

Participatory Governance of the 900 Pandora Block and the Street Community

by

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B.A, University of Ottawa, 2009

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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In response to the continuing challenges of homelessness in Victoria, BC, a variety of homeless-serving agencies are active in the region. Community concerns about these services have given rise to the practice of developing Good Neighbour Agreements ('GNA') and forming Good Neighbour Groups ('GNG') with local community members to monitor the social services, mitigate conflict, and prevent undesired impacts on the neighbourhoods. Based in an interpretive description methodology using interviews and document analysis, the purpose of this research is to explore the involvement of the street community in the development of one GNA and subsequent governance activities of the associated GNG. Findings demonstrate that individuals from the street community generally have not been directly involved but instead represented by a local homeless-serving agency, a model of representation that has important limitations. Despite the lack of formal involvement, people from the street community continued to engage independently in neighbourhood matters, undertaking ongoing advocacy work that in turn helped to yield greater participation of the street community in the GNG.

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List of Acronyms

GNA – Good Neighbour Agreement

GNG – Good Neighbour Group

OP – Our Place Society

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

In this thesis I have sought to explore primarily one facet of Good Neighbour Agreements established for social services geared to the street community¹: how people who are part of the street community are included in activities pertaining to Good Neighbour Agreements (GNA) for social services they may access. I do so by researching one prominent example from Victoria, British Columbia, the 900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement. In this chapter I provide some general context about homeless and GNAs in Victoria, followed by some background information on the 900 Block Pandora Ave GNA. Sections 1.1 to 1.4 proceed by giving a picture of homelessness in Victoria, the relation between homelessness and GNAs, how GNAs have been used in Victoria, and, finally, the 900 Block Pandora Avenue GNA. Section 1.5 highlights the relevance of this thesis in local and academic terms. Finally, in section 1.6 I outline some of my personal reasons for engaging in this study, followed by a statement of my research questions in section 1.7.

1.1 Homelessness in Victoria, BC

I want to begin with a note about terminology. Above I use the term ‘street community’, which broadly refers to people who are ‘street-involved’. The latter term is defined by Bernie Pauly (2014) as, in addition to referring to homelessness, referring to “people who are involved in activities that take place on or close to the street due to lack of private spaces. Such activities include many activities of daily living (e.g. eating, sleeping), socializing, networking, giving and receiving of social support, financial transactions, as well as activities such as drug trade and sex work. Street involved populations have higher rates of homelessness, trauma, and poverty as well as the effects of these, including violence, substance use, chronic diseases, mental illness than

¹ See section 1.1 of this thesis for a definition of this term.

that found in the general population” (personal communication, September 30, 2014). Instead of using the term ‘street-involved’ throughout this thesis, I use the term ‘street community’ to remain in accordance with terminology used in the 900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement. Of further note is that in this thesis, ‘street community’ is not taken to be a homogenous group but rather a collection of people who are variously involved in the above-mentioned activities. Moreover, members of the street community are also members of other communities, such as renters in the neighborhood, parishioners at local churches, volunteers at social service agencies, and general residents who participate in many other areas of neighborhood life.

Similar to the above terms, ‘homelessness’ can be understood in many ways and needs to be defined clearly in order to ensure coherent discussion about the topic (Hulchanski, Campsie, Chau, Hwang, & Paradis, 2009). For in this thesis I adopt the definition developed by the Canadian Homelessness Research Network:

“Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing” (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012, p.1).

The phenomenon is a result of numerous interweaving and synergizing factors, including a) structural factors, such lack of affordable housing and adequate income, as well as stigma and discrimination which can limit access to housing, employment, and/or services; b) systemic

failures, such as when people fall between the cracks of systems of social services; and c) personal circumstances, such as individuals experiencing health problems that result in job loss (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013, p.13). These factors create situations of housing instability and vulnerability to homelessness. When these factors interweave in a specific way, people can find themselves without permanent, stable housing and even worse, become caught in a cycle where it becomes very difficult to exit homelessness.

In Victoria, BC, homelessness has been a serious issue for many years (City of Victoria, 2006; Victoria Foundation, 2006, 2010, 2013). To facilitate greater local understanding of the issue, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness has released annual research reports tracking the extent of homelessness in the region and progress towards ending it. According to these findings, since 2010 more than 1,600 individuals have accessed emergency homeless shelters each year in Greater Victoria and these shelters have routinely operated at either over capacity or extremely close to capacity (Pauly, B., Cross, G., Vallance, K., Wynn Williams, A., & Stiles, K, 2013, p. 23). The rising cost of rental housing has made it difficult for people to find affordable rent while adequately covering other living costs, such as food and utilities. Even if an individual attains housing, it may be in poor quality and/or inadequately sized, thereby not fulfilling their housing needs but rather placing them in an unstable housing situation (Wellesley Institute, 2010, p. 24). Consequently, approximately 1,500 individuals have been in need of subsidized housing in Victoria year over year, as tracked by the number of households with applications to the Housing Registry operated by BC Housing (Pauly, B., Cross, G., Vallance, K., Wynn Williams, A., & Stiles, K, 2013, p. 20). Given these circumstances, too many people have no other option but to sleep outside and spend the majority of their time out in public spaces

due to not having a home of their own, as has been the case in many jurisdictions (Doherty, et al, 2008; Mosher, 2002).

1.2 Homelessness and Good Neighbour Agreements

Urban centres are frequently characterized by neighbourhood-level conflict. In these centres, people with and without personal ties to one another live in close proximity and interact, either directly or indirectly, with each other. This urban dynamic has been referred to as “the being together of strangers” because of the dense networks of people, organizations, and institutions that overlap and have varying degrees of interpersonal relationships, though without a necessary unity or commonality (Young, 1990, p. 237). Not surprisingly, some of our most crucial social challenges are located in urban centers and draw in many overlapping people, organizations, and institutions from these dense networks. Conflicts arise about the what, who, and how of the social issue: what is the nature of the challenge?; who should respond?; and how should they respond? By no means is conflict a necessary component of urban settings or an inevitability, yet conflict often does arise in these settings. The topic that I study in this thesis is an example of a social conflict that has arisen within a historical context, yet the urban area in which this conflict was situated was not always home to this conflict.

Issues related to homelessness have surfaced as one challenge that has been a fulcrum for neighbourhood-level conflict (Lozier, Johnson, & Haynes, 1990). Social services seeking to respond to the challenge of homelessness are often situated in dense social networks and come into conflict with other community members regarding their presence and the services they offer (Lozier, Johnson & Haynes, 1990, p.32). In Canada, recent efforts to mitigate conflict when delivering services for people experiencing homeless have taken the form of establishing a Good

Neighbour Agreement ('GNA') between the social service provider and community stakeholders (City of Calgary, 2014; Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2014, PIVOT, 2011, p. 12).

GNA's have been put in place to help manage a wide variety of services, from housing developments to liquor stores. Despite the myriad Good Neighbour Agreements cropping up in Canada, there is no common definition of what these arrangements are, coupled with a persistent lack of research and analysis on GNA's. PIVOT Legal Society has provided a loose definition which captures some of the features of these arrangements for social services: a GNA "outlines an organization's commitment to being a good neighbour. It's a way to promote dialogue and earn trust in the community." Though not legally binding, an agreement can help "dispel contentious disputes" by addressing concerns of local residents and including them in the crafting of the agreement (PIVOT, 2011, p. 12). Ultimately, by establishing participatory community processes and drawing in different stakeholders, GNA's may have the potential to be a means to address the hyper-localized "micro-politics of conflict over service provision" (Head, 2007, p. 450).

I take this to be a very optimistic definition. Based on the GNA/GNG experience documented in this thesis, some of these elements were present, yet the arrangement did not promote participation and dialogue universally amongst all community members, but rather for a select group of community members. Although GNA's/GNG's can be thought of as an example of neighbourhoods-based participatory governance, to my mind they are mainly about neighbourhood-level governance, which is a crucial distinction. Nonetheless, they can strive to embody elements of participatory governance, in which "citizens resolve disputes and common dilemmas through a process of deliberative self-legislation" (Fung, 2007, p. 450). Throughout this thesis I will examine the degree to which participatory governance exists in the GNA/GNG

and how it can be established. I further review a broader body of literature pertaining to GNAs in section 2.6 of Chapter 2.

1.3 Good Neighbour Agreements and the City of Victoria, BC

Over the past decade the practice of instating GNAs and forming Good Neighbour Groups² ('GNG') to involve community members in managing conflict and the impact of social services on neighbourhoods has blossomed in the City of Victoria. My thesis examined one prominent GNA and its related GNG in the City of Victoria. For this one example explored in these pages, there are ten-fold other examples in the City. Recent City policy has further solidified the practice of GNA's by incorporating them as a key tool for achieving social vitality goals in the City's Downtown Core Area Plan. The 'Plan' specifically cites the linkage between GNAs and services for people experiencing homelessness, outlining that the City will "establish Good Neighbour Agreements to support and encourage service providers who are developing new facilities oriented to the street community" (City of Victoria, 2011a, p. 102). With this policy direction in place, more of these arrangements governing social services can be expected in the future.

1.4 The 900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement

The 900 Block of Pandora Street in Victoria, BC is complex and contested (Litwin, 2009; Cleverly, 2009; Anholt, 2010). Apart from being a major entryway into the downtown core, the block is home to a diverse mix of residents, businesses, social services, organizations, and intersecting groups of people. It has become an important congregation point for many people in the street community mainly because of the concentration of social services in the area. In 2005, two homeless-serving organizations already located in the area merged to form one larger

² See Section 1.4 in Chapter 1 for further details.

organization, titled 'Our Place Society' (OP), and subsequently received federal and provincial funding to develop a new facility that now provides a variety of services (City of Victoria, 2005; Our Place, 2014a). During this time of merger and subsequent development, concerns about the impact that the presence of the street community was having on the area escalated from neighboring residents, businesses, and organizations. Further, there was a concern that the new facility being developed by OP would exacerbate the situation. OP was fully completed and operational by April of 2008 (Our Place, 2014a).

As a response to these concerns, the '900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement' was completed in the summer of 2009, shortly after the opening of the new social service facility (Litwin, 2009). According to the OP's website, the "Agreement is a commitment by the neighbours in the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue to communicate with one another, address concerns, show respect for the street community and to follow through on agreed to actions" (Our Place, 2014b). More formally, the Agreement is grounded in a vision statement for the neighbourhood, which reads that "all neighbours of the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue including residents, business, seniors, children, students, social service agencies, schools, churches, and the street community, will be welcome and may enjoy comfort and safety in their neighbourhood" (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009 - see Appendix 'A' for the full agreement). A number of local businesses, organizations, resident/neighbourhood associations, and two levels of government (municipal and a provincial ministry) signed the agreement and thus became involved in activities relating to it. Of note is that no one from the street community appeared as signatories in the original agreement.

As part of the GNA a working group was formed, titled the 'Good Neighbour Group' ('GNG'), comprised of the signatories to the GNA. The GNG meets regularly with the mandate

to “manage social issues to reduce or eliminate their impacts on the immediate area” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009). A series of commitments are outlined in the Agreement that each member of GNG is expected to fulfill. Some of them are basic day-to-day operations, such as to “keep their building and grounds clean and in good condition” and “ensure that crime, whether on public or private property, is reported and that law enforcement is called promptly” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009). Other commitments are more substantial and relate to the participatory side of the GNG: members are expected to “provide a representative to the Good Neighbour Group” and “participate in joint, co-operative initiatives (both pro-active and defensive) as agreed from time to time by the Good Neighbour Group and to address issues when they arise” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009).

An important aspect of the GNA, appearing twice in the document, is the principle of engaging the street community (referred to as ‘the street community’ in the GNA document): “be respectful of the street community and engage them in resolving issues” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009). This principle very clearly articulates a role for the street community in this governance program. As for how engagement is to occur, service agencies carry the commitment to “assist in engaging the street community in the activities and initiatives of the Good Neighbour Group” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009). Of note here is that the responsibility of engaging the street community rests heavily with service agencies, rather than the GNG as a whole.

1.5 Local and Academic Significance of Study

This study has local and academic significance. To begin, I outline the local significance. Given the aforementioned recent policy directions of the City of Victoria, from a local

perspective, a critical study of GNAs and the involvement of the street community is timely. The GNA studied in this thesis is of particular interest because it is set within the context of a complex and contested area of the city where many people from the street community gathers to spend time and access social services. The GNG can be thought of as one ‘hub’ of governance for the neighbourhood and is unique in placing emphasis on engaging the street community in activities and initiatives. What makes a study of the GNG of specific value is that it is an opportunity for an exploration of the experiences of street communities in GNAs and participatory governance. While interest in these topics continues to grow, I believe it is important foster and maintain critical discussion on what GNAs have meant for the street community.

In addition to the local significance, two broad academic interests are served through this study. First, literature searches on the topic of Good Neighbour Agreements indicate that there is limited academic research on this topic and, moreover, that exploring how street communities have been involved in these arrangements is novel. Second, this thesis seeks to advance the research agenda that has been outlined by the Collaborative Democracy Network in 2005. Their research agenda revolves around the central question of: “Do deliberative and participatory governance processes achieve their objectives? If so, how? If not, why?” Five sub-streams of inquiry are presented, including: Connection to policy making, Process quality, Equality and representation, Evaluation and impact, and Institutionalization (p. 65-66). I believe this thesis will contribute to each of these streams, though most deliberately to ‘equality and representation’ and ‘process quality’; most distantly to ‘evaluation and impact’. This case is an opportunity to critically explore participatory governance in the context of marginalized peoples and contribute to academic literature regarding the involvement of street communities in these initiatives. In

completing this thesis I hope to have contributed to local and academic understandings of these issues.

1.6 Personal Introduction

In the broadest sense, this thesis was sparked by personal interests and motivations. Based on my own community work and previous research efforts, I have come to develop a critical stance towards the recent movement towards participatory governance, though remain supportive of the theoretical leanings and sentiment behind this movement. Having both organized and participated in neighbourhood-based participatory process, I tend to believe that these processes often struggle to live up to espoused principles of inclusion, empowerment, and consideration for power inequalities amongst people, even at times leading to situations where participants are co-opted by the process. Individuals who are part of the street community are typically left out of these processes altogether or barely involved. Such considerations led me to become interested in the 900 Block Pandora Good Neighbour Agreement ('GNA') and the associated Good Neighbour Group ('GNG'), questioning how people from the street community have been involved in this process and what steps could be taken to more fully realize inclusive participatory governance. Coincidentally, my personal interests aligned well with local circumstances regarding GNAs. The time felt ripe for this study. While undertaking this thesis I started working at a local social service agency and a research center at the University of Victoria, both in the area of housing and homelessness. My personal perspective on homelessness and related issues has been greatly influenced by this work.

1.7 Research Questions

Given my reasons for exploring this topic, the purpose of this thesis is to understand and explore the inclusion of individuals from the street community in the governance initiative of the

900 Block Pandora Avenue GNG (Victoria, BC). This thesis focuses around one central research question: *How is the street community involved in the governance program of the 900 Pandora Block Good Neighbour Group?* Key sub-questions are posed alongside the central question:

- 1) How is the street community participating in the activities and initiatives of the Good Neighbour Group?
- 2) How is the Good Neighbour Group engaging the street community?
- 3) How do power inequalities and co-optation manifest in the participatory program? What steps, if any, are taken for their resolution?
- 4) What effects has the Good Neighbour Agreement had on relations amongst members of the Good Neighbour Group, the communities they represent (if applicable), and the street community?
- 5) What opportunities to improve the practice of participatory governance with the street community are available to the Good Neighbour Group?

Chapter 2: Theoretical Lens and Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature to this thesis. It covers multiple areas: participatory governance and deliberative democracy; social inclusion, engaging street communities; stigma; guarded alliance; and good neighbour agreements. Also, the participatory governance literature reviewed in section 2.1 forms a theoretical lens and grounds the central research question of this thesis. The remaining literature is relevant to the topics of homelessness, participatory governance and GNAs.

2.1 Participatory Governance

Participatory governance³ is defined as a conception of democracy that views it “as a community in which citizens resolve disputes and common dilemmas through a process of deliberative self-legislation”. Inherent in this idea is that “citizens engage *directly* with one another to fashion laws and policies that solve problems that they face together” (Fung, 2007, p. 450). Having diverse groups collaborate with one another across a range of backgrounds and interests is important for “resolving community-based issues, such as the micro-politics of conflict over service provision, land-use planning and infrastructure projects” (Head, 2007, p. 450). Participatory governance really emphasizes democracy as being a mode of collective problem solving (Young, 2000, p.28).

Participatory governance shares key theoretical positions with deliberative democracy. The latter posits that “our institutions and practices should be arranged so as to encourage citizens to grapple with these moral conflicts [health policy, welfare reform, doctor-assisted suicide, etc.], to seek reasons that can be accepted by their fellow citizens who will be bound by political action” (Macedo, 1999, p. 5). However, the value of deliberation is distinct from the value of participation (Fung, 2007, p. 450). A strict view of deliberative democracy does not

³ For the purposes of this thesis, participatory governance is taken as synonymous with ‘participatory democracy’.

presuppose participation in end decision-making, but rather an emphasis on the exchange of reasons in public discussions. The exchange seeks to achieve a reasoning that is mutually justifiable; terms that all involved can accept (Mansbridge, et al, 2010, p. 67). This vision of an engaged politics where communities are deliberating together is shared by those who support participatory governance. Yet, as the aforementioned definition implies, participatory democrats move one step beyond the deliberative democrat's position, arguing that "political participation is radically incomplete without decision and action" (Fung, 2007, p. 450).

To get a more comprehensive picture of participatory governance, I explore here deliberative democracy theory. In the late 1990s Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson outlined a version of deliberative democracy that spurred a wealth of subsequent scholarship on the topic (Macedo, 1999). Their book, *Democracy and Disagreement*, outlines three principles that form the basis of deliberative democracy: reciprocity, publicity, and accountability. Each of these principles is discussed in order. The first, also the core of the author's conception, is defined as "the capacity to seek fair terms of cooperation for its own sake" (Macedo, 1999, p. 7). The implication of this principle is to "aspire to a kind of political reasoning that is mutually justifiable" (Macedo, 1999, p. 7). A citizen or a group of citizens must make claims in terms that others can accept, and conversely, others will make claims on terms that they can accept. Note that this does not limit our understanding of 'mutually justifiable' to reason-giving alone but any means of communication, be it artistic expression or storytelling. What is important is that those involved in the deliberation can accept the terms of communication, in whatever form it takes.

Publicity, the second principle, refers to a quality of communication: claims that are "accessible to their fellow citizens" (Macedo, 1999, p. 7). At its basic formulation, this principle in action pushes citizens to deliberate beyond narrow self-interest and "consider what can be

justified to people who reasonably disagree with them” (Macedo, 1999, p. 7). Consider the following public example: a specific portion of a community that has historically benefited from environmental racism now is facing the possibility that they must deal with all of their untreated liquid waste locally rather than continuing to dump it into a water source that is an unprotected salmon spawning river used by indigenous communities. Dealing with the waste locally would amount to significant costs for that particular sub-set of the community. Appealing to basic parochial NIMBYism in deliberation regarding what to do about the liquid waste would not satisfy the principle of publicity, as it does not move beyond narrow (privileged) self-interest towards claims regarding public goods and justice. Referring back to the first principle, reciprocity, these would not be terms that others could accept.

Publicity also operates in a second manner. Claims must be open to “critical assessment from a variety of reasonable points of view” (Macedo, 1999, p. 8). Typically, within deliberative democratic theory, this principle has led to very narrow conceptions of what is ‘acceptable speech’ within the public sphere. One outcome of introducing the criteria of publicity is that it excludes appeals to spiritual experience that take the form of imposing the condition of accepting a way of life in order to grasp an understanding required to assess the particular claim (Macedo, 1999, p. 8). In other words, claims that are accompanied by remarks such as “if you practiced my faith than you would understand the veracity of my claim” are out of bounds. Thus, citizens must make claims with the understanding that they can be assessed by a plurality of viewpoints, not just their own.

The third principle, accountability, is to a degree simpler than the first two. Any reasons used to justify claims or actions should be accessible to the public, as well as any information

that informed the claims (Macedo, 1999, p. 9). What this means for citizens is that they must be ready to justify their positions to others if asked.

Together these three principles establish the ambit of acceptable communication within deliberation. Since their articulation, Iris Young has provided both useful expansions and critiques of the principles. Young begins her articulation of deliberative democracy from an acknowledgement that society is currently comprised of unjust inequalities. In contrast, Gutmann and Thompson propose that social and economic justice is an antecedent condition to realizing deliberative democracy (Young, 1999, p. 153). Instead of assuming justice as a necessary condition, Young argues that democracy should ideally *produce* just outcomes (Young, 2000, p. 30; Young, 2006). A key aspect of this position is a focus on justice in decision-making (Young, 2006, p. 94).

With the goal of realizing greater justice through democratic means, Young adds a fourth principle to the original three principles: inclusion. The addition of a further principle is necessary because the original principles of reciprocity, publicity, and accountability do not directly imply inclusion (Young, 1999, p. 154). For instance, we can conceive of a situation in which a group of wealthy landowners abide by the original principles and make political decisions yet are not inclusive of the broader public. Such a situation is likely to reinforce inequalities, as these landowners set the deliberative agenda and can deliberate from their own privileged viewpoint without having to encounter “a public differentiated by, for example, class or gender” (Young, 1999, p. 155). Thus the decisions made by this group of landowners may be egregiously unjust.

The principle of inclusion provides us with a deepened sense of what a normatively legitimate democratic decision is. A democratic decision is normatively legitimate “only if all

those affected by it are included in the process of discussion and decision-making” (Young, 2000, p. 23). Returning to the group of wealthy men, with a principle of inclusion we can ask “who has the opportunity to make claims to a deliberative public and who is there to listen and hold claimants accountable?” (Young, 1999, p. 155). The public would therefore truly include *everyone* and thus everyone would have the opportunity to affect the deliberative process and decisions.

In other writings, Young has argued that her understanding of inclusion goes beyond other deliberative democracy theorists (Young, 2012, p. 121). While many other theorists accept formal opportunities to contribute to a dialogue as sufficient for effective inclusion, Young contends that more than formal opportunities are needed to realize inclusion. As the practice of inclusion is situated within unjust inequalities, it must contend with these realities. In order to counteract inequalities, democracies will have to take *positive action* to promote inclusion (Young, 1999, p. 156). This is especially crucial in cases where certain groups benefit and/or profit from the exclusion of other groups. Positive action may take the approach of establishing special forums of participation, supplying the necessary means to attend public forums (transportation, food, honorarium, child-care, translation, etc.), or a host of other options. In terms of including people with experience of homelessness in decision making on issues that affect them, the need for positive action to surmount the inequalities between housed and unhoused people has been identified in a growing body of literature (Normand & Pauly, 2013).

In applying the theory of inclusion to public debates in the US, Young has developed criteria to observe levels of exclusion. The following are signs of exclusion:

- 1) Public debate refers to social group in third person.
- 2) If that group rarely, if ever, appears as a group in the deliberation.

- 3) Few signs indicating that public participants believe themselves accountable to that social group, among others (i.e. being disrespectful towards the group).

Exclusion is particularly evident if we are able to observe all three of these occurring. When the three acts of exclusion act in concert, it will look as if groups are being treated as objects of the deliberation and the people referred to as a ‘problem’ (as in, “what course of action should we take regarding the problem of street people”) (Young, 1999, p. 157).

So far I have discussed inclusion in terms of bringing all affected into discussion and decision-making. However, recognition is also a component of inclusion. Since public spheres are characterised by particularity, it is impossible to reduce all that is present within a public sphere to a common denominator – plurality and heterogeneity are necessary. In light of this, recognition must be a *condition*, not a goal of political communication (Young, 2000, p. 61). If an individual is to be actually included in deliberation and decision-making, their particularity must be recognized. Inclusion, therefore, is not simply an abstract equality of “all who are affected”, but rather it requires an explicit acknowledgement of social differentiations and division. Subsequently, it follows that one must express their particularity, in which people located in different positions draw on their “situated knowledge” to speak to one another (Young, 2000, p. 109). In Young’s work, particularity may be expressed in the form of standard cultural differences or structural relations to material objects, as well as the power relations that influence them (Heckman, 1999, p. 68).

Young’s politics have been referred to as ‘radically pluralist politics’, based on mutual recognition and affirmation of differences (Heckman, 1999, p. 20). Her politics are not isolated to discussion of inclusion alone, but instead offer a more comprehensive vision of democratic politics. In her seminal book, *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000), Young articulates a

comprehensive account of deliberative democracy, in which inclusion is accompanied by the three further principles: *political equality*, *reasonableness*, and *publicity*. Each principle will be discussed in order.

To begin with, the principle of political equality builds on inclusion by stating that all affected by an issue should:

- “Be included on equal terms;
- Have effective opportunity to question one another, respond, and criticize one another’s proposals and arguments; and
- Have freedom from domination, that is, not in a position to coerce one another into accepting positions” (Young, 2000, p. 23).

Political equality thereby augments the notion of inclusion. Together, the three tenants of political equality convey a notion of deliberation that does not entail one-way communication. Having the notion of ‘effective opportunity’ within the framework contributes substantially to Young’s vision of inclusion.

Simply having an individual in a dialogue does not necessarily meet the criteria for effective opportunity. In analyzing debates on welfare reform for single mothers in the US throughout the 1990s, it can be seen that at times single-mothers were brought into the dialogue, though not necessarily included to such a degree that provided an effective opportunity to participate. In these national dialogues, single-mothers were treated as *objects* of debate, and talked about as a *policy problem* (Young, 1999, p. 157). When single-mothers appeared in the dialogue it was simply to provide an ‘object lesson’; explaining what it’s like to be a single mother but not contributing their own substantive opinions regarding welfare reform (Young, 1999, p. 157).

Reasonableness features prominently in Young's thought. Moving away from the conception of reasonableness popular in Rawlsian liberalism, the focus is less on the contributions of participants and more on their disposition. For Young, one's reasonableness is not determined solely by the quality of what they say during the dialogue but how they relate to other participants and receives their input. Put more specifically, reasonableness is thought of in terms of one's willingness to listen to others who want to explain to them their positions, make an effort to understand, and then possibly change their own position (Young, 2000, p. 25). In this, there is an acknowledgement that dissent often produces insights and to judge a proposal too quickly is to be unreasonable (Young, 2000, p. 24).

Finally, *publicity* is understood similarly to Amy Gutman's and Dennis Thompson's use of the principle. Speakers are still charged with the responsibility of speaking to a plural public, meaning that they must attempt to be comprehensible to a plurality of others (Young, 2000, p. 25). What is unique with this account is that speaking publically "does not entail that it is immediately understood by all, or that the principles to which argument appeals are accepted by all" (Young, 2000, p. 25). Speaking in deliberation *aims* to be understood, but still involves periods of puzzlement and disagreement, where participants actively work to understand one another (Young, 2000, p. 25).

Young (2000) is quick to remind us that where structural inequalities of wealth and power exist, democratic procedures often reinforce these inequalities. Yet, in many conceptions of deliberative democracy the core assumptions serve to perpetuate these inequalities (Young, 2000). Knowing this, Young has identified four common assumptions, three of which will be discussed here in order: *privileging argument*, *privileging unity*, and *assuming norm of order*⁴.

⁴ One of the assumptions identified by Young, the 'Centered View of Democracy', deals with large scale democratic procedure (i.e. nation-wide), and hence out of the scope of this thesis.

Deliberation is often subject to attempts to shape political communication in accordance to a shared discursive framework. Typically, the norm of a ‘proper’ speaker is one whose speech is characterised by articulateness, dispassionateness, and following a specific logical structure (Young, 2000, p. 37). A framework that privileges argumentation in according with these principles in turn forms a set of shared meanings which shape a dialogue. Drawing on the thought of Jean-Francois Lyotard, Young argues that a set of shared meanings tends to silence those outside of the idiom. In this case, norms of articulateness and dispassionateness carry with them both a patriarchal worldview and other culturally specific norms (Young, 2000, p. 38). To counteract these norms, the idea of ‘reason-giving’ must be expanded to acknowledge many forms of reason giving, to include forms that are not characterized by articulateness and dispassionateness. This call has been supported by subsequent theorists (Barnes, Newman, & Sullivan, 2004, p. 274) and practitioners (May, 2007).

The second assumption is that successful deliberation is dependent on prior unity amongst the participants. In this case, unity refers to a pre-existing shared set of guiding norms, such as a conception of the common good. In other writings, Young has argued that this Rawlsian approach charges participants in a dialogue to accept “a standpoint of impartiality” and subsequently assess proposals only in accordance with the principles of the impartial standpoint (Young, 1997, p. 342). Again, Young’s critique of this assumption is that if we start from an acknowledgement of a pluralist society, than we cannot assume that we sufficiently share common understandings that we can all appeal to (Young, 2000, p. 40). When starting from an acknowledgement of these differences, we can assume that conflict and disagreement will be part of the usual state of affairs in a dialogue setting. Moreover, where participants are differentiated by culture, social status, and material wealth, a conception of the common good is likely to

reflect, in generalized terms, dominant interests. However, if participants are at least *aiming* towards agreement, a set of commonly held understandings and norms is not required (Young, 2000, p. 43). What matters is that people are striving for agreement.

Finally, *assuming norm of order*, acts to entrench the image of the ‘rational deliberator’ who abides by the aforementioned notion of *privileging argument*. Young argues that the conception of the ‘rational deliberator’ in turn yields a narrow conception of deliberative civility (Young, 2000, p. 47). The consequence is to rule out protest and other more confrontational political tactics as outside the bounds of deliberative civility (Young, 2001, p. 675). However, deliberation will generally involve moments of agonism and moments of consensus. Rather than rule this out of bounds, we can instead attempt to positively integrate this type of speech act into our modes of deliberation. Further, the moments of agonism in particular suggest that deliberation is in part a process of *struggle*, particularly for marginalized groups (Young, 2000, p. 50). Thus, images of the rational deliberator only serve to undermine the process of struggle that many groups are engaged in. However, when applying Young’s principle of *reasonableness*, it is clear that her conception can allow for protest tactics. As long as those involved in a deliberation are open to listening to others and having their position altered, meaning that they are reasonable people, protest tactics are well within the bounds of deliberative civility (Young, 2000, p. 50).

The theory developed through Young’s work, from *Justice and the Politics of Difference* through *Inclusion and Democracy*, has yielded important contributions to recognition-based politics. Additionally, the 1990 work, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, was considered unique because it attempted to integrate both recognition and redistribution into a single theory, while much previous theory tended to focus on one or the other (Fraser, 1995, p. 167). Certain

aspects of the book resonated with concerns from theorists that issues of redistribution/maldistribution had become obscured in the wake of the overwhelming focus on the politics of recognition (Lovell, 2007, p. 1). Fraser has since explored this line of thinking, grounding her inquiry in a number of questions: “What is the relationship between redistribution and recognition? Do these constitute two distinct conceptions of justice, belonging to two distinct theoretical paradigms? Or can both be accommodated within a single comprehensive theory? On the practical-political plane, moreover, do struggles for recognition work against struggles for redistribution? Or can both be pursued simultaneously without mutual interference?” (Fraser, 1995, p. 167).

In developing an integrated theory, Fraser explicitly addresses the question of “what is the relationship between redistribution and recognition?” In contrast to Young, Fraser begins by acknowledging that recognition and redistribution are both *primary*. There are many cases of “two-dimensionally subordinated groups”, such as marginalized sexualities (Fraser, 2003, p. 19). Such groups do not suffer solely from maldistribution or misrecognition. Rather, both forms of oppression these groups are subject to are primary; one is not the effect of the other (Fraser, 2003, p. 19). ‘Race’ is one example of two-dimensional subordination, implicated in the economic and cultural status structure of society. Economic structures have been organized around race, often determining structural divisions between types of jobs, such as paid and exploitable labour. Economic structures thereby reproduce forms of maldistribution, with racialized individuals and groups facing higher rates of poverty. In turn, a politics of redistribution is necessary to counter the oppression (Fraser, 2003, p. 22). In terms of status structures, Eurocentric patterns of cultural value inherently privilege whiteness and associated traits. These patterns of cultural value have become institutionalized, thereby perpetuating cases

of cultural misrecognition. As such, a politics of recognition is required to counter-act the oppression. Thus, injustices rooted in race cannot be uprooted by addressing either maldistribution or misrecognition solely with the hope of subsequently indirectly affecting the other form (Fraser, 2003, p. 23).

Apart from placing equal emphasis on redistribution and recognition, Fraser also departs from Young in her overall framing of justice. ‘Parity of participation’ forms Fraser’s normative core, which conceives justice as requiring that all (adult) members of society are capable of interacting with one another as peers (Fraser, 2003, p. 36). Based on this conception, Fraser provides an integrated bipartite theory, where both distribution of material resources and recognition are required to realize parity of participation. The two aspects are as follows:

- 1) Distribution of material resources must ensure individuals’ independence and voice.

The distribution of materials is intended to surmount forms of economic dependence and inequality that impede participatory parity. Institutionalized patterns of economic inequality, dependence, and exploitation are to be replaced to ensure sustained just distribution.

- 2) Recognition requires that institutional frameworks of cultural value express equal respect for all individuals and allow for the attainment of social esteem.

Subsequently, institutionalized patterns that systematically undervalue certain categories and qualities of groups are precluded, such as welfare policies that stigmatize particular groups of people (Fraser, 2003, p. 36).

Arguments around redistribution and recognition are generally concerned with the ‘what’ of justice. The question being asked is: “what should count as a just ordering of social relations within a society” (Fraser, 2007a, p. 18). In Fraser’s later work, the ‘who’ of justice became a

central theoretical concern. Questions of ‘who counts as a member of society?’ and ‘which is the relevant community?’ are now increasingly important. What these questions point towards is the *frame of justice*, which sets the ground on which struggles of redistribution and recognition occur (Fraser, 2007a, p. 21). Answers to the question of the ‘who’ falls into the political dimension, which specifies who is included and excluded from the acts of redistribution and recognition. This dimension – the political - represents an addition to Fraser’s theory, expanding the bipartite theory to a tripartite theory. What is unique about this dimension is that it helps to problematize both political space and decision-making rules operating within political spaces, in a manner that redistribution and recognition do not (Fraser, 2007b, p. 313). Subsequently, we can think of three distinct obstacles to participatory parity: misrecognition, maldistribution, and the political (Fraser, 2007a, p. 21).

The 'political' is referred to in a constitutive sense, in which the focus is on the construction of a polity's jurisdiction and decision making rules. These two components act to structure political contestation within the polity (Fraser, 2007a, p. 20). More specifically, the political establishes *criteria* of who is and who is not a member, thus shaping inclusion and exclusion. The dimension of *representation* adds a further layer: based on the established criteria, representation concerns the procedures that structure public processes and who is included in such processes (Fraser, 2007a, p. 21).

Both jurisdictional and decision making elements (i.e. the political) are matters of the 'who' of justice. They are fundamentally political matters that cannot be handled technically by a group of experts, but rather democratically by many affected people. As the political works to constitute the overall frame on which the matters of a polity are subsequently acted upon, this act

of framing is of utmost importance (Fraser, 2007a, p. 28). Democratic framing becomes necessary to create a ground for participatory parity to be established.

Categorizing the political as an element of justice further refines the principle of parity. Specifically, it reveals the dual quality of the principle. Not only is the parity of participation a tool for evaluating social arrangements, it also specifies procedural standards for decision making (Fraser, 2007a, p. 28).

Uncovering this dual quality also helps to strengthen Fraser's claim that the principle of parity needs to be applied dialogically. First argued in *Redistribution or Recognition*, it was further clarified in subsequent responses to other theorists. For two reasons the effects of decisions on levels of participatory parity cannot be determined monologically through technocratic means. First, not all proposals have clear outcomes as to whether they will positively impact overall levels of parity, be it to foster increased parity or inhibit it (Fraser, 2003, p. 43). It is a task of affected individuals/groups to interpret and determine the requirements of justice and deliberate how decisions will impact levels of parity (Fraser, 2003, p. 43). Second, in that the principle of parity acts as a procedural standard, the primary object *between* those involved in a given polity is not political reasoning but rather the social relations between them. The social terms on which decisions are made are crucial (Fraser, 2007b, p. 330). Consequently, decisions become binding only insofar as the affected regard themselves as having contributed to the authoring of the decision (Fraser, 2007b, p. 318).

Having discussed the basics of Fraser's theory I think it is fair to ask what insights the theory yields when applied to issues relevant to the street community. Of interest here is writing that has applied the integrated theory of justice to poverty. To my knowledge, there has been little work that applied the theory to the issue of poverty. As such, the following discussion is

limited, particularly in terms of redistribution and political representation. The concept of recognition in the context of poverty has received the greatest amount of attention.

Fraser views poverty as another example of two-dimensional oppression. Though conceived primarily as an economic issue, poverty does ramify into the dual harms of maldistribution and misrecognition. Fraser muses that misrecognition of those living in poverty is largely autonomous from issues of maldistribution, and thus a politics of redistribution alone are not sufficient to counteract this oppression (Fraser, 2003, p. 24). To be sure, a politics of redistribution is essential, but a politics of recognition may be necessary to support a robust political movement of the former (Fraser, 2003, p. 24). This sub-set of the literature is of particular importance to this thesis, as homelessness is frequently associated with poverty (Norman & Pauly, 2013). This association has been observed across Canada (Canada, Parliament, Senate, 2008), provincially in British Columbia (Government of British Columbia, 2001; Auditor General of British Columbia, 2009) and more locally in the Victoria, BC (Isitt, 2008).

What is particularly interesting is that poverty poses an interesting question for the politics of recognition and by extension the politics of recognition of people who are experiencing homelessness. Whereas the identity and qualities of faith groups, for instance, tend to be recognized and affirmed in the classic ‘celebratory’ way, the identity and qualities of those living in poverty and the subsequent class association are not to be recognized and positively affirmed in a different manner. Instead of a group-specific identity, what requires recognition is the *status* of the members of the given class as “full partners in social interaction” (Lister, 2007, p. 164). This refers back to Fraser’s focus on the relative social standing of social actors, a view of recognition as a focus on institutionalized injustices (Fraser, 2007b). Misrecognition leads to

institutionalized patterns of cultural valuation, which ultimately impacts the relative social standing of individuals and groups (Lara & Fine, 2007, p. 38). The social status of people living in poverty is generally diminished relative to other individuals and groups, resulting in disrespect, as well as exclusion from decision-making processes (Lister, 2007, p. 168). Diminished social status and the resulting exclusion is equally the case for people experiencing homelessness concurrently with poverty (Anker, 2008). Recognition addresses the status subordination, whereby both respect and acknowledgement of expertise borne of experience are extended to those hitherto subordinated. In addition to recognition of the personal dimension, what is also to be recognized are the *institutional structures* that govern the lives of the impoverished, and therefore the unequal power relations which people are subjected to (Lister, 2007, p. 168).

Section 2.1 of this literature review has paid close attention to two theorists whose work is foundational to this thesis. In this thesis, the parity of participation principle will be used as the high level theoretical lens, providing more theoretical depth to Young's work on deliberative democracy. Fraser's theory of justice contributes to Young's deliberative democracy theory by emphasizing elements other than democratic procedure. Fraser's theory is very holistic, acknowledging the material and cultural elements that shape social relations, while at the same time emphasizing the role of democratic procedure. Alongside it, Young's work provides important insights into the practice of participatory programs.

2.2 The Problems of Participation

Rebecca Abers has developed a useful model outlining three problems of participation: implementation problems, power inequality problems, and co-optation problems (Abers, 2000, p. 10). I discuss each of these problems in order. First, participatory processes often require

flexibility, in terms of timelines and end goals. However, bureaucratic norms generally require ‘uniform norms and standards’, measuring success in efficiencies of timelines and financial expense. Second, once implemented, participatory programs must grapple with power inequalities. The key dilemma here is that participatory programs will favour well organized and resourced groups, which tend not to be already marginalized groups. Furthermore, well organized groups are more likely to present at participatory assemblies and more capable of manipulating and convincing less well organized groups towards a certain position. Therefore, there is a concern that participatory programs may serve to reproduce power inequalities that existed prior to the implementation of the program. Third, co-optation refers to the potential for participatory programs to limit the civic autonomy of groups and individuals rather than providing them greater political power. Participatory programs are by and large government-controlled spaces and so the scope of what can be deliberated in such a space (e.g. social justice goals) may be far more constrained than what these groups and individuals are capable of doing outside of such a space. The results (a key aspect of this problem) is a ‘demobilization of independent political actions’, as participants are kept working on projects and in spaces that are deemed safe by governments (Abers, 2010, pp. 9-10).

Drawing from her research and experience with participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Abers has sketched out strategies to surmount the three problems of participation, organized here in two categories: *citizen action* and *government action*. In terms of citizen action, participatory programs should have both a mobilizing and organizing effect. First, groups and individuals previously excluded from or consciously not active in policy development (or any participatory governance process) get involved. Second, in addition to basic involvement, the participatory spaces should act as a catalyst for emerging political activity, in that new relations are built and

new civic groups are organized. This second issue is particularly important. Involvement in formal participatory processes risks taking participants away from ‘horizontal mobilization’, as the formal structures tend to promote more vertical (hierarchical) networks amongst participants (Abers, 2000, p. 196). Subsequently, participation in the more vertical structures may actually reduce the political efficacy of some participants. Creating structures that present real opportunities for horizontal mobilization is one sign of successful participatory forums.

The third aspect in the ‘citizen action category’ relates greatly to the second aspect. Participatory programs should also allow for participants to actively resist co-optation. The second aspect noted that participation in more formal structures can reduce a group’s political efficacy. The scope of what the GNG, for instance, is able to engage with (the political agenda) can be dramatically reduced to issues deemed ‘safe’ by the more dominant interests and organizers (Abers, 2000, p. 196). With these challenges in mind, the ability to resist co-optation can be measured by whether participants are successfully able to promote and defend their own agenda, which largely may be outside the dominant agenda, even in the face of opposition from powerful participants and/or government (Abers, 2000, pp. 218-220). As with the three problems of participatory programs, these three strategies can work together. For instance, resisting co-optation may occur when participants are able to promote agendas outside of the dominant ones. Organizing autonomously and establishing horizontal networks outside of the formal structures can build empowering momentum that helps to resist co-optation. When entering into the formal structures, participants can draw on the strong networks that they are steeped in. (Abers, 2000, p. 195). So, autonomous mobilization and promotion of marginalized agendas can work hand-in-hand.

As for the second category, government action, mobilizing citizens is in part achieved by active efforts to encourage the participation of previously excluded or consciously uninvolved people. One key positive intervention is to employ external agents to help mobilize people (Abers, 2000, p. 224). These organizers work with communities to help them mobilize themselves. This includes both immediate mobilizing (providing transportation, organizing information meetings, helping to facilitate community relations, etc.) and education that will support further mobilizing (training opportunities, briefings on complex policy issues, etc.) (Abers, 2000, p. 225). Furthermore, what is important about this approach is that it also takes into account the importance of maintaining mobilization over the long term.

Secondly, governments could intervene to resolve power inequalities by controlling the specifics of the deliberation outcomes, however, interventions risk constraining the autonomous deliberative and decision making ability of participants. Positive action directed towards promoting the participation of the hitherto excluded can be more empowering than attempting to control the content of deliberation outcomes (Abers, 2000, pp. 219-220).

2.3 Social Inclusion

Participatory governance literature has been relatively taciturn on the involvement of street communities in participatory governance programs. Direct acknowledgement of the importance and challenges of including these communities in participatory governance has been stated only by a small set of authors (Abers, 2000; Buck, Rochon, Davidson, & McCurdy, 2004; Mahjabeen, Z., Shrestha, K., & Dee, J., 2009; Innes & Booher, 2010). For greater insights, I look to the social inclusion literature, which has explored street community involvement in service design and delivery.

A movement known as ‘service user involvement’ has been growing over the past many years. This practice sees service users not as passive recipients but active citizens contributing their direct experiential knowledge of homelessness to service design and provision (Whiteford, 2011). However, user involvement is not a direct path to increased wellbeing for homeless people. The practice alone cannot surmount problems of marginalization, since these practices are located within more systematic forms of exclusion. The realization of equitable and inclusive user involvement must also involve challenging wider social power relationships (Whiteford, 2011). Furthermore, other literature discusses how instilling more inclusive practices within an organization takes considerable amounts of time and resources. It is an organizational practice that is “often slow and difficult” with various “barriers and obstacles” likely to arise (FEANTSA, 2007, p. 9). A difficult transition period is common (FEANTSA, 2007, p. 9).

Achieving inclusion requires means to surmount inequitable power relations that act to inhibit any equitable inclusion. Norman and Pauly’s (2012) review of literature on involving homeless people provides valuable insight into the matter. In their review, the concept of ‘social inclusion’ figured significantly. While a generally accepted definition of the social inclusion currently does not exist, an understanding of the antithetical concept of ‘social exclusion’ helps us move towards a clearer understanding of the former concept. Social exclusion can be understood as “a process characterized by restricted access to opportunities, limited capability to capitalize on those opportunities, along with social and economic exclusion from adequate resources, the labour market, and social relations including participation in political and cultural life that significantly limit the life opportunities of those who experience it” (Norman & Pauly, 2012, p. 22). Starting from the understanding that social exclusion is the implicit preference in current policy frameworks and practice, promotion of social inclusion is an active choice

(Norman & Pauly, 2012, p. 15). In the context of this thesis, 'exclusion from political life' is the key aspect of this understanding of social exclusion. One aspect of social inclusion is therefore 'political inclusion'. Using the term 'meaningful inclusion', the authors map out three aspects of the concept:

- Participation in service planning and delivery
- Identifying and designing solutions to homelessness
- In addition to authentic participation in decision-making, accountability to people who are impacted by programs developed for them and decisions made by others that affect them (Norman & Pauly, 2012, p. 16)

The third aspect moves the discussion of 'meaningful participation' to interesting terrain. In that decision-makers are making decisions on behalf of others, the ethical condition of accountability to these others is implicated. This point overlaps with Fraser's emphasis on the significance of the social relations *between* people and Young's emphasis on accountability in her discussions of inclusion (discussed earlier in Section 2.1 of this chapter).

An understanding of meaningful inclusion must be accompanied by an understanding of factors that support it. Again, three factors have been identified, which are considered antecedent to the practice of meaningful participation:

- Voices of the marginalized are valued
- Minimal requirements of participation are met. That is, necessary conditions that enable marginalized individuals and communities to meaningfully participate, such as provision of food, means of transportation, and translation.
- Recognizing that a range of strategies may be needed to support participation of excluded groups. (Norman & Pauly, 2012, pp. 18-19).

These factors help move us towards a more precise understanding of what ‘social inclusion’ entails.

As part of a more radical approach to social inclusion, there is a growing movement to develop peer-led organizations and coalitions that is exemplified by work in the respective sex trade movement, HIV movement, drug user movements, and more recently, amongst people with lived experience of homelessness (Rabinovitch & Strega, 2004; Anker, 2008, 2009; Belle-Isle, Benoit, & Pauly, 2014). In Canada, examples of peer-led community-based agencies exist from each of the four distinct groups above. Broadly speaking, these groups have established participatory processes aiming to “enhance genuine social inclusion and empowerment among groups affected by health inequities” and facilitate “genuine social inclusion” to “bring the most disadvantaged in society together in their struggle against injustices, build local leadership and give people a greater sense of control over their lives” (Belle-Isle, Benoit, & Pauly, 2014, p.183). For instance, PEERS (Prostitutes’ Empowerment, Education, and Resource Society) in Victoria, BC has established an organizational structure and numerous services by and for sex trade workers, relying on the expertise of sex trade workers to shape the work of the organization (Rabinovitch & Strega, 2004, p. 156). By doing so, PEERS has progressed beyond a model of peripheral involvement and firmly established central involvement as the organizational norm (Rabinovitch & Strega, 2004, p. 143; Belle-Isle, Benoit, & Pauly, 2014, pp. 183). Peer-based organizing around the same struggles at the national level has also been seen, notably by the Canadian National Coalition of Experiential Women, “a consortium of women committed to the advancement of equality and human rights for sex workers” (Belle-Isle, Benoit, & Pauly, 2014, p. 184).

In recent years, the drug user movement in Canada has had notable successes, both nationally and locally in Victoria, BC (Jürgens, 2008; SOLID, 2014). Similar in spirit to the work of PEERS mentioned above, approximately 14 peer-run organizations of people who use drugs have been established across Canada (Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs, 2014, p. 1). These organizations have become “an important voice representing peers and addressing issues of concern to people who use drugs” (Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs, 2014, p. 1). Common organizational activities include engaging in peer outreach services, health promotion work, public advocacy and education (Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs, 2014, p. 2). In Victoria, BC the Society of Living Illicit Drug Users (SOLID) has been active for a number of years also providing peer-run outreach and health promotion services. Like other peer-run drug user groups, they also engage in community education and advocacy work (SOLID, 2014).

Alongside the sex worker, HIV, and drug user movements, a movement of people with lived experience of homelessness has begun to take shape. Homelessness creates a context that diminishes the ability to organize with peers to collectively exert influence over matters that directly affect them (Anker, 2008, 2009). Nonetheless, examples of peer-based organizations specifically for people experiencing homelessness have appeared, in places such as Victoria, BC and Denmark (Committee to End Homelessness, 2014; Anker, 2008, 2009). In the latter jurisdiction, SAND was formed with the aim to “seek to counteract the causes and the consequences of homelessness” (Anker, 2008, p.32). One way the organization fulfills this mission is by forming “user councils” at local emergency shelters of people who have current or former experience of homelessness who then act to ensure that the shelters meet acceptable conditions (Anker, 2008, p.32). One central challenge to this type of organizing is that people

experiencing homelessness lack resources and face many barriers to self-organizing. Therefore, people attempting to organize fellow peers experiencing homelessness must be equipped with adequate resources to achieve their organizing goals (Anker, 2009, p. 284). One possible source of resources is the support of non-peer allies, who can provide both financial and in-kind support inclusion (Anker, 2009, p. 278). As a final remark on peer-based engagement, I believe that in many respects, the peer-led models demonstrated by the aforementioned organizations can be thought of as the furthest along a hypothetical ‘spectrum of inclusion’.

Other Canadian literature has raised some critical challenges of the social inclusion discourse. Uzma Shakir talks about social inclusion discourse becoming a ‘new dogma’. In her examination of social inclusion she argues that the concept is inherently based on the binary of social inclusion/social exclusion, where to be within is necessarily good and to be outside is something we should avoid. In turn the binary sets up a universal goal of ‘being included’. This is not to say that inclusion is an unworthy ideal, but we need to be cognizant that the binary is not neutral and can still reflect unequal power relations (Shakir, 2005, p. 204). Implicitly the binary suggests that the ‘excluded’ should desire ‘inclusion’ and, moreover, it is the people who are already included in some way who are in the position to give inclusion to the hitherto excluded. For Shakir this sets up a paternalistic relation, where the excluded rely on those already included for inclusion. What needs to occur is an explanation of why these inequalities exist in the first place. In the absence of this, if people sense that the ‘space of inclusion’ perpetuates deep inequalities, than remaining outside of that space may be a better option and a means to maintain a level of self-control (Shakir, 2005, p. 206).

Shakir contends that inclusion is sometimes understood along the lines of an ‘additive’ model of representation, also known as a liberal pluralist model. This model assumes that by

adding more representation into institutions or organizations we can solve the problem of exclusion. However, what are typically not challenged in this model are the cultures of the institutions and organizations which are marked by the inequalities that continue to reproduce the inequalities (Shakir, 2005, p. 207). A deeper cultural change needs to occur to support a thicker notion of inclusion, along the lines of what Norman and Pauly outline or what has been seen in peer-led organizations, for example. This could shift the understanding of inclusion from an ‘additive model’ to a practice which negotiates new organizational possibilities and relations of power between people (Shakir, 2005, p. 207).

2.4 Stigma

A discussion of homelessness and poverty would be lacking if the role of stigma was not addressed. In this thesis I acknowledge that stigma has deep effects on people and public spaces. It can be understood as “disqualification from social acceptance, derogation, marginalization and ostracism” of a given group “as the result of societal negative attitudes, feelings, perceptions, representations and acts of discrimination” (Room, 2005, p. 144). People who possess “some attribute and/or characteristic that conveys a ‘social identity’ that is devalued” generally are subject to stigma. Often this is the case for people who are homeless (Belcher & DeForge, 2012) and/or face alcohol and drug addictions (Room, 2005). In many cases people are subjected to multiple types of stigma, which cumulatively undermine both social status and health (Pauly, 2014). For instance, people who are experiencing homelessness can be subjected to poverty stigma, disease stigma, drug use stigma, and so on. Consequently, these layered forms of stigma raise robust barriers to one’s inclusion in society (Pauly, 2014).

Stigma of homelessness arises in part because of common understandings of homelessness. Many societal images of homelessness portray the matter as the result of an

individual's poor decisions, which makes it easier to blame people for their circumstances (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). This parochial viewpoint levels responsibility on the individual without proportional consideration of causal factors over and above the individual. On top of this level of stigma, people who are homeless tend to face additional stigma due to being characterized as a) threatening to the general public and "bad for business" and b) associated to drug or alcohol addictions (Brad & DeForge, 2012, p. 933). In particular, people who use intravenous drugs are framed as irresponsible and "lack concern not only for their own health but the health and safety of 'innocent' others in the community" (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 266). Ultimately, the stigmatization of people experiencing homelessness and/or addictions is used to justify socially exclusive practices, be it attempts to remove individuals from public areas because of the 'undesired characteristics' or not including people(s) in program and policy decisions that directly affect them (Belle-Isle, Benoit, Pauly, 2014). Often stigma becomes a "persistent predicament" since it is difficult to undermine multiple types of stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 380).

Power is a crucial component of stigma. For people who exhibit a devalued social identity to be stigmatized, there must be an arrangement which enables a person and/or system to stigmatize a given person(s). By this, what I am referring to is that stigma is about relationships between people and systems, not just the attributes of people (Link & Phelan, 2011, p. 366). Link and Phelan (2001) conceptualize stigma as occurring "when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows them" (p. 377). Key to this understanding is that a 'power situation' facilitates the stigmatizing, meaning that a person, institution, or system is in a position over other groups that enables them to devalue another group by labelling certain differences of a particular group in a deprecatory

manner and have those differences “stick” (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 375). The ability to label the differences relies on a power differential between people, or what Link & Phelan (2014) term “stigma power” (p. 25). Along with the power to devalue other people comes the ability to exclude people from a variety of societal activities because of their devalued status, since the same power differential enables one to control access to key societal spheres (e.g. planning, decision making, jobs, healthcare, etc.) (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 376).

As gains can be derived from stigmatizing others, there are incentives to perpetuate the stigmatization. Often, action will occur to keep stigmatized people “down, in, or away” (e.g. efforts such as residents mobilizing against a mental health facility moving into a suburban neighbourhood) (Link & Phelan, 2014, p. 25). In this case, efforts can be seen to keep people ‘away’ from the neighbourhood of the mobilizing residents. Yet, in many cases the interests in perpetuating the stigma are not acknowledged, meaning that the co-terminus act of stigmatizing and its corollary effects become deeply embedded in the regular operation of groups, organizations, or institutions to the point that sometimes we are not cognizant of the continual act of stigmatizing (Link & Phelan, 2014, p. 30). In other word, effects of the continual stigmatization exerted from these arrangements become normalized. Yet, in times where the deep seated processes falter and do not achieve the interests of the stigmatizers (sic), be it keeping select social services outside of a neighbourhood boundary or mitigating the presence of unwanted individuals, the reaction may be to shore up the processes to ensure that certain interests are achieved (Link & Phelan, 2014, p. 30). Actions to shore up interests can take many forms: advocating for exclusionary zoning, reduced funding for services, and for social policies that promote social control of certain groups, and so on.

Agencies which attempt to provide relevant social services to persons who are stigmatized become intertwined with the stigmatization. What occurs is that stigma of certain groups translates into stigma of agencies providing social services for that group. Needle exchange programs, for instance, commonly face opposition from community members in the neighbourhoods where they try to site new facilities (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 266). The proposed facility may be framed as a safety hazard for the neighbourhood because the facility will draw in people who use intravenous drugs into the neighbourhood. Opposition of this sort poses challenges for the smooth operation of social services and consequently for the health of people who require the services (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 266).

However, service providers do have a role in countering stigma that affects their services and the people they serve (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004). Social service workers can take multiple strategies when advocating for clients. First, they can attempt to refute the “differentness” of clients through resisting the distinctions that separate acceptable clients and/or neighbours (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 269). Second, they can attempt to frame people who use intravenous drugs as “worthy” of receiving health services designed for their specific needs. Third, they can work to normalize drug use through public education that reminds other community members that drug dependence is very common and widespread in society. Overall, advocating for unpopular social services involves a “balancing act of interests” amongst the various people and communities present in the neighbourhood, matched with an “understanding of the dynamics of particular communities” (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 273). Finally, social services can support peer-led organizing which helps build collective capacity of stigmatized people to represent themselves and engage in advocacy work (Anker, 2009; Belle-Isle, Benoit, Pauly, 2014).

2.5 Guarded Alliance

‘Guarded alliance’ is a conceptual framework developed in the field of nursing to understand healthcare relationships amongst patients and professionals, with a specific emphasis on the role of trust. I have included this body in the literature in the review because the focus on relationships has complimentary links to literature reviewed earlier in this chapter. Both Young and Fraser are concerned with interpersonal relations and write about this topic in high level theoretical terms. Thorne is also concerned with interpersonal dynamics, yet her writings focus in far more on relational dynamics as experienced in a practice setting. As such, the concept of guarded alliance greatly compliments the theory reviewed in section 2.1 of this chapter. Further, bringing her writing into this thesis helps to more finely address my research questions explicitly concerned with relations, such as question six: “What effects has the Good Neighbour Agreement had on relations amongst members of the Good Neighbour Group, the communities they represent (if applicable), and the street community?”

The concept describes three stages of healthcare relationships: naïve trust, disenchantment, and guarded alliance. Relationships in each stage are characterized by the level of trust. The stage theory presupposes that naïve trust is inevitably shattered when patients have unmet expectations or unresolved difference of perspectives with their healthcare professionals. Erosion of trust is often followed by a disenchantment stage, characterized by frustration, anxiety, and significant distrust of their healthcare professional or even the healthcare profession in general. It also is expressed through angry emotional outbursts, notably being overly assertive and even aggressive with their healthcare providers (McGrath, 2001, p. 76). This is a reflection of having been let down or mistreated in the past, so people take it upon themselves to ensure that they are listened to and considered. In certain ways, this recalls Young’s notion of ‘agonism’

in deliberations, where people who are frustrated and marginalized sense that they need to struggle to be recognized and listened to.

Disenchantment can be followed by a resolution stage where an alternative bond of trust is formed so that a patient can continue to receive health care. Trust in this stage is different from naïve trust, in that it exists on a more guarded basis, hence the stage is known as the ‘guarded alliance’ stage (Throne & Robinson, 1989, p. 154). At play is a pragmatic attitude that healthcare services are still required, despite the patient’s reservations, and so a guarded trust is developed.

Reconstructed trust, as Thorne and Robinson refer to it as, is “highly selective and contingent on revised expectations of roles of patients and provider. Over time the shattered trust is reconstructed, though never again amounts to ‘naïve trust’. However, the renewed trust can be reformed in a number of different ways: hero worship, resignation, consumerism, team playing (Throne & Robinson, 1989, p. 155). For the purposes of this thesis, I only briefly discuss the modes of resignation and team playing. In resignation, only minimal signs that trust has been reconstructed are seen. Patients in this mode may withdraw from services as a way to spare themselves the “agony of unfulfilled expectations” (Thorne & Robinson, 1988, p. 784). Resignation can also mean having only marginal involvement with providers to protect oneself against negative future possibilities, such as the event that they do require significant care and need to be able to easily access a physician. So, if they dropped out of services altogether it could result in losing their family physician, thus putting them in a dilemma in the event that they do require significant care in the future (Throne & Robinson, 1989, p. 155).

Team playing is another mode of guarded alliance, in which a reciprocal and negotiated trust between the patient and provider is formed. They act as a team, where the patient applies their own values to health care decision making in collaboration with the provider. What is

particularly relevant about the idea of ‘team playing’ to this thesis is the unique mode of trust it embodies. Trust in the provider and trust in the patient (i.e. patient’s self-trust to handle health care decisions) were variables that determined what type of reconstructed trust was formed. In team playing trust is not unilateral, in that the patient simply trusts in the provider’s ability to take care of them, but that the provider trusts the patient’s ability to take care of their own health, meaning that there is a level of reciprocal trust (Thorne & Robinson, 1989, p. 156). Furthermore, unique to this form of trust is the movement beyond a general notion of “respect for others or a global attitude toward humankind” to a specific belief that *this* patient has the competence to manage their own health. The affirmation is “context-specific and individualized” (i.e. for a particular individual in a particular context) and by virtue of the specificity, it is meaningful (Thorne & Robinson, 1988, p. 785). When a patient’s competence is not acknowledged and accepted, dissatisfaction with the relationship can rise, eroding the reconstructed trust formed with a specific healthcare provider.

Trust, therefore, is a foundation which facilitates ‘team playing’ where healthcare providers and patients collaborate together for the improved well-being of the patient. However, more than an abstract “generalized good will” towards all people is needed, as an abstracted ethic is less meaningful on a personal level for the patient. Trust that is person-centered and recognizes the individual’s perspective and competencies is vital, though difficult to establish (Thorne & Robinson, p. 788). This idea of person-centered trust has parallels with the Young’s discussion of recognizing difference and the particularity of the context at hand.

2.6 Good Neighbour Agreements

As stated in section 1.3 in chapter 1, GNAs have increasingly been put into practice at the local level. Relatively little literature is available that documents the theory and practice of GNAs. In

this section I review the extant literature, with a focus on the use of GNAs in social service delivery.

GNAs have been used in a variety of fields and settings. Notably, GNAs have become a recognized tool in environmental movements in the USA. In this setting, a GNA is a tool that can be used by local residents to draw up a compact with major companies operating environmentally-related services in their region, such as a chemical factory or waste dump (Lewis & Henkels, 1998, p. 129). Interestingly, grassroots environmental activists have adopted this tool in campaigns for environment justice, since a compact of this sort can enhance accountability of companies to local communities and work to raise the local environment standards that are expected of companies (Illsely, 2002, p.70).

Literature documenting the practice of using GNAs in social service delivery appears to be less developed, with a small amount of literature from the UK. Since the 1990s GNAs of some sort have been used by social housing providers in the UK (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000; Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007), either between the landlord and tenants or in a tripartite scheme with the landlord, tenants, and other community members in the neighbourhood. These schemes have been variously titled “Good Neighbour Agreements, Neighbourhood Charters, Tenant Participation Compacts and Resident Involvement Statements” depending on the housing association and region (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.2). The growth of these schemes has been part of wider government policy efforts in the UK focused on ‘neighbourhood management’, which in large part addresses ‘anti-social behaviour’ at the neighbourhood level (Flint, 2004a, p. 894; Flint 2004b, p. 153). Central to all of them is an emphasis on the notion of a ‘responsible tenant’ and encouraging certain forms of behaviour to realize this ideal (Flint, 2004a, p. 894). As well, the emphasis on self-agency is complimented by

an emphasis on “the communitarian duties” of welfare recipients, such that people must recognize their role in broader community settings and their duty to be a ‘good neighbour’ within their community (Flint, 2004b, p. 153).

Flint (2004a) observes that much of the commentary around these schemes has highlighted the associated increase in punitive actions taken by social landlords to prevent undesired ‘anti-social’ behaviour (i.e. drug dealing, loitering, nuisance levels of noise, etc.) (p.895). At the same time this reshaping of tenant responsibilities is seen by some social landlords not solely as a new means of behaviour management but also as an attempt to engage residents more in their own communities and promote a sense of ownership over their housing units and the communities they live in. Tenants are encouraged to assume the two-pronged responsibility of regulating one’s self-conduct and contributing to the wider operation of housing management, which may, for example, involve notifying management when issues need to be addressed or getting involved in a resident’s committee (Flint, 2004a, p. 904). In practice though, the punitive and tenant responsibility aims do not always cohere and can “create tensions and ambiguities within tenant participation strategies” (Flint, 2004a, p. 894)

In a UK study of 200 social landlords (i.e. associations that operate not for profit housing), 91 had some form of a Good Neighbour Agreement. Across the myriad agreements there were many differences, from underlying motivations for creating the agreements, to the level of community participation in the agreements, and to how they were put into action. Key motivations for landlords to introduce these agreements were social, such as preventing anti-social behaviour and/or neighbourhood management, but also economic, such as protecting investment made in housing units and/or promoting stable housing environments and long term tenancies (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.17).

The amount of consultation conducted with tenants and the broader community to draft the various agreements varied widely amongst the social landlords. Approximately half of the landlords engaged tenant representatives and a smaller portion engaged non-tenant community members in the development process. For agreements developed with little consultation, “the actual content and thinking on how a scheme would operate were most usually generated within organisations”, while agreements developed with extensive consultation tended to be for smaller areas (e.g. a single housing development) and sought to capture community aspirations into a coherent document (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.41). The latter type typically resulted in a clear understanding of “community norms” around acceptable behaviour (e.g. improved security, garage cleaned up, enforcement measures to reduce criminal activity, etc.) (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.41). Whether non-tenant community members were engaged in the process was indicative of the scope of the agreement, in that some agreements were strictly between the social landlord and the tenants, not a tripartite agreement amongst the landlord, tenants, and other community members in the neighbourhood. In cases where non-tenant community members were engaged, social landlords reported that it was vital to demonstrate that the housing association was serious about acting on concerns outlined by community members. This involved completing some “quick hits” (e.g. cleaning up garbage or improving security) that tackled an issue raised during the consultation and were visible to these community members (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.41).

Finally, upon completion agreements were put to practice in many different ways. For instance, some landlords used the agreements as a means to reinforce the contents of tenancy agreements, while other used them to reinforce a community’s values (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.18). Yet, despite all of these differences, in general the agreements had a

significant behaviour management component, outlining what type of behaviour were expected of tenants, often providing examples of ‘anti-social’ or nuisance behaviour and made clear what the landlord would do in response to undesired behaviour (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.46). Subsequently, these standards could be acted upon by tenants, non-tenant community members or the social landlord.

In a smaller study of GNAs in the late 1990s in the York area of England, particular attention was paid to one GNA, known as the Foxwood Agreement. Unlike many other agreements featured in this study, the Foxwood agreement, launched in 1998, sought more of a neighbourhood wide scope, covering a neighbourhood of 1487 properties in south west York, over half of which were privately owned and the rest social housing units (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000 , p. 9). Additionally, numerous local service providers were involved, including the police and housing associations. In broad terms, the Agreement was framed as a mechanism for improving tenant involvement in service provision and fostering more neighbourhood cohesion. More specifically, the Agreement was initiated to respond to crime and improve community safety, covering diverse topics such as “community policing, street and environmental cleaning and refuse collection, jobs, training and enterprise support, council and housing association homes” (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000 , p. 21).

Rather than use an existing neighbourhood residents association as a hub for resident engagement in the development and continued engagement in the Agreement, a new group was created to facilitate resident involvement, known as the Foxwood Community Action Group (FCAG). Establishing a new group was seen as important because many existing residents groups were based around a small number of already engaged people, which creates a centralized power structure that is often difficult for new people to penetrate (Cole, McCoulough, &

Southworth, 2000, p. 29). A community development worker was hired to support the FCAG by providing capacity-building skills trainings and ongoing support to help the group accomplish their tasks (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 20). Both the creation of a new organization and the provision of ongoing supports were unique amongst the 15 GNAs reviewed in this study. In contrast, many other GNAs were developed in large part from the input of already existing local residents groups (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 20).

FCAG was mainly used to coordinate smaller actions and to a lesser extent, larger-scale advocacy work. This involved beautification efforts such as the “Cleansing Walkabout” garbage cleaning events and graffiti removal. It also involved directly supporting ‘anti-social behaviour’ prevention efforts of the multi-agency Tenancy Enforcement Team, a working group formed as part of the Agreement. Members of the FCAG provided testimony and support prosecutions of people engaged in undesirable behaviour (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 24). To a lesser extent the FCAG was used as a platform to advocate for increased neighbourhood services. The group notably took on the project of advocating for a youth center in the neighbourhood as a means to address some of the persistent issues in the area. However, while smaller actions could be completed easily, time and resource constraints made larger-scale advocacy work challenging (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 46). In all other these efforts, though, the FCAG served as a valuable means to continually build relationships between residents and service providers (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 34)

Together these myriad UK-based schemes are at the forefront of a changing social housing landscape. This change is characterized by revamping the reputation of social housing and the definition of successful housing of this sort. In the UK, social housing has been marked by stigma, as often these developments are considered undesirable presences in neighbourhoods

(Flint, 2004a, p.902). GNAs are part of a movement which defines successful social housing as that which “looks much like private housing and blends into the area, with a good reputation” (Flint, 2004a, p.902). In other words, the housing is successful if it is free of ignominy and integrates inconspicuously into the neighbourhood, much like standard private housing (Flint, 2004b).

Despite the wide promotion of GNAs, researchers have been keen to note that this new movement in social housing poses challenges for vulnerable people. As the researchers in the larger study of GNAs observed, some people may not be able to meet the conditions laid out in a GNA. Experiences from some GNAs reported that many of the complaints about anti-social behaviour were for particularly vulnerable people, such as those with problematic substance use, severe mental health issues, or other unique support needs (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.39). It was recognized by some landlords that reporting the anti-social behaviour of these individuals was insufficient to address the issues at hand. Instead, ensuring appropriate support was in place for these individuals to access was far more important (Croucher, Jones, & Wallace, 2007, p.39). Nonetheless, it is useful to acknowledge that GNAs have limitations and certain people are more heavily burdened by the conditions laid out in these agreements than others.

On a similar note, Flint argues that determining causal responsibility for neighbourhood problems should be viewed with an eye to complexity. Flint (2004a) writes that “any debate about responsibility also requires a distinction to be drawn between attributing causal responsibility for problems and designating responsibility for the resolution of these problems, which need to reside in the same parties” (p. 897). This is to say that responsibility does not necessarily rest with the individual; there are potentially other factors which have a contributing role to the behaviour an individual is exhibiting. For instance, individuals using intravenous

drugs in a public park may be classified as exhibiting ‘anti-social behaviour’ and thus offend other community members. However, there may be other structural or systemic factors that influence the individual to use intravenous drugs in a public park, such as the lack of a safe consumption site where individuals can safely and discreetly use intravenous drugs. What the discourse of self-agency and responsibility neglects is precisely the role of wider social and economic issues weighing down on neighbourhoods. Moreover, this discourse ends of becoming one of simple individual-centered blame instead of addressing complex problems and seeking to identify appropriate parties to tackle to the problems (Flint, 2004a, p. 897).

In parts of Canada the use of GNAs has become more common. In recent years the City of Calgary has encouraged the creation of GNAs and developed a number of guidance documents (City of Calgary, 2011, p. 19). One of these documents contains a basic working definition for the City: “Good Neighbour Agreements are instruments that provide a vehicle for community-based organization and service providers whose underlying philosophy is the mutual acknowledgement of the need to build a relationship responsive to the needs of each” (City of Calgary, n.d., p. 1). Key to this working definition is the emphasis on relationship building and ongoing dialogue amongst community partners, similar to what is put forth in the definition supplied by PIVOT Legal Society (see section 1.2 of chapter 1; PIVOT, 2011, p. 12). The City suggests that these processes set the stage for increased understanding amongst involved parties, since it allows an opportunity to talk directly to one another and supply accurate information about the social service’s operations and goals (City of Calgary, n.d., p. 1). Providing accurate information can help to dispel misunderstandings and mitigate unease about the social service being located in the given neighbourhood (City of Calgary, n.d., p. 1). In this sense a GNA, as the City suggests, “sets the table for advocate and nimby alike” (City of Calgary, 2011, p. 17). It

can allow people to advocate for inclusion of services into a neighbourhood while conversely allowing people who are either tentative or unsupportive to voice concerns and have a hand in shaping the outcomes of a service (City of Calgary, 2011, p. 17).

2.7 Summary

This review has explored multiple bodies of literature. With a focus on participatory governance, it outlined theory by Nancy Fraser and Iris M. Young, the concepts of social inclusion and guarded alliance, and reviewed some of the practical challenges often faced in participatory programs. As stated earlier, Fraser's 'parity of participation' principle acts as the high level theory guiding this thesis; Young's work compliments Fraser's by outlining important aspects of the practice of participatory governance; Norman and Pauly's articulation of 'meaningful inclusion and participation' help to clarify what inclusive participatory governance with the street community looks like; the review of stigma illuminates a phenomenon which often excludes the street community from decision making that affects them; the concept of 'guarded alliance' acts as a framework to understanding some of the relational dynamics; and Aber's discussion of problems with participatory programs, particularly around co-optation, sheds light on some of the institutional challenges that may arise in such programs and options to counter them. The particular focus on 'the hitherto excluded', which encapsulates people in the street community, of all these authors is very useful for this study, since the GNA speaks of including the street community. Finally, the review of Good Neighbour Agreements brings together current information on the practice of using Good Neighbour Agreements, within Canada and internationally.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Perspective Underlying Methodology

This research project adopts a critical theoretical perspective. Critical research is associated with not abiding to positivist research demands of a “commitment to reason, perspectiveless truth, objective and [allegedly] neutral forms of knowledge, separation of subject object” (Strega, 2005, p. 203). From the ‘critical’ viewpoint, knowledge is decidedly not “objective, impartial, innocent in intention and effect, and neutrally observed” (Strega, 2005, p. 204). This situates critical research within a different research paradigm than positivism. In doing so it subverts the central dichotomy inherent in the positivist perspective, which makes a distinction between objectivity and neutrality on the one hand and “subjectivity, emotions, desire and specificity” on the other (Strega, 2005, p. 203). The project of critical research is concerned with exploring, challenging, and changing the status quo structures present in a given context, part of which involves exploring the “multiple layers” found in social realities (Neuman, 1997, p. 75). For this research project I acknowledge that “deep structures and unobservable mechanisms” are generally present in participatory platforms, like the GNGs associated with GNAs, in the form of the subtle and overt power relations that shape them (Neuman, 1997, p. 75). In turn, this research attempted to document, expose, and engage discussion aimed at surmounting these power structures and mechanisms (Neuman, 1997, p. 75).

In taking a specifically post-structuralist stance, I attempted to move beyond the positivist dichotomy. The stance entails that no universal reality (accessed, experienced, and shared by everyone) can be discovered – such an entity does not exist. Rather, the post-structuralist draws attention to *power* and *subjectivity* within a given context. The study of power is particularly significant in post-structuralist research. Power is everywhere and acts to condition any given context, however power is not fixed and stable (in the sense that it only exists as a material sum).

On the contrary, power exists in the in-between; “people are positioned within power” (Strega, 2005, p. 225). Though it may (and often does) calcify, establishing large self-perpetuating institutions, power is nonetheless fluid and continually negotiated. Post-structuralist research seeks to provide accounts of situations by exposing power dynamics and presenting viewpoints of a situation that are often covered over by dominant actors and discourses.

Subjectivity entails that there are multiple standpoints from which knowledge is produced, so starting research from the perspectives of marginalized groups, for instance, can bring forth unique insights (Strega, 2005, p. 223). The standpoint of individuals and groups marginalized in situations of unequal power relations has significant importance since the perspectives can be more “comprehensive” of the situation and thus yield advantage insights (Strega, 2005, p. 223). Here Strega draws links with other theorists of ‘epistemic privilege’. The idea of epistemic privilege (or epistemic advantage, to follow Strega’s terminology) is that “oppressed groups have a more immediate, subtle, and critical knowledge about the nature of their oppression” (Narayan, 1988, p. 35). In recognizing a specific standpoint(s), the researcher(s) in turn values the associated experiences, emotions and desires that comprise it (Strega, 2005, p. 223). Emotional reactions, intuitions, and experiential reflections together form a nuanced and subtle understanding of unequal power relations. An understanding from such a viewpoint is largely inaccessible to dominant individuals and groups and thus significant to gaining a broader perspective of a situation.

Strega qualifies the above statements on epistemic advantage by stating that experience does not necessarily entail knowledge. Although experience is necessarily conditioned by power relations (Strega, 2005, p. 224), having an experience of an event does not necessarily entail an understanding of the causes of the power relations (Narayan, 1988, p. 35). This does not mean

that someone experiencing oppression cannot grasp a fuller account of their own situation. Rather, what it means in terms of research is that one must be cautious not to simply bring together accounts from individuals and groups and present them as knowledge. In turn, this implies that some level of interpretation (by the individual, group, and, perhaps, the researcher) must be used to dig into the experiential accounts to develop fuller understandings. This line of thinking is discussed further in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

Following post-structuralist thinking, as much as possible I sought to honour and highlight alternative viewpoints ‘from the street’, recognizing subjective accounts to critically explore power relations that are inherent in the GNG.

3.2 Research Methodology

This thesis has the aim of “engaging and using knowledge for change” (Patton, 2002, p. 129). It is born out of personal belief matched by a body of literature that while supportive of the move for more participatory governance, values critical questioning and understandings to further improve practice. As much as possible the study attempted to positively influence understanding and practice of participatory governance involving street communities by articulating a critical viewpoint of the GNA and GNG that was grounded in perspectives of people from the street community and members of the GNG. Issues of power were at the forefront when conducting the research and interpreting the findings.

In order to achieve fidelity with critical theoretical perspectives and to adequately articulate a critical viewpoint of the GNG, *interpretive description* (ID) methodology was adopted. As the name implies, this methodology does not yield just a description of a subject but specifically provides a useful interpretation of the data. It assumes that objective knowledge is unattainable and reality is contingent on personal viewpoints, which places the methodology

outside the scope of positivist research methodologies (Hunt, 2009, p. 1285). Further, ID not only acknowledges the personal but validates knowledge arising from personal experience; “people who have lived with certain experiences are often the best source of expert knowledge about those experiences” (Thorne et al., 1997, pp. 173-174). ID’s rejection of objective truths and embrace of subjectivity meshes well with post-structuralist theoretical frameworks adopted for this project. ID’s goal of producing a useful interpretation to inform “clinical understanding” and practice also meshes well with the research objectives of this study of informing practice (Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 3)⁵. In producing interpretations of phenomenon, three main principles apply:

- 1) Provide ‘tentative truth’ about what is common in a particular phenomenon;
- 2) Inform practice;
- 3) Create sense-making structure for variations and anomalies in the real world. (Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 3)

Interpretive description acknowledges the inherent analytic process of working with data to produce research findings. Rather than merely providing (or supposing) a ‘positivist picture’ of the data, the researcher is tasked with “constructing an interpretive account of what themes within the data signify” (Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 4). In constructing an interpretive account, the researcher must continually keep the theoretical perspective of the research project in mind, yet recognize that a priori theory is not adequate to fully capture the phenomena being studied (Hunt, 2009, p. 1285). With this in mind, the researcher is aware of their role as an interpreter of data with myriad possible avenues of interpretation to explore

⁵ Granted, this study is neither situated within a clinical discipline nor seeking to contribute to clinical understanding in the sense of treating patients. Rather, the emphasis on contributing to understandings that inform practice which are useful for people involved in the particular field is what made ID a good fit for the research objectives of this thesis.

(Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 6). Thus while applying a chosen analytic framework with rigor is integral to interpretation, research findings do not simply attempt to push data into a presupposed analytic framework (Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 5). Instead, the researcher is engaged in a “dialectic between theory and data”, in which the data alters not only the researcher but theory accordingly. In other words, the journey through the data attempts to avoid “theoretical imposition on the one hand, and atheoretical description on the other” (Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 6).

The end product of an interpretive account generally assumes a narrative form. This type of product relies less on common qualitative approaches of presenting data in which theme totals are reported but more so in an attempt to communicate important ideas in a fresh manner (Thorne, Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 7). Themes and patterns in the data are communicated through the narrative, which is contextualized within a larger frame. Presenting findings as such helps to ensure that the three aforementioned principles for interpretation are satisfied.

3.3 Research Methods

A number of research methods were used for this thesis, including a work exchange, interviews, document analysis, and a research journal. Interview-based data collection was guided by a distinct sampling strategy.

3.3.1 Work Exchange

All research methods were embedded within the framework of a *work exchange* with a Victoria-based homeless-serving not-for-profit organization, which provides street outreach services. One staff member of this organization was involved in the development of the GNA studied in this thesis. A work exchange is conceived as a mutually beneficial reciprocal trade

between two or more people and rather than being characterized by a monetary transaction, is an exchange of services and/or goods, such as tilling a garden or trading a sack of potatoes⁶. In this case, through the work exchange I provided volunteer services in exchange for the opportunity to interview a staff member of the organization, benefit from their knowledge of the community, and be introduced to people from the street community and other individuals affiliated with the GNA. My volunteer services mainly included helping with street-outreach efforts. Given the subject of the study, a work exchange seemed appropriate. Although I had previous experience in community-based work and participatory processes, I was fairly 'green' to the dynamics of the subject I wished to study. Since the research could not have been completed without being immersed in the neighbourhood, the participation of individuals from the street community and members of the GNG, and someone to share their knowledge and introduce me to community members, contributing my own volunteer services was a (small) way to make the process more reciprocal.

The work exchange lasted for approximately six months. During the first four months I had the opportunity to greatly immerse myself in the neighbourhood, learn more about the topics pertaining to the study, meet different people, and conduct interviews. The final two months I was unable to volunteer as much but did assist the organization with drafting some policies while at the same time completing the rest of the interviews. Throughout this time I had numerous informal conversations with the staff member of the organization about some of my reflections on the GNA and GNG.

My research plan developed as I learned more about the issues pertaining to the subject being researched, met people who were involved in the development of the GNA, met people

⁶ Note that this definition was conceived by the author.

who were affected by the GNA, and generally gained a better sense of the community in which the GNA and GNG was situated. More feasible research goals emerged from this learning and, more importantly, an understanding of what was reasonable and ethical to ask of potential research participants (this is discussed further in Chapter 5, section 5.1). At the end of the work exchange I became formally employed by the organization to draft policies and do street outreach work, which I discuss in further detail in Chapter 3, section 3.6.

3.3.2 Interviews

Initially, I had intended to conduct individual interviews and one focus group. As mentioned, my research plan changed as I learned more about the community and ultimately this led to the decision to not conduct the focus group but instead do only face-to-face interviews with people who were interested in the project and fit the sampling strategy (see below). Interviews allowed for more flexibility in meeting people at times that were convenient to them. Interviews were done on a one-to-one basis using an interview guide model and open-ended questions. This approach allowed for exploration of pre-defined topics but also maintained a conversational tone that helped me respond to the immediate context of the participant's discussion (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Overall, the face-to-face interviews were intended to yield considerable depth into the phenomenon (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 95). Two interviews had two participants in them and were conducted as such out of convenience for the participants. The two interviews that had two participants in them yielded considerable depth and were also interesting in that they did have some tones of a focus group because they had more of a "dialogic nature" which helped "participants (and researchers) to trade ideas and understandings and ultimately produce new breakthroughs" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 164-165) (see Appendix B for a copy of the interview guide).

Participants were selected according to a “mixed purposeful sampling approach” (Patton, 2002, p. 244). This form of sampling involves reviewing and studying “all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). However, rather than aiming to study ‘all cases’ that met the sampling criterion, my aim was to pull together a body of interview data that represented diverse and informed perspectives on the subject. The criterion for participant selection was as follows:

- Is aware of the 900 Pandora Block GNA and the work of the GNG;
- Has been directly involved in activities pertaining to the geographic boundaries of the study from the time of the signing of the Agreement;
- Has been recognized as a peer leader within the street community; and/or has worked directly with the street community; and/or has been involved with the GNG.

In order to identify participants who met the criterion, ‘chain sampling’ was used, which is useful for locating ‘information-rich key informants’ (Patton, 2002, p. 237). The process of identifying key informants was three-fold: First, a staff member from the organization I did the work-exchange with suggested individuals who would be good for the study. If the individual fit the criterion, he then acted as a third-party recruiter to inform them of the study and make contact with me, the researcher. Second, based on learnings from the work exchange, I made contact with two participants via email using publically available contact information. Third, one individual who was informed of the study informed another two participants about the study and they subsequently contacted me to inquire about participating.

Seven interviews were conducted and ranged from 30 minutes to 50 minutes in length. Five were one-to-one and, as mentioned above, two interviews had two participants. All participants had the opportunity to review interview transcripts after they were typed up. Except

for one, all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for digital analysis. In the one interview that was not digitally recorded I made extensive notes by hand during the interview, which the participant reviewed after the interview. I then typed up the notes and gave them to the participant to review for any final feedback. This interview was not recorded because it occurred ‘on the fly’, at the convenience of the participant, at a time when I had a consent form with me but no audio recording device.

A total of nine participants were interviewed for this study. Five identified as male and four identified as female. All participants interviewed were between the ages of 30 and 70. Two participants were either currently or at one point homeless⁷ (e.g. would be identified as part of the street community), three participants had past or present affiliations with OP, two participants were part of the local residents/neighbourhood association that signed the GNA, one participant worked for the City and had contact with the GNG, and one participant was an advocate with Peer-Based Organization. Additionally, two other participants listed above (one who had experience of homelessness and one who had worked for the City) had experience working as advocates with Peer-Based Organization.

Quotations and comments drawn from the interviews are specifically referenced in Chapter 4 (findings) and the interview participants have each been given one of the following pseudonyms: Steve, Kirk, Susie, Noam, Rebecca, Mary, Brent, Connie, Lee.

3.3.3 Document Analysis

In addition to the qualitative interviews, this study collected data from two document sources: the Pandora GNA document and minutes from City Council meetings. Document-based data was used to supplement and support the qualitative interview data. This approach follows

⁷ See page 1 for a definition of this term.

Morse's (2009) conception of mixed methods research where the project consists of one method to complete the "core component" and another method to complete a "supplementary component" (Morse, 2009, p. 1523). However, together the two "components address a single area of inquiry that cannot be addressed by the core component alone" (p. 1523). I used the document-based data to "illuminate (or add to) the results for the core component", which was the interview data (Morse, 2009, p. 1523).

The GNA document was used to understand the broad framework in which the GNA worked and to demonstrate how some of the qualitative data directly related to provisions contained within the GNA. Minutes from City Council meetings, including the minutes and agendas from the numerous committees of Council, were reviewed to collect information pertaining to the GNA, the GNG, the 900 Block Pandora Avenue, and OP. The following search terms were used to scan the City's online archive of Council minutes and agendas: Pandora, Our Place, 919 Pandora, Harris Green, Pandora Green, Open Door, Rev. Al, St. Andrews School, GNA, GNG, GNA, GNG, Mid-block crosswalk, Harm Reduction, Streets and Traffic Bylaw, Tent, Camping. A total of 69 documents were reviewed, 41 of which contained relevant information and 28 of which did not contain relevant information. A total of 17 documents were used for this thesis, as these particular documents complimented the qualitative data (i.e. 'the core component'), either in a supportive or challenging manner. In addition to historical and contextual information, records of speech statements from members of the GNG and individuals addressing City Council (either at meetings or through recorded correspondence with the committees) were collected from these documents and compiled in an excel spreadsheet.

3.3.4 Field Notes and Ongoing Research Journal

A research journal was kept throughout the thesis. During the period of data collection I recorded both ‘on-the-fly’ notes, periodic reflections on my conversations, and general thoughts about the subject matter. Recording my thoughts and feelings promoted reflexivity in my own research practice (Ortlipp, 2008). Journal entries did not include participant observations as I did not seek to be ‘in the field’ to observe the “setting” of engagement; how people interact, the activities that took place, etc. (Patton, 2002, p. 262). Journal entries were very personal, simply documenting my thinking process. After the period of data collection I continued to use the journal all the way through data analysis, writing the findings of the study and drawing conclusions from the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Deep engagement with the data and meaningful interpretations are the goals of interpretive description analysis (Thorne, 2008). At the outset of the inductive data analysis process, the initial step was to acknowledge the research methods and philosophical traditions that were used in this thesis. By continually raising my awareness of these I worked to avoid mechanically running data through a pre-fabricated analytic sieve. Instead attention was paid to the relation between research technique and the underlying theoretical perspectives which colour the interpretations that were ultimately articulated (Thorne, 2008, p. 153). Prior to any formal coding of data, a great deal of time was spent immersing myself in the data, such as listening to recordings, reading transcripts, and pondering about what was and was not being said by participants (Thorne et al., 1997, p. 175). The inductive process of data analysis began after the first interview. Apart from transcribing the interview myself, I wrote down notes from the interview and made journal entries about my reflections on the discussion. This process was repeated for each interview. Over and above the immersion in the data, this work between

interviews was useful because I was more attuned to potentially relevant information and novel discussion in subsequent interviews. Once all interviews were completed and transcribed I took time to read the transcripts consecutively and write down my overall thoughts, what Thorne refers to as “developing a sense of the whole beyond the immediate impression of what it is they contain” (Thorne, 2008, p. 143).

As coding began I was cautious to avoid early interpretive conclusions. To allow for flexibility while coding, I followed Thorne’s advice that researchers use broad-based qualitative coding that focus on themes and ideas (Thorne, 2008, p. 145). This is because overly precise coding early on in the analytic process can have implications later in the process, as interpretive possibilities may be closed off within the scope of a prematurely detailed coding scheme (Thorne, 2008, p. 147). Thus, data was brought together in broad categories to review for thematic relations amongst data. From there patterns within the data were searched for with an eye to identifying relationships between and amongst the data (Thorne, 2008, p. 149). To aid deeper coding efforts I employed some thematic analysis techniques, which provided useful guidance for a beginner researcher. Similar to interpretive description, thematic analysis is not tied to any specific theoretical framework, so I was able to place it within the ambit of post-structuralism and draw attention to some of the discourses in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81; Fransson & Storo, 2011, p. 2521). In developing themes the goal was to express the latent content and the multilayered meanings of the data in relation to the context in which it was situated. This helped me move beyond just simply analyzing data through descriptive level categories (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013, pp. 401-402).

Effort was made throughout the data analysis to remain reflexive. Thorne advises that the key to making sense of the data when using interpretive description is to allow for a variety of

interpretive possibilities (Thorne, 2008, p. 147). I frequently took stock of journal entries and re-read the entries alongside the memos written in the interview transcripts. Together these tools helped me to think broadly about the patterns and relations within the data and then to take a further step of abstraction to think through potential meanings and interpretations. As a more general practice, Thorne's golden questions (Why is this here?; Why not something else?; and, what does it mean?) were kept front and center to continually challenge my insights and provoke continued exploration (Thorne, Kirkham, & O'Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 7). Questioning in this way helped to yield breakthroughs in my own thinking, particularly around the emphasis on the agency exhibited by people in the street community and the challenges of advocacy work.

When I was reasonably confident with the analysis of the interviews I turned my attention to the documents data. Themes and codes developed for the interviews were applied to the documents to see how this body of data supported or contrasted what was seen in the interviews. Point of consensus and departure were noted.

Ultimately, the overall analysis process moved through approximately 25 major iterations of the coding scheme⁸ and six major iterations of themes. Themes were eventually finalized through the process of developing a "table of contents outline format" (Thorne, 2008, p. 179). Developing the table was an opportunity to see how the themes worked in relation to one another and whether collectively they hung together coherently and told an overall story. Initial attempts at developing a table of contents demonstrated that my data analysis work was incomplete and the themes required further refining and considerations regarding what they meant in relation to one another. I ended up drafting multiple iterations of the thematic table of contents.

⁸ Listings of the coding scheme were periodically exported in report format from the qualitative data analysis software I used. This helped to track the ongoing development of codes and encourage reflection on how the inductive process was developing. Themes were mapped out conceptually in the software program and periodically exported in report format.

3.5 Validity in the Research Process

In the literature on validity, a basic distinction is struck between *transactional* and *transformational* approaches to validity. An ideal of the transactional approach is to apply techniques to ensure an accurate reflection of reality (or at least, participants' constructions of reality) (Cho & Trent, 2006). A strictly transactional approach has been critiqued because "knowing concepts such as bracketing, member checks, and triangulation do not necessarily... [ensure] validity if used." In other words, the approach does not guarantee knowledge claims (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 333). A transformational approach conceives differently of validity. Documenting an individual's or group's sense of meaning requires significant engagement with them before formal data collection, be it interviews or focus groups. If a researcher is 'holistically' engaged with the people they are completing research with, then we can more so assume that the information they collect accounts for the unique context in which the 'researched' live. Moreover, we can assume that the researcher has undergone their own process of change and understanding in completing the research (Cho & Trent, 2006). Through the work exchange I attempted to engage with people as much as possible prior to data collection and the subsequent analysis.

The transformational approach stems from post-modern critiques of positivist human research. At the heart of this is a call to instill self-corrective and reflexive elements into value-conscious research, as to prevent forcing what is researched into "pre-conceived interpretive scheme" (Lather, 1986, p. 65). In an attempt to avoid the pre-determined, a researcher's assumptions and general worldview are continually called into question. Self-reflexivity helps to produce data that is trustworthy. The following are four recommendations for ensuring validity in value-conscious research:

- Triangulation of *methods*, *data sources*, and *theories*

- Reflexive subjectivity (some documentation of how the researcher's assumptions have been affected by the logic of the data)
- Face validity (established by recycling categories, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a subsample of respondents)
- Catalytic validity (some documentation that the research process has led to insight and, ideally, activism on the part of the respondents) (Lather, 1986, p. 78)

In this thesis, I sought to satisfy three of the recommendations: methodological triangulation (using interviews and documents), reflexive subjectivity (using a research journal and immersing myself in subject from the work exchange), and face validity (ongoing conversations with the staff member at the work exchange organization, and more generally through the work exchange). Due to limitations of time and my place as an outsider within the street community and the neighbourhood more generally, catalytic validity was not as feasible.

3.6 Ethics

Ethical approval of this study was granted by University of Victoria-Human Research Ethics Board (ethics protocol number 12-334). Apart from this approval, I attempted to exercise ethical reflection throughout the research process. Many ethical considerations arise when engaging with people who have experience of homelessness; mainly, the power-over relation of researcher and marginalized individual and concerns with my own privileged position as a researcher. In light of these considerations, I felt that a respectful way to access the topic was by doing a work exchange and learning from someone who had more experience with the subject, was involved in the Pandora 900 Block, and was respected by a range of communities. By engaging in research through a work exchange, I hoped to give back to the community – even if only in a small way. Additionally, interview questions were crafted to yield substantive opinions

and perspectives rather than just eliciting experiences, which can end up treating people as “object lessons” with no substantive thoughts to contribute (Young, 1999, p. 157). On top of this, an ethical practice adopted throughout the study was to not push people to help out with the study or participate in the study. This resulted in some limitations to the study (discussed in chapter 5, section 5.1), yet helped to maintain fidelity to the principles of the study.

During the course of the work exchange I was offered employment with the organization. Being employed with the organization would have created significant ethical considerations for data collection, which was discussed with my thesis supervisors. Employment with the organization was eventually accepted but deferred until after all data collection was completed.

Finally, through the work exchange and the numerous interviews I learned that the subject matter was still very much alive in the public and somewhat controversial. By spending many hours in the neighbourhood and getting to know people through the work exchange and interviews I developed a number of relationships. Out of respect to these people, it has been important to create a research product that remains grounded in critical theory but does not come off as attacking particular people who have worked extensively in the neighbourhood and have a stake in the GNA/GNG.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretations

In this chapter themes and subthemes from interviews, city minutes, and the GNA document are discussed. Organized as a thematic summary, the chapter primarily draws on interview data augmented with data from city minutes and the GNA document, where appropriate. Thorne writes that thematic summaries are useful when a study is small (i.e. does not collect extensive data) and/or when relatively little research has been conducted on a particular phenomenon, as the summary provides a broad insight into “the main elements of the phenomenon” (Thorne, 2008, p. 165). In other words, a thematic summary details a broad range of themes relating to the subject rather than selecting a few specific themes of interest to explore in depth. This way of presenting findings is not purely descriptive but contains some degree of interpretation, yet is not a fully developed interpretive account of a particular phenomenon. A more fully developed interpretive explanation presents “a coherent model of some phenomenon, or a single thesis or line of argument that addresses causality or essence” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003, p. 914). Conversely, choosing to convey the findings in this manner necessitates a trade-off of scaling back on more in-depth analysis of particular features in the data (Thorne, 2008, p. 165). Since the data covered a broad scope of topics and little research on GNAs has been conducted, I felt that a thematic summary was appropriate for this study, rather than seeking to write a more fully developed interpretive account. I have structured this summary broadly to tell the story of this GNA by a) moving from the manifest to the underlying and b) moving from past to present (Thorne, 2008).

Data was broadly organized into four major themes: *Deal with Pre-Existing Issues*, *Making the Block More Public*, *Engagement: Dynamics of the Good Neighbour Group*, and *Marginal Involvement*. The first two themes give a picture of the context the GNA was

developed within and the impact the GNG has had on the area since the signing of the GNA. The final two themes give a picture of the dialogic side of the GNG, exploring the inner dynamics and the role of people from the street community in their work. The first theme, *Deal with Pre-existing Issues*, unlike the other themes, does not contain any sub-themes, as it is not as extensive and I did not identify any substantive sub-themes worth detailing.

Table 1: List of Themes and Subthemes

<i>Deal with pre-existing issues</i>
<i>Making the Block More Public: Actions of the Good Neighbour Group</i>
○ Community Safety
▪ Discourage Congregating
○ Police Presence
○ Impact on Service Delivery
<i>Engagement: Dynamics of the Good Neighbour Group</i>
○ Venue to Voice Concerns
○ Angst and Hostility
○ Advocacy about Homelessness
○ Building Relationships
<i>Marginal Involvement: Street Engagement with 900 Block Pandora Avenue</i>
○ No Invitation
○ Service Provider as Representative
○ Challenging Role
○ Cautious Involvement
○ Independent Action
○ Opening up

4.1 Deal with Pre-existing Issues

The GNA was developed at a complex time for the neighbourhood and numerous antecedent issues gave rise to the GNA. Interview participants often spoke about how the GNA was a means to *deal with pre-existing issues* that were creating conflict in the neighbourhood. Notable pre-existing issues that the GNA sought to respond to and which also ultimately coloured the contents of the GNA are detailed herein. In this section (4.1) I also draw upon resources other than the qualitative data or city minutes, as to provide additional contextual details where needed.

Prior to the development of the GNA, many new businesses and residents were moving into the neighbourhood. Alongside these new commercial and residential neighbours, a great number of people in the street community also spent time and/or lived on the 900 Block Pandora Avenue. This dynamic gave way to, as a participant from the Community Residents Association⁹ described, a “fair amount of conflict between the businesses and the people on the street, you know. And people just didn’t seem to want to, you know, associate in the area very much or come through the area” (Brent). For some residents, business owners, and other organizations in the area there was a feeling that the block was moving in a negative direction which they had little control over. Thus the GNA was for some neighbours a way to have some influence, or as an individual from OP summarized, “feel like they were not spectators in their own community life. They wanted to have a say.” (Kirk).

The development of OP opened an opportunity to *deal with pre-existing issues* through the GNA. This meant that the GNA intended to manage OP’s impact on the neighbourhood, but also ensure that pre-existing issues were not exacerbated but dealt with by neighbours. Notable issues referenced by multiple participants were a) drug use in the neighbourhood, as represented by harm reduction services and b) camping on the boulevard in the neighbourhood. Though interweaving, each of the pre-existing issues had a unique effect on the 900 Block Pandora Avenue and eventual colouring of the GNA that was completed in the summer of 2009. Looking to the GNA document reveals the importance of both of these pre-existing issues: the “context” section of the GNA document singles out drug use and camping in the neighbourhood as “generally contributing to unhealthy and unsafe conditions in the block” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009). In the remainder of this section (4.1, chapter 1) I

⁹ Note that the name of this organization has been changed to protect confidentiality.

will provide relevant details of each of these pre-existing issues that eventually were responded to by the GNA and actions of the GNG.

First, there was a concern about drug use in the neighbourhood, which manifested as a struggle over harm reduction services in the neighbourhood. The coordinating agency and people accessing the harm reduction services faced great community opposition. In 2008, a community-based needle exchange located on Cormorant Street that was operating in the neighbourhood for over 20 years (in fact the only needle exchange in the city at the time) was delivered an eviction notice after concerns from some community members escalated (“Victoria neighbourhood resists needle exchange”, 2007; MacNeil & Pauly, 2010, p. 3). One participant recalled that the needle exchange came to be seen as a threat to *community safety* and “galvanized the community, say, against the delivery of services” (Lee)¹⁰. Conversely, such services were seen as necessary to greater wellbeing by people who delivered and accessed them. After the needle exchange program on Cormorant Street was closed down in 2008, the local health authority attempted to relocate the needle exchange to a new location along the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue. Opposition to this proposal was strong and continued to spark the participation of many groups who initially expressed concerns about the needle exchange on Cormorant Street. During a public hearing in 2008 regarding the proposed relocation of a needle exchange onto the Downtown Block, a number of the soon to be GNG members expressed deep concern regarding harm reduction services in the area. In the City minutes, many speakers linked harm reduction services to an increased potentiality of property crime due to the presence of drug users. It was suspected that the relocation of the needle exchange to a site along Downtown Block would have similar ‘negative’ effects as were seen in the old location. For instance, a petition of 1,700

¹⁰ Data from the minutes of City Council meetings, demonstrates that some of the individuals and organizations involved in the campaign against the relocation of a needle exchange to the 900 Block Pandora Avenue eventually formed part of the GNG (City of Victoria, 2008, pg.5).

signatures “requesting that the needle exchange not be relocated to 941 Pandora Avenue” was presented to City Council (City of Victoria, 2008, pg.5). Individual comments expressed similar sentiments, as exemplified by this comment from a staff member from an organization located along 900 Block of Pandora:

With the news of the proposed relocation of the needle exchange we will no longer be able to guarantee the safety of these children and others and we are not prepared for compromises. We have worked closely with [OP], but the [900 Block of Pandora] community is under stress and this move may result in the breaking point. It has been said that the problem of [needle exchange on Cormorant Street] will not be permitted, and that they will not be permitted to shoot up on the premises, but where will they be permitted, a few block down and the staff of the [organization name] will have to clean up the used paraphernalia. The City’s inability to clean up [old needle exchange] means nothing will be different if it’s located on [900 Block of Pandora] (City of Victoria, 2008, pg.5).

There is specific reference made to people who use drugs as having a detrimental effect on *community safety* in the neighbourhood. In one comment, a representative from an organization opposed to the relocation of the needle exchange remarked that “drug addicted people are unpredictable and children should not be permitted to be ‘assaulted’ with these visuals” (City of Victoria, 2008, pg.5). So it wasn’t the harm reduction services per se that were the cause of community backlash but more so the thought that people who use drugs would be in the neighbourhood to access these services, and somewhat stereotypical views of people and substance use featured prominently in the discussion.

Through the collective efforts of residents, businesses and organizations in the neighbourhood and other parts of the city, the needle exchange was not relocated to the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue. With the introduction of OP there was a concern that their presence could exacerbate some of the issues that certain community members had worked to mitigate. Conversely, the introduction of OP also represented a possibility to continue to root out the pre-existing issues on the Block. Drawing on data from the minutes of City Council meetings, it can

be seen that some individuals and organizations involved in campaigning against the needle exchange in the neighbourhood eventually formed part of the GNA Group (City of Victoria, 2008).

A key outcome of these community-based struggles was the creation of a “no go zone” that governed the future operation of needle exchange services in the neighbourhood. This ‘zone’ covered a two block radius around the location of the closed needle exchange and the 900 Block of Pandora. Service providers and outreach workers were prohibited from offering any needle exchange services within the ‘zone’. Clients of these services had to leave the specific area in order to access harm reduction supplies (e.g. clean needles). Appended to the ‘no go zone’ is a Code of Conduct for harm reduction outreach workers to follow, which stipulates that workers will not do any “needle exchange in front of residences, open businesses, schools and day-care centers” (MacNeil & Pauly, 2010, p. 3). At the time of writing this thesis, the ‘no go zone’ was still in effect and shaping service delivery in the neighbourhood. Indeed, section 4.2.3 of this chapter contains some accounts of how the ‘no go zone’ and the GNG interweave.

The second main *pre-existing issue* was an encampment, referred to as a ‘tent city’ that was set up on the grass covered boulevard running down the center of the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue. Camping around the City had been a contentious issue for a number of years prior to the encampment along Pandora, with previous attempts by the City to prohibit camping (Fong, 2008; The Poverty and Human Rights Centre, 2009). The encampment along Pandora raised concerns about *community safety* by many non-campers (Cleverly, 2009). This became a big issue particularly for OP who often was deemed responsible for the camping: “we had a huge issue over one summer with, um, ah, tents out in the boulevard. And then there was at that time too earlier someone got hurt, I believe got hit by a car. Um, but the major issue was all those tents”

(Kirk). One issue of contention with the camping on the boulevard was that the activity was linked to drug use in the neighbourhood (Lee). So people were camping on the green but that the encampment also became a ‘hub’ for drug use in the area.

A significant legal history regarding camping in public spaces in the City further frames the issue of the encampment on the Pandora boulevard and the shape of the eventual responses to the camping (by the City, the GNG, etc.). In 2005, after a number of people set up a tent in a public park, the City of Victoria sought a civil injunction in court to enforce city bylaws dealing with park and public spaces, titled ‘Parks Regulation Bylaw’ and the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’, which prohibited sleeping overnight in public spaces (The Poverty and Human Rights Centre, 2009, p. 3; Young, 2009, n.p). In 2007, the City amended its ‘Parks Regulation Bylaw’ to ban people from taking “temporary abode”, instead of just sleeping in public parks. As a result, city police were able to prohibit the street community from setting up any form of “overhead protection including tents, tarps, and cardboard boxes, even on a temporary basis” (The Poverty and Human Rights Centre, 2009, p. 3). In their own defence, a number of campers argued that prohibiting their ability to sleep overnight in public spaces contravened their Charter rights. Eventually, the issue made its way to the British Columbia Supreme Court, with the Court finding that the City bylaws “negatively affected the life, liberty, and security of the person interests protected under section 7 of the Charter” (Young, 2009, n.p). It was argued that since there was a shortage of appropriate shelter spaces to house people experiencing homelessness in the City, people had no other choice but to sleep outside and therefore required minimal shelter (The Poverty and Human Rights Centre, 2009, p. 3). Known as *Victoria (City) v. Adams*, the case has been heralded as an important step in solidifying the right to shelter for people experiencing homelessness in Canada (The Poverty and Human Rights Centre, 2009, p. 6). In the wake of the

Adams case, staff at the City of Victoria noted that the numbers of people camping in city parks, city owned boulevards, and street medians increased (City of Victoria, 2010c, p. 2). The boulevard along 900 Block of Pandora was one of the main sites.

4.2 Making the Block More Public: Actions of the Good Neighbour Group

As part of the signing of the GNA on July 20, 2009, a GNG was formed with the goal of collectively working to realize the vision of the GNA. At the time of signing, the GNG comprised nine organizations (including residents/neighbourhood association) and businesses. The vision reads that “all neighbours of the 900 block of Pandora Avenue including residents, businesses, seniors, children, students, social service agencies, schools, churches, and the street community, will be welcome and may enjoy comfort and safety in their neighbourhood” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009) (See Appendix A). Since then, the GNG has had notable influence on the 900 Block Pandora Avenue, such as helping to instigate amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw, pushing for increased police patrols and working on matters related to social service delivery. Throughout section 4.2, I explore the actions of the GNG by detailing their initiatives and activities.

Actions came in various forms, from affecting physical changes to the 900 Block Pandora Avenue, to influencing the aforementioned bylaw, and representing GNG’s perspective on various matters to City Council¹¹. A large portion of the interview data on the initiatives and activities of the GNG revolved around the theme of *Making the Block More Public*. The notion of what constitutes a ‘more public block’ was and still is contested, though I attempt to tease out some of the qualities here. Three sub-themes were identified as aspects of *Making the Block*

¹¹ For the purpose of organization, in this research project the action-side of the GNA Group is distinguished from its dialogic side (i.e. meeting dynamics, engagement of the street community, etc.). The latter is discussed in chapter 4, section 4.3.

More Public: community safety, police presence, and impact on service delivery. Sub-themes will be discussed in order.

4.2.1 Community Safety

In sections 4.1 and 4.2 earlier in this chapter, *community safety* was introduced as an important concern amongst GNG members. Since the development of the GNA, a large portion of the GNG's initiatives and activities have focused on enhancing *community safety*, which largely emanated from the 'Vision Statement' in the GNA, noted above. An emphasis on the safety of all community members ran through this vision. In many cases the primary emphasis was on the safety of individuals not from the street community and in fewer cases the safety of the street community was invoked. Often though, it was the presence of people from the street community on the 900 Block that was the source of residents feeling "threatened". As one participant recalled "the biggest thing was for a women who owned a condominium down the road to walk down the street and not be threatened, not feel threatened, walk by the street and not have to walk on the road, to be able to walk down her sidewalk in front of [OP] and feel comfortable" (Steve). This perspective was echoed by representatives of the Community Residents Association, who also added that safety had remained an "ongoing challenge" because "some of the residents in the area still don't feel really safe", often when they were out in the evenings (Connie). Through a series of work projects, the GNG attempted to enhance safety. Broadly speaking, actions to improve *community safety* tended to also *discourage congregating* of people in the street community. The rest of section 4.2.1 strives to show how these two themes are intertwined through an exploration of one major initiative of the GNG.

The tent city erected on the boulevard of the 900 Block Pandora Avenue in the year prior and at the time of signing the GNA in July of 2009 became the subject of much of the GNG's

actions shortly after the signing. Of all the various encampments occurring around the City, the one located on the boulevard along the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue was considered particularly large, with 20 to 60 people per night finding shelter there (City of Victoria, 2010c, p. 2). At the time, the tent city was cited by City staff in reports to City councillors as harming the “the residential and business community”. Attempts to ameliorate were numerous: OP had expanded street cleaning efforts in the area, the police were attempting to address provisions in city bylaws regulating camping in public green spaces¹², regular liaison with staff at OP to help remove/relocate campers, the GNG was meeting regularly to discuss issues, and the City was funding its own cleanup efforts of the boulevard (City of Victoria, 2010b, p. 76; City of Victoria, 2010a, p. 14). In 2009, the GNG made a submission to the City regarding *community safety* concerns. With specific reference to camping on the boulevard, they sought action by the City to prevent further camping by amending the City’s ‘Parks Regulation Bylaw’. The motion on behalf of the GNG was presented by a city councillor and requested that “the [boulevard] area between 900 and 1100 be excluded from permission for overnight camping” (City of Victoria, 2009a, p. 3). Two reasons for the change were cited: the “Health and Safety of the people on the [boulevard] area” and that no camping would be “A reprieve for the community neighbours in the evenings” (City of Victoria, 2009a, p. 3). The latter reason reflects the sentiment that the campers were simply not wanted in the neighbourhood.

City Council approved the GNG’s proposal and asked staff to review the City’s Parks Regulation Bylaw (City of Victoria, 2009b, p. 14). Almost one year later, City staff delivered a report on August 30, 2010 to City Council that detailed the state of the tent cities located around the City, notably with reference to the encampment along Pandora Avenue. Encampments were

¹² The City minutes do not provide detail about what bylaw(s) the police were reviewing.

characterized as spaces which “[attract] illegal and inappropriate behaviour (public urination and defecation, open drug use and public indecency)” and “negatively affects the image of the Victoria and threatens the future of Downtown” (City of Victoria, 2010c, p. 2). Further, it was observed that camping on boulevards and medians had led to numerous “serious accidents and near accidents involving pedestrians leaving the median” onto the street, so safety concerns for both campers and vehicle drivers were cited (City of Victoria, 2010c, p. 2). Overall, in the way the concerns were spoken about, a degree of blame was placed the street community for the negative conditions and threats to *community safety*, without a proportionate acknowledgement of other reasons which may have influenced the formation of a tent city. Campers were to a degree thought of as irresponsible and not caring about the wellbeing of the neighbourhood. Ultimately, City staff recommended that the City’s ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’ be amended to “prohibit camping and erecting of any unauthorized structures on City road allowances (i.e. boulevards and median) at any time and to prohibit occupation of medians after dark¹³” (City of Victoria, 2010c, p. 1) (See Appendix C for the proposed bylaw amendment).

City council formally voted on September 9, 2010 to approve the amendment of the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’ shortly after receiving the report from August 30, 2010. Changes to the bylaw effectively prohibited people from camping on city owned boulevards and medians, while continuing to permit camping in areas designated as public parks. Additionally, further powers were granted to city personnel, including police officers, for the “removal, detention or impounding of any structure, tent, object or thing found on a boulevard or median in

¹³ Although the GNG put forth a motion to amend the City’s ‘Parks Regulation Bylaw’, the report delivered to City council on August 30, 2010 recommended that a different bylaw be amended, the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’. The City focused on the latter bylaw to clear up an “ambiguity” between the two bylaws, and by amending the latter bylaw, boulevards would officially not be categorized as parks and thus is governed under different a bylaw. Under the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’ the City would be able to prohibit camping on such boulevard and medians (City of Victoria, 2010d, p.5).

contravention of this section” (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 10). Council also voted to arrange a public hearing regarding the proposed amendments to the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’.

During the public hearing GNG representatives spoke in favour of the bylaw amendment. A City Councillor summarized the GNG’s support for the bylaw as grounded in concern for *community safety*: “The [GNG] starts with a Vision statement stating that all will be welcome and enjoy the comfort and safety of the neighbourhood. The GNG supported the Bylaw as their vision was not being met” (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 10). Citing similar issues raised by city staff, multiple members of the GNG also spoke in favour of the bylaw. The chair of the GNG cited that, in addition to the safety concerns of campers being hit by cars, “camping on the boulevard includes other issues such as vandalism, defecation, urination and drug use that threatens our safety and security and they now have security guards” (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 5). The GNG was sympathetic to the challenges of people on the streets and reported to Council that they “want to help implement solutions” but the bylaw amendment was seen as “a first step” to addressing the issue (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 5). However, the encampment and the people who were sleeping on the boulevard were framed as taking away the community’s “basic right for safety” and a degree of responsibility for threatening *community safety* was placed on the campers. In an interview, a staff member from OP cited their reasons for supporting the bylaw amendment as sympathetic to the campers but fearful of the potential safety risks: “we knew they needed a place to camp but we didn’t see the boulevard as being an ideal place” (Susie). For them, the problem was not camping in public but the specific location because it posed safety concerns for the street community. Such sympathy for camping was not unanimous though; other GNG members positioned the safety of business interests and people other than those in the street community in the forefront. Camping was partly framed as holding back the neighbourhood from

positive growth and in minutes from the City Council meeting, there were many statements marked with a sense of urgency around responding to the tent city in order to prevent drastic negative impacts on the local business community (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 9). Either way, people who were camping were framed as a) people who did not care about community safety or the wellbeing of the neighbourhood and b) a ‘problem’ that needed to be dealt with.

At the same time, other voices at the public hearing expressed concerns that the bylaw amendment was not a proportional response to the situation at hand and did not take into account structural challenges such as the dearth of accessible public space or affordable housing. One interview participant who was part of the street community framed the situation as: “You have this building issue in Victoria where people aren’t housed, you know, always this percentage of unemployed, always these empty houses around and not enough housing. And then eventually you had a situation of crises of homeless on the street.” (Noam). These voices at times were still supportive of business in the area but critical of the broad response to the camping, calling instead for a more proportionate understanding of the situation: “Um, I’ve no doubt that that kind of gathering [the tent city] had impacts, to some extent, on the local residents and the businesses but I think that we’ve also seen that businesses can be very successful in the neighbourhood, even despite or because some of the attention brought to the neighbourhood” (Lee). Perspectives along these lines (expressed by other participants as well) re-articulate the notion of *community safety* in two unique ways. First, it reframes the street community as individuals who do care about community safety in the neighbourhood. Second, it shifts responsibility for threats to *community safety* away from the campers and towards larger structural issues that weigh down on the neighbourhood (e.g. a lack of affordable housing in the city).

The proposed ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’ amendment, as appearing in the report from August 30, 2010, was given a third reading after the public hearing and City Council then voted in favour of the amendment. The bylaw amendment was followed soon afterwards by redevelopment of the boulevard along the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. Plans for this project stemmed back prior to the GNA. Funds for this redevelopment were originally allotted by the City in 2005, concurrent with the approval of development of OP. Later, a community engagement process regarding the design of the redevelopment occurred in 2007 (City of Victoria, 2011f, p. 2). Members of the GNG played an active role in drafting the redevelopment plans and provided ongoing input with the hope that the redevelopment would improve “functionality for positive uses and to add elements and infrastructure which would enhance safety and security” (City of Victoria, 2011f, p. 2; City of Victoria, 2011g, p. 10). What can be seen here is an example of how for many members the GNG served as a means for the continuation of neighbourhood-focused work which began prior to the creation of the GNA. Moreover, these redevelopment plans meshed synergistically with the amendment on the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’ and was keenly supported by the GNG, as they “agreed collectively it [camping] wasn’t a good use of the space and of course the City came on board and beautified it hoping that it would also act as, act as a deterrent” (Susie). The redevelopment project was completed in July of 2011 (City of Victoria, 2011h, p. 15).

The actions to amend the ‘Streets and Traffic Bylaw’ and the redevelopment of the boulevard on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue can be interpreted as the realization of a particular understanding of *community safety*. Boulevard improvements were framed around mitigation of ‘negative uses’ to draw in more ‘positive uses’, which one participant talked about as an “act of push and pull of trying to draw quote, unquote legitimate members of the

community” (Lee). Again, the street community are partly framed as a ‘problem’ which needed to be solved and changing the physical landscape of the area would help to limit the ability of such people from ‘negatively’ using the space. Having the ability to push for this type of ‘community safety’ pointed to a larger issue: that the GNG had a level of power to enact particular goals and policies. This power was generally not held by the street community, who couldn’t really counteract or respond to the initiatives to amend the Streets and Traffic Bylaw (discussed later in section 4.4 of this chapter). What can be observed here is an imbalance of power that stems from unequal access to resources and advantageous social positioning. The street community had neither resources nor the social positioning, such as being part of a legitimized and organized group like the GNG, to effectively counteract this push for ‘community safety’.

However, there were trade-offs to pursuing safety via dispersing campers. Many people from the street community advanced an alternative understanding of safety, which viewed the tent city as one means of achieving greater personal safety and congregating in numbers as important for creating a sense of safety. A participant (Noam) from Peer-Based Organization¹⁴ talked about how “people went there [tent city] after it got set up because they felt safe because the people could watch out for each other and all that.” Other people from the street community who spoke at the public hearing for the bylaw amendment articulated a similar sense of safety; for instance, “When [OP] closes at night they congregate and they have security and there is security to check on them” (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 5). Dispersing the campers left a reduced sense of safety for some people in the street community. What these voices were arguing was that the amendment of the ‘Street and Traffic Bylaw’ and the redevelopment of the boulevard

¹⁴ Peer-Based Organization (named changed to protect identity) is a local advocacy organization that seeks to bring the street community’s voice into matters that affect this community. It is comprised of individuals who have experience of homelessness, both current and past, and housed-allies who support the peer-led work.

were solving one group's problems but were not explicitly concerned with solving problems that the street community faced. Again, as noted above, unequal access to resources and a non-privileged social position (e.g. stigmatized) diminished the overall capacity of the street community to robustly advocate this position and have it acknowledged by other involved parties, be it the City or other community members.

An important narrative ringing through these alternative understandings is that peer-support networks helped facilitate safety for the street community. Moreover, since these networks help create safety for people in the street community, they can be seen as part of the larger project of creating safe communities for everyone. Other stories of peer-support networks were told by participants, beyond just the tent city. In certain cases, the general dispersal of peers from the 900 Block Pandora Avenue had impacts on people's personal health and safety, since peer-support networks that were relied on became weaker. By this I mean that the network of peers could serve as mutual support networks, which in some cases helped people maintain a level of health and safety that they likely would not have been able to achieve on their own in isolation. The dispersal of these peer networks left some people without the support they came to rely on. For example, in recalling a story about a specific individual, one participant discussed the ramifications of not having enough peers around, such that there was "no community around him to keep an eye on him, no community around him to keep peer pressure" (Noam). These stories really speak to the proactive agency of people to try and create a sense of safety and mutual support. Overall, a major trade-off arose from attempts to *discourage congregating*; it can make it more difficult for peer-support bonds to be formed and sustained, which ramifies into the broader community. This notion of 'peer support' is returned to elsewhere in this chapter, in discussion of peer-based organizing in section 4.2.2 and later in sections 4.5 and 4.6.

4.2.2 Police Presence

Participants spoke about a noted general increase in *police presence* along the 900 Block Pandora Avenue since the introduction of OP and accompanying much of the initiatives of the GNA. Interview participants mainly spoke about police activity as complimentary to the work of the GNG, assisting in the goal of *Making the Block More Public*.

Police involvement in the tent city and subsequent management of the boulevard was illustrated by participants from OP, with one staff member stating that after passing the bylaw to prohibit the ability to camp on the boulevard the City “gave it to police” to handle (Steve). As new encampments sprung up, responsibility for disbursing them was often assumed by OP in collaboration with the police, saying they would “go talk to them and tell them, and or we could call the police and would talk with the police” (Susie). Police activity remained high afterwards, and one participant (Mary), who identified as part of the street community, indicated that the activity would shift around the 900 Block Pandora Avenue to address the shifting concentrations of people who were part of the street community. This often involved asking people to relocate or issuing trespassing tickets to people in the street community for spending time on the property of a nearby church, despite not being able to pay the fine. Such increases had an effect of reducing the amount of accessible public space for the street community to gather in and making it “hard to, you know, for them to be in public because they often are dealing with being criminalized” (Noam). The effect is the street community is profiled as a population that must be watched and monitored regularly as they are suspect liable to do something ‘negative’.

A second order effect was that the police involvement in the area inhibited self-organizing amongst people in the street community engage in neighbourhood matters. Being out in public was “hard” due to the “criminalization” faced (Noam). Therefore, it was difficult to gather people together for the purposes of meeting and organizing around neighbourhood issues.

In this sense, I see that an increase of *police presence* can undermine some aspects of peer-support networks which are vital basis from which to pursue peer-based organizing, as the pursuit of *community safety* undermined some established peer-support networks (discussed above in section 4.2.1).

Along with the heightened *police presence* around the 900 Block Pandora Avenue, a number of participants saw an increase of police activity within service provider's facilities, which brought about some changes in the delivery of the social services. Police were common in OP's facility, both in uniform and undercover, as noted by multiple participants who had experience of homelessness (Noam and Mary). This was spoken of as the hidden ramifications of the GNA: "and then the underside, the roots of these things, is that you have police getting deeper and deeper, entrenched in these service providers" (Rebecca). Consequently, police had become more and more integrated into the day-to-day operations of OP.

And suddenly they're walking right past the security and dissing them. It's a disrespect! It's like, why can't you say "hey, Robin, you're working security today, we have to go in because we are looking for [name] whose been messin' up real bad." Okay, and then you can radio and let people know, 'hey the cops are coming'. Usually they'd be nice enough to call ahead, but no they just come and go now like it's, ah, one of their offices. (Noam).

This statement captures the trade-off of having police officers regularly working within service provider's facilities: the service facility may no longer serve as a place where the street community can safely access services without having to encounter the police. For people who have been involved in criminal activities, the possibility of encountering police officers can dissuade them from accessing services. This is not to say that police should never enter a facility, but too much presence may mean it becomes "just, you know [pause] yeah, it's just over controlled" (Noam). Comments from Noam and Rebecca together make the point that a service provider's primary responsibility is to the people who use their services and maintain a space where marginalized individuals can safely spend time and access services. Increased *police*

presence, often in the name of *community safety*, can negatively affect a service provider's ability to effectively serve people.

Interview comments illustrated the multifaceted nature of increased *police presence*. For some GNG members and certain neighbourhood residents, it secured a greater sense of safety, while for some of the street community it made them more hesitant about accessing services at OP or feeling welcome on the 900 Block Pandora Avenue. What an increase of police involvement means for different groups should be taken into consideration, and unchecked growth in police involvement has an underside that service providers and the street community bear. Despite these ramifications for the street community, there really was no medium (such as the GNG) in which to comment on the negative effects of *police presence* or provide input into police services. The sub-theme of *police presence* reverberated through much of the GNG's activities and is returned to periodically throughout this chapter.

4.2.3 Impact on Service Delivery

Ramifications of the GNA and the GNG's initiatives moved beyond the exterior spaces of the 900 Block Pandora Avenue and into the delivery of social services, as briefly touched upon in the discussion of *police presence*. Various examples of the *impact on service delivery* were highlighted by interview participants. One important change was the expansion of morning service hours at OP, occurring alongside the responses to tent city. The idea of expanding the services was the "result of the Good Neighbours and their discussions around 'how could we, you know, reduce the number of people hanging around out front during your off hours'; we changed our morning hours" (Susie). Expansion of the morning hours was widely supported. As one councillor stated, "it is assisting the neighbourhood businesses, residents and the police; it is good value for the community" (City of Victoria, 2011e, p. 5). Early morning hours helped the

street community by providing a warm place to eat but also “reduced any kind of traffic out in front of the building because people were coming right in” [from the street after the emergency shelters closed in the mornings] (Susie). This type of response to people congregating on the 900 Block was an attempt to satisfy GNG members by *discouraging congregation*, as certain community members desired that the public presence of the street community be limited. On the other hand, it also was supporting the street community by expanding services. It was therefore considered one of the positive contributions of the GNG, as they had an impact in attaining the services because “there was a bigger group that was backing them up for to get the extended hours” (Brent).

A similar overlapping solution was sought to address the issue of large crowds gathering to collect their social assistance cheques at the government office located along the 900 Block Pandora Avenue. These large crowds were unwanted for aesthetic reasons but also for *community safety* reasons because of the drug dealing that they were supposedly attracting. Collectively, the GNG worked with the government welfare office to change “their policies over a period of time in giving out their social assistance cheques” (Brent). Subsequently, cheque distribution was spread out over two days and the welfare office helped more people move onto a direct deposit system. This yielded benefits for the street community, since it became “less like being herded” (Brent), waiting in long lines to receive social assistance cheques. Participants spoke about how addressing this issue helped raised the profile throughout the City about more systemic challenges that people face trying to access their income assistance. One offshoot of this work was increased services at OP and the office of a local politician to help members of the street community attain identification and set up bank accounts to move onto direct deposit.

As one set of services expanded, the struggle around another set of services continued. Insufficient harm reduction services in the City had amounted to a gap in social service delivery that put pressures on the neighbourhood as a whole. The struggle over harm reduction services continued within the GNG, which served as a vehicle for some action against harm reduction (later in this chapter in section 4.3 I discuss how it was also a forum for dialogue about harm reduction). After the closure of the needle exchange and the subsequent regulation that prohibited needle exchange efforts along the 900 block of Pandora Avenue (as discussed in section 4.1 of this chapter), many harm reduction services were delivered through street outreach programs outside the neighbourhood. Yet, actions to *discourage congregation* and further *police presence* made it difficult to provide street-based harm reduction services effectively. After the tent city ended, harm reduction workers from Peer Outreach Organization¹⁵ were “not collecting the same amount of needles as they did from Green” and “more needles are being discarded throughout the neighbourhood” as people were dispersed through the neighbourhood (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 8). In particular, the inability to run a proper needle exchange and clean-up efforts put people on the street at greater risk from lack of clean supplies and discarded supplies and in turn community members were at risk as well, as has been noted in other academic literature (MacNeil & Pauly, 2010). Responding to the service gap, a pharmacy in the neighbourhood began to operate as a needle exchange. This “big scandal” was opposed by some members of the GNG and responded to by the police who “went down and made some very serious threats against the, the Pharmacy for doing something that was absolutely completely legal” (Lee). Subsequently, the needle exchange service was closed down (Hunter, 2010). Certain members of the GNG continued to engage around harm reduction issues, notably raising

¹⁵ Peer Outreach Organization is community-based agency that provides outreach services, including delivering clean harm reduction supplies. It is run by people with experience of homelessness.

objections to a report commissioned by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness in 2011 that outlined a framework to integrate harm reduction into housing first strategies, titled ‘Housing and Harm Reduction: A Policy Framework for Greater Victoria’ (City of Victoria, 2011c). This policy framework was to be used by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness to guide the implementation of its housing first strategy with associated harm reduction supports. It was presented for review and adopted in principle by City Council City of Victoria, 2011d, p.6. However, the report was objected to by the co-chair of the GNG on the grounds that the GNG was not consulted in the policy development process (City of Victoria, 2011b, p.3).

Overall, what can be taken from the discussion of impacts on service delivery is that the GNA was a tool that could be used by members in attempts to expand and contract services. This allows certain community members the capacity to be part of the shaping of local health services and their location in the neighbourhood. In some ways, it granted members power to exert more influence over service delivery than what actual clients of the services were capable of. People who access the services did not seem to have as strong of a say in the design and location of the services.

4.3 Engagement: Dynamics of the Good Neighbour Group

Throughout section 4.3 I turn to the dialogic side of the GNG, which refers to topics such as who participated, the content of discussions, dynamics in the meetings, and attempts to engage the community in its activities. At times I also refer to this as ‘engagement work’. Thoughts and ideas of interview participants converged around a number of interrelated sub-themes: *venue to voice concerns, angst and hostility, advocacy about homelessness, building relationships*.

4.3.1 Venue to Voice Concerns

In a very basic sense, participants identified the GNG as a *venue to voice concerns*. Two representatives from a Community Residents Association pointed out that the GNG opened a new channel for residents and business-owners to communicate with City staff, police officers, and service providers on neighbourhood matters. Businesses, in particular felt “more supported in in (*sic*) what they want to see happening” because prior to the GNG they would “just be kind of floundering around and seeing things happening that they didn’t like but not really having any, anywhere to go with those concerns” (Connie). GNG actions previously would have been more challenging to carry out because there was no direct *venue to voice concerns*. The formation of the GNG streamlined the ability for community members to communicate and act on concerns around a set of conditions contained in the GNA.

Being an established committee of groups elevated the members to stakeholder status with a unique access point to the City. This was seen in the boulevard redevelopment and the amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw, where in City Council discussions the voice of the GNG was specifically represented by a City councillor who served as the City’s liaison to the neighbourhood and the GNG (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 10). This was also seen later in discussions at City Council regarding whether to include a mid-block crosswalk along the 900 Block Pandora Avenue to provide safety for pedestrians crossing the road, which was opposed by many members of the GNG and relayed back to Council by the City liaison (City of Victoria, 2012, p. 8). Group members saw gains in political power through the existence of the GNG and the comparatively streamlined channel to City Council. Having the ability to voice concerns to the police was seen as a valuable aspect of GNG. A staff member from OP (Steve) talked about how the desire for access to the police was present early on in the formation of the GNA and

GNG. If instances arose that concerned residents, the regular GNG meetings¹⁶ held at OP was a place where they could “report it to GNG so that the police know that they need to patrol more around that area¹⁷” (Connie). Hence, certain residents had more input around police activity in the neighbourhood. In turn, this was beneficial for the police as well, since it left a “paper trail for them to act on afterwards” (Lee).

GNG members had frequent interaction with staff at OP and other organizations and access to service providers had two distinct yields. First, OP staff were called upon to intervene in many day-to-day issues, often removing people camping on the boulevard. Access became very direct, such that “when the camping was out there they were here all the time” (Susie), coming directly to the facility to report an issue and ask for intervention. In other cases staff would be “running defence” (Kirk) to meet with nearby business and organizations in attempts to mitigate problems. Second, on top of the day-to-day issues, the GNG functioned as a means for people to keep up-to-date on the delivery of social services in the neighbourhood. A number of participants mentioned that harm reduction services in the neighbourhood was frequently discussed at the GNG meetings. One City representative recalled that “a large part of the discussion was whether or not there was a needle exchange going on in the neighbourhood, with, um, with the claims of needles being found by residents, etc. (Lee)”. Social service organizations continually had to respond to certain GNG members about “whether or not there is going to be extended services’ (Susie). By signing on as members of the GNG, groups were able to better monitor and act upon harm reduction services in the neighbourhood, meaning that it would have been more difficult for social service agencies to establish harm reduction services. I also

¹⁶ At the time of writing this chapter, GNA Group meetings were held every two months, and special meetings were called on an as-needed basis.

¹⁷ At the time of writing this chapter, the police’s Community Liaison Officer attended the GNA Group meetings. An on duty police officer attended the meetings for approximately the first three years of the GNA Group.

interpret the desire to keep up-to-date with service delivery plans as a continued desire for consultation about all service delivery that affects the neighbourhood. Prior to the GNA certain neighbourhood groups became involved in service delivery issues and with the development of the GNA there was a new expectation that these stakeholders would be consulted on harm reduction service planning issues.

In a submission to the City regarding GNAs and harm reduction services, a committee of local social service providers contended that a GNA may grant certain neighbourhood stakeholders too much access and control over social services. The committee recommended that certain limits be placed on a GNA, such as they should address issues that can be directly linked, within reason, to the service provider (City of Victoria, 2011c, pp. 40-41). Drawing casual links to a service provider can be difficult. If someone is sleeping on the boulevard downtown, it was not caused by a service provider per se. Instead, the drivers are often larger structural issues, such as the lack of affordable housing and lack of public space for the street community to be in. Expecting the service provider to deal with these issues can disregard some of the other causal factors and thereby place responsibility on the service provider to address issues potentially outside of their scope. Additionally, responsibility may be placed on the street community for issues that are far larger in scope, such as the lack of affordable housing, such as engaging in 'loitering' behaviour when there simply is no other public space in which they are welcomed to be.

4.3.2 Angst and Hostility

Participants discussed that insofar as the GNG maintained ongoing dialogue about the neighbourhood, it also served as a venue for the expression of some *angst and hostility* towards the street community. Being a large social service provider and the focal point of the GNA, OP

received a great deal of angst and hostility, both publically and through the GNG. During the tent city OP was the “scapegoat for everything” (Kirk) and often blamed for the encampment. Some frustration was expressed about the quality of dialogue that was occurring in the neighbourhood at this time for levelling so much responsibility onto the organization: “if we hadn’t been there the tents wouldn’t have been there, but don’t blame us for having the tents” (Kirk). However, since the service provider was taken as the representative of the street community, they become an obvious target for a great deal of blame and hostility. What got lost in the expression of *angst and hostility* was a disregard of other factors which contributed to the tent city, such as the lack of affordable housing, instead laying blame on the campers and the organization for the negative impacts on the neighbourhood.

Hostility specifically towards the street community marked the dynamics of GNG meetings. GNG meetings were a venue where people could voice concerns without fully understanding the negative impacts of what they were saying. Throughout the development of the GNA and later in the GNG, staff at OP regularly had to receive stigmatizing comments. One participant (a City representative) spoke about their unease when having to listen to some of the regular comments that were “certainly lacking empathy and maybe insight into the lives of those who were most street-affected” (Lee). For instance, they recalled that one local resident was “taking pictures of people who were forced to shit in the streets, ah, for lack of access to any basic services” without really having “a conscious sense that you were taking and affecting someone’s dignity by taking someone’s picture to show what a horror it is that this was going on” (Lee). It is easy to imagine that a meeting where pictures of people “forced to shit in the streets” are being shown can be further stigmatizing for people in attendance who have experience of homelessness and penury. A stigmatizing environment along these lines does not

encourage people from the street community to take part in GNG meetings and activities but can instead deter people from getting involved. This point will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.4 later in this chapter.

Harm reduction services in the neighbourhood were also the subject of angst and hostility. As the pharmacy was distributing methadone, and later served as a needle exchange, its services were the subject of angst and hostility at the GNG meetings. The pharmacy eventually ceased participation at GNG meetings as to not endure the hostility towards the services they were delivering:

The guy from [pause] the methadone clinic never came to the meetings and he always got yelled at because “well the methadone clinic and you have all the people hanging around out across the street already”. He said “heck with the meetings, I’m just not coming, I’m running a business and I don’t have to come, I’ve got more important things to do than listen to you bitch!” (Steve).

The pharmacy’s representative did attempt to engage discussion about their services but had “felt that their, that their voice was falling flat there, that they were feeling ignored, largely ignored, or not being acknowledged” (Lee). Subsequently, the pharmacy, a signee of the GNA, refrained from attending meetings out of a feeling of powerlessness. Loss of the pharmacy as a regular participant reduced the diversity of voices at the meetings, particularly as a service provider supportive of and involved in harm reduction services.

However, despite the exclusionary consequences of *angst and hostility*, it was felt by some participants that a venue to express *angst and hostility* was important. This was seen in comments from a staff member at OP, who felt a lot of learning came through having such a space:

But, you know, I’m not saying that they’ve suddenly had these epiphanies where they understand that everybody with a drug addiction is ill, um, you know because you get the ‘well they should be put in jail, they should be put away’ – all the ‘they, they, they’ statements. But I think there’s definitely more compassion than there would have been

previously as a result of our meeting with, including the residents and giving the forum and a venue to vent. (Susie).

The expression of angst and hostility was where the dialogue began; people needed to express angst, frustration and yell at service providers. From this basis greater understanding and “more compassion” grew, but, as Susie said, there first needed to be a “venue to vent”. I interpret this sentiment as recognizing the role of emotionally expressive speech in dialogue in the GNG. Yet, there exists a tension in the role that angst and hostility has played in the GNG. On the one hand, there were exclusionary consequences for some participants, such as the pharmacy deciding not to participate in the meetings (and later in section 4.4 of this chapter I discuss the exclusionary consequences for the street community). On the other hand there were more constructive consequences, such as the understanding and learning which can occur through allowing a space where certain privileged people can voice their raw angst. Constructive outcomes did not come quickly but came over time as staff at OP and other advocates sustained dialogue and responded to hostility. They jumped at the rare opportunity for sustained face-to-face dialogue and in doing so ground was gained in fostering more understanding of the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness. However, along the way, the exclusionary consequences were numerous and, for some participants, outweighed the learning outcomes which came overtime. Stigmatizing effects of this type of communication can perpetuate negative constructions of the street community as a set of ‘problems’ to be dealt with and not as a group of people who can positively contribute to the neighbourhood.

4.3.3 Advocacy about Homelessness

The brief discussion of the learning and understanding that occurred as a result of having a space to vent leads into another theme that emerged from the interviews, *advocacy about homelessness*. In conjunction to the *angst and hostility*, participants talked about the ongoing

advocacy for the street community, which created an ongoing push and pull dynamic. Staff at OP spoke about how they saw their role in the GNG specifically as responding to angst and advocating the street community:

So, we had many, um, meetings with various business within the immediate area, including the school, um, and had really, you know, very interesting conversations around the nature of what we were doing to serve, and, um, I think if anything, heightened their awareness and understanding of the difficulty that the people that we serve have. So, for, for me it was really trying to educate and inform and, you know, knowledge is power. Ah, if, if they had a better understanding of what we are doing than perhaps they wouldn't be so afraid of our presence in the neighbourhood. (Susie).

Their statement highlights the goal of “having a conversation”, in which staff could encourage people to reflect on and understand challenges faced by the street community. Facilitating ongoing conversation was a goal in and of itself because it “really helps the community”:

Is it really a community process? I guess there's a community conversation going on and I guess some of the conversation has melded into a policy and procedure around [OP]. For the most part it's been that though; a conversation going on. And in your house, your own home, if conversation is going on, good or bad, angry or not, we get to know one another a lot better. If conversation isn't going on, I think you've got a sick community. (Steve).

In the comment above, *impacts on service delivery* resulting from the GNG are acknowledged but they are diminished in comparison to the benefits which the ongoing conversation has had for other community members. Through the dialogue, reflection about the structural causes of homelessness was encouraged, including the lack of affordable housing in the region or the challenges of living off an income assistance cheque. In cases where some members placed blame on the street community for problems their business/organization was facing, staff would push back and draw attention to larger structural issues that impacted the neighbourhood. One such ‘push back’ was the effort of staff from OP to reframe the angst and hostility by pushing people to see homelessness as an issue that the entire community needed to address: “it moved from looking at me and [OP] as a problem to a more community problem and

how can the community settle, solve those issues” (Steve). Thus, homelessness was not just a ‘problem’ caused by the street community and a ‘problem’ that only OP should deal with.

Reframing, though, took time and ongoing dialogue. As OP was being developed, opposition from some community members was high. One participant recalled the early community meetings (around the time of the formation of the GNG) as filled with remarks along the lines of “don’t want this in my neighbourhood, this is not coming over my dead body” (Steve). However, the GNG was an opportunity for some people to learn more about people experiencing homelessness and over time change the way they perceived the street community and the issue of homelessness more generally. For example, a common perception was that the people from the street community were liable to physically assault other community members and thus diminish *community safety*. Some of these perceptions were alleviated over time as GNG members learned more and talked about what actually was occurring in their neighbourhood. One key learning moment, as recounted by one participant, was when a series of police statistics were released to the GNG which showed that there had never been any reports of people from the street community physically assaulting other community members in the neighbourhood. These statistics “sort of got everybody, I think, by surprise when it came out that ‘hey, you know, it’s not the street people actually’ (Brent). Similarly, another participant mentioned that “every month they [the police] publish their crime stats for each neighbourhood and North Park’s stats don’t really change that much” (Connie). This participant said that these facts are made known to people who come to the GNG meetings. Overall, the ongoing process of dialogue and learning that occurred through the GNG helped some people become “less scared” (Steve).

Advocacy efforts were not necessarily combative, but responsive and educative. Challenging uninformed assumptions and viewpoints was key to these efforts, as a City representative discussed: “I was in a good position to debunk some of the fear mongering that was going on around anything from needle exchange or otherwise to at least ensure that we’re having a dialogue, um, based on a common set of understanding and evidence, that a single case didn’t represent the entire, you know, the whole totality of what was going on around there” (Lee). Regular face-to-face meetings opened up a forum for more intimate conversation about harm reduction, which was unavailable prior to the GNA. Conversation continued outside of meetings through personal connections developed through the meetings, as evidenced in the example below. So while advocacy was occurring at GNG meetings, it was also occurring outside of the meetings, on a one-to-one or small group basis:

As recently as a month and a half ago I had that discussion around harm reduction because they were wanting to know if we were going to become a safe injection site. I said no we aren’t, that’s not the plan but remember that, you know, these people are ill and it’s not just addicts that we serve. And harm reduction; “a safe injection, well you’re just giving them the drugs”. And I would say, well, part of the reason is that they’re going to get them anyhow, they’re going to be shooting up under that tree in front of you. Why not have them here? We could have a discussion, some people will be pre-contemplative about addressing their drug addiction and we’ve got a captive audience; we don’t out on the street. So, I’m always trying to inform them about what harm reduction is on a one-to-one basis, so that little group is a little bit more aware. (Susie).

In this example above, a staff member from OP recalled a time outside of a community meeting where they engaged in a discussion with some community members about harm reduction services in the neighbourhood. In the conversation they were able to respond to the misunderstanding about safe injection sites as simply facilities that ‘give people drugs’ by providing some information about what harm reduction services actually are and how they can help people recover from addictions. It was in moments like this one that the staff member was

able to inform people about harm reduction and respond to any misunderstandings or questions that people may have.

4.3.4 Building Relationships

The 900 Block of Pandora Avenue is a confluence of businesses, public sector organizations, social service providers, arts facilities, social housing, residential buildings, abandoned buildings, green space, arterial roads, and people from different backgrounds. The GNG interacted with this web and altered the relations amongst these people and groups. It was a platform for *building relationships* amongst GNG members and to a degree with the street community. Relationships formed through the GNG were the basis from which extended conversation and work occurred.

Through angst and advocacy, OP was able to build “relationships all over the street” (Brent). These were important because via OP other GNG members and certain residents were able to develop relationships with people from the street community. In this sense, the organization acted as a conduit between the different social positions and communities. By working one-on-one and at an organizational level, staff at the organization took on the role of facilitating improved relations and respect for the street community:

Well, I think the respect comes as a result of developing a trusting relationship and from my own experience, the more that I was – and I’m only speaking about me and I’m not suggesting that this is, this is, you know, unique – but I think the more anyone spends time listening to people’s concerns, acting when they can, and informing those people when they can, then you develop that relationship, they trust you, and then they respect you ... And then they, they will respect what I’m saying and therefore by virtue of that they will respect the people on the street. You know? (Susie).

Personal relationships took time to form but were worthwhile. In that people knew and trusted the staff members, they were more inclined to seriously consider what they were saying. The same participant above (Susie) also spoke about regularly inviting people to visit OP, learn more about what goes on in the facility, and get to know people who used the services.

On a larger scale, more concerted efforts to build relationships amongst GNG members and the street community came in the form of neighbourhood events, in which everyone in the neighbourhood was invited to attend. Held at OP, “the community once a year did a BBQ in the yard and the street community came and they talked” (Steve). No formal deliberation about neighbourhood matters occurred at these events, just casual conversation. These events helped some community members challenge their perceptions about the street community and the issue of homelessness more generally. They also helped draw some GNG members and other residents further into the work of the organization and “the more they took part in that, some of them actually volunteered, the more less scared they become, or more less concerned they became” (Steve). By creating an environment where people could interact not over divisive issues, such as camping, but in a more casual manner, it was easier for some people to engage with people from the street community. Speaking from experience of homelessness, one participant cited the BBQs (and similar open house-type events held at OP) as a good environment for the street community to meet other neighbours in a friendly environment and form personal relations. Simple engagements like these helped to change some perceptions about the people who were struggling with homelessness and accessing services at OP.

There were some limits to what these relationship building events could achieve though. There was a struggle to unravel the “them and us” divide through these events alone. Community BBQs took steps towards surmounting the divide but the events perpetuated some of the same relations that were divisive, so “unintentionally create the ‘them’ and ‘us’” (Steve). These events can take on the form of being mainly a charitable act and less so about really getting to know others and developing social solidarity. What is proposed is that the events try to be more of a two-way street in which GNA members and people from the street community collaborate to put

on an event, thereby making the event less of an act of charity and more of a shared and supportive project. Nonetheless, both the smaller interpersonal and larger community-scale relationship-building efforts did set a tone for increased engagement with the street community. What can be seen in some of these efforts is an attempt to lay the foundations so increased engagement can occur.

Other discussion struck a more critical note, implicitly saying that any improved relationships have not resulted in significant gains to the wellbeing of the street community. Two individuals from Peer-Based Organization pointed out that, “There’s been deaths, like, unprecedented numbers of deaths and everybody will tell you that. Like, unreal, unreal. 30 in one month or whatever it was” (Noam). So, despite improved relations, the numbers of people dying on the street still remained high, hostile and stigmatising environments continued. Moreover, the street community were still not explicitly engaged in the activities of the GNG, whose members were still active in supporting police activity along the block and preventing harm reduction services, factors that contribute to challenging environments for people on the street. Therefore, the relationships that may have been formed perhaps were more so ‘friendly’ interactions and did not necessarily translate into increased empathy for the significant challenges faced by people on the streets or dramatic action to improve conditions for these people.

Latent in this comment by Noam and weaving through other participants’ thoughts was a recognition of the material dimension of relationship building. Relationships were built through community events and ongoing conversation, certainly, but relationships were also built because action had been taken on concerns expressed by GNG members, such as having a 24 hour security guard outside of OP. Therefore, increased compassion and less fear was contingent on concrete changes to the 900 Block Pandora Avenue that reduced the presence of the street

community - “a bad sore that healed a bit” in the eyes of some neighbours (Steve). So it was the presence of a security guard, more outdoor lighting, and more police activity that were important drivers behind the increased compassion.

4.4 Marginal Involvement: Street Community Engagement with the 900 Pandora Block

Absent from much of the discussion in section 4.3 of this chapter was a picture of the street community’s role. In this part I highlight the involvement of the street community in the GNG. From a high level, involvement in the GNA can be understood as *Marginal Involvement*, a view that flowed through all of the interviews. This theme has three broad implications. First, there was not substantial room for the inclusion of the street community in the GNA and GNG activities. Rather, people from the street community had no substantive power in the GNA and participated in peripheral ways, such as being consulted by a service provider, represented by a service provider, or attendance at relationship building events organized by the GNG. Second, attempts to participate more fully in the GNG were met with experiences of marginalization and exclusion. Third, the theme of *Marginal Involvement* also denoted the important ways in which, from the margins, the street community were proactively involved in the GNA, GNG, and, indeed, the 900 Block Pandora Avenue more generally. Six sub-themes were related to the overall theme of *Marginal Involvement: no invitation, service provider as representative, challenging role, cautious involvement, independent action, and opening up*.

4.4.1 No Invitation

The first sub-theme, *no invitation*, was broadly articulated by multiple participants. The GNA was broadly about people experiencing homelessness but not signed by people experiencing homelessness. Although the GNA was about people experiencing homelessness, only the City, local businesses, certain housed residents were identified as the important

neighbourhood stakeholders to include in crafting the Agreement. In other words, there was not room for substantive participation of the street community:

most of my experience was more with the development of it with [staff] at the City and engaging the businesses and the residents, which is probably a good beef from the street community about “you’re developing an agreement, we’re in the neighbourhood, we’re on the street and we’re not a part of that.” So, it’s not honouring their ability to contribute. (Susie).

The GNA was about attending to the interests of specific businesses, certain local organizations, certain housed residents, and to a degree the City. Its framing subsequently was “mostly between [a segment of] the community and [OP]” (Kirk). OP was positioned in such a way that they “ergo, were representatives of the homeless” by way of being “where the homeless come” (Kirk). Therefore, it was through the organization that the street community was part of the GNA, not as an independent or equal voice. Framing the GNA as such had lasting consequences on how the street community related to the GNA. Knowledge of the GNA was not widespread but some individuals from the street community were aware of it when it was being developed. Hence, the GNA was closed off since “there was never a premise that this was an open door agreement” it was and remained an “exclusive and elitist neighbourhood club that not everybody is welcome into” (Rebecca). Referring to the GNA as not open speaks to the consequences of how the GNA was framed. A homeless individual who was camping on the boulevard was not welcome at the GNG meetings in the way that a signatory (i.e. local business owner) was. Subsequent to the signing of the GNA, little to no individuals from the street community were actively involved in the GNG. Some interview participants recounted the few times that people from the street community participated in the GNG meetings and in each case, “they’ll come for a couple of meetings” (Connie) but sustained engagement rarely occurred. Speaking from a different perspective as a past City representative to the GNG and referring to the absolute

homeless, one participant said “I’ve never in all of the Good Neighbourhood Agreements that I’ve been to seen an actual member from the street community attend” (Lee).

At the same time, the GNG has expanded since the initial group of signatories. Additional businesses and a local school have since joined on as members of the GNA. Similarly, local residents who were not part of the street community were invited to attend GNG meetings even if they did not participate in the development of the GNA, as the invitation was subsequently extended to many selected housed residents. A different reality existed for the street community, who by and large were not aware of the GNG meetings because the invitation to participate had not been formally extended. By virtue of being a certain type of renter or property owner, individuals were more aware of the meetings and invited to participate.

4.4.2 Service Provider as Representative

For the purposes of the GNA, OP was framed as the representative of the street community. As discussed earlier in this chapter in section 4.1, this framing had profound impacts on how the street community related to the GNA and was involved in the GNG meetings. Rather than directly participating, the street community was represented by OP in the development of the GNA and subsequent GNG meetings. Indeed, stated clearly in the GNA was that service agencies make a commitment to “assist in engaging the street community in activities and initiatives of the Good Neighbour Group” (900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement, 2009).

The role of representative for homeless people was assumed by the organization because of their status in the neighbourhood. Since they served the homeless they had credibility and “ergo, were representatives of the homeless” (Kirk). There was a sense that no other credible options to represent the street community existed in the community, which, by extension, implies

that the street community did not have the credibility to participate in the GNA themselves. OP was in a position to do so because they were a well-recognized group that worked with the homeless. Moreover, people grappled with the question of “who speaks for who [sic]?”

Because who speaks for them? [name] spoke for them because he was seen; he was the face of homelessness in [the city]. He was certainly the face of [organization] and the face of homelessness in the larger community. Um, so, who? Who would you, who, whose ideas and thoughts would you solicit to pull something together because they were such a [claps hands to show tension], ah, you know? You know, I mean, yeah, I don't know how you would. (Kirk).

Being a ‘nebulous’ population, it can be arbitrary to ask a small group of individuals from the street community to represent the entire population group. OP, on the other hand, had a recognized authority amongst parties involved in the development of the GNA (and the City at large) to speak on behalf of the street community. Problems of representation of this sort were not unique to this GNA but had cropped up in other processes around the City with the pretense that “there is no one person who can speak for the homeless of the street community, but we’re dealing with a bunch of isolated individuals” (Lee).

There was a theoretical struggle over the question of representation. The absence of a well-recognized and organized group that was ‘ergo representative’, similar to what exists for businesses via a chamber of commerce or certain residents via a residents association, meant that the street community could not adequately participate in the development of the GNA as a distinct group. Other organizations that represented street voice did exist, but were infrequently involved in the development, for various reasons, such as the likelihood of experiencing *angst and hostility*. One such group, a Peer Outreach Organization¹⁸, was “initially invited to the meetings and was taking part in them and then, and then would, would come in on and off,

¹⁸ Note that the name of this organization has been changed to protect confidentiality. This organization is different from the Peer-Based Organization, which is mentioned elsewhere in this chapter.

would come in on and off, if I recall” (Lee). Given OP’s status in the neighbourhood, and having the ability to act as a representative, it does not seem like it was a priority to ensure that another representative organization participated, particularly one that would bring an alternative viewpoint.

For various reasons, OP acted as the representative of the street community and attempted to bring their interests into the development the GNA and GNG meetings. The street community, however, did not explicitly choose this means of participation. Speaking as a member of GNG, a representative from the Community Residents Association discussed how the method was adequate and contributed to discussions:

P: But, yeah, it it worked good because it got everybody together, and ah with [security] or whomever, so everybody sort of worked together in that respect. And there were some street people who got involved as well, so they were involved in ah some of the planning on the park, they consulted them. Basically not so much being at the meetings but through [OP].

I: They were a bit of the conduit?

P: Yeah, they would have plans over there and so on and then people could, they’d have people commenting there and they would, ah, [staff] would bring the comments forward at a meeting. So it, it worked good. (Brent).

Staff from OP acted as an intermediary between the groups, meaning people from the street community were one-step removed. Acting as an intermediary does, however, transfer a great deal of responsibility to OP; to be a mediator between the worlds, representing the interests of GNA members and the interests of the street community. In attempting to bring their voices into the process, the Organization would “meet with the street population separate from the business and home owners” on a regular a basis “and talked to them about what they wanted and talked to them about what the community wanted” (Steve). Through regular meetings held at OP the street community heard about the concerns of other GNG members and consulted regarding their own concerns. Participating via a representative did pose some challenges for OP to work through: the street community was not homogenous, and “there’s a split in the community itself where we

have the ones that aren't using, poor, using the facility, but aren't addicted, so they tended to be at these meetings, more than what the building was built for; the addicts and the mentally ill" (Steve). Different engagement techniques were required to engage people less apt to go to participate in a meeting. One technique described was to "meet them within an alley, and talk to, you know, or on the park bench and talk to two or three or five of them together to try and bring their voice into the process" (Steve). These different perspectives within the street community would be taken into account by OP and then be brought to GNG meetings. Describing this "split in the community" grapples with some of the challenges that OP had to take into account when acting as a representative.

Participation via OP also carried with it intrinsic power differentials. Although the street community may be consulted and represented (even only marginally), decision making power and control over decision making processes rested with GNG members. This was illustrated through the specific example of public benches installed as part of the redevelopment of the boulevard:

You know, but, ah, that being said I think it was, ah [pause] that they've been consulted in most of, most of the things that have happened; the [boulevard redevelopment] project, although I know probably not all of them are happy with it and, ah, that. But I know quite a few of them were consulted and were talked to ah and it's unfortunate some of the things that were done have had to be undone because of, um, activities that are happening on the street. (Brent).

There was a push by different GNG members to include the public benches into the redevelopment plans. Later the benches became a popular spot for individuals from the street community to gather (and exhibit what was deemed as 'disorderly' behaviour). Despite the minor tendencies to consult during the development of plans, the decision to eventually remove the benches rested with the GNG, without any additional consultation. The extent of consultation

– when and to what degree - was determined by GNG, independent of the input of the street community.

4.4.3 Challenging Role

Many rich insights explored the challenges, tensions, and limitations inherent in having a service provider act as a representative. Participants spoke about OP being in a *challenging role*, having to fulfill duties as a GNG member, represent/advocate for the street community, and maintain the wellbeing of their organization. In particular, at times the responsibilities of maintaining organizational health and representing/advocating for the street community were in competition. Trade-offs had to be made:

[Staff member] was in the middle of it because he was speaking for, speaking the homeless, speaking for the organization – incidentally we have to be out of here by four – speaking for the organization, speaking for, um speaking for the homeless. And he was walking a tightrope in many respects on that issue and, um, I don't know whether he saw it that way but I know as a Board we, I felt it... (Kirk).

Certainly the interests of the organization and the interests of the street community can have overlap and are not necessarily exclusive, yet in some cases there are competing ends which are difficult to balance or integrate. Hence the organization ends up “walking a tightrope”, a complex and precarious position to be in. In signing the GNA, OP “was really under a lot of pressure to act up, to basically control that that same community that they're, they were serving, you know, it was basically their patient, their population base, their, um, clientele” (Lee). By ‘act up’ this participant is referring to OP being under pressure to yield to the interests of other parties, such as the police or other GNG members, even if it ran contrary to how OP wanted to serve its clients. Having to “act up”, as it were, gave rise to tensions between serving and controlling the same population. This type of challenge was described as arising from the competing needs of advocating for people who are homelessness and being concerned about organizational credibility in the neighbourhood, thus “being tied between the two” (Kirk).

As a new presence on the block, OP had to engage with *angst and hostility* and work with neighbours to gain support and confidence in the organization, what Kirk referred to as “credibility and stature”. Tent City (a major event around the time the GNA was signed) was referenced as a challenging issue for OP and participants further detailed some of the tensions already discussed throughout this chapter. To illustrate I hone in on a specific instance. OP was facing pressures to support the amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw:

I think that [OP] had a very challenging role and played a very - did a very good job for a long period of time of representing that missing voice, and I certainly, ah, I certainly have a lot of admiration for what they were able to bring to those Good Neighbour Agreement Meetings, since a lot of the time the anger and frustration was directed at them. I also think that they [pause] made a few poor decisions along the way as well, and the, the, maybe the major one was supporting the ban on on camping on [900 Block Pandora Avenue]. Even ah, I think that that ban on camping - I think even from a principled position, from the symbolic position, they should have simply said we don't want people camping on [900 Block Pandora Avenue] but we're not going to support more policies based on exclusion and, ah, ah stigma and marginalization. And there was a very safe space for them to do so, but I think under the pressure they were feeling at the time they felt that they needed to either support the ban or risk being pushed out of the neighbourhood. (Lee).

It is noted above that the organization aptly represented the voices of the street community in certain cases. Pressures of having to be accepted into the community and maintain positive relationships with GNG members made it difficult to speak out against the bylaw amendment. This is not to say that under different circumstances they necessarily would have spoken out against the bylaw, but rather to emphasize that they were being pulled by many other groups (e.g. the City, local businesses, the police, certain housed residents) to support the bylaw, and the support of these other groups was important to their organizational health. To be associated with the tent city and publically stand in support of it was a challenging position to occupy.

The decision of how to respond to the tent city was complex. Speaking in hindsight from the organization's perspective, Kirk described the difficulties faced in supporting the tent city:

I think we should have been out in into some of those tents. We should have been, I think from a social service point of view, I think we should have been out more in those tents saying 'how are you', 'what are you...', 'are you okay'. Um, we should have just been more proactive. We should have been more proactive from a, from a caring point of view. I think we were kind of - stayed away from it, again because we didn't want to become associated with it; police were there all the time and whatever. We were, we were – [OP] was getting all this negative press and etc., so we didn't want to get involved. But I think we should have been more active in it, we should have been more, um, active from a social point of view and a caring point of view and maybe had [staff member] been around and if we had taken more of that role, maybe we could have had a more... had a better... we could have been more effective in maybe trying to ameliorate the situation. (Kirk).

It was acknowledged that the organization could have played a more proactive role in the tent city by working directly with the campers and offering services. Immense negativity and hostility surrounding the encampment was strong enough to motivate them to back off from playing a more proactive role. In other words, the organization's ability to be an advocate and support for the campers was reduced, since being associated with the encampment meant trade-offs to other aspects of organizational health. Indeed, the City, which was supportive of the bylaw amendment, also had invested a great deal of staff time and financial resources into OP (City of Victoria, 2010b, pp. 86-87; City of Victoria, 2010d, p. 6). Investment in OP was recognized at the hearing for the bylaw amendment where one staff member not only pledged support for the bylaw but outlined that they deliver many services and have "helped 45 of the hardest to house thanks to this Council" (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 8). One can interpret this dynamic as 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch your back'; the City had supported OP so it was OP's turn to support the City. Any loss of funding and support from the City could have been detrimental to the organizational health of OP.

Although OP publically supported the bylaw amendment out of a concern for the health and safety of the campers, the point being made by some interview participants was that the organization was in a *challenging role* to do otherwise. Health and safety likely was an interest

of campers (though perhaps expressed differently than how OP staff framed health and safety, as described earlier in this chapter in section 4.2.1) but so was the ability to have agency over the future of their encampment. There were multiple interests to advocate for and it was difficult for a single service provider to capture these while also aligning with important organizational and GNG interests. Speaking from the organization's perspective, one staff member (Susie) illustrated that many people thought it was a "bit of a surprise" that they (staff from OP) voted in favour of the bylaw, since it went against the interests of people camping on the boulevard. Susie believed that many people in the street community "thought he [staff from OP] would support their camping" and therefore not support the bylaw. People on the boulevard were seeking support for the tent city and looking to OP for this support, yet the organization publically represented another position. This led some to question whether the voices of people camping on the boulevard were represented in the public debate at all. Direct consultation with campers, with the support from Peer Outreach Organization (who worked with people on the boulevard) was called for:

Whose voice is heard? She is a staff person for [Peer Outreach Organization] and others who spoke for [Peer Outreach Organization] are well qualified and provide direct peer support in the community. A lot of time is spent picking up used syringes in downtown but most of their work is with people on the [900 Block Pandora Avenue]. They are respected by their peers and if Council wanted to do it right in a short period of time they would have approached [Peer Outreach Organization], but there has been no request for consultation. [Peer Outreach Organization] does not represent the views of all those who use drugs. (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 8).

Rather than seek to represent the people camping on the boulevard, it was proposed that staff from Peer Outreach Organization could facilitate direct consultation with the campers. I think what also is being said here is that unless direct consultation occurred, the voice of campers was not included in the discussion. In other words, even if their perspectives were represented by OP and advocated for, the voice would still be missing. Implicit here is the viewpoint that there

was no sufficient substitute for direct consultation, only an ersatz. This viewpoint was not without support from other sources. For instance, one City councillor acknowledged that certain voices may have been excluded from discussions about the bylaw amendment, stating that although a committee of service providers supported the bylaw, Peer Outreach Organization “can be the voice that may not have been heard” (City of Victoria, 2010e, p. 8). Together these comments highlight that peer-based organizations bring a distinct voice to discussions in a way that is not really possible from non-peer-based organizations (such as OP).

Making space for peer-based organizations amounts to challenging power relations between different organizations. The authority from which large, established (mainly not peer-based) providers spoke from to a degree overshadowed the voices of those they represented or attempted to represent. It also overshadows the fact that service providers and the street community are not synonymous but are distinct groups that should be acknowledged as distinct:

Noam: you bring up a good point because it was the service providers who spoke on behalf of the street and homeless and that's not cool. That's called middle class managing.

Rebecca: Yup.

Noam: Why can't they speak for themselves? It was a bunch of them who don't even want to go to their service providers. You know what I mean, what about them? The tent city people?

Using the phrase “middle class managing” conjures the idea that the campers were denied the right to speak for themselves. The social status of large service providers granted them a power to speak on behalf of the people they (attempt to) serve and be seen as the ‘street’s voice’, but in situations like the tent city, they were not necessarily representative of the street. Rather, they were taking a public stance on the issue, somewhat independent of the street voice. Asking “why can't they speak for themselves?” advances a similar sentiment as the above question, “whose voice was heard?”; it called for the campers to represent their own interests at a decision making table where their interests had not been represented.

Awareness is needed around the transfer of responsibility to a service provider and the limitations of this model of participation. By comparison, two residents associations (one for the neighbourhood residents and one for certain downtown residents) and multiple businesses were signatories to the GNA, meaning there were multiple streams of representation for certain housed residents and businesses. For the street community, there became one distant and limited stream, where multiple streams were needed to adequately bring voice to the different groups within this population group. Service providers could still have played an important role in facilitating the inclusion of the street community into discussions and decision making (discussed later in this chapter in section 4.4.6), but the most important stream would have been the voice of campers themselves.

4.4.4 Cautious Involvement

As outlined earlier in this chapter in section 4.4.2, participation in the GNG did occur but mainly through representation from a large service provider and numerous barriers were present that prevented individuals in the street community from participating more fully. Many people exhibited *cautious involvement*, deliberately exercising caution and hesitation when participating in GNA activities. More specifically, discussion amongst interview participants explained that *cautious involvement* was a response to the stigmatizing environment and having little power throughout the entire process. Speaking from the service provider's perspective, Steve recalled how they witnessed this stance during the development of the GNA:

But the truth is though, I'm going to back to all of that said, I think those words were good and I think that brought a better understanding of the street population, that we wanted them to have some ownership of this. But they're not stupid and they knew that the mortar was being poured in the building, they knew the mortar was being poured. So they knew that real voice, like if a safe-injection site, which was said time and time again, was not going to be put in that building, that storage was not going to be put in that building. They asked for storage and storage was not going to be put in that building. So, some of their bigger requests failed. Weren't - wasn't really listened to. (Steve).

The same participant (Steve) continued and stated that apart from participating in the relationship-building events, there was little enthusiasm amongst some people from the street community to engage in the GNA process. People were not under a false understanding that they had substantive power to contribute to discussions and *cautious involvement* was demonstrative of understanding the power differentials inherent in the process and one's place within it. What was also expressed above and echoed by other participants was an awareness of the barriers in the process that prevented people from participating more actively. They did not place blame on the street community for not participating, nor exonerate the organization or the GNG for the lack of participation. 'Expecting people to participate' can be a dangerous notion that unjustly places too much responsibility on the street community to surmount barriers to participation. In turn expecting people to participate directs responsibility away from the organizers to understand why people are not participating in the first place.

Active participation was inhibited not only from the lack of power referred to above but also because the stigma that may have been faced by those attempting to participate in GNG meetings. Two participants from Peer-Based Organization spoke about what people in the street community faced when trying to access GNG meetings:

*Rebecca: Well, there's the power thing. You have to think about power and so to try to go into that space where you don't even know about and where you're not invited to, when you get there you're not invited to speak and blatantly City councillors admitting that not everyone is acknowledged. I mean ///*¹⁹

Noam: And when you think about the criminalization of...

Rebecca: \\ We expect so much.

Coming from a different social position than GNG members and walking into a space with *no invitation* was difficult and could result in further stigmatization. Under such conditions, it can

¹⁹ “//” and “\\” indicates where two interviewees speak at the same time.

be a struggle to attain even the minimal level of participation, so expending energy to be present at a meeting may simply not be worthwhile. One of these participants (Noam), who had experience of homelessness, recounted their own experience of attending an early (circa 2010) GNG meeting and how others would also find it challenging. To begin, there are safety concerns with police attending, which can be threatening for individuals who are generally subject to heightened *police presence*. And concerns of not being recognized are very real, as was their experience with a meeting chair who “doesn’t recognize everyone” (Noam). So, while one is trying to raise their voice and contribute to discussion, they are concurrently expending energy to “do what you’re supposed to get through it”. The experience is not really of ‘active citizenship’ but one marked by just ‘getting through it’; dealing with the feelings of stigma and marginalization. With such barriers in place expecting people to participate was unrealistic. Further, when people do attempt to participate, expecting them to do so ‘civilly’, along the lines of ‘standard’ participants, can be unjust. One participant recounted that in their experience a reaction of some people is to become more aggressive and attempt to use the meeting space as “soapbox” “to shit on people” (Steve). When people walk into a hostile and stigmatising environment, reacting strongly like Steve described can be appreciated because people are under great stress and pressure. More aggressive tactics may be seen as necessary to simply make sure that one has a modicum of voice in the process. At the same time it can have a counter reaction of further alienation from the meeting.

Exercising caution, then, meant that at times it was best to choose not to participate at all, for one’s safety and mental wellbeing. It was also indicated that in certain cases it was a safer option. Not participating avoids potentially further stigmatization that may have been

encountered (e.g. being disrespected, see section 4.3.2 earlier in this chapter). It also lessens the chance of additional encounters with police:

We have to see the street community as people who are fed up and disgusted already. They have no interest in going to meetings where these people are and they go through what we went through. Why would they want to go through what I went through, with all those suits and cops? No way! There's no invitation of engagement. (Noam).

Police presence discussed above was a particularly salient barrier. Avoiding further encounters with the police was also the reason why some people from the street community did not attend the relationship building events hosted by the GNG (e.g. community BBQs). It is a risk to attend a meeting or an event where there is potential to be targeted by police for past offenses or other incidents. In the context of a GNG meeting, it is also a challenge to be in a space where the police play an important role, have a powerful voice, and typically exert much power over the street community.

An interpretation can be made that *cautious involvement* in this case was an expression of apathy - being 'tuned-out'. However, a more positive interpretation is that people may be hesitant and highly selective, waiting for opportunities that are inclusive and work for them. So, I take *cautious involvement* to be indicative of a proactive and self-protective stance amongst people. People are selective and can recognize what a good option for participation is. Based on this line of thinking, meeting people on their own terms, whatever that looks like, can be a step towards inclusive participation. However, as one participant commented, generally "that never happens, it's always control" (Noam). In other words, it is expected that the street community fit into a pre-established format, which does not encourage people to get involved. I resume this discussion with more detail later in this chapter in section 4.4.6.

4.4.5 Independent Action

Participation in the GNA process accounts for only one way the street community engaged with neighbourhood issues. Engagement also occurred outside of the GNG, in what can be thought of as *independent action*. This refers to action specifically aimed at neighbourhood matters but altogether independent of the activities of the GNG. Much like what was illustrated through *cautious involvement*, section 4.4.5 continues to illustrate the proactive agency of the street community.

Though impactful, a great deal of the *independent action* happened largely unacknowledged, under the radar of participants from the GNG whom I interviewed. Already touched upon at different times in this chapter, the tent city can be seen as a distinctively *independent action*. Speaking of this action, Noam said “if you noticed, a lot of people who were on that tent city, no activists got that going, this was from the street.” Viewing it in this light reframes the encampment as a proactive self-determining action. That does not deny some of the safety concerns raised by other community members or make the argument in support of tent cities, but it does significantly strike in contrast to framing it entirely as a safety hazard or something that needs “reprieve” from (City of Victoria, 2009a, p. 3). Rather, the encampment was a reaction to difficult conditions and a means to self-provide safety and shelter. In the midst of the City working to redevelop the boulevard, the completion of the GNA, and increased contestation of the boulevard, individuals from the street erected a tent city in an act of agency where they had had little agency in other events shaping the boulevard.

Subsequent to the tent city, *independent action* continued to occur around the boulevard. Very often this occurred on a one-to-one basis through relationship building and advocacy. As seen earlier in this chapter in section 4.3.4 the GNG worked to further develop positive relationships. Similarly, albeit under the radar of some GNG members, people in the street

community were building relationships with other community members, by engaging in common, friendly interactions and getting to know people in the neighbourhood, such as business owners. One participant (Mary) saw street-initiated relationship building efforts as a valuable contributor to both the general acceptance of OP and greater acceptance of the presence of the street community in the neighbourhood. For example, Mary spoke about how she and other had built relationships with the staff at one local business. Over time the staff at this business came to support her and some of her peers by giving them free food when available. Friendly acts like this helped some community members get to know people from the street community and create lines of support. One-to-one work also took on more tones of advocacy when needed. For example, after the redevelopment, the City increased grounds keeping crews to tend to the boulevard, which resulted in some conflict between city staff and members of the street community individuals whom were on the boulevard. These day-to-day conflicts were proactively engaged in different ways, as one story from a participant illustrates:

Another example is the City workers who came and one crew were bullies, like really bad... But then I'm out there another morning and nice guys come and some women yelled them down and I thought I'm going to help these guys out. I went up to them cause I could see they were nice guys and I said "hey you guys, I just wanted to let you know", and I told them the story about when the police came and blah, blah, blah, and they went "oh...!" and one guy went "oh, I know that crew" and another guy went "oh" and he said "well, thanks for telling me" and they go to move away, and another women yells at them, you know, "fuck off you bastards". And I, I said and they went "man, we got to talk to those guys". You know, so two things happened: the influence of it creates divide and rule; you get asshole bully city workers come and the nice guys can't even be nice guys because they're considered that they're going to be assholes too. So they have to challenge each other, so I went and told them the story because they need to challenge each other about that! You need to go to the bullies and say "you're not representing for us. You know, we went on the Green and people were yelling at us because of what you did, treating them bad". It was horrible what they did. (Noam).

Above is a story of how someone who was involved in Peer-Based Organization engaged in one-on-one work with City staff. It has similarities to the one-to-one actions detailed in section 4.3.3, in which staff from OP engaged with housed residents in the neighbourhood around issues

of harm reduction services or the lack of affordable housing. In the above story, however, it's not a staff member from a service agency taking action, but rather an individual who had experience of homelessness. Through one-to-one engagement, they challenged City workers to confront their co-workers to talk about respectful conduct. Along the same lines, another participant (Mary) spoke about the one-on-one work they regularly did with police officers around respectful conduct with the street community, which also occurred through informal conversations. This type of one-on-one action is a way of advocating for the street community and getting other people to critically reflect on the difficulties faced by people on the street. Yet, unique to the example of *independent action* above, is that it is not an individual from OP acting as an advocate but an individual who has lived experience of homelessness advocating for their peers.

In addition to the smaller scale actions detailed above, larger actions (like the tent city) were organized. Shortly after the disbanding of the tent city, Peer-Based Organization organized a gathering on the boulevard in 2010 to engage community discussion about the changes to the boulevard and the impacts on the street community. Whereas some previously discussed examples of *independent actions* were on a more micro scale, the event on the boulevard reached out to a broader range of community members.

Rebecca: and that was the point of gathering on the Green and getting the neighbours together. It was sort of a similar thing, like get the neighbours together and hear what's going on with the bylaw//²⁰

Noam: Speaker's Corner...

Rebecca: \\\ Speaker's Corner booth for the film and stuff but there was a lot more going on. Like, people didn't - people came out for sure knowing it was about the film but people came out because a lot of people were up in arms about the way that people were getting cleared off that block...

²⁰ “//” and “\” indicates where two interviewees speak at the same time.

One goal of the event referred to by the participants was to create a space where alternative narratives of the boulevard could more easily be articulated and discussed - increased police activity, lack of accessible public space, and discouraging people from gathering on the boulevard. Both of these participants spoke about rethinking what ‘neighbourliness’ meant and what “being better neighbours” (Rebecca) with the street community looked like. In effect, the event challenged community members to listen to the experiences of people who lived on the boulevard and reconsider what a safe, welcoming inclusive community that supports the street community looks like. Apart from the critical discussion encouraged by the event, a notable aspect was the peer-based activity it fostered. A cross-section of community members were present at the action, including some organizations that were members of the GNG, which in itself is a success. Yet, a notable success was that the space was peer-led and helped people experiencing homelessness safely gather with one another. Knowing the event was peer-led and would be attended by other peers helped foster a sense of safety and welcoming, which some interview participants noted was more difficult to find in GNG activities or City Council meetings. The following section (4.4.6) continues with additional discussion of peer-based activity.

4.4.6 Opening up

A staff member from OP spoke about the growing awareness within the GNG that involving people solely through representation was insufficient, saying “we need to also engage those people that are in those positions and not just do it on their behalf or it’s, it’s a, you know, it’s a paternalistic kind, a kind of materialistic way of addressing the problem” (Susie). In this statement the limitations of representation or speaking on behalf of clients are acknowledged; this form of engagement can only go so far and only bring so much to the table. Deeper and more fulsome engagement with the issues at hand can come from having the voices of those directly

affected at the table. As such, Susie's comment was illustrative of the unique transition period within the GNG of *opening up* towards greater involvement of the street community. The period of transition came with associated challenges and opportunities.

Advocacy work by Peer-Based Organization and another local grassroots organization sparked the *opening up*. Together they sought more involvement in the GNG and pushed the GNG members to reconsider the role of the street community. The opening comment above (by Susie) highlighted the growing understanding that fulsome engagement with neighbourhood issues related to poverty, homelessness, and drug use must involve people who have lived these realities. This understanding was not entirely new to the GNG, as other participants noted the value of some individuals who were formerly homeless and occasionally attended GNG meetings, since they "could relate back to the street" and bring "street perspective" to the discussions (Brent). The difference, though, with the *opening up* was a growing recognition that the street community should be continually directly involved, not just via an unchosen representative or one-off attendance at a meeting. It was described as "wow, a light went off, why aren't they at these meetings?" (Susie). Through their advocacy work, Peer-Based Organization was invited by the GNG to participate in the regular meetings as an active member:

Connie: So there, right now there's [pause] a group of street people, um I guess it's okay to say the name of the group, um it's called [Peer-Based Organization]. It's different from the [organization] and it's, I think, a less formal less structured group but it is a group. Um, and they have asked to be allowed to come to the meetings. Ah this has just come up. And so, ah the Group is asking them to select a representative to come to the meetings rather than have all of them come. So, we'll see how that how that develops.

I: So that's kind of a new chapter for the Group in a way?

Brent: Yeah.

Connie: Yeah, they feel like their voice is not being heard.

In reviewing the data on the *opening up*, two related normative reasons for the participation of people from the street community stood out. First, and the more prominent of the two, is seeing participation as a right-based issue. Participants spoke about "honouring their

ability to contribute” (Susie) and having people “speak for themselves” (Noam). One aspect of the *challenging role* OP was in was that looking to their organization for ‘street voice’ had the effect of overshadowing others ability to speak for themselves. The second is a more instrumental reason, that better decisions are made when more voices are at the table and hence tackling issues relating to poverty requires that poverty-affected people have a say. “Street perspective” (Brent) was a positive and added to the GNG’s work “to resolve the challenges that people on the street and people with mental health and addictions issues face” (Susie). In other words, listening to experiential knowledge can yield a more comprehensive understanding of what is going on in the neighbourhood.

What marked the discussion of the *opening up* as particularly interesting was that it was situated in a time of transition. Participants spoke about how they felt the change would affect the dynamics and operations of the GNG. One such change that came up in the interviews was the hope for improved relationships between the GNG and grassroots advocacy organizations, like Peer-Based Organization:

... probably if we were going to do anything, the relationship between those grassroots advocacy groups, like [activist] and [organization], and ourselves - and I don't mean ourselves as in [OP] but as in the Good Neighbours - is probably one that there needs to be some work on because I think, I think right now if you read, you know, the statements coming from [organization] around, you know, it's like oppression of the underdog and it's kind of that, um, perception that we're the bureaucracy, we're the big bad guys with the money and they're the oppressed. And so to try and, you know, bridge that gap between what you would might want to use the analogy between the upper and lower class and come to a middle class. Um, I think there needs to be better engagement. (Susie).

The theme of relationship building is in the forefront in this comment. Some grassroots organizations felt alienated from the GNG as, in addition to there being *no invitation*, there were really no efforts to reach out and build relationships with these grassroots groups. By establishing better relationships between the groups it was hoped that a mutual understanding

will grow, similar to how relationships amongst GNG members encouraged trust and a basis from which to work on issues. For the most part, grassroots advocacy groups were on the outside²¹, which has meant that the inner workings of the GNG were largely unknown to people on the outside of it. Yet, even though their advocacy work brought them into the GNG, grassroots groups are not without apprehension about being brought into the fold. After years of being outside of the GNG and largely unaware of what goes on within the GNG, a level of distrust had grown. Despite the invitation to participate in the meetings, participants expressed some distrust and a sense of *cautious involvement*:

Well, I'm invited to the meetings, so I'm on their list as of this fall. Since they – we had this [Peer-Based Organization] meeting and service provider staff and one of the managers of OP were there and then we were in this meeting with them, suddenly they make it seem like it's like anybody can come to the meeting but that's obviously not the case. (Rebecca).

Based on the GNG's history, *cautious involvement* was a reasonable response to the new invitation to participate. An invitation is an important step towards inclusion but only a beginning, as alluded to by multiple participants. Being invited to a meeting and feeling that one's voice has been heard are two separate issues; people need to be able to trust that they are actually welcome at meetings and their voice will be respectfully heard. For the GNG this meant that trust building involved more than extending an invitation. Rather, it signalled that 'self-work' had to be done, where members engage in a process of uncovering the ways people have been excluded from the GNG, both past and present.

At the time of this thesis the *opening up* was only nascent. Participants did speak about the early stages and how it had affected the dynamics of the GNG. What resonated in the comments was the expectation that Peer-Based Organization would be just another member,

²¹ As mentioned in chapter 4, section 4.2, in the early stages of the GNA Group, one grassroots peer outreach organization attended meetings infrequently and eventually stopped.

participating in the same manner. Though Peer-Based Organization advocated for their own involvement, the nature of their involvement was largely defined by original GNG members. In turn, typical group dynamics would continue, meaning the GNG “for the most part it’s just going, it’s just going to go along as it is now, and if things come up, they’ll be handled” (Brent). Similar to other GNG members, Peer-Based Organization was asked to send only one representative to the regular meetings and soon after they began attending meetings, conflict had developed regarding the ‘one representative’ guidelines²². This format was not always followed and on multiple occasions they “sent more than one (advocate) rep to a meeting, which does tend to skew the proceedings and has resulted in their having been reminded that they were invited to send a just single rep to the [GNG] meetings” (Connie). Sending more than one representative resulted in changes to meeting dynamics that were unwelcome by other GNG members. Nonetheless, reminding them to send only a single representative reaffirmed the expectation that Peer-Based Organization should participate along the same lines as others do. Moreover, it conveys that they do not hold any special status and there will be no procedural accommodations to suit Peer-Based Organization’s needs and what the organization feels is the best way to include the street community.

Digging further into this dynamic gave some insights into how ‘inclusion’ was understood. Of course, various understandings swirled within the GNG, but a prominent understanding was that participation and inclusion are largely synonymous, meaning that participation/non-participation become positioned as the goalposts, so to speak, of inclusion/exclusion. In speaking about the new participants, one GNG member said that “now

²² In following the guidelines, Peer-Based Organization would send a representative who was not homeless, but an advocate who worked with the organization and was trusted by its members. The advocate representative model was needed in some cases because individuals from the street community could not attend meetings because times conflicted with service delivery or interrupted subsistence activities.

they have been invited to be included” and participating in the meetings meant “they’re not a passive participant in what’s going on there, they’re actually involved with it” (Susie). In this example, inclusion was spoken of as participating in the GNG meetings. However, this understanding of inclusion was contradicted by other stories shared in the interviews, which spoke about how someone can be present at a meeting (i.e. participate in the meeting) but still experience exclusion in different ways. Overall, what was suggested was that participation is but one piece of inclusion and in itself does not go far enough.

At the outset of the nascent *opening up*, inclusion was largely granted and defined by the pre-existing GNG members (i.e. the ‘one representative model’). However, participants did express some curiosity about how Peer-Based Organization’s involvement would develop over time and put out different ideas of what it could look like. This moved toward viewing inclusion/exclusion as conceptually distinct from participation/non-participation and looked beyond the ‘one representative model’. It was noted that while the ‘one representative model’ can work for advocates and some people in the street community, it may not work for many people in the street community. Many participants felt it was key to acknowledge the circumstances that people from the street community face, that “it’s difficult, though, when you are already at the bottom shit on by everyone, stigmatized and criminalized” (Noam). City officials, police, executive staff, business owners generally still command more authority, resources and respect than an individual who is sleeping rough. These social relations are not easily surmounted and an individual who is sleeping rough may be challenged to attend a meeting and have “the weight and respect for their voice to be heard” (Steve). Beginning from these circumstances and being honest about power relations was seen as a starting point for greater inclusion.

When participants looked beyond the ‘one representative model’ they generally emphasized practices and procedures that “meet individuals on their terms and locations that are convenient to them” (Lee). In doing so a shift of dynamics occurs, where it is less about the GNG inviting people from the street community into their process but the latter inviting the GNG into their own process. While this implies a variety of context specific approaches, support for ‘peer-based engagement’ came through the interviews as a key means of respecting the terms of engagement laid out by the street community. Peer-led dialogue was cited by numerous participants as a way to bring large numbers of peers together on their own terms to talk about the 900 Block Pandora Avenue and what they would like to do about current issues (Mary). These dialogues would be an opportunity for peers to “call each other out on, you know, ‘come on man, what are we doing?’” (Noam). At times, these gatherings may be for peers only, although still supported by the GNG. At other times, these dialogues may call for only minor involvement of GNG members, so that there would be “a couple of representatives that didn’t say anything but were part of those meetings and welcome to those meetings” (Steve). Alternatively, participants talked about how the focus could be more project-oriented and take on issues like the effect of *police presence* on the street community.

Finally, more than just procedural changes arise from support for peer-based engagement. There is a values component, which runs through the procedural matters and other aspects of the GNG. It must be grounded in respect - for the circumstances that people on the streets face and their capacity to contribute to the neighbourhood. To sow respect deeper into the GNG, a re-opening of the GNA itself is called for, a new community process with the street community to articulate the values and framework for being “better neighbours” with people from the street community (Rebecca). The notion of ‘better neighbours’ shifts the focus of the GNA and GNG

to be a vehicle for supporting the street community and building a community that is safe and welcoming for the street community.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Earlier parts of this chapter (sections 4.1 and 4.2) detailed the formation of the GNA and the work of the GNG. These provided a backdrop for discussion in sections 4.3 and 4.4, particularly for the discussion of the street community's role in the GNA and GNG. Overall, participants felt that the GNA increased the power of GNG members to make a mark on the 900 Block Pandora Avenue. An agenda was articulated in the GNA which was mainly based upon pre-existing issues and the subsequent formation of the GNG enabled further work around these pre-defined issues. Changes brought upon via the GNG often had mixed repercussions for the street community and in numerous cases were negative, such as the increase in police activity. Further, these changes typically were done so with only minimal participation of the street community. On the other hand, benefits were more-so experienced by community members who were not part of the street community – members who ultimately enjoyed a heightened sense of community safety from their perspective.

The GNG became a site for the expression of angst and hostility towards the street community but also a site for rich learning about the challenges that the street community faces. Push and pull of these dynamics was present throughout the GNG's history, circling around many issues such as the harm reduction services in the neighbourhood. Through the ongoing conversation, relations amongst members grew. OP became more trusted and their presence in the neighbourhood was more accepted. They served as a conduit amongst GNG members and the street community, which to a degree mitigated fear about the street community and the presence

of these people in the neighbourhood. Other members of the GNG were also supportive of these relationship building efforts and contributed to the efforts. However, there was a material dimension to improved relations too. Part of the greater acceptance of the street community was because their presence in the neighbourhood had diminished via changes to the 900 Block Pandora Avenue.

Overall, there was little room for the inclusion of the street community in the development of the GNA and subsequent activities of the GNG. In lieu of direct participation in the GNG, the street community were represented by a large service provider. This model had limitations as the staff from OP ran into difficulties balancing multiple roles of serving as a representative, acting as a member of the GNG, and looking out for the credibility and health of their own organization. Overcoming these limitations was difficult and pointed to the real need for more direct participation of people from the street community. At the same time, in an act of agency, individuals from the street community responded to their limited power in the GNG by cautiously participating in GNG activities (e.g. consultation opportunities) and at times chose not to participate or attempt to engage further. Instead, acting independently of the GNG offered greater power and more opportunities to take effective action on neighbourhood issues on their own terms.

In moving towards more involvement of the street community, a series of challenges and opportunities emerged. At the time of this study, the GNG was in a period of transition, inviting a Peer-Based Organization to participate and represent a street-based perspective. Despite the fact that there was little room for inclusion of the street community in the GNG, this organization, along with the support of other local advocates, worked to carve out a place for the street community. That said, having a new vice at the table meant that new dynamics in the GNG

were being negotiated. Viewing the change as a period of transition and development put into perspective some of the tensions that arose. Given the GNG's history, distrust persisted even though Peer-Based Organization was formally invited to participate. Participants wanted more than just an invitation to participate. Rather, recognition of the power relations that continued to shape the lives of the street community was called for and, moreover, the recognition of these conditions should be the starting point for thinking about and working on inclusion. This signalled the need for GNG members to build better relationships with grassroots organization, in addition to engaging in self-reflection about the inclusivity and exclusivity of the GNG's practices. Further, it was helpful to think of participation as distinct from inclusion and that participation was a step towards greater inclusion but not sufficient in itself. Conceptually this was important because in the early stages of Peer-Based Organization's involvement, conflict occurred over how they should participate due to not always participating in the manner of other GNG members, indicating that perhaps the means of participation did not work well for the organization.

A number of participants spoke about the need to look beyond the standard mode of participation, and instead adopt different means to facilitate greater inclusion of the street community. Looking beyond meant meeting people on terms they were comfortable with, which on the whole was support for peer-based engagement. Yet, this was not just a procedural matter, but would be grounded in a set of values that actively respects the abilities and contributions of the street community. This shift in the deliberative rules would also be grounded in a shift in culture of the GNG, moving towards envisioning the GNA as a vehicle for supporting the street community and helping to build a community that is safe and welcoming for the street community.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Looking back on my original proposal I can now see the extent to which this study grew from what was originally proposed to what it ended up being. While conducting the study I came to understand some of these developments through the boat metaphor common in the field of epistemology (albeit in a different discipline and context!): my research plan was a boat that at times I had to be rebuild piece by piece all the while still managing to stay afloat on it in order to conduct the study. Given that this study was conducted in a community setting, the study had to accommodate the dynamics of the community members rather than expecting everyone to accommodate my study. As such, two key limitations emerged. The first relates to data sampling and the second to data collection.

Initially the goal of the study was to emphasize the perspectives of people from the street community regarding the GNA and GNG by interviewing approximately ten people who fit the criterion. For a couple of reasons I was able to interview only two people who had experience of homelessness. First, from my understanding, there were not many people from the street community who fit the criteria of the study. Locating these people and trying to coordinate an interview was challenging, so I was grateful to have been able to speak with at least two individuals. Second, from an ethical standpoint, I did not want to force the study onto this community and force the third-party recruiter to ‘find participants’ for me, particularly as there were already ethical issues of being a middle-class researcher attempting to ‘give voice’ to people in the street community. Since this was a fairly small study conducted to complete an MA program, it did not feel ethically sound to push for more than what people readily offered. As well, I learned about the deep importance of compensating people for their time, which I had not anticipated to such a degree while drafting the study proposal. Although I was able to

compensate the two participants with food and tobacco (upon their request after agreeing to do an interview), I realized I did not have adequate resources to properly compensate a larger number of participants for being involved in the study.

Given the challenges of recruiting more participants from the street community into the study, the majority of participants did not have experience of homelessness but had extensive experience with the GNA and the GNG (past and present). These participants worked for social service agencies, residents associations, the City, or activists involved in anti-poverty organizing and grassroots peer-based groups. Data was subsequently tilted towards an ‘organizational perspective’. In addition, the majority of these participants would in some way identify as advocates for people experiencing homeless, which also tilts the data accordingly. I was unable to speak with local business-owners, members of the police, or additional housed-residents in the area, all of whom could have brought a very different perspective to the body of data.

The process of recruitment involved the appropriate process of consulting with a third-party recruiter who was well known in the community. We discussed the sample criterion and who would be suitable for this study but since the selection in part related to the recruiter’s insider knowledge of the community, our list of study candidates naturally was skewed towards their knowledge. However, this allowed me to meet people who, if not for the third-party recruiter, would likely not have been involved in this study.

Limitations with data collection also emerged during the study. My goal initially was to have a fair amount of ‘back and forth’ with research participants, in which I would follow up with further questions related to the interview data and seek feedback on some of the preliminary findings. Due to the aforementioned hesitation of not wanting to ‘push’ people and not having the resources to adequately compensate, apart from reviewing the interview transcripts, follow

up communication only occurred with the participant with whom I did the work exchange (the third-party recruiter). Also, I tried to secure minutes from the GNG meetings. Due to privacy concerns, copies of past minutes were not released to me.

Finally, the theoretical interpretations contained in section 5.2 and the policy and practice recommendations contained in section 5.3 are based on analysis of one GNA and associated GNG. I cannot claim that what I learned about this case is common to other GNAs. My learnings and reflections contained in these pages should not necessarily be generalized to other cases.

5.2 Theoretical Interpretations

A number of themes and subthemes were identified within the data. Following the suggestion of interpretive description methodology, section 5.2 of this chapter focuses in on “a handful” of themes for “further attention and consideration in the light of the wider knowledge universe” (Thorne, 2008, p. 195). The theme of *Marginal Involvement* and its related sub-themes is considered further in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

The first sub-theme organized under *Marginal Involvement* was *no invitation*. Participants spoke at length that there was really no substantive room for the inclusion and direct involvement of the street community in the development of the GNA or subsequent activities of the GNG. This occurred despite the fact that the street community is so integrated in the neighbourhood. “Framing” the GNA as such underscores questions of “criteria” (i.e. who counts as a member?) and “representation” (i.e. what are the procedures that structure public processes and who gets to be involved in public processes?) (Fraser, 2007a, p. 21). Questions of criteria relate to the jurisdictional elements of the GNA, which set forth criteria of “who counts as a member of society” (or neighbourhood) (Fraser, 2007a, p. 21). People outside of the GNA were therefore a separate category of neighbours, distinct from local entrepreneurs, for instance.

Defining the criteria helped answer questions of representation too, so by staking out the legitimate members of the neighbourhood, lines were drawn which designate who is invited to be involved in the public process and decision making. Answering these questions altogether created a frame in which subsequent questions of recognition and redistribution occurred within, such as the manner in which the street community participated (or not participated) in the and the more recent struggle for greater involvement. This type of struggle can be seen as a conflict over the 'frame'.

Framing is not an isolated and distinct event and it is invariably shaped by preceding matters. Those benefiting from pre-existing inequalities bring these advantages into the process of framing. The formation of the GNA and the subsequent activities of the GNG highlight one of Aber's cautions that participatory programs tend to favour well-organized and resourced groups (Abers, 2010, p. 9-10). Without an explicit attempt to counteract some of the pre-existing inequalities, a participatory program opens up a space which is easily filled by well-organized and resourced groups, as has been noted in some literature on GNAs in the UK (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 29). In recalling the context prior to the GNA, participants discussed how certain groups that were well resourced and already very active in the neighbourhood became significant participants in the development of the GNA. What occurred was that the issues these groups were concerned about and working on, such as reducing harm reduction services in the neighbourhood, were carried into the GNA and the GNG's agenda, hence the continuation of pre-established neighbourhood work. Participatory spaces, therefore, fill up quickly and the initial composition of the participatory space greatly colours what will come of the participatory process.

Although the street community were not included as active, direct members of the GNA or GNG, participants noted that they were indirectly involved via a service provider representing them in the development of the GNA and in GNG activities. Generally this took the form of consultations with people from the street community gathered at OP's facility. Feedback from these consultations would then be relayed back to the GNG by the service provider. This set-up can be traced to the framing of the GNA, as it was service providers who were primarily tasked with engaging the street community and supporting their participation in GNG activities. This approach to fostering inclusion had deep limitations and participants noted that OP was in a *challenging role*. They faced difficulty satisfying their various roles, as a member of the GNG with responsibilities to other members, as an organization needing to maintain its own health and community status, and as a representative of the street community. I was unable to find relevant literature which shed insight into the difficulty of balancing multiple and competing roles; however, Young's writings on the relation of recognition to inclusion open up some insights into the limitations of representation. Young argues that public spaces are characterized by "particularity" and if people are actually to be included in a process then their particularity must be recognized. In doing so, people speak their particularity and draw upon their "situated knowledge" to contribute to dialogue (Young, 2000, p. 109). This means that inclusion carries with it a valuing of particularized, situated knowledge that is unique to certain individuals and groups. Participants noted that the *challenging role* was evident around the conflicts over the tent city and in this specific case what OP was unable to bring to the public process was the situated knowledge of the campers. Similarly, other participants spoke about how some GNG actions had the consequence of disrupting peer-support networks that existed on the street. Knowledge of such networks is 'situated' within people who are a part of these networks and understanding

how they function and what effect an intervention will have on them is difficult to grasp for people who are not connected into these networks.

The nature of the *challenging role* also calls forth Fraser's argument that outcomes of proposals (e.g. the proposal to amend to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw) cannot always be determined through 'technocratic means'. By this it is meant that a set of non-experiential experts or representatives cannot simply apply knowledge to a situation and forecast the outcomes, due to complexities particular to the people and issue. Rather, it is a task of affected people to determine the requirements of how decisions will affect them, drawing on their own knowledge (Fraser, 2003, p. 43). In certain ways the representative model puts the service provider in a 'technocratic' position, interpreting for the other discussants how proposals may affect the street community. Consequently, the limitations of the 'service provider as representative' model point towards the need for people from the street community to have effective means to self-represent and engage in dialogue and decision making (Rabinovitch & Strega, 2004, p. 156; Anker, 2008, 2009; Belle-Isle, Benoit, & Pauly, 2014, p. 184). I return to this point later in section 5.2.

Service providers can, however, play a positive role in fostering inclusion. Despite the challenges highlighted by participants, OP did assume a positive role advocating for the street community and facilitating relationships. Both of these functions engaged what Fraser considers the primary object of a polity: the social relations between people. The social terms on which decisions are made can be seen as more primary than the political reasoning that occurs in decision-making because relations have such an immense influence on the eventual decision(s) (Fraser, 2007b, p. 318).

Through the advocacy and relationship building work, the organization made some positive contributions to the recognition of the street community in the GNG. In particular, the advocacy work sought to raise awareness around the structural and systemic factors that govern the lives of people in the street community, which included a variety of factors such as high level social policies, lack of adequate harm reduction services, and a shortage of affordable housing. Calling attention to the structural and systemic factors that have a role in creating the situation occurring along the 900 Block of Pandora Avenue directly confronted some of the common understandings of homelessness that foster the stigmatization of people experiencing homelessness – that homelessness is the fault of individuals (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). Citing factors that are exogenous to the individual (i.e. broader systemic factors) can help undermine the understanding of homelessness as purely the effect of one’s individual choices; hence, when there is an acknowledgement of exogenous factors, it is more difficult to ‘blame’ people in the street community for their problems (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). In doing so, staff members worked for greater recognition of the institutionalized injustices that governed the lives of people in the street community and diminished their relative social standing, which Fraser argues is an important dimension of recognition (Fraser, 2007b). Subsequently, staff members were able to somewhat challenge the “status subordination” that gave way to generalized disrespect of the street community. Challenging status subordination is one piece of the street community being “full partners in social interaction” (Lister, 2007, p. 164). What can be gleaned from this is the role that service providers (as well as other advocates, be it working for city government or independent residents) can play in countering stigmatization (Belle-Isle, Benoit, Pauly, 2014; Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 269) and supporting a ‘Fraser-esque’ recognition politics which aims to uproot systemic patterns that undervalue the street community (Fraser, 2003).

Another positive contribution of OP to the recognition of the street community was promoting what Young calls 'reasonableness'. Numerous participants spoke about the increased empathy for the street community that occurred through the GNG and some of the relationship-building work. Though this learning did not necessarily translate into improved well-being of people from the street community or more solidarity with them, some participants did recall that over time a new willingness to listen to different positions and try to understand them came about. This willingness to listen is a key feature of 'reasonableness', as defined by Young (2000, p. 25). Encouraging and supporting people to be more reasonable is not necessarily a matter of ensuring that speech acts are logically formed but more so concerned with people's disposition and their willingness to listen and change their positions as needed (Young, 2000, p. 25). A reasonable disposition is one ingredient of inclusion, since there needs to be a willingness to listen directly to people from the street community - and this is a disposition that service providers can encourage and support. However, as participants were keenly aware of, reasonableness was not developed over night but over time through ongoing conversation and relationship building with staff at OP and with the street community.

Insofar as OP and other GNG members positively contributed to the recognition of the street community and the reasonableness of GNG members, it can be understood as supportive contributions but not sufficient contributions towards inclusion. One principle of inclusion outlined in Young's theory and discussed by Norman & Pauly is accountability. For instance, the latter discuss that decision-makers need to be accountable to the people from the street community who are affected by the decisions made (Norman & Pauly, 2012, p. 16). Similarly, Young says that both speech and actions must indicate that participants in some way believe themselves to be accountable to the social group who are the subject of a decision-making

process (Young, 1999, p. 157). Participants highlighted that on numerous occasions the street community were the subject of *angst and hostility*, stigmatized and talked about as a ‘problem’ that needed to be solved. Disrespectful and degrading speech often occurs when speakers do not believe themselves to be accountable and having to justify their views to the people they are speaking about - indeed, the stigmatization that perpetuates this type of speech acts to ‘disqualify’ people from inclusion in deliberation (Belle-Isle, Benoit, Pauly, 2014). However, when speakers have to “explicitly address the others” to whom they are referring, a different sense of accountability arises (Young, 1999, p. 158). Thus, disrespectful speech become far harder to say when the person(s) spoken about is in the room and may demand a justification for the comment. In terms of the role that OP fulfilled, there is little doubt that their work and presence in the GNG heightened a sense of accountability to the street community, yet it could not suffice for the experience of having to “explicitly address” people from the street community. Following Young, there can be a humanizing aspect to the encounter, in which individuals from the street community become less so an “object of the debate” that is referred to in the “third-person” (Young, 1999, p. 157). Again, representatives from OP were able to support the accountability required for inclusion but could not fully substitute for the direct participation of the street community.

The experiences of people from the street community participating in activities related to the GNG (e.g. consultations held by OP or attempts to directly participate in GNG meetings) were heavily marked by a *cautious involvement*. In pondering what conclusions could be drawn from the findings of the study I consulted a modicum of new literature, which helped yield insights into this sub-theme. Primarily, Thorne’s writings on ‘guarded alliance’ are perspicacious in terms of understanding the dynamics of trust, though I have sought to explore the concept

outside of the medical context which the theory was originally formulated in. *Cautious involvement* can in part be seen as an approach that comes from a place where trust has previously been “shattered” and since has been “reconstructed” with “revised expectations” of one’s role within participatory processes (Thorne & Robinson, 1989, p. 154). However, this trust may not necessarily have been eroded through experience in other participatory processes but more generally because of the far-reaching experiences of exclusion that participants spoke about, independent of the GNA. These participants described what they saw as an active choice to participate only minimally, or at times not all, in consultations with the service provider. This act can be seen as a form of “resignation” to safeguard oneself from “unfulfilled expectations” of participating in the process (Thorne & Robinson, 1988, p. 784). Some people from the street community knew that they did not have much power in the process of developing the GNA and subsequent GNG activities, hence the responsive resignation. However, resignation can pose a dilemma, as not participating may result in losing something (Thorne & Robinson, 1989, p. 155). So, the cautious and limited participation could be a means of at least ensuring that some key issues are raised, such as the need for harm reduction services in the neighbourhood, even though it is understood that likely the services will not be delivered. Similarly, attending even one GNG meeting or event allows people to keep up to date on their activities and may facilitate better anticipation of changes that will affect the street community.

A concern for personal safety and mental well-being is expressed through *cautious involvement*. Above I noted that GNG meetings were sometimes places of *angst and hostility* directed towards the street community. Members of the GNG, whether acknowledged or not, wielded a degree of “stigma power” (Link & Phelan, 2014). Stigma power was exercised blatantly and subtly. Blatant stigmatizing involved GNG participants making deprecatory

comments without having to worry about repercussions or being accountable to any particular individual. More subtle stigmatization came through the conceptualizing of the street community as a ‘problem’ needing to be solved and a group to kept “away” as much as possible (Link & Phelan, 2014, p. 25). Altogether, a certain degree of devaluing of the street community occurred. Altogether, the GNG established a channel through which stigma power was exercised. This is not to say that such stigma did not occur prior to the GNA, but that the process opened new channels for stigmatizing to occur. Following Pauly’s discussion, people from the street community became subject to multiple layers of stigma that are characteristic of people experiencing homelessness (Pauly, 2014). To begin, people were deemed “bad for business” (Brad & DeForge, 2012, p. 933) and a safety hazard due to the associated drug use (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 266). These acts of stigma positioned the street community as people who lacked concern for the neighbourhood and the safety of “innocent” community members (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 266). Moreover, behind this is an additional conception that people from the street community lack concern for anyone, be it for their own health or that of other community members, which was corroborated by comments of numerous participants (Strike, Myers, & Millson, 2004, p. 266). From this standpoint, an almost de facto exclusion from decision making occurs (Belle-Isle, Benoit, Pauly, 2014). These multiple layers of stigma were difficult to undo and, moreover, meant that there were numerous ways in which individuals could be re-stigmatized by attempting to participate in a meeting (Pauly, 2014). By avoiding the GNG, people were able to avoid potential further stigma (e.g. participants described that exclusion was still experienced while participating in GNG activities). Protecting oneself from further stigmatization is particularly salient point to acknowledge.

Given that the GNA is a political event, *cautious involvement* can also be understood as a political stance. Exercising caution comes from what participants described as recognition of unequal power relations within the GNA process. If a ‘space of inclusion’ (i.e. membership in the GNG) is still a space fraught with social inequalities, then why would someone want to be included (Shakir, 2005, p. 206)? Similar to what Thorne and Robinson write, Shakir contends that remaining outside the space is an act of “movement as well as self-control” (Shakir, 2005, p. 206). So, the “integration of the margin into the centre” (a centre which is already predefined) is what some GNG members wanted but this desire was not necessarily shared by some members of the street community who were hitherto excluded from the GNG. Remaining outside of the GNA was for some an act of self-control because there is an acknowledgment that to be within the GNA, or even attempt to be, could result in being controlled by the process. So the stance of caution is not just about the dynamics of trust that Thorne and Robinson talk about but is also a political claim in itself, a rejection of what is being offered as ‘inclusion’.

The political contours of *cautious involvement* go further still. Deciding to participate only marginally or not at all was accompanied in some cases by focusing energy into *independent action*. In these related acts of ‘self-control’, as Shakir refers to them, there can also be a drive to retain what Abers call “civic autonomy” (Abers, 2010, p. 9). Participants highlighted many examples of people engaging in *independent action*, such as proactive relationship building, engaging with City workers and police officers to talk about respectful conduct with the street community, and organizing events in the neighbourhood to raise critical discussion about the treatment of people in the street community. Such actions may have been more likely to occur outside of the GNG, since the scope of what could be deliberated on within the GNG may have excluded some of these social justice goals. Subsequently, acting

independently not only offered more opportunities to pursue these social justice goals, it was a way of avoiding “co-optation” because it retained “civic autonomy” (Abers, 2010, p. 9). If mass energy was put towards participating in the GNG, there may have been a demobilizing effect because so much energy would have been put into what some participants saw as a “vertical” power structure. So, in turn there would be reduced energy and time for “horizontal mobilization” with other people from the street community, where greater political power could be derived (Abers, 2000, p. 196). Some of the larger instances of independent and horizontal mobilization, particularly the gathering on the green organized by Peer-based Organization, offered an opportunity to, as Shakir refers, actually ‘construct’ inclusion that is “critically minded” (Shakir, 2006, p. 212). The importance of this was emphasized by some participants who said that action offered a much needed space to be critical.

In more recent activity, the GNG has been in a period of transition and *opening up* to more involvement of the street community. As well, the GNG has been the subject of more general community conversations regarding the overall inclusivity of the GNG. Several participants spoke about the positive new participation of Peer-Based Organization (comprised of individuals who have experience of homelessness and advocate allies), while others spoke more generally about inclusive practice in the GNG. Much discussion honed in on what ‘inclusion’ meant and how particular understandings translate into practice. When talking about the recent participation of Peer-Based Organization, the understanding of inclusion articulated by some participants alluded to what Shakir refers to as an “additive” model of representation, whereby exclusion can be remedied by adding more representation into the GNG (Shakir, 2005, p. 207). In this current of discussion ‘inclusion’ was broadly categorized as synonymous with ‘participation’. Participation is a positive step, however, what gets left out of the ‘additive’

approach is any emphasis on challenging the cultures and practices of the GNG that are barriers to realizing thicker notions of inclusion - a critique levelled by a number of participants (Shakir, 2005, p. 207). Theorists like Young warn that if a participatory process is situated within unjust inequalities then inclusion demands acknowledgement and response to those inequalities, not only opportunities to be involved (Young, 1999, p. 156). Thus, a formal opportunity to participate is categorically distinct from 'inclusion' and we need to be cognizant of the unique requirements of inclusion.

The participation-model of inclusion was challenged by other participants with the critical reflection of "who is defining inclusion?" (Shakir, 2006, p. 206). A welcome invitation was extended to Peer-Based Organization but unpacking the invitation suggests that certain pre-existing power-relations were perpetuated. For instance, new participants were expected to work within the pre-established deliberative structure and participants recalled that some conflict had arisen when the peer-based organization did not participate in the manner that was expected by the other GNG members. Theoretically this instance of conflict can be seen as an issue of framing, specifically the dimensions of "representation" and the deliberative structure of the GNG, namely the 'one representative' model (Fraser, 2007a, p. 21). The power to select the deliberative structure largely remained with the original GNG members. What was asked by a number of participants was to reopen the deliberative structures and recreate them democratically with the voices of the street community actively shaping the understanding of 'inclusion' practiced within the GNG.

If conversations about the frame are not on the table, action that is deliberately challenging can be an effective means of encouraging the conversation. Conflicts over the deliberative structure spurred by the new participants went a ways to unsettle the established

deliberative structure. In response to such challenges there can be an impulse to pacify conflicts within the participatory process. One of the responses of the GNG was to regain what Young calls a “norm of order” by reinforcing the ‘one representative’ expectations of the GNG’s deliberative structure (Young, 2000, p. 47). This is not to say that the peer-based organization’s actions were overtly confrontational per se, yet they did unsettle and challenge the deliberative structures. Young theorizes that in adopting more inclusive practices, moments of “agonism” are to be expected in addition to moments of consensus, as for many hitherto excluded people participation in a group like the GNG can be contextualized within a process of “struggle” (Young, 2000, p. 50). To draw on another example, two participants recalled an example of members of Peer-Based Organization participating in a meeting that occurred during the development of the GNA (prior to the organization receiving formal invitation to participate). In that meeting, agonistic protest tactics were used as a response to the exclusion of the street community from the development of the GNA. Participating in that meeting was contextualized within a broader struggle for voice, respect, and wellbeing of people from the street community, and so agonistic tactics were a means to achieve some voice in a public process, like others before, which did not actively seek to engage their perspective.

Agonistic tactics and the stance of struggle can also be seen as a stance that comes from a place of “shattered expectations”, where people have seen public processes exclude the street community time and again (McGrath, 2001, p. 76). Seeing the repeated exclusion may leave people “disenchanted” and untrusting of public processes, such that overtly aggressive tactics are required to make sure one’s voice is heard (McGrath, 2001, p. 76). It becomes a reasonable way of challenging unequal power relations when said relations are not being challenged otherwise by already ‘included’ members. Therefore, assuming a “norm of order” where the calm “rational

deliberator” is expected and reprimanding people who feel that agnostic tactics are necessary at times to achieve inclusion can act as a further means of alienating people from public processes (Young, 2000, p. 47; Young, 2001, p. 675). With a history marked by exclusion and distrust, agonism should be expected and to a degree accepted as the GNG moves towards greater inclusion. Moreover, agonism can ultimately communicate strong messages to other members and thus can add to a participatory process, indicating that the social relations and the deliberative procedures amongst the members need to be critically reviewed.

Although Peer-based Organization was invited into a space where the deliberative procedures were predetermined, some participants expressed interest in seeing how Peer-based Organization’s participation would develop over time and a number of participants outlined what a more inclusive form of participation in the GNG would look like. First, there were thoughts on different ‘strategies’, as a number of participants regarded the ‘one representative model’ of participation as not capable of effectively including members of the street community. Second, renewal of the culture of the GNG, expressed through values and relationships, was explored. Overall, there was a desire to realize what Fraser refers to as “participatory parity” in the GNG (and the neighbourhood more generally), as some deliberative and cultural elements of the GNG inhibited a heightened sense of participatory parity, in which people from the street community could interact with other GNG members “as peers” (Fraser, 2003, p. 36). To reach a level of parity, it was stated that inclusion required “positive action” by GNG members to foster and sustain (Young, 1999, p. 156). The need for positive action to foster inclusion is corroborated by some literature on GNAs (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 29). Yet, any positive action should also be grounded in recognition of the social status of the street community, namely, the regular stigmatization of their identities (Belle-Isle, Benoit, Pauly, 2014; Strike,

Myers, & Millson, 2004) and the “institutional structures” that perpetuate unequal power relations bearing down on their lives (Lister, 2007, p. 168). Recognition of these relations and structures subsequently informs what positive action occurs.

The significance of meeting the street community on their own terms was stressed by participants and recognized as a key ‘positive action’. Implicit in this notion was the power to have a hand in defining the procedural standards for decision making, a central element of inclusion (Fraser, 2007, p. 28). That being said, participants often saw that meeting the street community on their own terms involved ‘peer-based engagement’, a powerful form of organizing and engagement documented in other literature (Rabinovitch & Strega, 2004, p. 156). This form values expertise born of experience and emphasizes peer leadership and mutual support amongst peers. This means that people who are part of the street community are experts on the deliberative structures most apt for their context and robust peer-based organizations are sources of leadership and guidance that the GNG can potentially draw on (Rabinovitch & Strega, 2004; Belle-Isle, Benoit, & Pauly, 2014). In Victoria, BC there are multiple organizations of this type which have deep knowledge and insight that potentially can be tapped into (Committee to End Homelessness, 2014; Society of Living Illicit Drug Users, 2014).

There were noted challenges to facilitating more peer-led engagement. As noted in the literature, participants discussed how being homeless makes it difficult to organize with other peers to try to influence matters that directly affect them (Anker, 2008, 2009). Nonetheless, in response, participants outlined how further ‘positive action’ explicitly supportive of peer-led engagement could assist in surmounting some of the challenges. Yet, grounding the notion of positive action in a peer-based framework augments the notion of positive action outlined by Young (1999, p. 156) with the condition that the content of the action is self-determined by those

hitherto excluded. This means that deciding on what ‘positive action’ to take is not up to the original GNG members. Rather, in respecting street-based experiential expertise, what the positive action looks like is more so determined by people from the street community. GNG members would then in some way support members of the street community to take self-directed ‘positive action’. Actions can range in size and scope. A small positive action could be allowing people who want to participate in GNG meetings to be accompanied by others peers or an advocate. On a larger scope, one example identified multiple times in participant’s discussions was peer-led deliberative forums. Peer-based organizations were the ideal candidates to organize and facilitate these forums, as noted elsewhere in the literature (Anker 2008, 2009). Positive action, therefore, could actively support these organizations in their efforts to “mobilize people” (Abers, 2000, p. 224). Supporting the mobilizing capacity of members of the street community is particularly important, as being homeless presents barriers to self-organization and self-representation (Anker, 2008, p. 35; Anker, 2009, p. 285). Supporting the mobilization capacity of users of services is also noted in some of the literature on GNAs, in which housing associations hired a community development worker explicitly to increase the capacity of service users to engage in decision making (Cole, McCoulough, & Southworth, 2000, p. 20).

Another way to support peer-led engagement would be to address the lack of accessible public meeting space and instances where police presence was deemed overwhelming, two barriers to engagement noted by several participants. The redistribution and allocation of resources for street-involve people has been cited as a vital condition of fostering greater inclusion (Anker, 2009, p. 284). Subsequently these positive actions would seek to address inequalities in resource distribution by seeking to “redistribute” needed material resources (Fraser, 2003, p. 36). For example, at times it was difficult to meet in public, such as on the

boulevard of the 900 Block Pandora Avenue, or at OP due to some *police presence* or actions to *discourage congregating*. Overcoming these inequalities would partly involve limiting the *police presence* in the area, at GNG meetings, or at OP to “redistribute” safe and accessible space for the street community to gather and meet (Fraser, 2003, p. 36). Adequate distribution of spatial material resources is a step to “ensure individuals’ independence and voice”, and in turn a step towards participatory parity (Fraser, 2003, p. 36). More generally, material resources are required to ensure successful organizing, particular since such peer-based organizing is attempting to overcoming structural and systemic barriers (Anker, 2009, p. 284).

Earlier it was stated that social relations are a primary component of any polity, as theorized by Fraser. Some participants who were GNG members cited relationship building between these groups as a needed step towards more effective participation of Peer-based Organization. However, some participants from the street community and/or homeless advocate participants were open about the strained relationship, saying it is difficult to trust the GNG given the history of exclusion and because there has been no attempt to meet the street community on their own terms (this distrust was acknowledged by other participants as well). Building trust is not an easy task, and in particular working through “shattered trust” requires active efforts to kindle a reciprocal trust (Thorne & Robinson, 1989, p. 156). What was latently articulated by some participants is that to trust they need to be trusted, which implies that their experiential knowledge and agency is valued. Both of these dimensions touch upon elements that can be part of the later stages of trust development, as outlined in the guarded alliance concept. Specifically, when someone knows that their perspectives are valued and their capacities to act are respected and encouraged, it becomes easier to trust the people they are involved/working with (Thorne & Robinson, 1989). Within the context of the GNG, it is not only a general respect

for the street community but a “context-specific and individualized” trust of participants from Peer-based Organization that is needed (Thorne & Robinson, 1988, p. 785). Thus, an individualized trust could value someone’s ability to be a peer-leader and independently organize other peers to engage, for example, the issue of respectful relations between police and people experiencing homelessness.

From a research perspective, this study occurred at a unique time. Discussion of the *opening up* was situated within a period of transition where Peer-based Organization had only recently been invited to the GNG. The literature reviewed for this study is taciturn on the role of transition, except for documented experience of social inclusion work in Europe, which has signified that transition is an important stage to be cognizant of (FEANTSA, 2007, p. 9). However, the FEANTSA work is in regards to developing new inclusive participatory processes, while the GNG was an already established process, with some participatory elements, in a period of transition. In this study, three points about transition were articulated: first, tension will occur in the encounter of new personalities and dynamics; second, opening up discussion about the deliberative structures is necessary for inclusion; and third, everyone involved has to understand how pervasive exclusionary forces are.

As the first two points have been discussed elsewhere in section 5.2, I mainly focus on the third point here. Some discussion was quite stark about the deep power inequalities at play and how they will continue to be a factor for the foreseeable future, meaning that achieving participatory parity will be arduous and potentially remain unrealized for years to come. The honesty expressed by participants about the depth of inequality echoed what some theorists talk about as acknowledging that social exclusion has been “institutionalized” and the “patterns of cultural valuation” which subordinate people are pervasive (Lara & Fine, 2007, p. 38; Lister,

2007, p. 168). Participatory parity is therefore not subject to an off/on switch but worked on and struggled for, over time. Viewing the transition as a unique period helps to put into perspective some the immediate challenges that will likely arise, such as experimenting with new dynamics and procedures. Yet, on a larger scale the period of transition is also a time of coming to grips with what social exclusion is and how pervasive it can be. This personal dimension is briefly touched upon in the work of the FEANTSA group, who write that transition periods can be times of both intellectual and ethical challenge (FEANTSA, 2007, p. 9). Larger societal issues, then, become personal when those who are not part of the street community come face to face with people who live through social exclusion, over time learning how their own lives are implicated within others exclusion.

Collectively, this series of reflections points toward one way of reimagining the GNA and GNG process. We can use participatory governance theory, interleaved where needed with literature on social inclusion, stigma, and guarded alliance, to outline a new approach to GNAs and GNGs that successfully promotes inclusion. To my mind, it would involve all three dimensions of justice outlined by Nancy Fraser (the political, redistribution, and recognition) combined with the focus on inclusion that Iris Marion Young advocates for. Below I sketch out some of these reflections.

The beginning of the development of a GNA is a crucial period, since the frame is established in which subsequent activities will occur within. As a result, beginning with an idea of ‘community’ as including everyone present, not just certain community members, is a major component. That said, I think it is necessary to begin a GNA process with the street community at the center with the required supports to assist sustained peer-based mobilization and engagement. However, the street community should not be seen as ‘just another neighbourhood

stakeholder'. Rather, their unique social positioning should be *recognized*, in that this group of people faces myriad inequalities in social status, power, and access to material resources. Given this unique social status, 'positive action' is needed to surmount some of these barriers (as best as possible given the circumstances) and facilitate inclusion. For instance, the amount of police involvement in the GNA may have to be decreased if we want to be a part of a process that the street community feels safe in. Also, the act of recognition can help to offset conceptualizations of the street community as a 'problem' that needs to be solved and instead draws our attention to the larger structural issues that shape what occurs at a neighbourhood level (e.g. lack of affordable housing or harm reduction services).

If the street community has an active and central voice from the beginning, this community is in a position to advance a conceptualization of the street community that is grounded in the experiences of peers with similar experience. Altogether, framing the street community in a more positive light - a conception grounded in street perspective - reframes the GNA in significant ways. A GNA can then be seen as a vehicle that is not about just about 'dealing with the street community' or mitigating the 'negative influences of the street community' but rather working with street community to support them in making a neighbourhood that is welcoming and inclusive for this community too. Carrying out this work would also involve the street community as active central members, with sustained support for their peer-mobilization and engagement efforts.

As the GNA/GNG currently functions, one can understand why some people in the street community would rather not participate at all (for reasons which I've outlined throughout this thesis). Yet, perhaps a GNA that operates along the lines of what I've outlined above would be attractive for the street community to participate in, as it can be a vehicle to maintain proper

social services and supports, as well as work towards a community that is indeed safe and welcoming for all.

5.3 Contributions to the Literature and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Overall this thesis has yielded unique contributions to the body of literature reviewed in Chapter 2. First, this study extends participatory governance theories of Young and Fraser into the context of homelessness and street communities. In doing so, this thesis has contributed to participatory governance literature by using theories of Young and Fraser to examine the practice of social service agencies acting as representatives for the street community and outlining some of the limitations and strengths to this mode of representation. Teasing out some of the limitations of this model in turn enabled some links to be drawn between theory developed by Young and Fraser and the theory of peer-based engagement. Second, much literature discusses principles of participatory governance and social inclusion and a smaller body of literature focuses on the practice dimension. This thesis contributes to knowledge about the practice of participatory governance informed by a social inclusion perspective, specifically the period of organizational transition to a more socially inclusive practice. By applying ‘guarded alliance’ theory into a non-medical context and paired with theory developed by Young and other social inclusion theorists, this thesis has added to accounts of navigating challenging inter-personal and power relations faced in practice settings. Finally, this study is, to my knowledge, the first academic work to look at Good Neighbour Agreements for social service delivery in a Canadian context. It is a unique in-depth look at a phenomenon that is widespread in Western Canada.

Learnings from this thesis have application to policy and practice regarding GNAs. For the most part my recommendations pertain to social service organizations involved in GNAs and the practice of social inclusion in these settings. My recommendations are as follows:

- Non-peer-based social service organizations have a role to play in advocating the street community. Staff at these organizations can use a GNG as a platform from which to build relations with neighboring community members and engage in advocacy for the street community. However, the ability of non-peer based social service organizations to represent and advocate for people from the street community is limited in certain cases where the organization is charged with tending to and representing multiple interests. These limitations are important to recognize.
- Peer-based social service organizations are uniquely positioned to represent and advocate for the street community. The importance and value of these organizations must be recognized.
- Non-peer-based social service organizations can support peer-based organizing in important ways. First, they can redistribute material resources, such as providing meeting space. Second, they can support the advocacy efforts of people from the street community, such as publically affirming positions taken by people from the street community. Third, they can assist with the mobilization of the street community, by helping to organize peer-based dialogue forums and other organizing events.
- The ‘one representative model’ (i.e. inviting only one person to the discussion table), as discussed in section 4.4.6 of Chapter 4, is not necessarily suitable for including the street community in dialogue and decision making. Requiring that individuals from the street community attend unaccompanied by either another peer or an advocate can create barriers to inclusion. Instead, people should be given the option as to whether they would like to be accompanied or not, regardless of whether that individual is connected with a peer-based organization or not. Overall, the meeting rules and format must be designed in partnership with the street community, integrating principles of peer-based engagement.

- Actions taken independently of the GNG by individuals from the street community (e.g. a peer-organized dialogue forum) should be recognized by other organizations and the GNG.
- Non-participation of the street community is not indicative of a lack of interest or tacit approval of the GNG's activities. Quite likely, non-participation is indicative of social and materials barriers (e.g. stigma, uncondusive meeting format, inability to self-organize and engage) that inhibit the involvement of the street community.
- Stigma of the street community inhibits inclusion. Countering stigma, both in the content of the GNA and the activities of the GNG, can help to create a meeting environment that is more welcoming and conducive to inclusion. Participants need to shift away from the paradigm of conceptualizing the street community as a 'problem' in the neighbourhood and instead continually acknowledge the larger structural issues that shape what is happening at a neighbourhood level (e.g. lack of affordable housing or harm reduction services).
- Overall the GNA should be revisited and framed more so as a vehicle for supporting the street community and building a community that is safe and welcoming for the street community.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

This thesis began from personal interest in local matters that I felt also had academic significance. By structuring the project through a work exchange I had the opportunity to learn a great deal about these matters and experience changes in my own perspective on them.

Throughout the work exchange, data collection, and data analysis, the post-structuralist theoretical framework I adopted has provided a means to look beyond some of the dominant trends I saw in the data to confirm the power asymmetries inherent in the GNG process and find some of the more obscured themes and interpretations. Based on this framework a tentative

interpretation, a crop of theoretical reflections, and general policy and practice recommendations were crafted in reference to the 900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Group. These interpretations, reflections, and recommendations are addressed to a local audience but also to a more general audience involved in social service delivery and social inclusion work. It is hoped that these writings provide a unique insight into the topic and conveys, among other things, the exceedingly valuable but often overlooked positive agency of the street community.

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Appendices

Appendix A –

900 Block Pandora Avenue Good Neighbour Agreement²³

VISION

All neighbours of the 900 block of Pandora Avenue including residents, businesses, seniors, children, students, social service agencies, schools, churches, and the street community, will be welcome and may enjoy comfort and safety in their neighbourhood.

GOAL OF THE AGREEMENT

To provide a means for all neighbours to work effectively together to achieve the vision.

PRINCIPLES

- Communicate clearly and honestly,
- Work together to address concerns and solve problems in a positive and timely manner,
- Be respectful of the street community and engage them in resolving issues, and
- Commit to following through on agreed actions.

CONTEXT

The 900 block of Pandora Avenue is home to a number of social agencies and services, as well as a mix of businesses. The Victoria Conservatory of Music and Saint Andrews School (just east of the 900 block) bring many children to the area.

Social service agencies on the block provide services to the homeless population and those individuals with mental health and/or addictions issues. Concerns have been expressed with individuals drawn to the area gathering on sidewalks and boulevards, camping overnight in doorways, openly using and selling drugs and engaging in vandalism and theft, thus, generally contributing to unhealthy and unsafe conditions in the block.

Social issues are a community reality and a shared community responsibility. Services such as those provided by Our Place are recognized as necessary and valuable in assisting disadvantaged individuals. Unfortunately, provision of such services may be accompanied by public disorder that can be difficult to control, calling upon residents, businesses, social agencies and the City to ensure that negative impacts to public and private property are minimized or eliminated.

It is recognized that a Good Neighbour Agreement can help to manage social issues to reduce or eliminate their impacts on the immediate area, but will not address the root causes (poverty, addictions, mental illness, homelessness), nor will it address some of the law enforcement challenges related to illegal activities.

GOOD NEIGHBOUR GROUP

This agreement is amongst neighbours in the 900 block of Pandora Avenue and the nearby residents, as represented by the North Park and Downtown Residents Associations, along with

²³ Note that this version omits the signatories to the Good Neighbour Agreement.

the City of Victoria and the Victoria Police Department who have signed the agreement. They have agreed to attend Good Neighbour Group meetings and participate in initiatives to improve the safety and livability of the 900 block.

The Good Neighbour Group will initially meet every four to six weeks and adjust the frequency of ongoing meetings as needed to maintain regular communication and discuss emergent and ongoing issues.

The City of Victoria, through the Downtown Coordinator's office (and through any successor office with similar responsibilities), will provide coordination services to the Good Neighbour Group.

COMMITMENTS OF REPRESENTED ORGANIZATIONS

Signatories agree to:

- Keep their buildings and grounds clean and in good condition,
- Promptly make any repairs needed and remove any graffiti,
- Make necessary modifications to the exterior of their buildings to discourage loitering and camping (e.g. enhanced exterior lighting),
- Ensure that crime, whether on public or private property, is reported and that law enforcement is called promptly,
- Provide a representative to the Good Neighbour Group,
Participate in joint, co-operative initiatives (both pro-active and defensive) as agreed from time to time by the Good Neighbour Group and to address issues when they arise, and
- Reach out to agencies and businesses that are not signatories to this agreement and encourage them to participate in agreed joint initiatives.

Service agencies further agree to:

- Take appropriate action to deal with any client who causes disruption in the immediate neighbourhood, and
- Assist in engaging the street community in the activities and initiatives of the Good Neighbour Group.

Appendix B**Interview Guides****Interview Guide - Group 1**

- 1) What was the context in which the GNA came about?
- 2) How was the GNA developed? (process)
- 3) What have the impacts of the Good Neighbour Agreement been on relations with the street community?
 - a. Have you noticed any recent changes?
 - b. What about overall respect and inclusion for the street community?
- 4) What have the impacts of the Good Neighbour Agreement been on the local housed resident's (i.e. not part of the street community, including businesses, institutions, police) perceptions of the street community?
- 5) Has the Good Neighbour Group attempted to engage the street community? If so, how?
- 6) How has the street community self-organized to engage with initiatives and actions on the 900 Block?
- 7) What are your reflections on involving the street community in dialogue and decision making in the Good Neighbour Group or 900 Block?

Interview Guide - Group 2

- 1) How were you first made aware of the Pandora Good Neighbour Agreement?
 - a. If yes, what do you think about the Good Neighbour Agreement signed for the Pandora 900 Block?
- 2) Have you or anyone you know been engaged in any decision making or activities for the Pandora 900 Block?
 - a. If yes, can you tell me about it?
- 3) How has the street community self-organized to engage with initiatives and action on the 900 Block?
- 4) What have relations with the street community and the rest of the 900 Block community (business, residents, organizations, police) been like over the last five years?
 - a. Have you noticed any changes?
 - b. What about respect and inclusion for the street community?
- 5) How would you include the street community in decision making for the 900 Block?

Appendix C – City of Victoria Streets and Traffic Bylaw (City of Victoria, 2010c)

(three pages total)

NO. 10-061

STREETS AND TRAFFIC BYLAW, AMENDMENT BYLAW

A BYLAW OF THE CITY OF VICTORIA

The purpose of this Bylaw is to amend the Streets and Traffic Bylaw so as to better regulate the use of boulevards and medians on City streets in order to prevent the unsafe use of City streets for camping, or for the erection of tents and other forms of shelter, to prevent the damage to City property and the nuisance and inconvenience to the public that results from such inappropriate and unsafe uses, and to preserve the aesthetic character and appearance of City streets.

Under its statutory powers, including section 8(3)(b) and (h), and sections 36, 46, 62 and 64 of the *Community Charter*, the Council of The Corporation of the City of Victoria enacts the following provisions:

1. This Bylaw may be cited as the "STREETS AND TRAFFIC BYLAW, AMENDMENT BYLAW (NO. 1)".
2. The Streets and Traffic Bylaw is amended by inserting after section 103 the following provisions as section 103A:

"Boulevards and Medians

103A (1) In this section:

"boulevard" includes:

- (a) on a street with curbs, the unpaved portion of street between the outside curb and adjoining property line; and
- (b) on a street without a curb, the unpaved portion of street between the edge of the roadway and the adjoining property line.

"median" includes:

- (a) an area that is painted, curbed or raised and is located between traffic lanes to separate vehicles travelling in opposite directions;
- (b) any unpaved portion of the road allowance, including but not limited to landscaped areas and greens, located between two or more roadways or streets; and
- (c) a traffic circle or other traffic divider.

"roadway" means that portion of a street improved, designed or intended for vehicular use.

- (2) A person must not place, construct, erect or cause or permit to be placed, constructed or erected any structure, tent, object or thing that encroaches on, obstructs, or otherwise occupies a boulevard or median without first obtaining written permission from the Director of Engineering.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not apply to any of the following persons or objects:
 - (a) employees or agents of the City while they are acting in the course of their employment;
 - (b) a special event for which a permit has been issued by the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Development; and
 - (c) works for which a permit is issued under section 102 or 106 of this Bylaw, or under a bylaw passed under section 14 of the *Victoria City Act, 1919*.
- (4) The Director of Engineering, a person authorized by the Director of Engineering, or a member of a police force, on behalf of the City may cause the removal, detention or impounding of any structure, tent, object or thing found on a boulevard or median in contravention of this section.
- (5) Between sunset of one day and sunrise on the next day, a person must not:
 - (a) occupy a median by squatting, kneeling, sitting, or lying down on it;
 - (b) stand or walk on a median except while lawfully crossing a street.
- (6) The prohibition set out in subsection (5) does not apply to any of the following:
 - (a) employees or agents of the City while they are acting in the course of their employment;
 - (b) police officers in the performance of their duties;
 - (c) a medical emergency;
 - (d) sitting on a seat, or standing, at a bus zone while waiting for a bus;
 - (e) persons participating in or attending a special event for which a permit has been issued by the Director of

Engineering or the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Development; and

- (f) walking on a path or trail designed for that purpose.
- (7) A person must not do any of the following on a boulevard:
 - (a) cut, break, injure, remove, climb, or in any way destroy or damage
 - (i) a tree, shrub, plant, turf, flower, or seed, or
 - (ii) a building or structure, including a fence, sign, seat, bench, or ornament of any kind;
 - (b) dispose of household, yard, or commercial waste.
- (8) Prohibition contained in subsection (7)(a) does not apply to any of the following:
 - (a) employees or agents of the City while they are acting in the course of their employment; and
 - (b) persons acting under an agreement with the City or a permit issued by the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Development.
- (9) For certainty, this section applies to any boulevard and median that is also a park, notwithstanding section 16A of the Parks Regulation Bylaw."

READ A FIRST TIME the day of

READ A SECOND TIME the day of

READ A THIRD TIME the day of

ADOPTED on the day of

CORPORATE ADMINISTRATOR

MAYOR