

Getting Ahead or Just Enough To Get By?
The Limits of Social Capital in an Asset Based Community Development Model

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**Getting Ahead or Just Enough To Get By?
The Limits of Social Capital in an Asset Based Community Development Model**

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Abstract

Recent trends in community development efforts rely on social capital to solve issues at the local level through consensus building, increasing capacity and citizen empowerment. The asset based community development (ABCD) approach assumes relationships and partnerships built on networks of trust and shared norms build communities beneficial for all members. The current community capacity building approach blurs political interests and supports the current neoliberal agenda of the state and private interests to shift the responsibility and management of social problems to the community. This project calls in to question the potential of an assets based community development strategy as it has been attempted in Hamilton, Ontario to lead to long-term structural change in addressing social issues at the root. Findings suggest that despite the number of community projects appearing on the ground, there is little evidence to support asset based community development and social capital that leads to long-term structural change in communities, or economic prosperity to the extent proponents suggest. Furthermore, contrary to the claim of resident leadership, the findings suggest models that attempt to include resident participation are still managed, funded, and administered by professionals in organizations in a ‘top down’ manner. Additional discussion will explore how social capital and capacity can be used toward meeting social justice outcomes in communities.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Recent practices of community development have turned toward building community capacity and the empowerment¹ of residents to take control of their lives and their communities. King and Cruickshank (2010:7) comment on current trends for community engagement that seem to dominate community development strategies focused on capacity building by saying,

It seems that the majority of the emphasis on community engagement has been placed on producing information-based websites, capturing local stories of community projects under knowledge management schemes, providing grants, setting up regional bodies to streamline processes, and sponsoring primarily government staff to attend workshops and meetings to discuss community engagement as a concept.

Models built on notions of shared norms, consensus, and resident participation are far removed from the past where organizing for social change was achieved through social action (Alinsky 1971). Local governments and foundational funding agencies have made the social capital perspective the central component of their anti-poverty community development work, resulting in the spread of consensus organizing while displacing advocacy and conflict oriented methods (Gittel & Vidal 1998). The current asset based community development model emphasizes strengths and assets (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993) while asserting the state should not be a primary actor in community development. Social issues are being tackled at the local level through consensus building, increasing capacity and citizen empowerment. The asset based community

¹ Empowerment is a contested and debated term. In this instance it is understood as the sense that people have the ability and the right to influence their environment, that they can act on their own behalf to meet their physical, spiritual and psychological needs (Lee 1999).

development (ABCD) approach assumes relationships and partnerships built on networks of trust and shared norms build communities beneficial for all members. It also assumes that communities, even those who are poor, have sufficient resources to address social issues and that the private and not for profit sector are willing partners (McGrath et al. 1999; Fisher and Shragge 2000). This community capacity building approach blurs political interests and supports the current neoliberal agenda of most governments and private interests to shift the responsibility and management of social problems to the community (McGrath et al, 1999). On the other hand models such as ABCD that stress locality development and consensus have been applauded on the left as ‘bottom up’ approaches based on resident self-determination, participation, and autonomy (DeFilippis, Fisher & Shragge, 2010).

Rhetoric and practices have emerged from asset based community development by local community associations, non-profit organizations and municipal governments that have supported community processes attempting to address adverse social conditions without challenging the causes of these issues. The goal of the practice is to increase local responsibility to "fix" social issues by building capacity to ensure consensus strategies as opposed to conflict strategies (Fisher & Shragge 2000). The state is no longer a guarantor of citizen entitlements but has taken the position of mediator between the not for profit sector, the market, and communities who are all partners in service delivery (Neysmith & Reitsma Street, 2000). The reorientation of the state in neoliberal politics and the inclusion of non-state actors i.e., resident volunteers, is not about participatory rights, but rather an opportunity for outsourcing state functions to local organizations (Fyfe, 2005).

Organizing communities from within, and focusing on local change as the approach to dealing with social issues like poverty is essentially servicing the neoliberal ideal of self-contained communities and the privatization of the service sector. In the current neoliberal context it is difficult to view community participation as simply or entirely an emancipatory exercising of citizen rights, but rather as a calculated political rationality that aims to pass on state responsibilities to civil society and further marginalize communities.

This research project recognizes that social context plays a large role in what communities are able to accomplish and the models they tend to use (Lee 2011; DeFilippis et al. 2010). From this orientation it questions the potential of an assets based community development strategy as it has been attempted in Hamilton, Ontario to lead to long-term structural change in addressing social issues at the root. Using stories and experiences of residents this essay seeks to understand if practices and rhetoric on the ground indeed match to claims made by Putnam (1993, 2000) and Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) on the development capabilities of social capital and community capacity building.

Findings suggest that despite the number of community projects appearing on the ground, there is little evidence to support assets based community development and social capital leads to long-term structural changes in communities or economic prosperity to the extent proponents are led to believe. Furthermore despite the claim toward resident leadership, the findings suggest models that attempt to include resident participation are still managed, funded, and administered by professionals in organizations in a 'top down'

manner. Additional discussion will explore how social capital and capacity can be used toward meeting social justice outcomes in communities.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Background

Hamilton is a city of approximately 500,000 residents in central Ontario. Once an economic centre, de-industrialization and globalization forces have moved a staggering 5000+ manufacturing jobs from the Hamilton community since the mid 1990's (Mayo & Fraser 2009). The loss of stable well paid manufacturing jobs have had a dramatic effect on the income and job landscape in Hamilton, as the shift in work has changed to generally low paying, precarious service sector employment (Mayo & Fraser 2009). Most of the low-income areas are concentrated in pockets near the downtown core and east of the city centre. These areas simultaneously represent the neighbourhoods involved with the Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) and the neighbourhood hub initiative².

Beginning in 2002 the HCF turned its focus to reducing poverty in Hamilton by committing \$3.6 million dollars through micro-grants to encourage resident and organizational collaboration on small community projects. The project named Tackling Poverty Together (TPT) provided small grants intended to obtain 'quick wins' in neighbourhoods intended to demonstrate change within community is possible (Foster-Fishman et al. 2006). The \$3.6 million dollars was distributed over 2004-2007 at approximately \$750,000 per year. In 2007 the HCF agreed to renew funding and commitment to the TPT initiative with a second round of funding of \$5 million over 5 years ending 2012. This renewed initiative Tackling Poverty Together II (TPTII) focused

² See Mayo, Klassen & Bahkt (2012) for detailed community profiles.

on the creation of neighbourhood hubs and to continue their grant system. In all, eight neighbourhood hubs have been involved with this initiative (see TPTII 2009; Mayo, Klassen & Bhakt 2012). The HCF wanted to focus on localized community change efforts and were significantly boosted by the 'Code Red Series' (Buist 2009) published in the local newspaper reporting on the conditions of health and illustrated concentrated areas of poverty. The most significant finding to arise out of the Code Red Report was the 20 year difference in life expectancy in some of the city's low-income neighbourhoods as compared to other Hamilton communities.

The TPTII initiative is premised on an assets based community development model (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993) which calls for community residents to be an integral component of community revitalization. In addition to micro-grants from the HCF it encouraged the creation of volunteer associations and organizations to work together at the local level. The inclusion of micro-grants was a significant part of the TPTII strategy as research in other health related contexts have shown micro-grants serves as incentive for organizations to partner with communities in which grant applications and funding opportunities exist (Schmidt et al 2009). However in the experience of Schmidt et al (2009) it translated to little inter-organizational collaboration or significant public participation. Furthermore they found that while micro-grants have the potential to stimulate action at the residential and organizational level it is insufficient to organize action for projects to be widely implemented and increase public participation. They concluded that micro-grants needed to be accompanied by investing in infrastructure to build capacity and collaboration to engage with broader structures

(Schmidt et al 2009).

Asset Based Community Development

Goodman et al. (1998:259) contend that community capacity is highly complex, multidimensional, and define it as “the characteristics of communities that affect their ability to identify, mobilize, and address social and public health problems”. The definition offered by Goodman et al (1998) is similar to the locality/community development model outlined by Rothman (1979). Wilkinson (1989) observed building community capacity *is* the essence of community development work; the difference being how it is accomplished. Community capacity building is a parallel concept to ABCD as well as social capital, as they employ a similar process of identifying and defining community strengths to meet particular challenges, typically in areas of poverty and health interventions (Smith et al 2001).

Asset Based community development rests on the communitarian philosophy that examines the individual ties to communities, the norms and values that tie communities together, and the institutions that produce them (Etzioni 1993). The belief being that increasing ties through common norms based in community associations for example, produce the bedrock for a viable and democratic community to engage with issues toward a common good (Putnam 1993). Asset based community development reframes issues and refocuses attention on capacities, skills and assets of lower income people and their neighbourhoods (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). The model juxtaposes the former needs based analytical map with the development of the community capacity map. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argue that an emphasis on community issues common in other

models, like that of Alinsky (1971) leads to a fragmentation of solutions. Instead an asset based model links community action and community knowledge to produce solutions based on the existing community assets (Mathie & Cunningham 2005). In this way asset based community development is not only people centered but is driven by the members of the community. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) observe that the key to regenerating neighbourhoods from the inside out is to locate all available local assets and connect them in ways that increase capacity and effectiveness that working in isolation would otherwise prevent. The reframing of communities as a group of people who are needy and deficient, to those who are full of strengths and untapped resources offers a supposedly new perspective for novel combinations of assets, new structures of opportunity, new sources for income, control, and possibilities for production (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

McKnight (1995) and Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argue that a needs driven perspective creates a culture of client/service dependency perpetuating the understanding that individual well being is dependent on professionals. This type of consumer/service provider dichotomy presents a barrier toward social inclusion where service providers offer services to deficient individuals in the community and excludes them as decision makers.

Asset based community development rests on two pillars. The first draws on evidence to support that any significant community development takes place in the context of community members being directly invested with their resources in the development process (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). The second suggests the development of internal resources is necessary in contrast to the prospect of outside help

as bleak (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). They have accepted retrenchment of the welfare state in the current neoliberal era assuming the withdrawal of social entitlements coming from the state is inevitable. In essence, asset based community development stems from this initial 'hard truth' that internal development of resources is necessary as there is no other choice in the current neoliberal context (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

Mathie and Cunningham (2003) observe that the asset based method draws attention to social assets including individual talents, while harnessing the social capital existing in neighbourhood associations and informal networks. In order to identify assets the model provides tools such as community mapping as a method toward identifying community resources (Mathie & Cunningham 2005). Assets in this model, can be financial resources but also individual skills and talents, organizations, political connections, buildings and facilities, as well as natural resources (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993). Mapping provides a tool to assign relative value to these resources and consider some assets that may not have been identified by a needs based model (Mathie & Cunningham 2005).

One of the most compelling points of asset based community development is its ability harness the power of informal networks such as community associations that have community leadership embedded within the them (Mathie & Cunningham 2001). Community associations become the drivers of community development to leverage additional support from organizations at the local level (Mathie & Cunningham 2001). Associations are the vehicle for determining a community's assets and connections to produce stronger networks and greater capacity from within communities (Mathie &

Cunningham 2001).

Critique of Community Capacity and ABCD

Critiques of community capacity building and asset based community development are plentiful and wide-ranging. McGrath et al (1999) critiqued community capacity building along five lines of inquiry. The first line criticizes ABCD for assuming a wealth of resources and unused capacities exists in the community. In an era of globalization and the rapid expansion of capitalism and technology, the impact on local communities and employment opportunities has been significant (McGrath et al 1999). The resource base of communities is constantly in flux and is dependent on the substantial social forces that exist outside of most local communities (McGrath et al 1999). Secondly, Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) nostalgic notion of communities based on shared norms and values that it depends on to build community capacity is not representative of the diversity that exists in contemporary major metropolitan areas (McGrath et al 1999). The idea that a broad representative group exists is based on exaggerated claims of families and communities as they existed historically (McGrath et al 1999). Third, the assumption that past community organizing models have ignored the strengths of local communities excludes a vast literature. The ABCD model is ahistorical as it excludes the complex and diverse perspectives that have focused on strengths as well as deficits as they have existed in individuals and communities (McGrath et al 1999; Freire 1971; Mayo 1977; Dominelli 1988). Lastly, a community can not exist independent of the market and state while the concept of capacity building obscures neoliberal ideology. McGrath et al (1999) argue that shifting responsibility from the state

to the individual, family, or community for individual well being ignores the inherent structural inequalities among these social structures. The welfare state functioned precisely as a response to inequalities and limitations of the market in addressing social well-being (McGrath et al 1999).

James DeFilippis (2001; DeFilippis, Shragge & Fisher 2007; DeFilippis et al 2010) has been strongly critical of recent practices of community development that have been dominated by non-confrontational forms of engagement and community organizing that are compatible with neoliberal ideology. He suggests consensus based approaches focused on community assets, social capital, community building, and partnerships that highlight shared interests between advantaged and disadvantaged groups ignore fundamentally unequal power relations. This argument follows closely with that from McGrath et al (1999) that capacity building not only aligns with neoliberal ideology but also tends to render the neoliberal agenda invisible. It also coincides with Mowbray (2005) who suggests a key factor in strengthening communities has historically been through tension and discord where communities are strengthened by acquiring economic, political or social benefit through conflict with more powerful groups.

Craig (2007) argues that the concept of community capacity building is new rhetoric for old community development models allowing governments to distance themselves from old practices. This has been significant because it allows the term community and community capacity building to be interpreted uncritically and applied to a wide range of activities that have little to do with development (Craig 2007). Community capacity building models have also been criticized for not being ‘bottom up’

approaches as they are intended, as practices may be based more in rhetoric than substance (Craig 2007; Eversole 2012). Community capacity building is pursued by powerful partners who incorporate local communities into established structures and mechanisms. Community capacity building still requires professionals, structures and institutions to define how community members engage with community development and actions in neighbourhoods (Eversole 2012).

Lastly, local governments tend to narrow the scope of community development while overemphasizing their character and impact on community (Craig 2007). Drawing on Mowbray's (2005) review of a program in Australia, governments have the ability to make funding available to communities that have pre-existing and well established structures, while retaining the power to ensure activities that are political in nature are excluded from the initiative framework while claiming credit for community action plans. Craig (2007) recognizes the ability for communities to act autonomously on issues they identified can be easily compromised by the governments need to follow their own social and political agenda.

Social Capital

With the push toward community centred action, leading communitarian theorist Robert Putnam (1993, 2000) argues that communities should focus on rebuilding the social and moral fabric toward a renewed definition of citizen, and a democratically conscious public. Central to communitarian theory is the concept of social capital loosely defined as the relationships and networks among institutions, communities and residents. The emphasis is focused on communities to increase networks and social capital as a way

toward prosperity (Putnam 1993, 2000). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) draw heavily from communitarian theory by emphasizing the role of building capacity and social bonds to build sustainable communities.

Social capital defined by Portes (1998) is the ability to gain access to benefits by being a part of a group. He makes the distinction between source and consequences of capital, where as social capital can have positive or negative consequences. Membership of a group can carry both benefits and obligations. Positive benefits include those resulting from being part of a network of shared norms, while negative consequences can be in the form of imposing membership control through rules that limits individuality. Preceding Portes (1998) is the understanding of social capital as theorized by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993, 2000). Wakefield and Poland (2005) discuss the central distinction among these authors is the unit of analysis. Where Bourdieu (1986) focused on the individual effects of social capital Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993, 2000) were interested in the broader perspective in the role of social capital. The ideas of these three seminal figures are discussed below.

Theories of Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986) made key contributions to the notion of social capital as he believed the concept was integral to understanding the structure of society, as well as how a particular society functioned. He argued that a society is understood through an analysis of various forms of capital moving away from explanations based solely on economic resources. Capital can also be cultural or social, whereas social capital is individualistic referring to the power one gains from involvement in one's networks. For Bourdieu's

(1986) social capital was functional, not as an end to be achieved, but conceptualized as part of the process for individuals to access other forms of capital such as economic capital. DeFilippis (2001) observes that Bourdieu's use of social capital was an attempt to understand the production of class and class divisions. According to Bourdieu (1986) social capital is constituted by social networks and relationships and is never divorced from the influence of economic capital. Capital as Bourdieu conceptualized, is both economic as well as a set of power relations that constitutes non-economic realms (DeFilippis 2001). What is essential to Bourdieu's (1985) concept of social capital is that it makes visible the power relationships among forms of capital. For Bourdieu the production and reproduction of social capital are relationships of power where power and capital are almost synonymous (DeFilippis 2001). Bourdieu's conception of social capital is the most critical with his analysis of power that seems to best align with social work values of commitment to social justice.

James Coleman (1988) understands social capital as embedded in social relationships realized by the actions of individuals. Coleman (1988: S98) states, "social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production." In other words, social capital is defined by its function. Social capital as defined by Coleman is not solely a thing to be possessed, an instrument to facilitate, or an outcome in itself, but can be simultaneously any or all of them (DeFilippis 2001).

The Coleman (1988) definition of social capital was an attempt to bring together economic and sociological theory to describe social behaviour. In terms of economics he

posited that people make decisions that are self-interested in order to maximize their utility, while sociologically speaking individuals and organizations are embedded in a social context of norms. In this conception social capital exists as value neutral, it is simply drawn upon as a resource to allow actions to take place.

Robert Putnam's (1993, 2000) understanding of social capital explicitly redefined the concept as it entered into the mainstream consciousness of why communities should organize. Strongly influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville's writing on American civil society and voluntary associations, Putnam (2000) also gave prominence to voluntary associations as a form of civic engagement, and networks of trust among citizens. DeFilippis (2001) comments that Putnam considers networks of trust and networks of voluntary associations as win-win relationships. This guides Putnam's assumption that more social capital is always better, and therefore actions that alleviate poverty, or health interventions should aim to build social capital for the benefit of all (Putnam 2000). Unlike Portes (1998) Putnam does not recognize that social capital can also have a repressive function within networks.

Social capital is made up of the connections among individuals giving rise to networks that follow the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putnam 2000). Putnam (2000) argued that social cohesion is dependent on strengthening the constituent components of social capital that are social networks, norms and trust. Putnam was particularly concerned with civic engagement and trust as constituting the base of strong communities. The focus on these two elements places an emphasis on local communities as democratic centers when there is an actively engaged citizenry. Building social capital

through networks of trust and reciprocity recreates civil society, in turn, producing democratic communities.

Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital as the connections among individuals suggests social cohesion in communities is dependent on social networks, norms and trust as the constituent components of social capital. Putnam (2000) was particularly concerned with civic engagement and trust as constituting strong communities. The focus on these two elements places a strong emphasis on local communities as democratic centers as long as there is an actively engaged citizenry.

Putnam's (1993) project in Italy showed a correlation between high levels of social capital and regional economic development between two Italian regions. By linking social capital to economic development he argued that social capital is necessary for strong local economic development. In this way communities are recast as a form of social capital used to regenerate society (DeFilippis et al. 2010).

Forms of Social Capital

It is important for community development practitioners to be critically aware of the differences between the types of social capital and the variation between forms of social capital. A distinction has been made between bridging and bonding forms of social capital (Gittel & Vidal 1998; Putnam 2000). The main difference between the two is whether the ties are homogeneous or heterogeneous. Each has been shown to produce different effects on communities. Putnam (2000) includes the concept of bridging capital and bonding capital to account for the diversity amongst social actors and relationships. Putnam (2000:23) says, “ Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological

superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40... Many groups simultaneously bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others.” The concepts themselves are not meant to be interchangeable and the extent to which bonding and bridging capital exists in communities varies.

Bonding capital typically occurs within a community of individuals, mainly neighbourhoods based on similar characteristics (Larsen et al 2004). Bonding capital should be thought of as an antecedent to forming bridging capital as a more powerful form of social capital (Larsen et al 2004). Bridging capital provides the linkages that connect groups or members of groups to seek access, information, or to gain support (Larsen et al 2004). Bonding capital seems to be more prevalent in lower income neighbourhoods as relationships tend to be a protective factor against poverty (Woolcock and Nayran 2000), leading Sampson (1999) to question if bridging capital exists in low-income areas.

Larsen et al. (2004) also suggest that bonding and bridging social capital are distinct from one another and are predicted by different antecedents. They further suggest the creation of bonding capital as an antecedent of bridging capital is based on neighbourhood stability more so than individual stability (Larsen et al 2004). This is primarily because the creation of social capital takes time by building relationships that can be difficult in areas with significant turnover.

Within bridging capital there are vertical and horizontal ties that play significant roles. Bridging capital which links horizontally between groups may increase social exclusion as it only ties marginalized groups to other marginalized groups. This however

may have strategic value in building coalitions that are political to advocate for policy reform and social change (Wakefield & Poland 2005). Vertical ties link advantaged to disadvantaged groups, however in the discussion below they are in reality difficult to achieve.

Social Capital and Community Building

In a comparison of community practice, social planning, social action and community development models differs in their use of bonding and bridging capital to produce different effects (Aguliar & Sen 2009). The type of model also explains the role of the community development worker toward building different forms of social capital.

The community development worker in the ABCD model is an enabler or supporter, where they are focused much more on building bonding than bridging capital (Aguliar and Sen 2009). The exclusive focus on bonding capital leads to isolation and exclusion of groups from mainstream society as they lack bridging relationships (Aguliar and Sen 2009). This is an issue for community development models such as ABCD that concentrate on bonding capital and community empowerment. It lacks attention to bridging capital that limits the impact of community organizing on larger social structures (Aguliar & Sen 2009), or on a smaller scale to address a neighbourhood problem (Larsen et al 2004).

Other models such as social planning and social action both require social capital in varying degrees of the bonding and bridging types, but each are limited as to what can be accomplished. The role of the community development worker is also tied to the framework of these models (Rothman and Tropman 1979) and informs the part of their

duties that relate to the formation of social capital. In the case of the social planning model the community development worker is a fact-gather, analyst and an implementer who focuses on the building of bridging capital more so than bonding capital (Aguliar & Sen 2009). This model requires resources to come into the community, hence the importance of bridging capital, but usually does so under a deficits perspective (Aguliar & Sen 2009). The community action model is slightly different as the community development worker is aware of the effects of forming relations across and within groups to form coalitions to seek large-scale change (Aguliar and Sen 2009).

In their earlier review of the social planning, community development and social action models, Wakefield and Poland (2005) suggested that both bridging and bonding forms of social capital need to be developed at the micro level and macro level for social action to take place. The community development model recognizes differences in opinion, but it does not account for differences in power between social actors. Unfortunately bridging capital is not an easy task despite the essential role in community change (Wakefield & Poland 2005). Links to the dominant group via bridging capital are necessary for linking disadvantaged groups to advantaged groups. However, as social capital is developed along shared norms, it is highly unlikely that bridging capital between groups is easily achieved (Wakefield & Poland 2005). When bridging links are made it is because individuals from disadvantaged groups have adopted familiarity with dominant discourses that allow them to engage with advantaged groups (Wakefield & Poland 2005). It is not unreasonable however to wonder if power can become concentrated in a relative few individuals who have adopted dominant discourses in order

to link with advantaged groups, and how this affects community dynamics.

The above review of community practice models, illustrates the accrument of social capital is overly simplistic in the ends it can achieve. Variations of social capital in any given model is determined by the outcomes the model seeks. For example in a community development model, emphasis is on local capacity and relationships, and as a result bonding capital will be the focus. This has further implications for the role of community development workers and their ability to assist communities in long-term social change. Furthermore as Wakefield and Poland (2005) discuss the absence of a critical analysis of power in ABCD is overly convenient as social capital relationships are largely determined by power.

The Limits of Social Capital

In ABCD social capital attempts to rebuild communities with little recognition given to social forces that play a greater role in shaping communities such as globalization (McGrath 1999;DeFilippis et al 2010). The difficulty organizing around principles of social capital is not the issue per se, as much as these community building models are being shaped within, and by the neo-liberal context (DeFilippis et al 2009). The relationship between neoliberalism and the current community development model in Hamilton is rendered invisible while simultaneously shaping the definition and the residual response toward poverty in Hamilton.

Organizing to increase community capacity is inherently not a worthless endeavor. The critique of social capital and resulting practices are framed around the contextual reality that ABCD ignores broader social forces. Bradshaw (2007) reminds us

that the interplay between knowledge and practice is constantly being shaped by political bias and values. Bradshaw (2007:9) places a great deal of emphasis to the prevailing political climate when he says it “not only influences the choice of theory of poverty but also the very definition of poverty to be explained by each theory”. Bradshaw’s (2007) correctly assesses that the neoliberal philosophy has become a dominant force when setting the political agenda. Certainly DeFilippis, et al (2010) agree when organizing communities to respond to poverty, strategies tend to more often than not, align with the political agenda of the day. DeFilippis et al (2010:109) make this observation,

There is little doubt that all the forms of social capital and community building – theory, strategies and practice – are heavily influenced by the conservative context in the which the idea and strategies emerged. Intentionally or not, social capital and community building help to bring the neoliberalism to the grassroots as organizations seek to survive by figuring out how to adapt to neo-liberalisms global hegemony.

The argument that the social context not only shapes conditions within communities but the actual response to these conditions are echoed by Mayer’s (2003) discussion of blind spots in social capital theory. She writes that while the social capital discourse has been influential in pushing a civic engagement agenda, little attention is given to how socio-political processes transform the nature of civic engagement Mayer (2003). This transformative impact on civic engagement is evidenced by the shift in local organizations from institutions of social change to institutions of social control in the form of service provision. Community organizations help community members to ‘get by’ while finding ways to adapt to the current system rather than mount a challenge to it.

DeFilippis has been particularly critical of social capital. His critique of Putnam (2000) lies in the methodological and theoretical issues that arise in the construction of

social capital. Putnam's (2000) method of measuring social capital involves taking the aggregate of individual attributes and to scale them up. This is problematic for two reasons. The first assumes that communities are able to possess social capital and that the existence of social capital is enough to transform them. But, communities cannot possess things, and are products of complex cultural, political, social and economic relationships (DeFilippis 2001). The first issues leads to the second, in that no place can function solely on the internal attributes of the people who live there (DeFilippis 2001). If communities are constituted by outcomes, then they are products of relationships of power from within and outside of the community.

Secondly DeFilippis (2001) argues that Putnam's concept of social capital is divorced from capital itself. He argues that if social capital is to have any meaning, it is in the context of the production and reproduction of capital (DeFilippis 2001). If the goal of community development efforts is to raise the material conditions of a given community then social capital would only make sense in relationship to other forms of capital. Despite Putnam's argument that social capital combined with civil society promotes economic prosperity, there is little evidence to suggest this is true. Knack and Keefer (1997) found that associational activity, the types of associations that Putnam uses to support his argument, are not correlated with economic prosperity (cited in DeFilippis 2001). They suggest that horizontal relationships by way of group participation may be counterproductive to improving economic conditions (cited in DeFilippis 2001).

The allure of this model rests in the posture it presents as a consensus oriented, non-conflict solution to past deficit based models. Putnam's (2000) definition of social

capital strips it of its economic and political context while obscuring power relationships (DeFilippis 2001). Mayer (2003) notes that a focus on social capital diverts attention away from the contemporary socio-political climate whose effects threaten the promise of civic engagement. According to Mayer (2003) the production of a vibrant civic and politically engaged society depends on both a strong civil society and the state. Putnam's work emphasized the role of social capital as directly related to economic prosperity and explanations for generating economic prosperity localized in social capital, despite the very real effects of globalization and neo-liberal politics at the local level (Mayer 2003). When the state is mentioned in social capital practice and theory, politics are often placed in a subordinate role, which serves to obscure political movements and other types of community organizing such as conflict models that address broader structural issues (Mayer 2003).

In an assets based model, communities become the acceptable arena of engagement in the context of disengagement by the state in a neoliberal agenda. A shift from state care to community care requires and/or underwrites the dismantling of the welfare state and a renewed emphasis on self-help, community and the voluntary sector (McGrath et al 1999).

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) were highly critical of theories deduced from a priori assumptions that did not necessarily reflect empirical realities. The grounded theory method is intended as an inductive model to generate theory through continuous comparison of data, concepts and categories. The authors note, “Generating a theory from data means that most hypothesis and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research” (Strauss & Glaser 1967:6). Grounded theory directs the researcher to treat data analysis and data collection as a constant task throughout research, to immerse oneself in their data, and make comparisons across data to generate theory on a phenomenon.

Based on two main pillars of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, grounded theory presupposes an objectively observable social reality. Pragmatism understands the social world as constantly changing in response to evolving conditions, and as such an important component of the method is to account for changing conditions throughout the process (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Secondly determinism and non-determinism is rejected as actors are seen as having choice in response to conditions they encounter in the real world (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The purpose of grounded theory then is to highlight the interplay between changing conditions, individual’s responses and the consequences (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

A Constructivist Grounded Approach

This project uses the writings of Corbin and Strauss (1990, 1998) and Charmaz (2000, 2011) to inform the method, as an inexperienced researcher wanting to maintain the integrity of participant stories. A modified grounded theory approach for analyzing data used in conjunction with constructivism preserves the multiple views in people's stories while developing theory. Charmaz (2000:522) writes,

The further development of a constructivist grounded theory can bridge past positivism and a revised future form of interpretive inquiry. A revised grounded theory preserves realism through gritty, empirical inquiry and sheds positivistic proclivities by becoming increasingly interpretative.

Charmaz's (2000) version of constructivist grounded theory seeks to lean on its positivist roots while addressing postmodern critiques by including multiple voices, views and visions when using lived experience. By abstracting an analysis from participant responses to form a theory, postmodern thinkers have criticized grounded theory for glossing over participant stories and meanings (Charmaz 2000). In order to respond to this criticism and maintain the integrity of participant stories, the analysis used in this project incorporated a constructivist approach by seeking participant meanings that are deeper and reflect views and values as well as facts and actions (Charmaz 2000).

This process also recognizes the researcher as a part of the researcher who creates the data and the analysis through interaction with participants. Through this lens it is assumed people create meaningful worlds by projecting their meaning on to realities and acting within them (Charmaz 2000). The researcher immersed himself in a reflexive process while analyzing the data, exploring how preconceived assumptions and beliefs could impact the data analysis and data creation (Guillemin & Gillman 2004). A reflexive researcher is one who is critically aware of potential influences by taking a step back to

look at their role in the research process (Guillemin & Gillman 2004).

Social reality does not exist independent of human interaction and a constructivist grounded theory attempts to keep this belief at the core. Reflection throughout this process was important to examine the researchers relationship to the research project and the emerging analysis. Writing memos while analyzing the data provided opportunity for researcher inquiry and reflexivity.

Where the researcher places the emphasis during coding and questioning is also significant. The use of questioning to elicit deeper meaning is central to this model and does not try to arrive at a single truth, but illuminate multiple perspectives and understanding (Charmaz 2000). Charmaz (2000) writes that the aim is to understand the assumptions that underlie data by piecing them together, hoping to maintain participant meaning and not lose meaning through the use of jargon. Also in later writings, Charmaz (2011) discusses the use of coding in gerunds during initial line-by-line coding. Gerunds are a heuristic device that brings the researcher into the data allowing for deeper interaction (Charmaz 2011). Charmaz (2011:368) writes, “This type of coding [gerunds] helps to define implicit meanings and actions, gives researchers directions to explore, spurs making comparisons between data, and suggests emergent links between processes in the data to pursue and check.” Initial line-by-line coding was completed in gerunds to allow a deeper interaction with the data while maintaining participant meaning.

Overall, the difficulty in combing a constructivist approach with Strauss and Corbin risks an analysis that becomes descriptive conveying meaning rather than conceptualizing a theory grounded in data (Glaser 2002). This project attempted to

mitigate a merely descriptive summary by using a constructivist grounded theory approach to data analysis while guided by the analytical tools in Strauss and Corbin's (1990;1998) articulation of grounded theory methods.

The two main reasons for combining these approaches are as follows: First an objectivist grounded theory while being able to offer rich descriptions of social phenomenon, tends to remain outside of the experience of the individual. I want to be able to get inside the experiences of participants and understand how ABCD has or has not lead to community change. A constructivist grounded theory asks the researcher to look at beliefs and ideologies as well as situations and structures (Charmaz 2000). The researcher attends to the meaning and the substance of respondent's stories, as their social reality does not exist independent of their action. The choice of a grounded theory approach during data analysis was important to capture how residents experience the change brought about through ABCD. Most work in this area has taken the form of research projects by organizations and the HCF currently involved in the neighbourhood hub system. It was important as a beginning researcher and a student who has spent time in the hubs to use a method that allowed bracketing of past experiences and immerse oneself in the iterative process of collecting data, theorizing and reflection.

Secondly, Strauss and Corbin (1990;1998) provide strategies, analytic questions and methodologies to guide a beginning researcher. They are more systematic and less objectivist than Glaser's grounded theory and seem to align well with a constructivist approach (Charmaz 2000). Theories and data do not lay in wait to be discovered but they are merely created through the interaction of participants, the researcher and experiences

rooted in the social world. The claims and meanings I will be able to uncover and discuss using this approach to build toward a substantive theory seems more reasonable in an MSW thesis, than the creation of formal theory.

Question

Using a modified grounded theory poses an interesting opportunity to analyze asset based community development, drawing meaning directly from the data. The challenging aspect of this particular methodology is that it asks you to suspend your own assumptions and theoretical explanations only to find these in the data that is generated. The research question emerges from my own experiences in the Hamilton Hubs. Strauss (1987) comments that the use of self from past experiences and literature is useful in stimulating theoretical sensitivity and generating hypothesis that form the beginning of inquiry into a phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1998) provide more leeway to bring in sensitizing concepts from prior experiences and sources that the researcher is required to compare these against the data. Sensitizing concepts are background ideas that inform the overall research problem and may also serve in helping to form a research plan (Strauss & Corbin 2008). Furthermore as Charmaz (2011) notes it is almost impossible for a student or a researcher to not have any prior knowledge of a project based on the requirements of course work and ethical approval. In this project, reflexivity during memo writing provided an opportunity to explore past assumptions in relationship to the data. Immersing oneself in the grounded theory process of combining analysis with data collection helped to maintain focus on the data while limiting outside influences. The research problem began with observations in the neighbourhood hubs that questions who

is driving change in communities under an assets based model. This question was further explored in the extant literature, leading to the exploration of an assets based community development model in practice and comparing findings against claims in the literature.

Sample

Five community residents, from 3 different neighbourhoods were interviewed along with a community development worker who worked in two of the communities. Each neighbourhood must have been involved in the neighbourhood hub project and each participant having been involved for at minimum 6 months in their neighbourhood planning teams. Six months was chosen as a cut-off where residents would have been involved in the hub activities long enough to have a sense of its practices. The stories and experiences of the residents were critical to understanding the drivers of change as they live, work and experience the changes within their communities. A community development worker was interviewed as workers often act as an intermediary between community residents and large bureaucracies (Toomey 2011; Mathie & Cunningham 2005). A total of 6 community development workers work in the Hamilton Hubs.

Participants were identified in two stages of this project, beginning with a purposeful sample in the initial stages followed by theoretical sampling as described by Glaser (1978). Glaser (1978) recognizes the need to begin with a purposeful sample as the researcher will have some knowledge of where to find a rich source of data and leads for further investigation. It is important that a researcher begins where the phenomenon occurs, and in this project the residents were chosen prior to using a theoretical sample. According to Glaser (1978) theoretical sampling is the process of data collection where

the researcher analyzes their data to guide them where to collect data next. The interplay between data collection and analysis is integral to theoretical sampling to collect more data to examine categories and relationships to fully flesh out a category.

Theoretical sampling also lends flexibility to research design and research instrument. Glaser (1978) suggests that the researcher is able to shift the plan and emphasis early in the project so data can be more reflective with what is happening on the ground. The same flexibility is extended to questions asked of the participants where the researcher is continually asking questions to fit and relevance to the emerging categories. The researcher having an idea of the emerging data may want to ask questions to test the relevancy of categories as it relates to the developing theory. In this particular project potential probing questions were different for each interview based on the previous analysis of past interviews to help form and test categories.

Instrument

Unstructured interviews were used as a data collection tool to allow participants control of the experiences and opinions they were willing to share. Corbin and Morse (2003) write that unstructured interviews are shared experiences where the participants are given considerable control over the course of the interview. An unstructured interview provides opportunity for participants to willingly choose what they want to share, or what they do not wish to share with the researcher (Corbin & Morse 2003). Within an unstructured interview it is possible for researchers to ask probing questions, or clarification on particular topics but are not the main actors within the interview (Corbin & Morse 2003). Corbin and Morse (2003:339) write, “The purpose of unstructured

interactive interviews is to provide guidance but to gather information about topics or phenomena that happen to be of interest to researchers and at the same time are significant events or experiences in persons' lives." It was evident that residents and community developers who participate in community change provide maximum effort and represent significant events in their lives. Unstructured interviews were used to capture the significance and importance of change in communities while the use of probing questions helped gather information related to the drivers of change in their communities. A list of potential probing questions were developed and modified prior to each interview that expanded on previous data.

Interviews began by setting the context and explaining to participants that I was interested in hearing their experiences, stories and examples of changes they have made during their tenure on the neighbourhood planning teams. From this point each participant was asked, "who is driving change in Hamilton communities?" Probing questions were used for each participant as way to illicit deeper meaning on information that was significant to the research question, as well as points that were significant to the participant.

Data Analysis

The strength of grounded theory lies in the iterative process of data collection with constant analysis and comparisons between data being drawn to guide the researcher toward theory. In their original work Glaser and Strauss (1967) articulate a constant comparative method by joining coding and analysis to generate substantive and formal theory. The authors note, "The purpose of the constant comparative method of joint

coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically than...by using explicit coding and analytic procedures” (Glaser & Strauss 1967:102).

By using the coding method outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2011), line by line coding through gerunds led to further coding of concepts and categories abstracted from the data. In attempting to develop an understanding of who drives change in asset based community development, conceptual categories were generated and abstracted from the evidence through constant comparison. In doing so the evidence from which the category emerged was used to illustrate the operation of asset based community development emergent from the data and not previous assumptions (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Engaging in this constant process of comparative data analysis helped to inform what data to collect next and where to find it, building theory as the research progresses.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) developed analytic tools and questions to guide data comparisons and coding to strengthen the validity of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998). For example Strauss and Corbin (1990) invite sensitizing concepts into the analytic process of axial coding that allows the researcher to bring in outside concepts and develop a more complex theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress that these experiences need to be checked against the data and thus increase the rigor and validity of grounded theory research. Data collected were not only compared between participants but against the literature as well. Memo writing was also used as a way to further develop emerging categories and concepts throughout the coding of the data (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

Limitations

This project however is not without limitations relating to methodological concerns. Despite the use of unstructured interviews this type of method is particularly suited at developing deep participant stories but was limited in the size of the sample. Even though the themes used in this project were elicited from participant stories and constituted the workings toward a substantive theory on the operation of social capital within the neighbourhood hubs, achieving data saturation to flesh out formal theory was not accomplished. This issue stems back to the relatively short time frame allotted to complete thesis work that is incongruent with the realities of doing community based research that tend to take more time.

Similarly while those interviewed represented three distinct neighbourhoods within the hub system, the majority of neighbourhoods are not represented making comments and inference to other hubs difficult. Participant comments highlighted activities within the hubs and gave substantial insight to this end, the project would have benefitted from eliciting the opinions of members representing other hubs. Along the same line, stakeholders such as organizational leaders and political figures as an additional point of comparison. Future research into the hub system should evaluate the overall effectiveness of ABCD by including voices from all hubs and each level of stakeholders.

Chapter 4 - Findings & Analysis

Findings

Participant experiences in the Hamilton Neighbourhood hub system illustrated tremendous commitment to the betterment of their communities. This research project sought to determine if practices of ABCD in this context had achieved the claims often made in the literature about resident leadership, economic prosperity and broad social change (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993; Putnam 1993;2000). The data provided insight into what asset based community development can offer to community, and in some cases pointed to real progress being made by residents working together in various neighbourhoods. Turning a critical lens on the activity relative to ABCD in the neighbourhoods represented in this project, the data suggests limitations on what ABCD can offer communities in terms of resident leadership, improved economic conditions and broad social change.

The data suggests there is a high emphasis placed on building bonding capital to build in-group relationships. Further, the reliance on bonding capital may be creating barriers for other residents to engage local the community planning teams as well as the impact their efforts have on issues emanating outside their community. Secondly, non-government organizations and service partners play a large role in the ABCD model. It seems, from the analysis, that residents do not play a large leadership role outside of their communities, but are rather participants in a framework set and managed by local organizations. Lastly, change efforts using ABCD in the Hamilton context seem to be specific to localized community projects such as community gardens or food banks that

do not propel residents in 'getting ahead' but appear to be short term or very localized "fixes" to allow residents to 'get by'. The ABCD model as examined in this project has yet to show any potential for developing or underwriting structural changes and long-term economic prosperity. These limitations and how they may be attributed to the ABCD model and how it is implemented in practice during the current neo-liberal era are discussed below.

Analysis

Asset based community development and social capital have been well critiqued in recent years for an inability to provide economic prosperity and structural changes that embody social justice values (Fisher 2001, Mayer 2003). The stories and opinions shared by participants are explicit examples of communities building substantial networks of trust and relationships. On the other hand there was little evidence that suggests ABCD has led to more substantial community outcomes.

Participant stories suggested, to an extent, that the activities in their communities and specifically how relationships, organizations and power significantly influence or limit what is possible with an assets based model. An assets based model is problematic for change in four important ways. First, in this research participants tended to see social capital, the development of community bonds, as an outcome of community development. This appears to fit with the concern that Putnam's conceptualizing of social capital it shifted from a means to an end to the end in itself (DeFilippis 2001, Mayer 2003). There was little evidence that social capital as it operates in the communities of those interviewed has yet translated into broader changes in the structure of the communities.

Social capital and community capacity has focused primarily on forming relationships and building bonding capital while ignoring other forms of capital. Secondly, and related to the first point, engagement has been a difficult task for each hub as relationships that form along similarities in a model that assumes a homogenous population. This is not reflective of the community and presents challenges for creating change and broad engagement of diverse and marginalized populations. Third the role of funding and government organizations continues to be at issue while using the rhetoric of resident led participation and claiming to be ostensibly community oriented. The asset based model as current implemented is not participatory in key features of resident leadership. Lastly building social capital and focusing on community capacity building does not lead to structural changes and economic prosperity but needs to be used in conjunction with other forms of capital that allows community to engage with governments and other powerful stakeholders.

The Focus on Bonding Capital

Bonding capital, a form of social capital based on shared norms was the dominant form of capital found in the assets based model that favours networks of trust and reciprocity. However bonding capital exists in the absence of other forms of capital that is particularly problematic as significant change typically occurs by linking social capital with other forms of capital allowing communities to access power. Social change that is rooted in social justice is difficult to accomplish in a model that emphasizes community bonds and treats relationships between social actors and organizations as neutral.

The main premise behind assets based models and social capital is that well connected groups are better able to identify and mobilize their assets to effectively act on desired outcomes (Putnam 1993; 2000). Accumulation of relationships and networks of trust translate into community outcomes. In his review of definitions of social capital Paxton (1999) concluded that definitions carry two common elements: trust and association. Each were found to be important factors in these neighbourhoods.

All participants stated that they believed relationships were the base for community development. In fact most participants viewed establishing relationships as the prerequisite for any other community activity. This exchange between Joan and Sandra highlight the importance of relationships when Joan said, “you got to start with relationships, you lose people if you haven’t got relationships with them... the relationship is the base so that’s why its really important that we do that.” Joan’s thoughts were quickly agreed upon by Sandra who said, “that’s such a good point, that’s such a good point. I never even thought of it like that before. I just think lets just get together and get the job done, yeah I’m calling it the job, and I don’t think that’s really the right way to go.”

Similar comments were heard across each interview and each participant. Typically, engaging in relationships and relationship building exercises such as community barbeques were seen as a way to build relationships among community members in order to increase engagement in the local planning teams. Most of the community relationship building took place within the neighbourhood and rarely did they extend to groups outside of it.

Relationships were also seen as important as they were understood as building an amount of trust and security to residents. Barbara indicates how trusting relationships build a sense of security in the community,

It's like my husband when he walks by the elders over in the park, I only know one word that's 'sat sri akal'. That's hello in their language, and they're like oh 'sat sri akal' because were saying hello to them in their language, they are really appreciative of it. So now every time they say that to my husband when he walks the dogs. So now he's starting to build their trust... so if they see him around, something's wrong they're more apt to walk to him you know? So its, it is a matter of trust and I really love it here. I feel safe here. I'm not worried at all, I'll walk the streets at three o'clock in the morning and I know if I needed help I'd have it, someone would come. I never not felt safe here, never not felt safe, its amazing.

Joan gave a similar example about relationships building trust and security.

Cause we want to pull everyone in. Its so cool though because the other day, here's an example, I was walking my dog at 4 in the morning ... and I'm thinking, I think I live in a good area but I am a woman walking down the street alone at four in the morning. But then I thought you know what Susan lives there and George lives there you know? I'm just naming all the houses all the way up and down my street two whole blocks...but anyway I thought to myself I'm safe you know... relationships protect you...you get connected so you're not alone, being alone is what's dangerous, but being in a community where you have all those interconnections, its just its just a big deal.

Joan describes relationships as protective. Being alone in a community is dangerous not only for reasons of physical safety but acknowledging the need for community members to work together by establishing trusting relationships. This follows the basic concept of social capital that one's connections with others constitutes an important asset that can be called upon in a crisis, or leveraged for material gain (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Communities with a stock of networks and associations are in a stronger position to confront poverty. Similarly, in the absence of social connections

living in poverty is exacerbated when one does not have access to networks, or opportunities to secure a way out of poverty through employment, or other mechanisms (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). These comments support the communitarian view that the centrality of social ties help vulnerable populations manage poverty and risk (Woolcock & Narayan 2000) but they do not necessarily suggest that they lead to ways of improving the lives of those in disadvantaged situations in a significant way.

Bourdieu (1988) identified social capital as a variable in achieving social mobility or reproducing class relations. According to Bourdieu (1988) social capital allowed people to access other forms of capital such as economic and cultural capital necessary to move up social classes. Putnam (1993; 2000) argued on the other hand that prosperity of communities is dependent on the quality of relationships. Social capital that was once a variable in the process of achieving upward mobility, became a commodity, something that can be possessed by communities to achieve a range of desired outcomes. Putnam's redefinition of social capital also brought it in line with communitarian views of a neo-Toquevillean society where voluntary associations were the vehicle for producing social capital, leading to a range of desirable outcomes including economic prosperity, good governance and reduced crime rates (DeFilippis 2001).

Moreover, social relationships based on a shared set of norms and values have real potential for structurally reproducing the exclusion of the poorest. A politically neutral development model focused solely on strengthening associational life and public participation of disadvantaged groups is unlikely to lead to greater inclusion, or to significant poverty alleviation. Not all forms of social capital are equal and there are

variations among bonding and bridging capital that play a significant role in community action and social change. Social capital is a resource that facilitates action that can have positive or negative consequences (Bridger & Alter 2006). Negative consequences of social capital are prominent particularly when bonding capital outweighs other forms of social capital leading to consequences such as fragmented groups in the absence of bridging capital (Paxton 1999). Bonding capital found within a single group may be positive for that group but does not necessarily translate to social capital for the broader community (Paxton 1999).

Bonding capital looks inward and tends to reinforce social relations between homogenous groups (Putnam 2000). Bonding capital is concentrated in densely connected groups and provides critical social support and fostering in-group solidarity. Examples of such groups are found in the reflections of Joan and Sandra as they rely on each other for support looking to their networks to provide safety and security. A network structure that leads to sustainable community development however needs to be open and diverse with social capital ties at the bridging and vertical levels (Kay 2005; Dale & Newman 2008). Bridging ties lead to connections outside of the local organizations to tap into other resources while vertical ties encompass those that connect with decision makers and authority figures (Dale & Newman 2008). While bonding capital is a necessary requirement as an effective defense against poverty, real sustainable development requires a shift to link to other networks. The difference between 'getting by' and 'getting ahead' requires bonding as well as linking capital through vertical ties and bridging networks (Woolcock & Narayan 2000).

Bonding and bridging capital can effect community outcomes in different ways. The main distinction between forms of social capital is homogenous versus heterogeneous ties and the different costs and benefits of each. Heterogeneous ties are vertical or horizontal while bridging capital can also be between homogenous groups as in Paxton's (1999) research, where as bonding capital is primarily a function of in-group relationships.

In their discussion of social capital and power Wakefield and Poland (2005) caution that horizontal ties are limited in that they tend to only link excluded groups with other excluded groups keeping them out of mainstream society. This places limits on the usefulness of this kind of bridging capital in reducing exclusion but also reinforces existing social divisions by increasing segregation (Wakefield & Poland 2005). Wakefield and Poland (2005) suggest the development of bridging capital in the form of vertical ties that link disadvantaged groups with advantaged groups is essential to access social capital as well as other forms of capital. Without linking to dominant social groups, disadvantaged groups are continually excluded from accessing sources of economic, social or cultural capital (Wakefield & Poland 2005). However bridging capital in the form of vertical ties is difficult to achieve, and when they are achieved these ties benefit a few members of a community and not necessarily the entire community. Vertical ties are generally formed through shared norms or understanding of the world which requires those from marginalized groups to adopt the dominant discourses in order to engage with dominant groups (Wakefield & Poland 2005). This places the power of

marginalized groups in the hands of a few spokespersons reinforcing hierarchies and systems of domination within and between groups (Wakefield and Poland 2005).

Bonding Capital & Community Engagement

Bonding and bridging capital not only play an important link in forming relationships critical to community development they also play a significant role when engaging other members of the community. Engaging with other members of the community and maintaining involvement in community organizations has been a difficult aspect for community development in all communities represented in this project. Bridger and Alter (2006) argue networks that arise out of shared norms and trust tend to be homogenous which limits participation in voluntary associations to a limited number of people. Similarly voluntary associations are fixed to time and place and depend heavily on face-to-face interactions. Bridger and Alter (2006:8) argue,

The kind of networks and norms social capitalists celebrate depend, almost by definition, depend on particular conception of community – a place where the physical boundaries are well defined, where the people share common institutions, and where there are few social cleavages.

Communities in the neighbourhood hub system are diverse and are not accurately reflected in the voluntary associations which leads to little participation and a significant amount of bonding capital between those with shared norms and values. Bonding capital might provide substantial benefits to one part of the population but hardly promotes the interests of the broader community (Bridger & Alter 2006). Where as Joan and Sandra benefit from bonding capital in that it provides safety and protection as part of the in-group this benefit of social capital may not be extended to all, and perhaps may not be a

desired outcome for all community members. For example, during Sandra's interview she continually referred back to the inability to change the walkability of her neighbourhood citing engagement as part of the issue. For example when talking about a main street that runs through her community Sandra said,

 this is absolute insanity , and that strip of main street runs through ... so , I think really , whenever I think of all the stuff that has to be done , I go right back to that strip of main street that runs through ... and I think, ugh this is, this is a travesty this is killing a neighbourhood.

 Increasing the walkability of the neighbourhood through traffic calming on main streets that pass through her community is priority for her and the residents. Changing the flow of traffic would require the community to engage with, and receive significant support from residents, organizations and local government (Clark et al 2010). Sandra shares her frustration with projects of this size when she says,

 Its like people are wearing cement shoes they can not move forward on it. They can't move forward and so what we think is we have to get more people saying yes, this is a great idea and you have to talk to your councilor. So we need critical mass, although I hate using that term now because everybody uses it, now we need more bodies. So essentially right now, I'm like, I'm a body collector that's all I do I collect bodies.

 Sandra is frustrated with the rate of change in her neighbourhood on major issues and sees it as partially an issue of engagement leading to the lack of organization of large groups of people in order to effect social change. In communities with a prevalence of bonding capital, engagement with other groups specifically forming horizontal bridging links to other groups in the community is difficult to achieve. Similarly my research findings show limited evidence of vertical bridging links to those in positions of power such as local politicians. Without these vertical links it is almost impossible to move

ahead on large-scale projects that require engagement with a variety of people and groups. Secondly, there is some confusion about how to move forward as she has found it frustrating to engage directly with government bureaucracy, she then turns back to the community to engage with residents to gain more support.

The issue of engagement evolved from groups that form around shared norms and values thereby structurally excluding those who are marginalized in the community with different norms and values. Social capital and communitarianism theory in general assumes communities and associations are networks of similar interests. This assumption is simply not the case in Hamilton that is home to many diverse groups with varied interests. The presence of high bonding capital while the weak presence of bridging capital particularly vertical ties may be one reason community planning teams have trouble engaging residents in larger numbers and groups outside of their neighbourhood. This situation is difficult to resolve because the presence of internally cohesive groups based on similarities and trust is necessary to promote member well-being and collective action (Wakefield & Poland 2005). The process of building group social capital by nature excludes those with different norms and identities (Wakefield & Poland 2005). It seems in order to promote broader engagement and social action it is necessary to develop social capital within and among groups.

Overall there was little evidence to suggest structural changes that alleviate poverty or leading to economic prosperity as proponents of communitarianism and local capacity development argue. The accumulation and creation of social capital and community capacity does not seem to be leading toward significant changes in their

neighbourhoods despite the potential to do so claimed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). It is apparent that change does not occur from a specific group or accumulation of community capacity through social capital, but through complex relationships that constitute various forms of social capital to engage with power structures.

The Role of Organizations

Non-profit organizations and community foundations are a significant part of community organizing in Hamilton and fit within the broader trend of NGO's and foundations to meet existing demands in the community (Mathie & Cunningham 2005). Organizations and service providers seem to vary in the level of commitment to community with some confusion as to who they are accountable too. While they are accountable to the Hamilton Community Foundation for providing funding to carry out programs, Rita thinks there should be more accountability to the residents as well. She comments that,

The planning team has every right to know what you're [service providers] doing and they, they supported your plan going in , so you are accountable to the planning team ... and I think they think, they're only responsible to the Hamilton Community Foundation and the Hamilton Community Foundation hasn't questioned where they are at this point. They just wait for their final report in December.

Eva and Nora share a similar sense noting that some (but not all) service providers in the past have attended community meetings when it is time to re-issue funding and then disappear leaving the planning teams wondering how funds are being used in their communities.

Recently in an effort to bring more accountability and control into the hands of residents, the HCF required community planning teams to support local service providers in order for them to receive funding via a voting process. That is, service providers apply for funding through the local planning teams who vote whether or not the service provider should receive funding from the HCF to run their initiative. If the community members decide not to fund an initiative the service provider does not receive funding from the HCF. To this point Rita said,

So if a funding proposal goes in and is not supported by the planning team, then they're not going to get the money. So that's a good thing that the planning team has to know what's going on and has to know what organizations and programs are within their own community and have to want them, and support them.

Despite this being seen as a positive by a community development worker and members of the planning team alike, it must be noted that the funding still comes from the local community foundation building the perception that those who receiving funds are only accountable to the foundation. Rita had been trying to receive updates on the progress of organizations in her community and commented that, "I think they think [service providers] they're only responsible to the HCF, and the HCF hasn't questioned where they are at this point. They just wait for the final report in December."

The role of organizations and their paid employees seem to be seen as having an impact on change efforts in the community. When asked about the role of organizations and the Hamilton Community Foundation Eva stated that the help comes in the form of funding and expertise that does not compromise the community agenda. She says,

Financially, instructively you know? How to, the grant writing program they had at the leadership institute there's no way I'd have any idea how to do any of that, and leadership, it was excellent. They introduced you to all the people that, and they were all so down to earth to meet because you feel so nervous otherwise to approach anyone like that.

Sandra made similar points when she said, "I would say funding. Funding and promotions, and I would say all the political stuff that were not able to do."

While the work of the HCF has been helpful to residents through various programs it still retains control of the management frameworks and the financial terms for work carried out in the community. This finding aligns with Eversole (2012) who critiques community capacity building as a practice that tends to allow professionals to define and structure the parameters for community development in local neighbourhoods. Organizations can access HCF funds through micro-grants intended to support resident led initiatives, increase community capacity or support local services (TPT II 2009). Foundation grants of larger sums can also be accessed by organizations to work across hubs on broader issues of poverty, specifically those targeted to marginalized populations ie., seniors (TPT II 2009). Residents do have input on which service providers receive funding to allow for increased accountability and resident leadership. However these seem to be limited to micro grants while the entire model for determining funding remains largely out of their hands. Rita the community development worker notes the Foundation also retains the ability to turn away community proposals if they have not met the criteria for investment even after the community has approved the proposal. She said, "Two of our proposals got turned down because HCF, I guess at the time didn't think it was appropriate to fund that organization, that we were at that level yet, and yet the planning team thought they were".

The term resident led can conceal this unbalanced relationship as it extends to development projects (Eversole 2012). The amount of power and control the Foundation and service providers have is substantial and heavily influential in terms of what communities can accomplish. Residents may be leaders within their communities, but not when it comes to the overall model and how it shapes work being done in the community. This was best exemplified by Rita's comments when she said,

This project, the Neighbourhood Action Plan project, the city came in and said this is what we're doing. The community didn't say oh we need an action plan, we need a booklet, we need all these stuff to tell you what needs to be done in our community. The city said were hiring these community developers, these community developers are going into the neighbourhoods and they're doing a plan and you're going to have it done in nine months. That to me is not community development because we've gone in and we've said to them, this is what were doing, but it was community development in the sense of the community had input on what their concerns and priorities were.

Of similar concern to participants was the role of employees who work in service organizations and along side community planning teams. In the last two years, six community development workers have been hired to assist with development efforts in the hub system. Each resident agreed the role of the community development worker has been essential to success in the communities. Their role seems to be as a support for residents to carry out their plans within the communities and engage with organizations and community members (Aguliar & Sen 2009). Rita the community development worker along with Joan and Sandra recognized that there are limitations to what community development workers can accomplish. Rita noted that the lack of power afforded by the position often makes it difficult to hold service providers and other organizations accountable to the community planning teams. She said, "I don't think that

the community developers are given sort of, this is stupid to say, but I don't think know how to word it any other way, the power that they need.”

Similarly Joan and Sandra had framed the role of organizations, service providers and the city as “masters” who can exert considerable influence. They are also critically aware that employees of organizations are first and foremost accountable to the entities who pay them and in effect potentially deferential to the organizations' agenda. Sandra said,

I think what happens is city employees, have a job first of all so they're getting paid so there's that kind of aspect. They're also being employed by a master. A masters views and ideals must be held in the forefront... I think its not so much a question of who's driving change as who is putting the breaks on change”

Often times this is the case for organizations that work in communities where differences in goals can cause conflict between residents and organizations (Mathie & Cunningham 2005). Joan comments that when relationships with service providers or organizations are no longer working toward the same goals, the community needs to go back and realign themselves with different organizations. Joan said,

On our planning teams, we have not only charitable organizations but we also have like, places of worship, and we have businesses and we have, because all of them have a different master so to speak. They all operate differently. So if one master [service provider] sees to serve us well, you know, we don't have to put our eggs in that basket... because you get stuck right, so then you start, so then you just move over to someone else cause you've gone as far as you can over there and you say you know what were going to try this then, and that's the thing.

This type of strategy however may not always be feasible given the limited number of organizations and resources, and the length of time required to build working relationships.

Asset based community development is often lauded for being a bottom up model that emphasizes community self-determination while being funded and managed from centrally determined regulations. As Rita and Sandra pointed out which projects are funded and the frameworks for participation are all top down decisions made by the “masters” where community members are left to fill in the blanks in the ostensible appearance of self-determination and resident leadership. The issue is that central control of the overall project is veiled under a discourse of participation and resident autonomy that serves to hide neo liberal interests and the operation of power. Participation can be used as a guise to hide power inequalities and differences, while enabling the powerful elite to maintain and pursue their own agenda (Eversole 2012). Drawing on the work of others Eversole (2012:32) writes,

Participation, while intended as a corrective to the ‘top-down expert-led model of development’ subtly perpetuates it by presenting community action within a project and program frame. Thus professional roles, structures and institutions define how we think about and action development in and with communities.

The ABCD model was chosen by professionals as the direction for community development efforts (TPT II 2009) and therefore greatly effects the type and scope of work in communities. The term resident led should not be confused with resident participation which is quite different thing and has its own issues (Arnstien, 1969) in that the project framework remains in the control of professionals and institutions. Joan captured this concern in her comments,

I think that it’s a dangerous word because people can usurp that right, they can be like oh resident led and they can go off and do their own thing as a service provider and just pretend to be resident led you know? You can make it look like resident led pretty easily that’s the danger right?

Mowbray (2005) critiques activities and community building projects as generally unassuming taken on with good intentions and for good purpose but does not necessarily represent an overall challenge to the prevailing status quo. He points out that these community led projects could be and often are pursued regardless of organization or government influence. Small community projects exemplify community participation but tend to be the opposite of people driven change. These programs and projects at work in varying degrees across the neighbourhood hub system and have rarely produced resident led action in terms of tangible long term sustainable community development to combat poverty - the reason why such models are supposedly used in the first instance. Rather resident participation is limited to projects in their communities that are managed by professionals at an organizational or municipal level (Eversole 2012). Community work, though a useful endeavor does not necessarily translate to structural community change in the lives and conditions of the disadvantaged, nor do participatory approaches necessarily allow for resident involvement in all aspects of development. Despite the notion that these projects meant to "empower" disadvantaged communities, local institutions are still cast as initiators, developers and agents of change (Eversole 2012). As we can see from her comments above, Rita was keenly aware that the parameters for work carried out in the Neighbourhood Hubs are defined and implemented by organizations while work on the ground such as building a community garden is carried out through resident participation.

ABCD and the lack of Economic Progress

An assets based model is about identifying community assets in the interest of forging solutions for alleviating poverty. It is clear however, that solutions to poverty

require communities to engage with larger structural issues which an assets based model is neither meant, or equipped to handle. It simply does not require residents to engage directly with politics through advocacy or any other means that may disrupt the unequal distribution of wealth and power that is at the root of community disadvantage. Asset based models focused on building social capital produces community gardens and food banks and other positive outcomes for the local community, but does not challenge the overall power structure nor provide any long term solution or relief to poverty. Rather than being about any substantial social transformation neighbourhood action plans, like those we see in the Hubs are typically about increasing access to local services, improving public amenities and infrastructure, organizing local events, promoting business initiatives, improving local communication, and providing local educational opportunities³.

In the Hubs, while residents undertake the responsibility of being actors within their communities, powerful elites continue to control their roles and ability to produce change. While on one hand it confirms the potential for ABCD to increase local involvement and development of services and small projects (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993) on the other hand it confirms the literature that critiques ABCD as engaging with broader structures (McGrath et al 1999; DeFilippis 2001;Mayer 2003; Craig 2007; DeFilippis et al 2010) Social capital is linked to, and is affected by, the context in which it operates and the prevailing attitudes of local authorities and other powerful local influences (Kay 2005). Bonding and bridging capital are distinct forms of social capital

³ <http://www.hamilton.ca/ProjectsInitiatives/NeighbourhoodDevelopment>

that have different predictors leading to varied outcomes. Even though bonding capital must exist before bridging capital can be developed (Larsen et al 2004), bonding capital alone is not sufficient for creating economic prosperity. This project illustrated the priority given to bonding capital by community members as evidenced in all the participants' comments and the high profile placed on forming relationships within the community. Specifically, the data highlighted above described the insulating effect bonding capital plays in the lives of Joan, Sandra, and Barbara when they discuss physical security and assisting their neighbours. This illustrates that localized bonding social capital operates as an effective defensive strategy against poverty, while the necessary condition for real development entails a shift to other, looser networks (Woolcock & Nayran 2004).

The shift from 'getting by' to 'getting ahead' requires a shift from bonding to linking social capital, through bridging networks (Dale & Newman 2008). Furthermore Dale and Newman (2008) suggest that government policies are also a critical, necessary condition for sustaining the momentum for getting ahead. Social capital alone is not enough to assist communities in getting ahead.

Preliminary evidence in regards to the lack of economic prosperity is available in the limited data examining income disparity in Hamilton during the past 10 years of building community capacity and social capital. The comments and reports by the HCF and Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton are particularly telling about the realities and the inability of ABCD to address the poverty issue. The HCF reports, "Overall poverty rates did not improve from 2002 to 2008, and remain highly variable by

neighbourhood. The city's social assistance caseloads are at a 10-year high, while emergency food bank use continues to be above pre-recession levels"⁴. Similarly for Hamilton's most marginalized populations including children, recent immigrants, visible minorities and aboriginal peoples, their rates of poverty are substantially higher than less marginalized groups (Mayo & Fraser 2009). In terms of housing Hamilton had a larger increase in its social housing waitlist than the provincial average in the 2004-2010 period (Mayo et al 2011). Approximately three-quarters of low-income individuals and families spend 30% of their income or more on rental housing leaving less money to cover other living costs (Mayo et al 2011).

Early indications point to community capacity building projects that the HCF describes, have not lead to economic prosperity. Issues that are the result of systemic inequality mediated by factors outside of community borders require a systemic response. The ABCD model helps residents 'get by' but surely can not be expected to help residents 'get ahead'.

⁴ <http://www.hcf.on.ca/issue/gap-between-rich-and-poor>

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Social Justice

The commitment of social work toward social justice and equitable outcomes positions social work practitioners to critique localized community development efforts that do not provide opportunities for residents to get ahead. Social workers have an ethical obligation to work toward social justice but have a tendency to do so in a manner that operationalizes a vague conception of what social justice entails. Bonnycastle (2011) observes that a vague definition of social justice allows for social workers to draw from a bank of multiple theories and concepts that tend to string together social work practice. The vague connection to understanding social justice subverts the ethical responsibility of the social worker to respond to social injustices (Bonnycastle 2011). A firm positioning, understanding, and commitment to social justice is important. A clear definition of social justice allows for collective action upon ethical principles, a strengthened mandate for social workers, and the ability to articulate alternative visions of social reality (Mullaly 2007 as cited in Bonnycastle 2011).

Bonnycastle (2011) conceptualizes social justice on a continuum with social oppression and social equality at opposite poles. At the 'thick' end of the continuum social equality emphasizes solidarity among oppressed populations and their allies to bring about change at an institutional or structural level (Mullaly 2010 as cited in Bonnycastle 2011). On the 'thin' pole of the continuum social oppression is defined as ideological control, as well as control and domination of social institutions and resources to privilege a few at the expense and exploitation of others (Hardiman and Jackson 1997 as cited in in Bonnycastle 2011). While social equality and social oppression occupy the

two poles, Bonnycastle (2011) characterizes social justice along the continuum at three critical junctures of thin, middle and thick, in terms of political ideology, social welfare, identity, human rights, and distributive justice.

Social welfare policies and programs as related to community development should be modeled and delivered in such a way that meets the criteria of ‘think’ or at the very least varying degrees of ‘thick’ and ‘middle’ characterizations of social justice. According to Bonnycastle (2011) this means a political ideology that incorporates social liberalism, or the idea that the state has a role to play in addressing social and economic issues. At the thick end of the spectrum reconstituted socialism that challenges oppression hierarchical relationships and replaces them with equalitarian relations based on cooperation and mutuality (Bonnycastle 2011). Social Justice in the ‘thick’ to ‘middle’ of the continuum includes equal social conditions or at least equal opportunities, and the redistribution of resources including the recognition and representation of minority groups (Bonnycastle 2011). Policies and programs aimed at community development that are committed to social justice need to challenge both the social conditions created through unjust practice as well as the political ideology that supports and perpetuates oppressive relations.

Social Justice and Community Development – Recommendations

As Lee (2011) suggests, community practice, while related to social justice is not the same thing. Shragge (2003:123) puts it more definitely when he says, ‘The concept of capacity building and related processes of community development are not the problem; it is the context in which they are practices that is key’ (DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge,

2006:678). Practices that emerge from ABCD encouraging resident empowerment, and community organizing need to challenge the a-political stance related to social change by engaging with power structures. Much effort is focused on empowering residents to engage with their communities to identify assets and increase resident involvement. Many of the issues that face neighbourhoods in Hamilton are the result of systemic injustice and should therefore require a systems approach. Communities should be empowered to not only engage with their residents but with government directly, which places communities in positions of power (King & Cruickshank 2010). Low income communities are typically on the losing end of economic relationships that result in the uneven distribution of power to influence dealings within their own communities. Communities need to engage with the power structure that effect outcomes in their neighbourhoods if they are to see structural changes and achieve social justice. In the aim of achieving social justice outcomes in community development work the following observations are advised.

1) Networks of sustainability need to be developed by connecting across neighbourhood hubs, organizations and local governments through bonding and bridging ties to significantly increase social action and improve community outcomes. Networks are one critical way of bridging some of the barriers to sustainable community development. Newman and Dale (2008) argue that the network structure necessary for sustainable community development is one that is open, diverse, and involves social capital ties at the bridging and vertical levels. Bridging ties lead out of the local organization to outside resources while vertical ties lead to decision makers and authority figures. These ties are particularly crucial for bridging structural holes within a

community as well as inter- and intra-institutional silos (Dale, 2001) outside a particular community.

2) Networks should be vehicles for empowering individuals and communities to gain power and engage with power structures. When considering the relationship between empowerment and power community development work needs to closely examine social power. Within community organizing power is posited as influencing communities, not by intervening directly at individual levels, but by influencing economic, social, educational, legal and political systems that in turn affect individuals (Speer & Hughey 1995). The key implication for empowerment theory and community organizing is there must be a clear connection between empowerment and the development and exercise of social power (Speer & Hughey 1995). Methods to develop individual and organization empowerment are important to view ecologically. Ecological principles illuminate both the relationship between empowerment and social power (Speer & Hughey 1995), and essentially accounts for the contextual sensitivity sorely lacking in current ABCD models.

3) Community development in general needs to be prepared to use local government and resources for advocacy in pursuit of social justice. Mowbray (2010) suggests that community development practitioners are positioned to engage local government in an attempt to moving it toward becoming an institution that pursues social justice. He believes that by engaging local government it becomes a vehicle for change in the wider political economy and counteracts dominant neoliberal ideology instead of an institution that extends the neoliberal priorities of central governments and capital (Mowbray 2010). To achieve this ideological turn community development practitioners

need to question and engage the overall nature of local governments, its scope, power and other dimensions directly relevant to community development (Mowbray 2010).

Furthermore King and Cruickshank (2010) contend that residents' capacity building efforts need to be focused on engaging with local governments. The current preoccupation with resident led community development perpetuates old practices of government engaging with communities through top down processes. This raises the question about how effectively community views are heard by government and their role in shaping the framework and approach toward community development in their neighbourhood. The current model requires an overall power shift that moves residents in from the fringes of participation to meaningful incorporation into the activities of government and organizations.

4) Organizations need to broaden their analysis beyond the local community. DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2007) provide case studies of community organizations that are outward looking in that their focus includes the local, but extends beyond. They state the commonality between organizations is their propensity to integrate an analysis of the current social context in their practice, which includes, an understanding of the changing political economy as it presents barriers and opportunities in so far it advances the causes of their organizations (DeFilippis et al 2007). Chief on their agenda should be methods to increase the social and economic resources of their constituency and redistribution through a variety of policy changes. In contrast to ABCD it is important that organizations act politically and do not 'de-responsibilize' the state. Organizations must having an understanding of the relationship between community and the state as

well as the importance of state intervention to regulate the market or provide programs to improve social and economic conditions (DeFilippis et al 2007).

Similarly, Eversole (2012) suggests that spaces for communities to engage with organizations and local governments needs to be reexamined. She writes,

Lamenting either the unwillingness of communities to participate, or the unwillingness of top-down institutions to enable real participation, will not solve the basic contradiction of trying to create bottom-up development with a top-down frame. Nor, on the other hand, will self-help approaches that leave communities to create their own change, while ignoring their need to engage with, participate in, and access resources from larger systems (Eversole 2012:32).

The challenge for community development is to remake participation of communities, professionals and institutions that make a truly open space for participation. Eversole (2012) suggests this can be done by valuing forms of knowledge of both professionals and communities as each is needed and should be valued. Secondly she contends that the participation of organizations and governments needs to be carefully examined. Too often when governments and organizations attempt to engage with local communities they do so from within their own organizational processes that tend to structure participatory spaces from the perspective of those who own and provide them (Eversole 2012). The answer however is not to exclude organizations and governments as both are needed to achieve bottom up change. The challenge for organizations and governments is to become participants in community processes.

5) Despite earlier findings discussed above from the HCF and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC), the ABCD model needs to be critically and comprehensively evaluated independently to measure claims and outcomes related to economic and social change. Preliminary quantitative data from the HCF, SPRC as well

as qualitative data from this project has not been encouraging to this point. Mowbray's (2005) critical examination of a locality development model in Australia and his analysis echoes many of the concerns and findings of this project. Mowbray provides this spirited (2005:264) conclusion, and while his critique of government involvement in community capacity building is stated forcefully, he has identified some undeniable central points,

The policy aims of communitarian (and other) programmes cannot be understood at face value. Government-dominated programmes should not be misleadingly and simplistically reported as bottom-up and 'community driven', as breaking with traditional approaches, or as genuine partnerships. Rather than being about any substantial social transformation, community-building projects are generally about the kind of low-key and modest local activities and services that people pursue despite government. Not matched by the reality, the grandiose claims about community building need to be understood substantively as instances of ideological opportunism... Instead of promoting faith in the prospect of the communitarian dream becoming a miraculous reality like the fairy-tale Brigadoon, government should embark on wholehearted socio-economic reform. In this there would be no place for cynically conceived, cut-rate, short-term, boosterist programmes located on the fringes of government.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Conclusion

Returning to Lee's (2011) and Shragge's (2003) comments, community work is not synonymous with social justice, however the two are closely related. Certainly it is this writer's impression that community work needs to be undertaken with social justice principles in mind. This means at the very least attending to the neoliberal context in which community practices occur. Community capacity building is not the issue, but undertaken without a critical analysis on the broader socio-economic context and how that impacts communities has to be taken in to account. To be a truly bottom up effort practices on the ground need to form alternative models of participation among stakeholders and not the pseudo participation the current top down model offers. The recommendations are to be taken then, as suggestions extracted from the literature based on the realities of the data presented in this project to better equip communities and organizations to engage more broadly and organize for power. Residents should not shy away from advocacy and engage directly with powerful stakeholders to hold governments and organizations accountable to more than just helping residents 'get by'.

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