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Embracing the Grey Zone: Navigating flexible boundaries at Welcome Inn Community Centre

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EMBRACING THE GREY ZONE:

NAVIGATING FLEXIBLE BOUNDARIES AT WELCOME INN COMMUNITY

CENTRE

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of Social Work

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of relationships and issues of professional boundaries at Welcome Inn Community Centre, a faith-based community centre offering programs and services to address issues of poverty in Hamilton, Ontario. Data was gathered through semi-structured qualitative interviews with fifteen staff members, volunteers, and participants at Welcome Inn. A strengths-based perspective combined with mutual relationships and flexible boundaries were found to foster inclusion, acceptance, community building, and personal transformation at Welcome Inn Community Centre; Welcome Inn staff, volunteers, and program participants described these qualities positively. Mixed positive and negative comments were used to describe decision-making and boundaries at Welcome Inn. The need for increased intentionality and clarity around professional boundaries was identified. Using grounded theory methodology, a model, "Embracing the Grey Zone,' and associated reflexive tools for navigating flexible boundaries were developed. The model and tools are presented here for use in social work community practice and education.

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<center>**Chapter One**</center>

<center>**Introduction**</center>

Social Location

Welcome Inn has been a central part of my personal, faith, and professional journeys.

When I started this research, I had been involved at the Welcome Inn for four years, first as a

volunteer (2002-2005) and then as the children's program coordinator (2005-2006). Although I

had always highly valued work for social justice and social change, the Welcome Inn community

offered new opportunities and understanding. For the first time, my ethical, relational, and social

justice values were challenged and strengthened through relationship with people with lived

experience of poverty, oppression, and marginalization. My motivation for this study is in a

large part due to the deep personal impact of the Welcome Inn community in my own life and

how I've observed its positive impact in the lives of others.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I did not anticipate that I would experience the spiritual

homecoming I did at Welcome Inn. In spite of doctrinal differences, my spiritual values of

simplicity, community-building, and authenticity found resonance in the orientation and

practices of the Welcome Inn. In addition, the cross-section of people from different socio-

economic backgrounds greatly enriched my experience of faith in community and reflected a

type of diversity I have not experienced in Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Aboriginal Activist Lilla Watson said: "If you have come to help me, then you're wasting

your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up in mine, then let us work

together" (Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s). At its best, I've experienced

Welcome as a testament to people working together for mutual liberation. I began my joint

<div align="right">1</div>

Master of Social Work and Master of Divinity program hoping to one day start a Unitarian

Universalist community initiative that mirrors some of the successes of the Welcome Inn. Eight

years later, that is still my goal.

After finishing my course work for my joint master's program, but before finishing this

thesis, I unexpectedly returned to Welcome Inn as Executive Director, effective June 2011.

Working full-time at Welcome Inn, I found it increasingly difficult to find time and energy for

this project, and returned to this study after resigning my leadership of Welcome Inn in June

2014. I am currently serving as Assistant Minister for Outreach and Social Justice at the First

Unitarian Church of Hamilton, where I continue to draw on my learning from Welcome Inn. I

have incorporated some of my observations and reflections as Executive Director of Welcome

Inn into the discussion section of this thesis.

Problem Focus

Having experienced personal transformation through my involvement at Welcome Inn, and

hoping to bring some of the ethos of Welcome Inn to my future ministry within Unitarian

Universalism, I began this study with the intention of better understanding the approach to

relationships and community building at Welcome Inn, as well as its strengths and challenges.

Over the course of gathering and analysing the research data, my research became increasingly

focused on boundaries at Welcome Inn as a key component and challenge of relationships.

Brief History of Welcome Inn Community Centre and Church

The Welcome Inn was started in 1966 by Hamilton Mennonite Church. The impetus came

from their new pastor, Rev. Herman Enns, who gave two conditions before accepting their call:

first, that they would put up a building, and second, that they start a significant social service

project in Hamilton. The congregation agreed, and after researching needs in the Hamilton

community, started the Welcome Inn in a storefront in the North End. Staffed by "house

parents" Menno and Margarethe Ediger and Voluntary Service Workers,[1] the Welcome Inn first

functioned as a drop-in centre for people in the North End, many of whom were living in

poverty. Hamilton Mennonite Church members and Pastor Herman Enns remained closely

involved. One of the people interviewed in the current study was involved in the early years, and

remembers joint Hamilton Mennonite and Welcome Inn outings:

> There were sometimes excursions – families were encouraged to visit with each
>
> other. For a couple of years, they had community gardens, not in the city but out of
>
> town. People were encouraged to adopt a family and take them out there because
>
> they did not have transportation, and I remember one summer taking a family on a
>
> regular basis.

The Welcome Inn continued to grow and evolve. As a result of pressures of urban

renewal, the Welcome Inn moved to a large house in the neighbourhood in 1971. Hugo and

Doreen Neufeld began their many years of service that year (Welcome Inn, 2011). Eventually,

they were named the first Executive Directors of the Welcome Inn, and then Co-Pastors as well.

Out of weekly Bible studies grew monthly Sunday evening worship services in 1978, which

evolved into weekly Sunday morning worship services in 1981, forming the Welcome Inn

Church.

In 1983, the Welcome Inn moved again to its present location at 40 Wood St. E. In 1989,

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[1] The Mennonite Voluntary Service program provides young adults with an opportunity to gain experience in social service in communities around the world. Voluntary Service Workers (VSers) live together and either work directly for a service organization, or volunteer while working part or full time at another job in the area. All income supports the household. It is designed to strengthen Christian faith and the integration of faith and service.

the Neufelds departed and Harry Nigh assumed the role of both Executive Director and Pastor. Voluntary Service workers (VSers) continued to be active at the Welcome Inn until 2003. At the height of the VS program at the Welcome Inn, there were eight to ten VSers; by 2003, there were two. In 1998, the roles of Pastor and Executive Director were split to accommodate programmatic growth, and Michael Hannigan was hired as ED, while Harry Nigh continued as Pastor. Seniors' programming began in 1989; the Emergency Food Pantry in 1991; Circles of Support and Accountability, an internationally recognized program started by Harry Nigh for reintegration of convicted sex offenders, began in 1994; the Learning and Fun After School program in 2000; the PLAN program in 2007, and the New Horizons Thrift Store in 2008. In 2004, Donna Jean Forster started at the Welcome Inn as Executive Director and Marvin Friesen began as Pastor, which he continued until the closure of the Welcome Inn Church in 2009. I followed Donna Jean Forster as Executive Director beginning in 2011, until 2014.

Welcome Inn Programs

The Welcome Inn focuses on anti-poverty programming in its North End Hamilton neighbourhood. Programs and services are aimed primarily at people in the community who are living in poverty and/or socially isolated. The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton reports that in some parts of the North End and bordering neighbourhoods, up to 57 percent of adults and 76 percent of children and youth live below the poverty line (Mayo & Fraser, 2009). Many people from outside of the North End neighbourhood access programs and services. Program participants are diverse and include people from ethnic minorities, single-parent families, new immigrants, and those who are differently-abled both physically and intellectually.

The Welcome Inn's slogan, vision statement, and mission statement, effective until

December 2012, speak to the focus on community-building and empowerment:

> Slogan: "Connecting people, inspiring community"
>
> Vision Statement: *"*In partnership with others we will dedicate ourselves to combat the poverty of exclusion and loneliness. We will foster healing and justice, trusting in the mystery of faith."
>
> Mission Statement: *"*Welcome Inn is a Mennonite-sponsored community centre, in which all people are celebrated and loved unconditionally, enabled to give as well as receive. We are a caring community where people are challenged to grow in self-esteem and respect for one another. Essential to our mission is service to others."

Less tangible areas of self-esteem, healing, inclusion, and mutual giving are emphasized over direct service provision or alleviating the symptoms of poverty in the neighbourhood. Revised vision, mission, core values and slogans, developed by a team of staff and Board members with community input, were adopted in December 2012 (Appendix A).

The Welcome Inn aims to empower people through education and relationship, and by providing an inclusive space where everyone is invited to discover and share their gifts. The organization's programming spans various life domains and target populations: children's programs – the Learning and Fun (LAF) after school program and Summer Day Camp – that focus on both social and academic development, including self-esteem and confidence; the Seniors' program, supported by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, that serves meals facilitates community-building and relationships among seniors and between seniors; a food pantry that is staffed by volunteers who are also program participants, which was accessed by 10,000 people last year, and is the only food bank in the city that does not have geographic or income restrictions; PLAN program that offers workshops and micro-loans to people starting or

continuing a home-based business (bizPlan), as well as a matched savings program with adult, youth, and children's opportunities to save; and a thrift store, which offers quality used clothes and household goods, and offers service and sales job skills training to volunteers. Many people are involved in several different capacities and/or programs.

Theoretical Orientation

In keeping with Welcome Inn's emphasis on the gifts of each and every person, I have used a strengths perspective as the theoretical orientation of this research. Dennis Saleeby (2006) presents a model based on the belief that every person, group and community has strengths, potential and resources that enable resilience and fulfilling living in the midst of adversity. The strengths perspective will be further explored in the literature review.

Theological Orientation

My theological orientation to this research is grounded in relationship and connection. The first principle of Unitarian Universalism calls for affirmation and promotion of "the inherent worth and dignity of every person;" the seventh principle calls for "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part" (see Appendix B for the full statement Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources). This research and my combination of social work and divinity flow from my deep sense of connection with the interdependent web of all existence, and the call to community, spiritual growth, and social justice that flow from that connection.

Two models of contextual theology are reflected in the theological orientation of this research: an anthropological model and a praxis model (Bevans, 1992). Bevans (1992) describes the anthropological model as centring on the value and goodness of the human person, with divine presence as manifest in every person, society, social location, and culture, and religious

expression measured by human categories of life, wholeness, healing and relationship (p. 55).

Bevans describes the praxis model as rooted in thoughtful action: first acting then reflecting on

that action in faith. Feminist and liberation theology are both examples of praxis theology. In

the praxis model, the anthropological model's emphasis on the inherent goodness of culture is

challenged, and social change and political and economic stands are imperative. In honouring

each person's gifts and strengths, and the capacity for relationship, compassion, and community

at Welcome Inn, the anthropological approach is reflected in this study. Through examining

power dynamics at Welcome Inn and applying a reflexive model for boundary discernment, this

study reflects a praxis theological approach.

In their book *Proverbs of Ashes*, Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker offer a

Theology of Presence in the midst of suffering: "Love encompasses life. Like an arc of fire

across the night sky, Presence blesses those who await it. In sensing Presence, we embrace a

passion for life. Love is a seal upon the heart, a hunger to create, to honour life, to protect it, and

to see it flourish" (p. 252). Parker and Brock's powerful reminder of divine Presence in the

midst of suffering, partnered with their call for human compassion and presence in relationship

and community, and their affirmation of the renewing power of life and love resonate with my

sense of the interconnected web and the mysterious presence of God in its midst. At Welcome

Inn, I experienced a depth of community where I could see beauty, compassion, mutuality, and

resilience in the midst of hardship and challenge.

My theology of relationship was in a large part informed by my experiences at Welcome

Inn, and in turn informs this research.

In this chapter, I have outlined how my involvement in Welcome Inn has been

meaningful in my own life, and led to this research. Further, I have described the focus of this

research on relationships, with an emphasis on the impact of boundaries on relationship. I have described Welcome Inn's philosophy, values, and programs, and linked Welcome Inn's focus on strengths to the strengths perspective orientation of this research, as well as to a theological orientation of relationship, presence, interdependence, and social change. In the next section, I will review literature related to the strengths perspective and relationships, as well as various considerations in defining and understanding professional boundaries in community practice.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Strengths Perspective

According to Saleebey (2002), the strengths perspective in social work practice focuses on the belief that every person, group, and community has qualities that facilitate reaching their goals and living fulfilling lives in the midst of adversity. He presents an asset-based model using the acronym 'CPR' – focusing on people's competencies, capacities, courage, and character; promise, purpose, possibility, and positive expectations; and resources, resilience, relationships, resourcefulness, resolve, and reserves.

Grant and Cadell (2009) suggest the strengths perspective as an alternative to a pathological, or problem-based worldview, in social work practice through the introduction of strengths and what is going well to assessment and intervention. They note that pathological worldviews distance social workers from the people who use social work services, thus reinforcing power imbalances. Grant and Cadell state "The strengths approach to social work practices values empowerment of individuals seeking services and advocates a relationship of collaboration as opposed to one of authority" (p. 425). They further contend that "To fully understand the basis of the strengths perspective, it is necessary to understand that it is possible—in fact, quite likely—to face adversity and to thrive, not necessarily *in spite of it* but often in great part *because of it*" (p. 426).

Grant and Cadell (2009) stress the importance of examining power dynamics in the strengths perspective; they cite Foucault (1994) who notes the cyclic relationship of knowledge and power, with divisions resulting in the subjugation of the 'Other.' Grant and Cadell contend

that "In the absence of attention to relations of power, then, the strengths perspective may inadvertently lead to further pathologizing of service users through subjugation of service users' knowledge and experiences" (p. 426).

Grant and Cadell (2009) studied an organization with a practice of employing 'prosumers' – people who are both providers and consumers of service – and found that divisions existed in several unnamed ways. For example, they found that support staff expected gratitude from prosumer staff members for the opportunities and support offered to them. Grant and Cadell differentiate between appreciation and gratitude, with the former connoting mutual, reciprocal relationship and the latter connoting hierarchical relationship. They also found that needs were sometimes overlooked due to a focus on strengths, and contend that it is important to remember that strengths and needs can coexist, and to honour both in social work practice. Grant and Cadell also remind social work practitioners that strengths, pain, and challenges also exist simultaneously in our own lives, not just in the lives of people whom we serve, and that to remember this helps break down barriers between service providers and service users.

Anti-Oppressive Practice

Grant and Cadell (2009) suggest that the strengths perspective be used in dialogue with an anti-oppressive practice model that examines power dynamics. According to Mullaly (2002), "A key concept of anti-oppressive social work practice is 'empowerment'... a process through which oppressed people reduce their alienation and sense of powerlessness and gain greater control over all aspects of their lives and their social environment" (p. 179). Mullaly (2002) advocates for building self-esteem and independence; he comments that "Developing agency is itself a central part of the liberation process" (p. 174). Vodde and Giddings (1997) suggest that dual relationships may empower recipients of care through greater connectedness, honesty, and

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integrity on the part of both social worker and client and through increased client opportunities for power and self-determination (as cited in Mayer, 2005).

A seven year ethnographic study of an empowerment-focused child development program revealed that the development of mutual relationships between social work staff and families helped to empower families living in poverty, and that the active collaboration and participation of families was integral to the process (Bartle et al., 2002). Schorr (1999) also advocates for community-based anti-poverty work that focuses on relationships, particularly in neighbourhoods, communities, and between clients and social workers. Peterson and Hughey (2002) assert that attention to relationships and the active participation of service-users in many different roles in an organization is an effective strategy for empowering participants living in poverty.

Boundaries

As previously noted, boundaries became a primary focus in this study, particularly as they relate to relationships. While there is more research on professional boundaries in clinical social work settings, boundaries in community settings are both more complex and less extensively researched. In this section, I explore boundaries in the context of community practice.

Standards of Professional Boundaries in Social Work Practice

Given the inherently relational nature of social work, and the reality that relationship is a tool of empowerment and healing in itself, questions of the ideal nature and extent of relationship naturally follow. There are inherent power inequalities in the relationship between social worker and client, especially when -- as is frequently the case -- clients are marginalized, oppressed, or vulnerable in some way; boundaries thus recognize and describe the role differences in the social

worker-client relationship (Carney & McCarren, 2012).

The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW)'s <u>Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice</u> outlines expected professional behaviours governing relationships between social workers and their clients. The Code (2008) designates clear boundaries between social worker and client through a focus on the latter's needs and interests (p. 9). Sanders (2012) outlines the importance of confidentiality and boundaries in social work practice to ensure the safety – physical, emotional, or spiritual – of all involved parties. Further, Sanders posits clear professional boundaries as essential to the social worker-client relationship to ensure the relationship remains professional and the focus remains on resolving the clients' presenting problems, as well as to prevent burnout, compassion fatigue, and countertransference (p. 10-11).

Reamer (2003) differentiates between boundary violations and boundary crossings: boundary violations are inherently abusive, oppressive, and unethical, for example sex with clients or influencing a will; conversely, boundary crossings are dual relationships that are not intentionally exploitive, manipulative, deceptive, or coercive (p. 123).   Reamer contends that the consequences of boundary violations are inherently harmful, while the consequences of boundary crossings can be negative, positive, or neutral for the client, social worker, and/or colleagues (p. 123).

Key boundary crossing issues include self-disclosure, friendship with clients, relationships with former clients, gifts and invitations offered by and to clients, barter for services, use of touch, participating in social activities with clients, serving on community boards with clients, providing clients with home telephone numbers, discussing one's religious beliefs with clients, providing help outside of the scope of usual duties, use of social media and digital technology,

and relationships with clients in rural communities (Dybicz, 2012, p. 278; Reamer, 2003, p. 122; Reamer, 2013, p. 168). Dual relationships are also considered boundary crossings; dual relationships occur when secondary relationships are present between social worker and client that lie outside of the social worker-client relationship, including social, business, or sexual relationships, among others. Dual relationships can be problematic because the possibility exists that the social worker will put her or his needs first and will utilize impaired judgment (Mayer, 2005).

In discussing ethical use of social media by social workers, Reamer (2013) suggests that client knowledge of a social worker's family, political views, social activities and religion is inappropriate (p. 168). Gripton and Valentich (2003) differentiate between friendships and professional relationships: friendships are characterized by equality, open-ended duration, and confidentiality as a mutual risk, whereas professional relationships have power imbalances, are time limited, and constrained by different roles in the relationship (as cited by Pugh, 2007, p. 1418).

Sanders (2012) offers two case examples where the social workers' relaxed boundaries caused harm to clients: in the first case, the family of a patient of a hospice worker felt abandoned when the worker no longer visited after the family member's death, and in the second case, a hospice worker recommended a particular course of action because she over-identified with the patient's family in a situation of divorce, resulting in a dying teenager missing the opportunity for a visit from her father before her death (p. 15). Mayer (2005) summarizes potential negative consequences of boundary crossings, including potential client feelings of exclusion, confusion, hurt, betrayal, and resentment of other clients' "special relationships," as well as diminished confidentiality.

Daley and Hickman (2011), Halverson and Brownlee (2010), Pugh (2007) and Brocious et al. (2013) all affirm that dual relationships are unavoidable in small, rural communities for several reasons, including a) increased likelihood of contact with each other outside of the professional setting, b) the desire of many service users in rural areas to 'place' the worker in relation to themselves and others in the community as part of building trust, c) closer-knit, friendlier nature of many rural communities, and d) expectations of congruence between public and private lives in many rural communities. Pugh (2007) also notes that in rural communities, the roles of client and professional are often reversed, with social workers becoming clients of their clients (e.g. mechanics, teachers, etc.). Further, Strom-Gottfried (2005), Ginsberg (1998), and Martinez-Brawley (2000) suggest that rural social workers need to adapt to the norms of personal relationships in rural communities to gain acceptance, "fit" into the community, and to practice effectively (as cited in Daley & Hickman, 2011). According to Daley and Hickman (2011), credentials may mean less in a rural context, and formality and strict professionalism may be perceived as superiority and thereby undermine the goals of social work.

Benefits of Flexible Boundaries

As early as the mid-seventies and early-eighties, social workers saw a need for a change in the rigid paradigm of professional boundaries. Wagenfeld and Robin (1976) quote Dinitz and Beran's concept of "boundary busting" that changes the personal/professional dynamic between workers and clients. They found that mental health workers from a variety of health care disciplines viewed their own practice as more personal and less professional than the standards of the organization for which they worked (Wagenfeld & Robin, 1976). Dybicz (2012) contends that present day re-examination of social work relationships is bringing the profession back to its founding principles in positive ways:

This re-examination of the client-social worker relationship brings social work full

circle back to its roots. The Charity Organization Society ideal of the 'friendly

visitor' and the settlement house requirement that workers reside in the house (thus

being friends to and neighbors of those they served) spoke to much different qualities

than expressions of care in the relationship—qualities that emphasized democracy,

reciprocity, collaboration, and equality of partners. Being a friend and neighbor to

the client pervaded practice and played a prominent role in the helping process. This

'first voice' of social work (Weick, 2000)—hidden in a dark comer for the past 100

years, crowded out by professional (that is, scientific) knowledge— seems ready to

bask in the sunlight once more, alongside a new expertise that lends it strength and

vitality. (p. 279).

Further, Brocious et. al (2013) agree that avoidance of dual relationships is inconsistent with the

strengths perspective that currently prevails in the field of social work (p. 5).

Maidment (2006) similarly praises relaxed boundaries. While compassion, love, and

reciprocity in relationships between social workers and their clients are typically viewed as

unacceptable and unprofessional, Maidment suggests these qualities contribute to positive

therapeutic outcomes for service-recipients, such as building trust and honouring authenticity.

Maidment (2006) questions "whether the separating of worker professional and domestic worlds

is in fact possible or even desirable in carrying out authentic morally active practice" (p. 116).

She challenges traditional boundaries between clients and social workers and suggests that

reciprocal relationships, shared social experience and spiritual exercises, and expressions of

platonic love may greatly benefit clients.

Several authors advocated for personal interactions as an effective social work tool. Swartz et al. (2008) found a positive correlation between personal interactions with staff and improved depression symptoms (as cited in Trimberger, 2012, p. 72). In her work with tenants as a community development worker, Clements (2004) found she was more effective when she approached people as another human being rather than as a professional; shared social activities, including cultural events, picnics, crafts and recreational drinking, improved communication and outcomes in her work (p. 71). Similarly, Marshall (2009) expresses concern that agency policies designed to protect social workers' reputations and avoid litigation, such as no touch policies, may prevent effective provision of care and compassion to clients (as cited in Trimberger, 2012).

Dybicz (2012) found that when Charity Organization Society and settlement house workers engaged in friendships and as neighbours with those they served, their dual relationships improved treatment planning and outcomes. Consequently, Dybicz argues that a balance between "expertise" and "expressions of care", such as genuine friendship, is essential to providing effective support and help (p. 271). Halverson and Brownlee (2010) note that openness to boundary crossing is positively correlated with a worker's integration in the community (p. 255). Dybicz cites Biestek (1957) who called the study, diagnosis and treatment the "body" while relationship is the "soul" of casework (p. 273). More than medical professions, in social work the "body is lifeless without the soul to vivify it" (Dybicz, 2012, p. 271); essentially, there is no social work without relationship. Dybicz goes as far to say that "being a friend is also something that complements the professional context rather than undermines it" (p. 279). For Dybicz, social work values are expressed through relationships that embody the message to the client that they are seen and valued as a unique person (p. 275). Lawson and

Alameda-Lawson (2001) go one step further, contending that boundaries can actually hinder social work practice in the community by maintaining systematic and institutional hierarchies.

In a study of non-professional helpers or 'guides,' Ungar et al. (2004) found value in relaxed boundaries and "less visible" social service practice that empowers individuals and communities to solve their own problems. Doing similar work to social workers but from within communities, and with multiple hats, non-professional helpers were successful in creating bridges for the participation of marginalized people in the life of the community:

> Guides acted as bridges to inclusion in a variety of ways: They helped people return
>
> to school, church or work; they helped them manage their finances or provided direct
>
> financial support; they linked them to others through individual and group
>
> associations; they helped organize activities that allow inclusion to occur; they
>
> offered people opportunities to share their skills and talents in meaningful ways with
>
> others in their communities; and most of all, they talked with those excluded in ways
>
> that demonstrated that they are accepted and valued. (p. 555)

Guides were effective through their participation with multiple hats in the life of their communities, through which they were sensitive to local contexts. They were also effective by being less visible in their leadership, facilitating connections between people rather than placing themselves at the centre, and through their practice of inclusivity. Ungar et al. (2004) contend that through their effectiveness, non-professional helpers invite social work practitioners to question our role as outside facilitators and could be effective role models for locally sensitive social work practice.

Brocious et al. (2013) interviewed rural social work practitioners who suggested that increased cultural competence and trust are benefits of dual relationships in their practice (p. 10).

Halverson and Brownlee (2010) found that long term practitioners in rural communities highly valued dual and personal relationships with clients, viewing intimacy as a means of connecting with clients as well as holding themselves accountable and responsible "more than" that of a professional capacity alone: "the more ties, the more effective" (p. 255). Mayer (2005) contends that dual relationships may also serve to make the client less vulnerable, enhance reality testing, and provide productive role modelling. In another vein of dual relationships, Mayer (2005) identifies the potential benefits of employing active clients, including honouring autonomy, supporting self-determination and the worth and dignity of the person, and improved economic wellbeing.

In a rare study of the opinions and experiences of people receiving care where boundaries were relaxed, Lord Nelson, Summers, and Turnbull (2004) interviewed parents of children with special needs and found that their experiences were mixed, with some clients appreciating dual relationships as positive and some clients experiencing them as detracting from care. Some reported feeling like the worker was "part of the family" while others felt uncomfortable, especially when they were not receiving the care they would like, which hurt all the more coming from a 'friend' (p. 155). At the same time, Lord Nelson et al. found that participants preferred workers who were accessible and available and went beyond strict interpretations of their job descriptions, including home visits, calls outside of regular hours, and informality in their relationship which made them feel like "family".

Pugh (2007) notes that in social contexts, the social worker must still recognize power and privilege:

We learn that supportive relationships are not just about "accepting one another," but that there are profound differences in social class and resources that underlie such

relationships. Supportive relationships are also about ensuring that disadvantaged

partners can get to meetings, participate with dignity, and be accepted for behaviors

and language that in the professional context might be considered rude.

Navigation of social relationships in addition to professional relationships therefore introduces

more complex dynamics that can both challenge and reinforce power differentials between social

workers and clients.

While the risks and benefits of relaxed and formal boundaries are debated, the reality

remains that social workers in rural environments and indeed in all environments need to find

ways to navigate dual relationships and potential boundary crossings. According to Corey and

Herlihy (1997),

It is clear that not all dual relationships can be avoided, and it is equally clear that

some types of dual relationships (such as sexual intimacies with clients) should

always be avoided. In the middle range, it would be fruitful for professionals to

continue to work to clarify the distinctions between dual relationships that we should

try to avoid and those into which we might enter, with appropriate precautions. (As

cited in Reamer, 2003, p. 122).

This is especially true in contexts where relaxed boundaries are an intentional part of a

practitioner's and/or organization's philosophy and practice.

Boundaries and Organizational Decision-making

Decision-making in community-based social work practice involves role clarity, and

different decision-making structures inherently reflect power dynamics and boundaries. With

increased participant involvement in decision-making, power differentials and distinctions

between service providers and service participants are reduced. Hardina (2005) encourages

decision-making procedures that minimize power differentials among all stakeholders, including board members, staff, volunteers, and program participants. Proponents of feminist theory challenge hierarchical and patriarchal structures, and advocate for procedures that minimize power differentials by giving all participants equal partnership in organizational decision-making, often through consensus-building" (Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999; Hyde, 1992; as cited in Hardina, 2005, p. 31).

Hardina (2005) emphasizes the link between participation in decision-making and empowerment: "Empowerment-oriented organizations create formal structures to support the participation of clients in organizational decision-making. Integration of service users into formal decision-making structures may include their placement on the board of directors, task groups, and advisory committees, as well as in the role of program advisors" (Beresford & Croft, 1993, as cited in Hardina, 2005, p. 27). This can serve a dual purpose in some organizations: a) to reap the benefits of participant ideas and input, and b) as one facet of intervention with service users (Cox & Parsons, 2000; Hardina & Malott, 1996; as cited in Hardina, 2005, p. 27). Service user participation also helps to ensure program relevance to participants (Tourginy & Miller, 1981, as cited in Hardina, 2005, p. 29). Further, service participant inclusion in program design and evaluation increases awareness and responsiveness to service user needs and may be achieved through inclusion on planning committees or task groups (Iglehart & Becerra, 2000; Rose & Black, 1985; as cited in Hardina, 2005, p. 29). This serves to dissipate oppressive power imbalances, to increase program responsiveness to community needs and culture, and to facilitate participant empowerment and skill development (Coombe, 1998; Padilla, Lein & Cruz, 1999; as cited in Hardina, 2005, p. 30).

Key Issues in Boundary Formation

Professional boundaries and ethical behaviour are central in social work practice and reflected in the Social Work Codes of Ethics; however, there is considerable room for interpretation and judgement in their application at both the individual practitioner and organizational levels (Trimberger, 2012). Asquith and Cheers (2001) found that practitioners' own moral perspectives were the foundation of ethical decision-making when issues of moral ambiguity arose, and that most practitioners' actions taken with their own morality as guide resulted in nonconformity with social work codes of ethics (as cited in Doel et al., 2010, p. 1871). Doel et al. (2010) also found that organizational context and professional role significantly affect ethical decision-making; agency codes of conduct were more frequently referenced than professional codes of practice, yet most practitioners referred to neither, relying instead on their own personal codes in decision-making. Brocious et al. (2013) note that the limitations of Codes of Ethics as a rulebook necessitate discretionary application on the part of individual practitioners.

In terms of dual relationships and boundaries in particular, Carney and McCarren (2012) contend that existing codes of ethics do not fully define or provide guidance on dual relationships that are not clearly unethical (p. 13). Brocious et al. (2013) note that the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (United States) suggests avoidance of dual relationships rather than providing recommendations on how to navigate them, "thereby placing the burden for ethical decision-making on the practitioner" (pp. 5-6). Sanders (2012) highlights the relationship between clients and social workers as the foundation of therapeutic work and states that "Developing this type of relationship requires that the social worker possess awareness about who they are as a person and professional. This self-awareness is critical to

maintaining healthy and professional relationships with clients" (p. 10-11). Trimberger (2012) notes that the intimate nature of relationships between clients and social workers inherently blurs the lines between the personal and professional (p. 68).

Further, Doel et al. worry that literal interpretation of codes of ethics may both deter reporting and taking responsibility for errors, as well as replace ethical behaviour with adherence to a code (p. 1873). Yoder (1998) contends that codes are insufficient replacements for professional ethical sensitivity and decision-making (as cited in Doel et al., 2010, p. 1873). Trimberger (2012) differentiates between codes and policies to protect professionals versus those to protect clients, citing Browne and Russell (2005), who contend that agency self-protection can interfere with attendance to service user needs.

Trimberger (2012) suggests that understanding how boundaries are developed and interpreted may help efforts to minimize harm to client by social worker boundary crossings (p. 69). Trimberger (2012) summarizes Bogo and Dill's (2008) study that found that formation of professional ethics is influenced by many factors, including personal development, supervisory relationships, organizational culture, and policy, and Timberger adds personal traits, life experience, job duties, and agency culture to this list. Reamer (2008) contends that religion, culture, and community demographics (for example urban versus rural practice) play key roles in boundary formation and ethics. Duvell and Jordan (2001) found that type of work is another significant contextual consideration in the application of professional boundaries; they observed that for social workers working with asylum seekers, boundary issues were sharp, especially when social workers acknowledged their agencies' policies to be unacceptable in terms of human rights, dignity, and social justice (as cited in Doel et al., 2010). Similarly, Halverson and Brownlee (2010) found that power dynamics of worker-client roles factor significantly in dual

relationships, with the least invasive roles, or where the client is least vulnerable, as the most compatible with dual relationships (p. 254).

Doel et al. (2010) propose a model of two circles for understanding professional boundaries; the inner circle concerns fitness to practice, with boundary violations that are harmful to people (for example racism, sexual abuse), and the outer circle concerns the public confidence in the professional and/or profession, with boundary violations that undermine confidence and/or integrity (for example occasional drug use, gossiping on Facebook). They contend that it is the outer layer of behaviour that is more difficult to prescribe or control among social work practitioners (p. 1879). Doel et al. (2010) also describe "shadow" areas in professional ethics that exist in the intersection of service user, professional, and agency systems and expectations. They note that most agency policies do not address shadow or grey areas, in "stark contrast" to realities of practice, and that "the task of providing bullet-point lists to steer professionals away from the shadows, or through them, is near impossible" (p. 1884). They further contend that "It is highly unlikely that a breach of professional boundary was caused by the absence of a bullet point in a code of practice" (p. 1884).

Mandell (2008) draws significant parallels between use of self and professional boundaries:

[Use of self] serves us in setting and maintaining boundaries and confidentiality, conveying empathy and respect, building rapport and trust, and modelling constructive social behaviour. Use of self is often considered by workers to be synonymous with boundaries and personal integrity, especially when they are in tension with the dictates of the professional code of ethics. What constitutes appropriate boundaries and ethical behaviour tends to vary according to the context

and one's own theoretical framework. (p. 8)

In order to reflect conscientiously on appropriate boundaries, she contends that social workers must first develop a nuanced understanding of their own social location. She calls for active self-monitoring and reflection in social work practice, but notes that social workers need guidance, time, and processes through which to develop self-understanding and identity. In a chapter of Mandell's (2007) book, *Revisiting the Use of Self,* Lafrenière highlights the importance of reflexive use of self in community practice, noting that "Reflection on use of self enables us as practitioners to be real with ourselves and create spaces for discomfort and truth" (p. 156) as well as to "ask tough questions of my colleagues and allies" (p. 157). Lafrenière (2007) contends that "one could not be cloaked in the safety of the role of community organizer and dispense with the responsibility of thinking of one's social location and privilege" (p. 156-7).

Trimberger (2012) reviewed various authors who call for professional boundaries and ethics education and training for all social workers. Carney and McCarren (2012) developed a survey to test novice and advanced social work students' responses to boundary crossing scenarios. They identified correct and incorrect responses based on the NASW Code of Ethics and found that overall, advanced students performed better and had a high rate of correct responses. It is important to note that the assumption of clarity and appropriateness of boundaries as depicted in the NASW Code of Ethics was assumed in their study. In a survey of social work programs in the United States, Congress (2001) found that the majority of programs (98.9 percent) reported that they integrate ethics education throughout their curriculum, and approximately half (50.6 percent) offer an elective course in ethics, while just over a third (34.5 percent) had a policy on dual relationships and less than half (44.8 percent) discussed ethics and dual relationships at faculty meetings (as cited in Carney & McCarren, 2012, p. 14). In a survey

of active practitioners in remote Canadian communities, Halverson and Brownlee (2010) found that most participants felt their formal training lacked adequate information and direction for managing dual relationships, leaving them to "learn on [their] feet" in practice. The need for education in skill sets, decision models and self-care were identified (Halverson & Brownlee, 2010).

Sanders et al. (2012) identify that organizations have a crucial role in supporting staff in the maintenance of strong professional boundaries. Sanders et al. (2012) propose that agencies develop comprehensive policies on ethical decision-making to mitigate the wide range of interpretations possible by individual social workers. Reamer (2013) also recommends that organizations implement social media policies to protect clients and promote ethical use of digital and electronic technology. Sanders et al. (2012) posit that policies on issues such as use of personal cell phones, contacting clients off hours, and self-disclosure, among others, are also needed (p. 27).

After noting problems that emerged from a dual relationship of co-worker and parent, Mayer (2005) recommends the establishment of guidelines and policies that recognize both the potential harm and benefits of dual relationships, wherein they aren't uniformly accepted or banned but rather would support ethical conduct and situation-based decision-making. Similarly, Doel et al. (2010) call for recognition that codes of practice are a useful starting point rather than complete guide for morally difficult scenarios; they state that agencies must be open to learning so that codes are not seen as hostile rules to be managed, and boundary issues are not forced underground. Further, in contexts where boundary crossings are used intentionally in support of service users, Doel et al. (2010) warn that this must be accomplished in a considered and transparent manner.

Doel et al. (2010) further suggest that a bottom-up approach to the development of codes of practice be used, with an "ethically engaged workforce" working together with service users (p. 1884). They note that this is not usually the case, and that it is also rare in research and policies to consider that professionals and service users might be overlapping groups.

Sanders et al. (2012) recommend that organizations use peer supervision and support to navigate situations that challenge professional boundaries; they note that this can promote trust among staff as well as strengthen teamwork. Doel et al. (2010) found that the "best way" to help professionals avoid boundary violations was to provide them with opportunities for regular ethical practice, especially exploration of case studies with their peers, to inform daily practice and to maintain ethical alertness. Daley and Hickman (2011) note that supervision and consultation allow for independent assessment of a social worker's situation, adding different experience, skills, and perspective (p. 101). Reamer (2008) recommends staff training and continuing education workshops with an emphasis on case scenarios and role-playing to support social workers in professional boundary formation. Brocious et al. (2013) found that rural social workers who had to negotiate shades of grey in boundaries on a daily basis developed advanced critical thinking and ethical discernment processes in implementing the NASW Code of Ethics.

Banks (2006) contends that "the increasing proceduralisation of social work" challenges the idea of a single code of professional ethics (as cited in Doel et al., 2010). Boundary formation and navigation is a complex process for educators, practitioners, and organizations that requires education, training, personal development, and supportive organizational practices. Trimberger (2012) discusses trends in ethical discernment in social work since the 1980s, with increasing emphasis on sequential discernment processes. Halverson and Brownlee (2010) found that most social workers felt that a discussion of available discernment models would have

been helpful during their formal education and training (p. 256). Several processes and models are reviewed in the following section.

Boundary and Ethical Discernment Models

The following four models are a sampling of ethical models proposed for social workers in their boundary and ethical discernment.

Doel et al. (2010) propose two key questions in considering the ethics of certain actions: 1) "How does this affect the service user?" which they note can be from either an empowering or paternalistic point of view, protecting a 'vulnerable person,' and 2) "How does this affect the agency?". They note that the questions are not mutually exclusive or necessarily always compatible.

Sanders et al. (2012) warn against boundary crossings where workers go "over and beyond" for patients and their families in hospice care, and hope workers consider whether their actions are motivated by the needs of the patient or fulfilling some need within themselves. They recommend the following three questions in determining ethical action: 1) "If you do it for one, would you do it for all?'', 2) If the action is not one the social worker is providing to all patients and families, ''Why or why not''?, with attention to potential boundary violations in their reasons, and 3) How will this act of ''going over and beyond'' impact colleagues who are not providing similar service?, especially if patients come to expect extra care and other social workers refuse (p. 20).

Younggren (2002) proposed that therapists explore several questions before starting a dual relationship:

Is the dual relationship necessary?

Is the dual relationship exploitative?

Who does the dual relationship benefit?

Is there a risk that the dual relationship could damage the patient?

Is there a risk that the dual relationship could disrupt the therapeutic relationship?

Am I being objective in my evaluation of this matter?

Have I adequately documented the decision-making process in the treatment records?

Did the client give informed consent regarding the risks to engaging in the dual

relationship? (as cited in Pugh, 2007, p. 1417-8).

Reamer (2003) contends that a clear understanding of ethical versus unethical dual relationships is essential to effective management of boundary issues, and identifies four characteristics of unethical dual relationships: 1) unethical dual relationships interfere with the social worker's exercise of professional discretion, 2) unethical dual relationships interfere with the social worker's exercise of impartial judgment, 3) unethical dual relationships exploit clients, colleagues, or third parties to further the social worker's personal interests, and 4) unethical dual relationships harm clients, colleagues, or third parties (p. 129). He proposes the following as essential components of a risk management tool for managing boundary issues:

Be alert to potential or actual conflicts of interest

Inform clients and colleagues about potential or actual conflicts of interest; explore

reasonable remedies.

Consult colleagues and supervisors, and relevant professional literature, regulations,

policies, and ethical standards (codes of ethics) to identify pertinent boundary issues

and constructive options.

Design a plan of action that addresses the boundary issues and protects the parties involved

to the greatest extent possible.

Document all discussions, consultation, supervision, and other steps taken to address

    boundary issues.

Develop a strategy to monitor implementation of action plan. (p. 130)

Critique of Rule-Based Ethics

Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto (2009) explore ethical discernment in social work through the

lens of relational model theories, specifically the relational school of intersubjective

psychoanalysis that posits that people are "inherently and necessarily connected" (p. 328). They

use the term 'thirdness' to describe the co-creation of subjective experience that happens

between two people in relationship that could not exist in isolation.   They contextualize ethical

discernment in terms of the relationship paradigm:

> One's understanding of relationship is correlated to the way that one goes about
>
> making ethical decisions. For those who see relationship as fraught with danger and
>
> the potential for conflict and aggression, ethics becomes a matter of mediating
>
> between opposing needs. Objectivity becomes important; hence, one may come to
>
> rely on a set of generalized rules that apply across contexts. This is the form of ethics
>
> with which most social workers are familiar, called, among various names, rule-
>
> based ethics. But for those who see relationship as a fundamental necessity for
>
> human growth and well-being, the logic of rule-based ethics does not apply. For
>
> those who believe that the best ethical outcome is one in which everyone's needs are
>
> met to the highest degree possible, perhaps the best way to ensure that this happens is
>
> through engaging clients in a relationship of thirdness. Hence, the ability to relate to
>
> another from a position of thirdness may be seen as a fundamental character trait (or
>
> virtue) that an ethical social worker possesses. This is certainly the position of those

who advocate for the ethics of care. Because ethics is so closely tied to one's

understanding of relationship, whether or not social workers wish to adopt thirdness

as a virtue hinges on the question of how we wish to conceptualize relationship. Are

our clients best served by us casting our relationship as one of conflicting needs,

endangering each of us because of our proximity? Or do we believe as a group that

relationship is a fundamental human need, and that growth and healing require a

mutual relationship in which the subjectivity of each participant is valued? The

answer to this question will go a long way toward helping us clarify how we want to

make ethical decisions. (p. 328)

Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto thereby challenge many of the models and frameworks for

consideration of boundaries and ethical discernment. Similarly, Dietz and Thompson (2004)

view policies to dictate social worker-service user relationships with rules and procedures as part

of a patriarchal 'distance' model and instead favour a feminist 'relational' model of social work

practice (as cited in Trimberger, 2012). Gumpert and Black (2005) found that rural social

workers are more likely to use relativistic or culturally sensitive ethical discernment procedures

over rule-based methods (as cited in Daley and Hickman, 2011).

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on the strengths perspective in social work

practice as well as the use of an anti-oppressive practice lens in dialogue with the strengths

perspective. I reviewed various aspects of boundaries in community practice, including

standards of professional boundaries, challenges in maintaining strict professional boundaries in

community practice, the benefits of flexible boundaries, and approaches to developing and

maintaining professional boundaries. In the next chapter, I review the methodology of this

study, including the general and specific research questions, method of inquiry, sample and data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Question

General Question

How are relationships at Welcome Inn Community Centre characterized and experienced by its staff members, volunteers, and program participants?

Specific Questions

• What are the strengths and challenges of Welcome Inn's approach to relationships?

• How are decisions made at Welcome Inn? How is decision-making related to Welcome Inn's approach to relationships?

• How are boundaries between staff and community members understood and implemented at Welcome Inn?

• What are the strengths and challenges of Welcome Inn's approach to boundaries?

Method of Inquiry

A grounded theory methodology was employed in this study. According to Creswell (2007), "The intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a process" (p. 63).   In this study, a new model for understanding and navigating professional boundaries in community practice was

developed.

Specifically, this study aligns with Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory approach. Charmaz (2006) notes that "constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance toward the research process and products and consider *how* their theories evolve" (p. 131). In the discussion section, I show the evolution of the presented boundaries model as additional layers of analysis were applied. In addition, Charmaz suggests that, in the course of constructivist grounded theory research, "differences and distinctions between people become visible as well as the hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity that maintain and perpetuate such differences and distinctions" (p. 131). In this study, the focus on boundaries and power dynamics within them reflects this important component of constructivist grounded theory.

Sample and Data Collection

All participants in this study are staff, volunteers and/or program participants at Welcome Inn Community Centre, and a purposeful sampling strategy was used to recruit participants. A diverse sampling of participants who are involved in the Welcome Inn were invited to participate: staff members, volunteers, volunteers who are also program participants, and program participants; people involved for different lengths of time (ranging from a few months to over 40 years); people involved with different programs; and people of diverse age and socioeconomic background. Hugo Neufeld's book, *The North End Lives,* based on his experiences as Co-Executive Director and Co-Pastor of Welcome Inn, was also considered data for this study.

Through my historical involvement with Welcome Inn, I was familiar with many community members at Welcome Inn, as well as with its programs. With the above diversity in mind, I identified potential participants in the study through a snowball sampling approach with

assistance from the Executive Director of Welcome Inn and other staff members. While an open call for participants was considered, it was anticipated that too many people would respond to the request; given that inclusion is an important value and norm at Welcome Inn, purposeful sampling was selected to avoid feelings of rejection or exclusion. While this introduced sampling bias, the intentional recruitment of people of diverse backgrounds and experience helped to counter that bias.

All participants were read a pre-interview script (Appendix C) to review the interview process and address any questions they might have. The consent form (Appendix D) was reviewed orally for all program participants and volunteers.

Fifteen people were interviewed, including five staff members; four volunteers, one of whom is a long time volunteer with knowledge of Welcome Inn's early history; five volunteers who are also program participants in some capacity; and one program participant only. Because volunteering is a primary way to become involved at Welcome Inn, many of the core community members are involved as volunteers as well as program participants.

Interviewees ranged in age from early adulthood to mid-seventies. Educational background ranged from no high school to graduate level education. Participants also came from mixed economic situations. Only one quarter of those interviewed were men, and only two of sixteen were people of colour. The gender imbalance reflects a predominantly female staff team, though a greater proportion of male volunteers and program participants may have been possible. The ethnic make-up of interviewees reflects the predominantly Caucasian make-up of the Welcome Inn community, especially among staff and volunteers. Note: Two programs have significantly higher ethnic diversity: the learning and fun (LAF) after school program (among both children and volunteers, who come from McMaster University), and the food bank.

Interviews followed a semi-structured method, with pre-set questions that allowed for flexibility in follow up questions. Interview questions for the different participant groups are included in Appendix E.

Data Analysis

Data was transcribed and analysed using NVivo data analysis software according to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory open coding techniques. Starting with the data, themes and concepts were identified and developed into categories and subcategories (parent and child nodes in Nvivo). Original nodes included a) description of Welcome Inn, b) impact of Welcome Inn, c) Strengths-based orientation, d) community building, e) relationships, f) decision-making, g) empowerment, h) faith and spirituality, i) belonging, j) barriers, gaps, and opportunities, k) innovation, l) social action and social change, m) socioeconomic diversity, n) socioeconomic diversity, and o) the 'how' of community building (method/approach).

Through the process of secondary axial coding, wherein links and relationships between categories are explored (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), a connection between the approach to community building at Welcome Inn and flexible boundaries between staff and volunteers/program participants was observed. The strengths-based orientation became a meta-category. With further analysis, several aspects of relationship were identified among original categories. Areas of strength in relationships at Welcome Inn as well as caveats to Welcome Inn's approach to relationship, including decision-making and boundaries, were identified. With the identified focus on boundaries, additional literature on boundaries was reviewed after data analysis, in keeping with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The literature review and findings about relationships and professional boundaries led to the development of the boundaries model presented in the discussion section of this study.

Ethical Considerations

The methodology of this study, including consent forms, interview scripts and questions, and participant recruitment, was approved by Wilfrid Laurier University's Review Ethics Board in 2008.

As previously noted, the sample of this study was purposeful and selective. Because staff were involved in identifying and inviting participants to participate, there was potential sample selection bias as well as power imbalance in the invitations. The former was addressed through purposeful selection of interviewees with diverse backgrounds and experiences (noted above). The latter was mitigated by the culture of close relationships between staff and community members at Welcome Inn. Nevertheless, the potential for both sample bias and power imbalance remain in the study design.

Researcher Bias

As a volunteer, staff member, and then, following the completion of data collection for this study, Executive Director of Welcome Inn, I am not an impartial or arms-length researcher. My own involvement and experience of community at Welcome Inn led to this study, and my experiences as a volunteer, staff member, and especially as Executive Director, informed my data analysis. My role as Executive Director also introduced an additional layer of power imbalance in the communication of this research. Intentional reflexivity and the fact that I am no longer serving as Executive Director help to mitigate this imbalance; however, I remain mindful of the power dynamics in the writing of this study.

The grounded theory focus of this study allowed me to transcend a qualitative description of Welcome Inn or assessment of its value in favour of developing a model for boundaries in community practice, informed by my findings.

Difficulties Encountered

The primary difficulty encountered in the course of this research was the unexpectedly long time of data collection, analysis, and writing. Interviews were conducted between 2008 and early 2011. Due to the requirement of a year-long internship for my Master of Divinity program, no work was done on this research in the 2009-2010 academic year. After finishing coursework for both my Master of Divinity and Master of Social Work programs, I began work as Executive Director of Welcome Inn. With the intensity of this role and need for work-life balance, I found it increasingly difficult to work on my thesis research, especially because Welcome Inn was its subject. I took two one-week leaves of absence during this time at Welcome Inn to focus on this study, but was unable to finish. As such, I returned to the project after leaving my role as Executive Director at Welcome Inn in June 2014. Time between interviews and data analysis allowed for increased distance from the research but also decreased familiarity with the data during analysis.

Limitations of the Study

Although in general staff, volunteers, and program participants at Welcome Inn are quite frank in their opinions and suggestions, something I knew from my time as staff member, it is possible that my dual role as researcher and former staff member and the power differentials therein may have made study participants more cautious in their sharing. My dual role and resulting experience of Welcome Inn also informed my data collection and analysis, including the questions I posed; I was not an objective observer but rather a participant in the Welcome Inn system, and one who shared much of Welcome Inn's worldview. In this way, I was able to more deeply explore some aspects of relationships and boundaries at Welcome Inn, and may have missed questions or observations that would have been clearer from an outsider perspective. My

dual role may also have impacted my data analysis in assessing the relative merits and challenges of Welcome Inn's approach to relationships and boundaries.

The model presented in this study flows from the literature review and findings of this study. It provides a framework for discernment of whether or not to initiate a dual or boundary-crossing relationship; if such a relationship is begun, it would require on-going monitoring and reflection to ensure the relationship is healthy for all involved parties. The model of boundaries in community practice is based on the research and experience of one organization; study of additional communities might yield useful additions or changes to the model. The tools presented are based on that model presented, and designed to aid community-based practitioners in situational reflexivity on boundaries. These tools are as yet untested, and their use and testing are needed to confirm their utility.

Gender and ethno-racial considerations have not been incorporated into this model. A larger sample size as well as a more ethno-racially diverse participant base would be needed for this analysis. Largely people of Canadian and European descent have historically populated the North End of Hamilton; while diversity is increasing, the majority of people involved at Welcome Inn continue to be White. This is a growing edge for Welcome Inn as the City of Hamilton becomes increasingly diverse, and the model proposed here would benefit from testing in – and perhaps adaptation to -- more diverse settings.

In this chapter I have outlined the general and specific questions driving this study, as well as the grounded theory method of inquiry, purposeful sampling, open coding thematic analysis, and secondary axial coding methodology. I have also reviewed ethical considerations, biases, difficulties and limitations of the study. In the following chapter the findings of the study are

presented, including strengths of relationship at Welcome Inn, and caveats to Welcome Inn's

approach to relationships, specifically around decision-making and boundaries.

Chapter Four

Findings

In this chapter, I explore the question "How are relationships at Welcome Inn Community Centre characterized and experienced by its staff members, volunteers, and program participants?" A strengths orientation was identified as guiding relationships at Welcome Inn. The specifics of what that meant to study participants are elaborated, and the challenges to maintaining a strengths-based approach to relationship outlined in relation to decision-making within the organization and to maintaining healthy boundaries between staff, community members, and volunteers.

Relationships Guided by a Strengths Perspective

Several staff members equated Welcome Inn's focus on mutuality and gift sharing as a challenge to charity models and as an agent of social change. One staff member differentiated the Welcome Inn's approach from other Hamilton agencies by defining the Welcome Inn as a community: "We are not a social service agency, we are a community. We do not operate from a charity model and that is different from every other agency in town… most people working in those agencies wouldn't even be able to articulate what is not life giving about their model." Another staff member emphasized the impact of Welcome Inn's programs both in addressing immediate needs and in working to address cycles of poverty by providing "educational and practical resources" and "proactive" supports, at the same time, he reiterated his emphasis on relationships as central to all Welcome Inn programs "at the heart of all of these programs is the relational piece." He asserts that the focus on community and relationships is a way in which the Welcome Inn intentionally shifts away from band-aid social services. Another staff member

contrasts the Welcome Inn with other groups interested in addressing poverty:

> I think the key way is that we really - we're doing concrete things. Other groups, I'm always picking on things like The Round Table on Poverty and stuff. I mean it's really important that we know that poverty is bad but what are going to do about it? I mean what are we going to do about it? Who cares if it's bad? You know, we knew that and to spend five years writing reports saying "poverty, there's lots of that." Well thank you for that insight! In the meantime, you know, we hang out with people and talk to them and sometimes we get ranted at, you know, about how people are getting screwed by OW this month, and it's really frustrating. Because on the one hand, it's amazing to be part of empowering people to make change but then when you hit the places where somebody is so mired in like all of those things that happen at them and the barriers that they're up against that they can't see over them, it just breaks your heart. It just kills you. And I think that one of the key differences is that we say okay, let's think this through, let's see what we can do. Let's make some phone calls. … Because we see people as people and I think that's the key of it.

She applauds the Welcome Inn's hands-on approach to poverty alleviation, and most importantly, its focus on people. Yet another staff member also appreciates the Welcome Inn's focus on people's strengths as opposed to focussing on needs, as well as its individualized rather than programmatic approach:

> When I came here I suspected that to do things in small little pieces is better than having really big things. And I think my experience at the WI has affirmed that. I would think that that's the way to do it, and not to strive to make these big huge programmatic successes. … I cannot stress enough the whole thing about letting

someone's strengths define them. I think that is very unusual. When I think of most

programs I've seen in the city, well intentioned people define people by their needs,

and agencies try to meet people's needs, and I think that that weakens them, because

it makes them the dependent ones, and the agency the strong one, and I think that

weakens neighbourhoods, and weakens people's self-esteem and their capacity, what

they can do, and I think coming to WI -- as well as, it's been at WI that I've done

some volunteer stuff in the neighbourhood around capacity building in schools and

stuff, and I think in the timeframe I've been at WI I've become absolutely convinced

that the worst thing you can do is just meet someone's needs and let the need define

them. I think that it's not just neutral, this isn't just a little bit of a better way to do it,

but I think it's the only way that will help people become self-sustaining and self-

sufficient, and have worth and dignity.

She equates needs-based programming with facilitating dependency, and strength-based

programming with facilitating capacity.

One staff member looked at the cycle of poverty, and the Welcome Inn's role in the cycle,

in a different light:

And when you say the cycle of poverty, it's really interesting because I see it both

ways. I think oftentimes we have middle class folks who come here to help with the

cycle of poverty and … I want to be careful here… who look down on people who

are in the cycle of poverty and who call them "them" and think they are 'this' type of

person and think they have something to provide 'this' type of person. And I hope

that the folks they meet can change that, because that is an impoverished spirit and I

feel badly that they would think that way because I think that a lot of it can impact

somebody deeply in a negative way. So I hope that through relationships here that

that can also shift because I would consider that the cycle of poverty as well. Often

this is raised very loudly, and sometimes very subtly, but I think it goes both ways.

Another staff member asserts this as an important part of Welcome Inn's challenge to

societal values of money, worth, and productivity:

I also think poverty is more than about just money. So I think that people who may

never have skills that can make money, we provide … they can still access a place

that they can come and it is their work. I so I think that's very much about valuing

the human spirit and valuing capacity and what can be given.

Another staff member linked asset development and empowerment, saying that "Asset

development approaches to poverty reduction are empowering for individuals and communities,

precisely because they take into account the unique humanity of individual participants." She

gives the example of Hamiltonians laid off from steel mills:

It becomes an empowerment piece around earning a living and controlling your own

ability to earn a living. And so many of the folks that I've been meeting, especially

lately, are people who have been laid off from steel mills and nobody wants to retrain

them because they're in their late 50s. And what do you do with that? You can

collect EI for 46 weeks but after that, what, OW? You're not old enough for Social

Security. We help people rethink. We give them a space and start to rethink and start

to experiment with ideas and to have people challenge their ideas and they're always

interesting how – but I think that all of that feeds into the need to, you know, rethink

– rethink what people who live in poverty look like and rethink what people who live

in poverty can do.

She adds that developing a language of asset development has helped to clarify the Welcome Inn's approach: "The shift to a really sort of explicit asset development focus I think has truly been helpful in terms of how we put that out in the sort of social aspect of those connections to other people and building human skills assets and things like that."

A volunteer noticed that Welcome Inn staff help her live into her strengths: "[She] would bring the best out in me."

Relationships Integral to Welcome Inn

Interviewees consistently described relationships as integral to the Welcome Inn. A volunteer, when asked what was most special to him about Welcome Inn, answered, "the people." Another volunteer began her answer to the question of what Welcome Inn has meant in her life saying, "I've met a lot of very nice people." A staff member answered the same question with the response "Working at Welcome Inn has given me many great relationships."

Another staff member described relationship as the primary purpose of Welcome Inn:

Some would argue the purpose of WI is to provide services, but it would seem to me that one of the fundamental things we all need is relationship, a place to be accepted and cared for and a place to hang our hat, a sense of belonging. … At the heart of all these programs is the relational piece, the relationship between LAF kids and mentors; the relationship between people in the plan program and volunteers who are walking beside them, helping with business plans and models; interactions that take place at the store and what happens on food bank days. I keep harping on relationship but that's the stream that runs through all these things, and needs to.

The same person commented "It's hard to articulate the depth of relationship and how that impacts one's life. I would say that the relationships that I was part of at the Welcome Inn are

relationships I'll cherish the rest of my life."

Relationships Communicate Inclusion and Acceptance

Staff, volunteers, and program participants identified inclusion and acceptance as integral to relationships at Welcome Inn. One person who wears multiple hats at Welcome Inn shared that she feels a freedom to be herself:

Pretty much easy going, like everybody can be themselves … they let me be me. *{laughs}* That's the one thing, they let me be me. You don't got to walk on eggshells… I walk through the door, and they don't care if you have seven heads or one head, that type of thing. You come in the door, you're welcome to come in the door.

This was closely echoed by a staff member: "People come in the door, they're a part of our community. That's it!" Another volunteer agrees: "It's been refreshing to be part of a place where this sense of community is where you can, kind of to a certain extent, let your guard down and be who you are. That is something that I don't find at many other places."

One church member noted that "it's welcoming, it's a non-judgmental atmosphere." Another church member said "When we came here, I found a community of people that were very accepting. They accepted me."

A person who uses the food bank noted that the Welcome Inn has a more comfortable atmosphere than other social services in her experience:

Well I would say, like with the food bank in particular, the fact that I can come into the food bank and there's not really any judgement and there's sort of no limits or whatever, you know what I mean or whatever, there's not a whole lot of limitations on you and stuff like that. So, no judgements made. You don't feel like you're

judged. Then I do feel - find that the atmosphere's a bit more comfortable here then

at like the [other organization] or anything else like that. Like you know in and still,

its - yeah, its still a bit more comfortable and accepting.

A church member noted that participation is the key to inclusion at the Welcome Inn, rather than specific criteria or beliefs:

So I think that's really cool that not so much focussing on do you fit the criteria to be

part of this but are you willing to participate in it. To be open and respectful, that's

the main criteria. And that relates a lot to, I think, where a lot of the problems in the

world are with all the barriers between people are. So, there are huge class issues in

our society, right? And so just by bringing people together in the same room on an

equal footing, that that can go a long ways to what is happening. And I think

similarly, with things like spirituality and religion, there's been a lot of tribalism in

the past, or rivalry and that idea that you don't have to all agree to have the same

ideas but it is still valuable to know people face to face and to enjoy people and be

friends and have community even if you don't have everything in common.

He described his first time at the Welcome Inn Church, when congregants made beer bottle cap

tambourines, symbolizing the beauty in the common, everyday. He was struck by the

participatory and inclusive nature of the activity and the Welcome Inn community, and the

diversity socioeconomically. It was while making tambourines that he and his wife decided to

make the Welcome Inn their congregation: "And right at that moment, that's when I think one of

us said to the other, 'I think this is the place.'"

Two volunteers talked about the relationships they've formed with one another and others.

One said: "I get to meet lots of people and talk to different ones – subjects are not always

agreeable and sometimes fantastic. And you make new friends here. … [She] and I have become

close as friends, we're going to travel. We've already travelled together and we've enjoyed

ourselves." Her time volunteering at the Welcome Inn's thrift store is not only about selling

goods at reasonable prices, but about connecting with people, hearing their stories, and forming

friendships. She first came to Welcome Inn as a shopper, and found something appealing in the

atmosphere that led her to her application to volunteer:

> Okay. Well I came in here just as a shopper and decided that I'd like to be here. And
>
> asked about volunteering, and [another volunteer] said "Yeah, you can talk to
>
> [coordinator]." She was here and she said, "Oh yeah, that sounds good." She gave me
>
> an application and we set up an appointment for me to be here. Within a very short
>
> period of time, I was here volunteering. As soon as my police check went through,
>
> which was very quick. So I just felt like this is where I belong. And I've moved in
>
> from Oshawa so this is a whole brand new thing, and it helps me get involved with
>
> the neighbourhood and be part of the city.

Being part of the Welcome Inn helped her to feel connected to her community and to build

relationships after her move to Hamilton.

Another volunteer also talked about their friendship, as well as the casual nature of the

Welcome Inn that accepts people as they are. The interview with this volunteer was interrupted

twice, briefly, by someone who was looking for the master set of keys, which at first the

volunteer didn't think she had and then realized she did. She apologized, and the other volunteer

responded "I'll shoot you later!" and they both laughed. Following this interaction, the

interviewee said:

> See, exactly that! You really can be yourself. People accept it. And you're just given

dignity and respect as a human. I mean, we all come with our shortcomings but these

are the wonderful things that happen – the bonus things that happen. You just met

[her] *{laughs}* and we've been on a trip to Toronto overnight and now we're

planning another one, like to Ottawa.

The playfulness and open atmosphere enabled both volunteers to feel welcome and their

friendship to blossom.

Inclusion and acceptance at Welcome Inn are enacted through accepting people as they are,

facilitating the formation of friendships based in acceptance, and using participation as the

primary criterion for inclusion.

Relationships are Supportive

Staff, volunteers, and program participants alike affirmed that Welcome Inn makes a

difference in people's lives through fostering strong and supportive relationships. One long time

volunteer articulated this as follows:

I mean the difference I have seen in the lives of so many of the people that have

related to Welcome Inn over the years and continued to, if someone had told me that

when I first met them, I would not have believed it. But I have seen the difference

because I connected with some of these people regularly, particularly in the seniors

group but some others, too. It's an amazing thing that God has done.

One long time program participant who is also a food pantry volunteer credits the

Welcome Inn with giving her strength in times of challenge: "With the Welcome Inn's help I

was able to overcome the problems a lot of times. I had strength to go on. And before I didn't

have the strength. But now I've got the strength to go on. It was too late for my kids, though."

Another person found the Welcome Inn Church, and specifically the pastor at the time, a

welcome support: "Personally, it also was at the time I joined, things going on in my life where I needed some, basically, pastoral care and support. And the minister at the time was really supportive and willing to spend some time just to be there for me. … That was huge." Two other volunteers noted that the Welcome Inn gave support in difficult times, both for them, and as one notes, for others:

> They are very accepting. I went through a traumatic experience for myself. I had cancer two years ago and they were there for me. So yeah, they're always there. I really admire the way that they look after the seniors here in regards to their welfare. I've seen it with several of them. They're very caring people here, very caring.

and,

> For the most part, I am a private person but I've learned to come out a little bit because I guess I kind of had to. My husband got sick and like I said, I was a very private person and to me, I wanted to deal with me and I only have a selective few friends who helped me get through it but I don't know. It's the way they (people at the Welcome Inn) were, like supporting me, I kind of - I've come out a little bit more.

The latter person noted that in her time of crisis, she received support from the Welcome Inn, even though she was very private about her struggles. She indicates that their support also encouraged her to become more comfortable with receiving help.

Participants identify the support from staff at Welcome Inn as particularly helpful in times of turmoil and crisis, leading to deeper relationships.

Relationships Build Community

The commitment to relationships at Welcome Inn extends beyond inclusion and acceptance

to nurturing depth of community.   One staff member, when asked what is most special to her about the Welcome Inn, answered:

> People. People and the really widespread deep commitment to community. You
> know, the acknowledgement that the creation of community is a valuable end in
> itself. We do a lot of stuff here but ultimately, it always comes back to ensuring that
> people feel a part of something to whatever extent that they want to feel a part of it -
> ensuring that they leave here with more than they came with, regardless of who they
> are.

She added: "Really, what we're doing is connecting people with people."

Yet another staff member had a similar response when asked what is most special to her about the Welcome Inn community: "I think just that: the community. The fact that people from all walks of life come here and have a stake in this." She went on to describe people as the pillars of the Welcome Inn.

One church member described the community he found at Welcome Inn as diverse and rich: "I found people who were unique in terms of their background; in terms of their socio-economic status; in terms of their life ways. And just felt that this was such a rich community that I didn't want to leave."

Another volunteer credits the community building atmosphere at Welcome Inn for giving her opportunities to interact with her neighbours:

> I answer phones and you meet some very interesting people when they come for food
> bank. They'll sit and talk to you. Sometimes, they will come in and it's their first
> time, and I try to make them as comfortable as possible. They don't want to go in and
> sit with everybody else, they'll sit out in the hall and talk. I will tell them about the

seniors' program, that they're always welcome to come and how to get to it, and

when it is. A couple of them have actually come in afterwards. So I do like that. At

the store, I made a lot of friends over there too from the public. Neighbours

recognize me on the street from working at the store. So yeah, it's impacted me in

that way. I'm more involved in my neighbourhood than when I was working. When

you're working, you don't get that - you know, you've got that 9 - 5 sort of thing, so

you're gone from your home basically from 8 o'clock until the time you get home.

So you don't have interaction with your neighbours. Whereas now I do.

As a volunteer, she simultaneously finds connection herself while helping to connect others to community.

A bizPlan program participant who graduated from the program and received a microloan to start her business described the support she receives from other participants and staff:

Well, I know that I have someone to turn to when I get discouraged or need some

support or need some information. The encouragement has been a big thing, and then

also, her knowledge about this loan from the bank … That's made a big difference

for me, and that, so just knowing – you can't get loans for your businesses – little

businesses anywhere else, it's impossible, especially if you're on ODSP. And so it

was really good to have that and then contact with other people, too. You know like

the times we do get together. … It's so important when you're on your own and

doing your own business, to be able to have somebody to turn to and just say, well

you know, what about this. Or I'll just say, I need some help on this. You know, like

good words or whatever - encouraging words, or I need to commiserate!

In addition to the financial assets and opportunities for learning provided by the program, she values the supportive community she finds at the Welcome Inn as a critical component of her business success.

The theme of family came up repeatedly. One staff member said, "Sometimes we describe it as a family that has all the pieces of a family's function and dysfunction." Another staff member wrote comparing the belonging, responsibility, and care for one another at Welcome Inn to family:

I hear over and over again: "Welcome Inn is family to me." And I believe that is the best way to sum WI up. FAMILY....with all our imperfections people are welcomed and pulled into family. That is huge - especially for folks who do not belong to family elsewhere. It is a very different thing than just offering programs. Underneath and through everything is the theme of belonging...of being part of something bigger...of being part of a family...where you have responsibilities and where you know there will always be someone "who has your back."

Another staff member linked family, safety, and vulnerability: "I think what makes [Welcome Inn] special to me is the sense of community, sense of belonging, folks finding a safe place that is family, that is safety, that is where one can let down a facade of indestructibility and kind of be human again."

A volunteer described his experience at the Welcome Inn as family, and even more, a place where he could comfortably breathe his last breath:

At one point - my sister noted that at one point in my life, I had said something like, if it wasn't for the Welcome Inn, I wouldn't go to church. It's the one place where I found this community that was - I may be using different words - but real, open,

sense of family - broader family. That has been so important to me. When I came out

in 1986, I made a two year commitment and I am still here. And a large part of that is

due to this feeling of community that I found at the Welcome Inn. I wrote a song

about it years ago, I've - since I came here, I've been to different places. I went to

[city] for a bit, I've been to [city] a bit, went back to [province] for a bit. But I always

felt that my home – my spiritual home – was now in Hamilton, a place I didn't want

to come to in the first place. Yeah, it's been so important to me. In fact, a few years

ago, we had a meeting with the Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada and I

remember saying at that meeting that I felt that the Welcome Inn - you have to

understand what I meant here - the Welcome Inn is a place where I could, um,

happily die. Surrounded by the people that I knew there that I could comfortably - I

felt I could easily give my last breath surrounded by the people that I have come to

consider my extended family. That has been so important to me.

His words exemplify the intimacy experienced in community at Welcome Inn.

A staff member also spoke to the intimacy, saying: "You really get a view into people's

lives, staff or not." She also explains that while most staff run a specific program, they relate to

the community as a whole as a community member:

My programming has nothing to do with seniors and yet I've had a lot of contact

with a lot of the seniors that have been coming to Welcome Inn for years, and

they've told me their stories, and they've welcomed me in.

She also described the community events held by the Welcome Inn as a key way that community

is fostered outside of programs geared to particular people and groups. She noted the way in

which a particular event brought together people from many backgrounds:

I think the biggest thing to me was the pig roast this past summer that [staff member] put so much work into and so much heart and soul and then all these people came out. And it was people from all over the neighbourhood and beyond that came to this pig roast. And I mean we had people from Bay Street where we have million dollar houses and then you have the people from municipal housing. And then you've got people from these blue collar/white collar, hard working families – everybody's just coming together and they're all sitting and we're all squished into this building. But everybody is sitting beside somebody they don't know and they're carrying on these conversations. And I just couldn't believe the amount of community that was built that day. And I think that is our greatest strength. I think that being able to draw people from everywhere and say everybody has value. Everybody has that gift to give.

Similarly, a staff member described Welcome Inn's Thrift Store as an equalizer across socioeconomic groups, one that facilitates community building across differences:

I love the thrift store because it is really a leveller when you think of poverty…. because people can shop for thrift for any reason. They can shop at thrift stores because they don't have money, they can shop at thrift stores because they're trying to save the environment, anything… you don't have to be poor to shop in thrift stores. So I love it that it's not a ghettoized kind of thing, and it very naturally mixes people, both volunteers and people who shop here. It just mixes people on a very natural level and you can be working beside someone who you would never in a million years get to know naturally… your paths wouldn't cross naturally. But you can be working in the back room and developing relationships. I just think that's a

huge strength; I just love the levelling of it.

Both examples capture the Welcome Inn's ability to bring people together and to build bridges that are rare in our society.

As identified by interviewees, community building at Welcome Inn offers connection, safety, intimacy, and a sense of belonging and 'family.'

Relationships Promote Mutuality

One of the primary ways that Welcome Inn values people and builds community and capacity is valuing each person's skills and gifts. Staff members highlighted the value placed on each person, and the firm belief that everyone has something to give. Many staff members quoted or paraphrased the Welcome Inn's belief that "each person has both a gift to give and a need to receive at all times" (Welcome Inn Board of Directors, 2010). One staff member explained that mutuality is the key that sets Welcome Inn apart from other social service agencies in her experience:

> I really believe that when we say, "Everyone has a gift to give and a gift to receive,"
> I think that that's a big thing. Because it's easy to say we're giving – we're the givers
> and they're the receivers, and this is us and they're the other. And I feel like I went
> through that with a couple of different organizations that I volunteered with or had
> experience working with prior to this. And, you know, I don't feel that way anymore,
> you know, I really don't. So that's the only thing I can reiterate and I know I've said
> but this is how we're different.

She credits the Welcome Inn with widening her perspective on the giving/receiving dynamic. So does another staff member, who suggests that it takes a step outside patriarchal systems to recognize them:

I think it's extremely inclusive. I mean we have people from all walks of life and it's funny to say it, and you think of this kind of archaic model, you know, of working in non-profit so you're working with these needy or vulnerable people. And certainly, some are vulnerable and some are in need but that is not kind of - we don't take this patriarchal view of "Look at us, we're so great for helping these poor souls." I think a lot of places that I had been involved with prior to my experience with Welcome Inn kind of took that stance. And you don't realize how condescending that is until you work in a place that doesn't. You know, and makes a concerted effort *not* to treat people like that and *not* to have clients but to just have community with - with your neighbours. So I think that makes a huge difference about how Welcome Inn operates.

Another staff member came to the Welcome Inn already valuing mutuality, and appreciated finding it at Welcome Inn:

The giving and receiving piece is key. Because I had previous experience in a similar context, I certainly didn't come in with the notion that I was bestowing help... the reciprocal relationships were hugely significant to me. The folks who showed a huge depth of caring for me and my family were very moving, especially given what many of them were going through.

Staff members emphasized that they are not 'above' other people in the community.

Another staff member describes staff role in community as facilitators rather than controllers:

I think we're all facilitators and I think we're facilitators of that community as it grows out of these strange interactions between those groups of complete strangers. And I really think that it's part of the learning curve of this place and it's part of why

some people fit really well as staff and some people really don't. You have to be really open to that very organic piece because you cannot control it. You can direct but you cannot control a path of those interactions and that's really what is important because the things that grow out of them are really amazing. Yeah, we're definitely - definitely a facilitator, not a controller.

Another member described staff-community interactions as building trust, and therefore facilitating transformation: "We have long-term relationships with people that enable trust to form so that long term changes can happen." She described staff-community relationships as casual, respectful, and mutual: "Casual, I think there's a lot of mutual respect, and I think staff really try to walk along side people as opposed to doing a top down thing." She adds that this is an established part of the Welcome Inn culture, one that is maintained through staff changes:

Even if a new person came in and tried to do something top-down, I don't think that would work in this organization, to the credit of neighbourhood and to the credit of the people who have come before us for years and years and years really building a mutuality in the relationships between the community and WI, where they blend into one. Any new staff member who comes in needs to practice it and listen, and there isn't this sense of "oh, what's going to happen now?" and more a sense of "this is how we do things at the WI, so get on board with the way we do things" and I find that quite refreshing.

Another staff member puts mutuality in the context of asset development principles:

We have been employing asset development principles – more or less explicitly – in all of our programming over the past 43 years: long before anyone would have labelled our organizational philosophy in this way. The belief that everyone who

comes through our door has something to contribute, and something to receive from

this community is the foundation of everything we do. Even our programming that is

more traditional, more income-based (our emergency food pantry, for example) has

an asset- development flavour in that it is almost entirely volunteer run, thus

removing the distinction between service providers and service users: people are

giving as well as receiving.

Another staff member described Welcome Inn's approach as a continual process of

commitment to mutuality:

And it's not always easy to say, you know, to not look at people and say we're giving

them - we give so much, you know. And so you really have to check yourself all the

time and say, you know, am I treating this person like an equal or am I treating them,

like I'm giving them something or I'm bestowing something on them. I think it's a

constant thing. It doesn't just happen but I think it has a lot to do with the character

of this place that makes it so easy.

While she asserts that the ideal of mutuality can be difficult, she also affirms that there is

something in the Welcome Inn's ethos that facilitates mutual giving and receiving.

A program participant described her relationship with a staff member as a friendship:

Then I come up and see [staff member name] and she likes to see what I'm doing and

stuff like that, so I can really, you know, I can share who I am and what I'm doing

and, you know, it's really kind of - basically, it feels more like a friendship with her

… Most special is my contact and friendship with [name], yeah, most special.

One of the primary ways that Welcome Inn fosters mutuality is providing opportunities for

people to identify and share their gifts. One staff member called honouring people's gifts one of

the Welcome Inn's "sacred cows." Participants, volunteers, and staff alike described personal growth and skill development through their activities at the Welcome Inn.

One program participant and volunteer said: "It [The Welcome Inn] made a good life for me. I found gifts that I didn't know I had." When asked to explain further, she said:

Well that I could be pleasant with people and I could end up volunteering and bring out my gifts for working with others. … That I'm able to talk to people that I couldn't talk to before -- they bothered me -- and to know different type of people. That mum always said it wasn't against her to know certain people but I learned to deal with people and the Welcome Inn helped me with it. WI is really a great place to be.

She contrasted her volunteer experience at Welcome Inn with her experience applying to volunteer at another organization: "they want to stick to the regulars ... The ones that volunteer up there, they've all got a few dollars. They're not poor like the WI deals with." Another person talked about sharing her Newfoundland sense of humour at a Welcome Inn volunteer dinner:

Well, I'm not much for being a speaker or at the microphone and that type of thing. But I just kind of like it if it's a comedy thing. So I wrote a song about the Welcome Inn and they let me be me. And I come from the East Coast - I'm a Newfie. So the Newfie came out in me! *{laughing}* and I just had a crazy time, that's all. For the most part, I'm calm and steady but every once in a while, I like to have fun.

One volunteer noted that her involvement with the program allows her to develop her skills in working with children, finding abilities she didn't think she had:

It really helps my ability to explain things properly - or you know, when you're teaching kids, it's kind of hard to keep patient - patience, I guess, is really what I'm

improving here. … Honestly, I love it because before this, I thought I couldn't deal with kids and it's sort of just started on a whim kind of thing because I wanted to volunteer a little bit. And I honestly thought I didn't have the patience to work with kids but after like volunteering here for a year, I think I can do it. Honestly, one of the things that I've learned is kids are just kids and you just need to be like at their level kind of thing and not look down on them and then don't – and then they'll be fine with you. Yeah, like it's definitely been a positive thing on my life, like just knowing that I can work with children. And plus I want to go to Med school, maybe paediatrics, I don't know, so yeah, it's been positive.

A church member noted both his own growth and that of another member:

It fed my own spirituality and even things like learning how to play guitar in public. And so it was a place where I could develop too. And I think others experienced that too, like a member you might know eventually became the e-mail person for the church with a sister congregation ... in Columbia. And she became the person - she had no - very little education and no technical skills, but somebody sat down with her and showed her how to do an e-mail.

One staff member described a significant shift in one community member when she serves as a Welcomer:

She gets very business-like and she's been answering the phones lately as Welcomer and its quite amazing the transformation that happens. She becomes very, you know, "Hello, Welcome Inn this is _____" kind of - it's wild. … A lot of capacity to change, you know, as the occasion calls for it: adaptive.

The staff member noted the stark contrast between this person's social interactions on and off the

phone, and realized that she was exercising -- and learning -- new skills through the process of talking to callers.

Another staff member noted that she appreciates that she is able to share her gifts in meaningful ways in her role at the Welcome Inn:

It's a place where I can actually take the things that I'm good at and the things that I'm passionate about and the things that I love and share them with other people in ways that are useful to them. And it's like unbelievable! I have like truly the best job in the world. It's - I get all squishy when I talk about it! … To know that at the end of the day, the conversations that you have with people make some kind of difference for people in that they've got the information they need or they've connected to somebody that they need to connect to. Yeah, it's totally - it's renewed my faith in community and humanity and, you know, all of the things that I want to do.

She feels that in sharing her gifts at the Welcome Inn, she is able to make a difference in the lives of others, and in doing so, receives something valuable in return.

A volunteer noted that gifts themselves are defined inclusively in the sense that whatever people can contribute is valued:

I think that's one of the very positive things about Welcome Inn is that there was a - there wasn't that hierarchical sense that you have to be - your gifts have to - like a comparison or a critical sort of critiquing people's gifts or whatever. That anybody could participate at whatever level they are able to and want to.

A staff member described the openness of the Welcome Inn to people bringing their unique gifts, even if they don't fit within already established programs:

So if someone came in with a gift of, say, teaching badminton, and wanting to play

badminton with kids, or whatever, and that's not something we have the space for, I

think, I would hope, that there would be an openness to exploring ways to make that

happen, and I think most times there is. Of course it needs to be balanced with

practicality and costs and that kind of thing, but there is an openness, if things fall

within the vision of WI, there's an openness to exploring.

Another staff member noted that it is an intensive process to match people with opportunities to

discover and share their gifts:

I spend a lot of time figuring out roles for people … and trying to nurture and support

their gifts to come out. I spend a fair amount of time making sure our systems are on

track so that we can plug people in. … So part of that connecting would be perhaps

they have needs to be met, that might be the food pantry or seniors' program, or

whatever or New Horizons. But I think all of us have needs and all of us have gifts

to offer so we would try to look beyond just the needs and find the gifts that

somebody would have to offer and connect them to that as well. Whether that's

helping them develop leadership or connecting them relationally with somebody or

that can be a huge spectrum of stuff.

She gave several examples of ways people "plug in," and gave the example of a group from

L'Arche:

They pick up garbage around the building and do odd jobs. It's a huge value to the

store but I think it's also a huge value to them - they may never be able to work in the

paid employment scenario but they very much give back to the community and I

think that gives them a sense of worth. So we have that, and it's played out over and

over again with folks.

When asked to elaborate further, she shared several other examples in writing:

- There is a gentleman who has been released from prison and has all kinds of restrictions placed on him - so that he cannot actually work with people at this point. He is trying to do something good for the community but because of his restrictions is very limited in how he does this. He loves jig saw puzzles. So....he comes to New Horizons and we give him jig saw puzzles. He takes them home and completes them - and then brings them back to us marked that 'all the pieces are there'. It is helpful for us - and gives him a focus.

- This year we had 2 Spanish speaking women who did not speak English, but wanted to learn. They were great at folding our linen....(and none of the rest of us are great at that). They would come in and fold all our bedding and towels and slowly began making friends with other volunteers and customers. It was a safe way for them to begin to learn English and develop relationships.

- New Horizons[2] is a great spot for students with learning disabilities to do their 40 hours of community service. We have lots of jobs that are repetitive and need doing (pricing etc.) and this seems to connect well with many people who are struggling in other ways. They come, work hard at pricing, and can take their time easing into all the "people stuff" that swirls around in our environment.

- It is also a great spot for people (typically guys - often living on the margins of society for various reasons) to "lug our stuff" from spot to spot. Very needed from our perspective, and it seems to be a "therapeutic thing" for folks who want to contribute

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[2] New Horizons Thrift Store, as noted in the description in the introduction section of this study, offers quality used clothes and household goods at low cost to the community, as well as opportunities for service and sales job skills training to volunteers.

and like doing physical work.

- Quite a few of our volunteers are recovered addicts. They love coming on a structured day and contribute a variety of skills. It gives their lives structure. Some of these folks have developed very meaningful relationships with other volunteers and they do social things together when they are not at the store. This has definitely been a very enriching social experience for these folks, without question.

- We have one volunteer who volunteers 3 days a week. She often says how grateful she is for the opportunity. She has limitations where paid employment was too stressful for her. She brings a lot of beautiful skills to the table with us - and we can easily work around her limitations. Her experience was that employers were unwilling to do that.

One volunteer describes her goal of accommodating people and any challenges they face to enable them to volunteer. She notes, however, that it would help to know more about people's challenges, so she can better integrate them in their volunteer roles:

Um, oh boy, how am I going to put this delicately. Um, like I said, some of the volunteers, they're hard workers but they do have some mental issues, I don't know how to put it. … If she could get more -- a little bit -- not invasive -- but a little bit more into their problem so we're not trying to guess -- second guess how to work with them.

Welcome Inn staff and volunteers go out of their way to find ways for people to participate and give. Other Welcome Inn programs function in similar ways. For example, the food pantry integrates volunteers who are struggling with poverty themselves, and has various roles that work around people's strengths and limitations. The seniors program incorporates volunteers who help in the kitchen and/or with serving meals who might not be accepted as volunteers at

other agencies.

The goal and practice of mutuality at Welcome Inn is reflected in commitment to the idea that everyone has both gifts and needs, and finding opportunities for people to discover and share their gifts even as their needs are being met. Volunteers who are also program participants is a primary way this mutuality is accomplished, and great effort is taken to match people to volunteer opportunities.

Relationships Facilitate Personal Transformation

Several staff members and volunteers voiced the significance of Welcome Inn in their own lives and identities as well as community members'. One staff member described the merging of her identity and Welcome Inn, "Honestly, at this point it is hard to remember or even know what was me then and what is me now. I feel like I have become WI and WI has to a certain extent become me...I really think it has that kind of effect on people." She is not alone in her attachment to the Welcome Inn; many people remain connected with the Welcome Inn for years and years, or even since its beginnings 46 years ago. One volunteer who has moved away said: "It's one of the biggest regrets I have in terms of moving away from the community - that I'm not involved there anymore." Three of the people interviewed have been part of the Welcome Inn community for over thirty years.

One staff member described her shift from academia to working at the Welcome Inn and the accompanying deepening in her understanding of community and inclusivity:

> I think that I've always been kind of an idealist about community and inclusivity and
> I think that's how I came here. And that's only deepened since I've been here. And
> it's been challenged sometimes on a daily basis since I've been here. ... I came from
> an academic background so it was all well and good to talk about your inclusivity

and let's, you know, keep open community and intentional community and then you

get here and you meet Mary (pseudonym) and you think, "Oh, can I do this really?"

And yes! Yes you can but there's talking about meeting people where they're at and

then there's doing it. And that's been – that's been really exciting for me because

I've always believed that that is how it should be done. … So that's been a really

huge area of growth for me just in terms of trying to put into practice what I believe

is the truth. Yeah, my commitment to those ideals has certainly deepened but I think

also, I have a much more concrete appreciation of the challenges of putting those

ideals into practice.

At the Welcome Inn, she had the opportunity to live out the theories she was studying in her

graduate program. Her understanding of the complexity of community deepened, and she found

obvious joy in the reality of community she found at the Welcome Inn.

Another staff member also identified that the ethos of Welcome Inn has helped her to

explore her own judgements and grow her ability to be loving and respectful of everyone:

There are people that come here that are tough to love or that sometimes I feel maybe

in my own judgement are coming with this kind of demanding attitude. … I have to

check myself because I need to say everybody deserves the same, no matter what

attitude they come in with, that's not my judgement call. It's everybody deserves the

same treatment, and the same love, and the same respect.

The Welcome Inn's commitment to values shaped how she responded to others, even when her

first response was one of judgement.

The same staff member noted and celebrated the growth in a long time Welcome Inner's

interpersonal skills, reflecting on this person's anticipation of the visit of the former Executive

Directors: "She said to me, 'You know, I love [two former staff members] and I can't wait to see them. I still really like you.' But to have the sensitivity, you know that's something she didn't have in the past, you know, according to [the same staff members]." Both the staff member and the program participant she described have experienced growth in their social skills through Welcome Inn.

One volunteer speaks powerfully of a time when a Welcome Inner living below the poverty line challenged him about his relative wealth:

God has created us all in his own image and why is it that some people he's been more generous to than others? I can't answer that question. But I guess the acceptance that I felt from some of these people over the years has been remarkable, knowing that I would pull in there driving a car and they walked, and they could never own a car. And I remember one fellow, … Fred (pseudonym) and I used to tease each other but we got to know each other quite well and Fred felt he owned the Welcome Inn. But it was – I mean he's one of these people that the Welcome Inn made a remarkable difference in his life. Anyway, Fred said to me – because I used to drive the pick-up there – and one day, I came in a car. And he said, "What did you do, get rid of your pick-up?" I said, "No, my wife didn't need it today." He says, "You have two vehicles?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, our pastor told us Sunday, if you have two, you're supposed to give one to somebody who doesn't have it." And he'd been listening to the sermon. I had to stumble over that one a little bit. It just made me rethink how fortunate I was and how generous God has been to me. And this happened I don't know how many years ago and I still remember it, clearly. But I guess my point is that these people, regardless of their station in life, have

something positive to give and we need to recognize it. We need to affirm them for it. And if nothing else, it's humbling for some of us that have more.

Similar themes of personal reflection, gratitude, and humility weave throughout Hugo Neufeld's book *The North End Lives* in his reflections about the Welcome Inn. One story is particularly poignant: Neufeld describes offering a ride home to a man after a weekly men's group at the Welcome Inn. It took some persuading, but the man -- Joe -- agreed. When Joe asked to be dropped off at an intersection near his home, Neufeld pressed to drop him off right at his home, citing a 'Good Samaritan' impulse. Joe allowed him to drive a little bit further and then asked to be let out around the corner from his home. Neufeld, curious, followed him, only to realize that he was homeless and living in a cardboard box. Neufeld realized his intrusion, but not before Joe saw him. Joe didn't return to the men's group. Neufeld writes:

> I felt guilty and could have kicked myself for my misplaced goodwill. I wanted to apologize and tell him I was sorry for pushing too hard and not respecting his wishes. I also wanted to convey some kind of regret for being part of a wealthy society in which low-cost housing is so scarce. I wanted to tell him that in my faith journey I was beginning to realize that I also have a responsibility to ensure that all have suitable housing.

Further, Neufeld credits his experiences and relationships at the Welcome Inn for his greater commitment to social action, and his participation in his first protest march:

> [My wife] and I were aware of the Poverty Walk, which was organized by a coalition of community agencies, socially minded churches, labour unions, and various peripheral political and social parties. It included some aggressive activists who, in my opinion, were using tactics that didn't fit a nonviolence stance. We had never

participated in a protest walk before and were somewhat uncomfortable with it.

Some people in our supporting churches and organizations would have stayed miles

away from something like this. The idea of joining a group in which some had

motivations different from ours didn't sit well with us either.

On the other hand, in our walk with those who were poor, the concern for justice had

become increasingly important to us. Advocating for better access to the resources

our country provided was part of our calling.

…

What were we to do? Artie, who himself was on disability and always ran short at

the end of the month, was calling on us to join him.

Neufeld and his wife decided to participate in the Poverty Walk and gathered a group from the

Welcome Inn to go together, half of whom were on social assistance themselves. Neufeld found

immense value in the experience, and linked it to his faith: "Our fears of what others driving by

would think vanished completely. This powerful intergenerational experience carried the

proclamation of Christ's 'good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18).

One staff member notes that she came to the Welcome Inn with what she thought was a

good understanding of community and the North End community in particular, but had a

profound deepening of insight through working at the Welcome Inn:

I thought I had really good sense of what community was. And I thought I knew

what the North End was about having lived here [my whole life]. … I think this place

has only served to expand that, to say oh yeah, that I'm a life-long North Ender is

one thing. But I didn't realize, I think, everything that was being done here, you

know, all the great stuff. It's easy to say there's huge poverty in the North End but

there's a lot of great stuff too. But to actually be able to live it and see it on a daily

basis and yes, we see the fact of poverty - but we also see the good, you know, these

great kids that come out and the volunteers that come out and give their time… my

insight as to what community is has just grown. … I have never felt like I lived my

faith like I do now. … It is truly a universal place in terms of all faiths, all races and

all backgrounds. Yeah, and all different kinds of personalities. You know, they may

not be people that I would have met, you know, otherwise, or really connected

otherwise than being here."

Through the Welcome Inn, she developed relationships with people in her own community that

she hadn't in all of her years of living in the North End, and in doing so, found a deeper sense of

living her faith.

A volunteer shared that his experiences of community and inclusivity at the Welcome Inn

helped to shape his life work in his own charitable organization: "I think it's informed a lot of the

philosophy that we use."

Finally, a staff member described the huge personal impact of Welcome Inn:

I can hardly think about that and speak about that without tearing up. It's hard to

articulate the depth of relationship and how that impacts one's life. I would say that

the relationships that I was part of at the Welcome Inn are relationships I'll cherish

the rest of my life. I think what was so impactful in those relationships is the

transparency that takes place - there are very few pretensions, folks speak their mind,

rarely ulterior motives involved, a vulnerability I have not seen elsewhere. I think

that has helped me in new places in terms of being able to discern what's happening

under the skin, what's really going on, helping to get to the deeper things that some

people are more guarded about.

Staff and volunteers at Welcome Inn identified the many ways that the people at Welcome Inn have contributed to their personal and professional growth, including deepening their understanding of community and inclusion, challenging their judgements and privilege, growing in their ability to love and respect others, seeing growth and change in themselves and other community members, spurring greater commitment to social action, and informing future understandings and endeavours.

Caveats to Welcome Inn's Approach to Relationships

While Welcome Inn staff, volunteers, and program participants spoke of the above themes positively, comments around decision-making and boundaries had more nuanced and mixed responses.

Decision-Making

Staff, volunteers, and program participants reported varying levels of involvement in decision-making at the Welcome Inn. Several people noted a general spirit of openness and collaboration. One staff member affirmed that "the goal is always that we're always fairly collaborative." Staff members highlighted the casual nature of staff-staff interactions as a small organization, where many day-to-day decisions are made collaboratively through informal conversations. Staff members also suggested that the small size of the organization allows for flexibility and innovation without long bureaucratic processes; this flexibility was stated as a strength. One staff member described participant input as follows:

Decisions are made around programs with the people who participate in

them...through casual conversations with staff, through evaluations and focus

groups. … Some larger decisions that have big budget implications or are a potential

change in direction (e.g. New Horizons) go first to the board for their input and

approval; however a business case with input from the community is presented to the

board so everyone has their input included in that.

She explained that "Surveys and focus groups are done at least annually in each program and

feedback is integrated in the annual program planning sessions. Another staff member

emphasized the importance of staff staying attuned to community needs: "I think that's a hugely

important piece - for staff and ED to have an ear to the ground, to know what impact Welcome

Inn programs make, but also what impact Welcome Inn as an organic entity is making as well."

Most program participants and volunteers shared that they feel comfortable bringing

suggestions and ideas to Welcome Inn staff members, who are often responsive. One program

participant said with a chuckle: "I know I can make suggestions for the bizPlan but I don't really

have any." One volunteer said that "[Staff member] is very open-minded so when we come up

with a suggestion, she is open and honest and says, 'Yeah - yeah, that's a good idea, thanks a

lot.' That's one of the reasons I like it here - there's lots of good communication going on."

Another volunteer in a different program noted that "A lot of them (staff) take my suggestions or

my ideas." A third volunteer from yet another program observed that volunteer input is regularly

requested: "[Staff member] is always asking us to let her know if there's anything that can be

changed or rearranged. We've done online surveys in the past … And I think that everybody's

really open to change and also to criticism."

Another volunteer said that she feels free to make suggestions, whether or not they are

implemented: "I could make a suggestion. If they don't follow up, I don't get upset about it. But

yeah, I will make suggestions to them. Like the board downstairs, I helped to put that together."

She further explained her comfort in putting forward her ideas: "I don't feel like I'm being put down - I never have. I think everybody's very much on equal footing here."

Yet another volunteer appreciates the ability to make decisions on her own at the store:

I can voice my opinion, I can voice my ideas. And I really like that. It took a while to be confident enough to initiate a sale or a display without first getting permission. And now, I'm just a lot more confident about it. … I feel I have a lot of input. I was put into the manager position being able to delegate to other people. You know, it gives me a lot of self-respect - I like being the go-to person. Even when [staff member] is busy, I can still make a confident decision in the back room or at the cash when needed.

She links receptiveness to her input and empowerment to make decisions on her own to self-respect, self-confidence, and happiness in her role.

One staff member noted the high level of investment of volunteers in her program: "I have volunteers that have been with the program since the very first day and they're quite vocal about what they think. And I think a really important piece of it because they may have expertise in areas that I will never have. So their buy-in is deep."

Staff members indicated that there is great openness to new ideas; proposals -- from staff, volunteers, or community members -- are welcomed and implemented if time and resources allow. One staff member said: " If an idea is put forward for a change and there is budget and energy for it, we'll go ahead with it." For example, a volunteer talked about his experience of proposing 'Prayer and Praise' evenings after the closure of the church:

Just recently, I had been planning to have an evening of prayer and praise for a long time and I just found the mental space to propose that over the last couple of weeks

and now it's happening, and the idea has been fully supported. So I don't see any

lack of support. I see a lot of opportunity.

He suggested an idea, was supported by the ED and the Board of Directors, and was given

freedom to implement it.

Not all interviewees felt they have input in decision-making at the Welcome Inn. One

church member said that "Being part of the church, the community centre often felt a bit

mysterious, like I didn't really know how decisions got made." He notes that this may be an

issue of disconnect between the church and community centre: "there wasn't a lot of

communication, you know. We really didn't hear much about the workings of the community

centre and I wondered if the church was really on the radar screen of the folks over on the other

side." Another volunteer and program participant expressed dislike of changes at the Welcome

Inn. When asked if she feels she has input in changes, she responded: "No, they do what they

want."

One staff member felt more decision-making freedom at the Welcome Inn than she has had

in other employment situations:

Within my own program, I think for the most part, [my supervisor] has done a really

great job of letting me make decisions - of letting me kind of run with it - and bounce

things off of her, obviously. … I have felt from the beginning that [my supervisor]

has really let me come into my own in terms of a program co-ordinator because she's

let me co-ordinate … Sometimes I've had ideas and then worked out that they

weren't going to work or worked out that there was a better way to do it. And [my

supervisor] was great at leading me in those directions too, saying, "Well, this is

what's been done in the past but let's see your take on this." So I think in terms of

decision making, I have felt very comfortable and it took me a while to get there

even in terms of comfort level. Because I questioned myself and I've worked in

environments in the past where everything has to be managed - the executive director

or boss have to really have their input and their say and everything. So when I came

here and [my supervisor] said, "Great! Fine! No problem." I was kind of taken aback

by that kind of liberty.

Conversely, a former staff member suggested that sometimes staff would like more freedom in

programmatic decision-making: "I suspect -- I know -- there were times some program leaders

wished they had more input and autonomy." She posits links between staff freedom in decision-

making, creativity, competence and staff relationships:

I would say the way decisions are made, I think there's a lot of really good staff who

could be given a little bit more freedom to structure stuff or to use their own

creativity around stuff, which is permission to make the programs they are

responsible for more their own in a variety of ways. I think that could be very

helpful. I think if that dynamic happened a little bit more, it would help with staff

relationships… it's not that staff relationships are bad, but I would say they're not

deep, and so I think if, it's hard to articulate, … like I've worked at places before

where people are really invested in the leaders of the programs, and say this is the

program, make it happen, and your supervisor is more of your support person as

opposed to the one making the decisions of how everything goes. I think people are

empowered and enabled more, and that's part of the philosophy of the WI and what

we try to do for people who come to the programs, but we don't do that for staff.

Interesting to note is her juxtaposition of the Welcome Inn's approach to its program participants

in contrast to its staff. While this dynamic is interesting and worth further exploration, it is also one she has seen shift positively in the last few years: "there is MUCH more freedom with decisions."

Related to organizational rather than programmatic decisions, staff members felt they have input in decisions via staff meetings and then to the Board of Directors (BOD) through the ED. One staff member expressed that "[the executive director] is quite able to carry the staff consensus or lack of consensus to the board and we're all comfortable that that happens." Another staff member said:

> [The executive director] and the board of directors have the last say on everything, as it should be. You know, they're qualified to do the jobs that they're in but I've never felt that I was left out of any major decision making that would take place in changing the character of this place ... Along the way, I think that during our staff meetings, it's been kind of an open forum. I've never felt that the staff were mistreated in any way or left out of that. I think that they've been very transparent in any kind of big decisions; or even just letting us know, "This is what we're planning to do -- this is what we're looking to change."

One staff member expressed a desire to participate more in larger scale decisions, but also acknowledged practical challenges of doing so in a small organization, as well as her overall satisfaction with the current model of decision-making between the board and staff members:

> Being able to participate in the big picture things is really important to the staff because we all have really strong opinions about how that should look. … I think in an ideal world, we'd like to be at the table as a staff group all the time for things like that. But the practicalities of it are different - with only six staff in the building, it

means we can't show up to a couple of board meetings a month to hash all that stuff

out because ... we don't physically have time. It's the best balance that we can get. I

mean, everybody has input which I think accomplishes what we need to accomplish

with it.

However, the same staff member noted that in times of turmoil, some staff would like more

direct communication with the board of directors: "But at points when things are unsettled, even

if just organizationally, some of the staff have a much greater investment in wanting to

communicate directly with the board and when that doesn't happen, it gets stressful for some

more than others." She also noted that there is inconsistency in staff input in some areas,

depending on the Board of Directors. For example, several years ago staff members participated

in the Board's job performance review of the ED, which hasn't happened again since.[3]

Staff members, volunteers, and participants indicated different ways in which they have

more or less decision-making power at Welcome Inn. Staff members had significant decision-

making power within their programs, and input into organizational decisions. Similarly,

volunteers and program participants had input into programming. 'Input' and 'feedback' rather

than direct involvement in decision-making was more common within the hierarchy at Welcome

Inn. This power hierarchy, affirmed in organizational charts, is seemingly contrary to the

descriptions of equality and mutuality at Welcome Inn.

Boundaries

Some staff members identified little or no boundaries between community members and

staff, "It's neat because there are no – there are no boundaries between 'you participate in this

program' or 'you're a volunteer' and 'you're a program participant' or 'you're staff.' We all live

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[3] Note: This practice was later reintroduced (2011).

in the neighbourhood, we all – we're neighbours so it's just cool." Another said: "We feel that

we are all in this together and try not to make distinctions between staff and volunteers or staff

and participants."

> Conversely, a staff member identified that boundaries have become clearer:
>
> I know that when I came to WI, I described it as unhealthy and almost
>
> incestuous. Many, many people were full of a sense of entitlement (you have to do
>
> this for me, it's the Welcome Inn) rather than a sense that they could do it themselves
>
> and WI would walk along side. I, together with a whole new staff, worked diligently
>
> to shift the culture to one of healthy relationships and clear boundaries and moved
>
> people away from that sense of entitlement towards a sense of I can do things to help
>
> myself and have confidence that WI will help when I really cannot do it myself.

She notes that the shift in organizational culture has been difficult for many long time Welcome

Inn community members, and that firm boundaries have helped her make those changes: "I think

that while I am a part of the community I have been responsible for some major shifts and

changes and those have been hard for people … So, I think that there is still a healthy sense of

distance that enables those hard decisions to be made."

> Several people also identified challenges and tensions related to close relationships and

flexible boundaries at Welcome Inn. Several staff members identified that there is a high

tolerance for what might be called disruptive behaviour at the Welcome Inn. One said:

> There's a higher degree of tolerance. Because relationships are valued, our tolerance
>
> is higher. I think that certain personalities lend themselves to sometimes being
>
> disruptive; some organizations wouldn't tolerate that and would say 'you can't come
>
> back here, you're being disruptive.' But WI values relationship, so people lack

social graces, who sometimes are less than kind to one another. I don't know

anyone, other than the odd person who has acted or threatened violence, no one is

asked not to come back. There's a great tolerance for interacting with people where

they're at, even when they can get nasty, our mandate is to engage and connect,

that's the motivating factor.

Staff described cases where people regularly criticized programs and staff, or stole from the

Welcome Inn. During church services, people sometimes interrupted when others were speaking

and left for smoking breaks throughout the service.

One staff member noted that with intimacy and more flexible boundaries comes conflict:

The negative edge of that sometimes, is that in all closer relationships, that sparked

frustration and anger and verbal conflict from time to time, and so in that regard the

personal aspects of those relationships were valuable and to be treated with dignity

and respect; but could also be fractious sometimes as well.

The same staff member noted that intimacy can also be a barrier in terms of inclusion of new

people:

The Welcome Inn reflects the kind of stereotype of the gritty north end, industrial

area - the folks who are part of the WI community kind of reflect that:

straightforward, blunt, at same time deeply compassionate and caring for each other

and fairly tight knit. The church is a very welcoming group, but sometimes a little

overwhelming for new people in its strong desire to have people be integrated right

away; from outside, it's kind of hard to get in.

A former staff member also talked about the tension of boundaries in the context of staff

wellbeing and burnout:

If we're serious about creating community …, we need to be willing to go into some dark and difficult places to be true to ourselves and relationships with integrity. At the same time, we are who we are, we have our own story our own narrative, we come with that reality, and we do need to be careful. I needed to be careful to know where my boundaries and edges were, too, because as much as I don't like the notion of self-care, in certain respects it is a community that can become all consuming, and when it becomes all consuming, it seems that we weaken our mission and our ability to act with integrity and to be sustainable, to sustain ourselves.

This staff member introduces yet another layer of boundaries: monitoring the health of staff and volunteers who may become drained by the demands of the Welcome Inn community. Another church member also shared his experience of burnout:

I think I have contributed to a lot of things in the past - I'm contributing now in different ways but I have to be conscious. And I'm trying to take on the role right now of more of a facilitator for things to happen than - than total responsibility for things - if that makes any sense. But I found both [staff member] and I had considerably a lot of stress and we both had to step back in various ways. … A number of families left which left only a few people who were perhaps able - I hesitate to say that - and willing to take responsibility for church leadership. And a lot of people who were attending but weren't willing/able to fulfill those roles. So that left a shortage of people who could do leadership stuff and a lot of needs. And at the same time, we still tried to be everything to everybody which meant the Pastor would drive the van to Stoney Creek to pick up people - and across the city - before and after church, and I would take on multiple roles. So yeah, it was a combination

of things followed from past events, and a real small number of people who could do the leadership. So an imbalance in terms of – and it tended to fall along the lines, too, of those people who were perhaps better off with the resources of doing the leadership and those people who didn't quite have those resources who were attending. So it wasn't a sustainable mix.

Yet another church member also felt drained by the church:

I think, you know, when Welcome Inn went through some of the more difficult stuff with the church, I started to feel - still very involved but a little bit that I was kind of emotionally checking out of it -- like because it started to become a little bit of a draining place for me. … It got a bit out of balance, like mainly that's all who were there and not many people where I felt it was a bit more mutual where I could receive from. So it was, became a place where I felt it was very worthwhile, I found it harder to feel a strong desire to be there or to be a bit motivated or if I had to push myself to stay home.

… And I think this generally happened for others too. The ones who were carrying more the load of keeping things going gradually kind of got burnt out and that's probably what led to the church closing. So at this point, I still feel a strong connection to the Welcome Inn but I don't actually go there very often any more because the church was my primary place of involvement.

Three people made vague references to sexual boundary crossings in the history of the Welcome Inn, without explicitly naming them. One volunteer noted that "A few incidents happened." A church member said " when Welcome Inn went through some of the more difficult stuff with the church, …several years ago maybe four or five years ago, I can't

remember exactly when all that happened." One staff member wondered if the relaxed nature of the Welcome Inn in the past and present facilitates staff boundary crossing:

> The strength of the Welcome Inn is the casualness of its relationships and how we relate to people. I think the weakness of the WI is the casualness around the structure around staff. I think there has been a history of staff crossing boundaries with each other -- inappropriate stuff that has all crashed and burned. Four or five years ago we hired a new group of staff and I would say again there continues to be, from my perspective, some boundary crossing issues with the staff. And I wonder is that inherent… does that come out of structural casualness, or is that particular people, or what is that? But it seems to be a pattern. So I would say crossing of boundaries in this open environment I think can lead people to situations that lack integrity that they may not even be aware of at the time, but seem very obvious to others. … And because of this "oh, everyone's welcome" and it's so open, people are in tricky positions to counter that or to get into it.

She continues on to say that the Welcome Inn lacks structures for addressing staff boundary crossings, and that there is a dichotomy between lateral accountability and the hierarchical relationship between staff and the Board of Directors:

> So it's interesting because from a community perspective it's encouraged that we are laterally accountable to each other but on staff it's pretty much from the top down, so it's very difficult to speak up. It's interesting. And the board, I think structurally they do very well, and there's really lovely people on the board, but it's a separate entity. So staff are quite isolated if something is going wrong. There isn't … I mean you could go to the Board with a formal grievance … but there isn't a casual way for

that to happen because the Board is over here. And I'm not even saying that as a

criticism, but it's just structurally the way it is. It's an interesting dichotomy I would

say.

She adds her concern that: "Big things can go down with staff in regards to boundary crossing,

with no apparent accountability or awareness from the Board."

This section has explored the various challenges of boundaries at Welcome Inn. Some

staff laud increased clarity in boundaries, countering earlier entitlement and promoting healthy

relationships. Other staff celebrate that there are little or no boundaries or distinctions between

staff members, volunteers, and community members, that everyone are simply 'neighbours.'

Tolerance of disruptive behaviours, conflict due to closer relationships, and intimacy as

unintentional exclusion in a tight knit community are also named as challenges of Welcome

Inn's approach to relationship and boundaries. Serious issues of staff and volunteer burnout and

sexual boundary violations at Welcome Inn are also identified.

Summary of Findings

Relationships at Welcome Inn are largely described by staff members, volunteers, and

program participants alike as positive and integral to Welcome Inn. Relationships were

described to be guided by a strengths perspective, inclusive and accepting, supportive,

community building, mutual, and facilitating personal transformation.

Decision-making and boundaries at Welcome Inn had more caveats. While staff members,

volunteers, and program participants had input into decisions that affected them, staff members

had decision-making power within their programs and the Executive Director and Board of

Directors had decision-making power related to the organization. Some staff members,

volunteers, and program participants expressed desire for more clarity and involvement in

decisions.

The findings on boundaries are particularly diverse and challenging. Descriptions of boundaries varied among staff from clear boundaries to no boundaries at all, which was described both positively and negatively. Gaps in communication were identified between the board of directors and staff members when boundaries were crossed. The intensity of findings on the subject of boundaries, as well as the more limited research on boundaries in community settings, led to the focus on boundaries in the following discussion.

In the next chapter I will discuss the findings, propose a model to generate reflexivity with respect to potential boundary crossing situations, and make recommendations about how to reduce the challenges identified above.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Conflicting Paradigms at Welcome Inn

Without exception, every interviewee expressed deep appreciation for the Welcome Inn, its programs, and its strong sense of community. The strong sense of inclusion and acceptance at Welcome Inn, where "they don't care if you have seven heads or one head" and "you can let your guard down and be who you are," was apparent through staff, volunteer, and community member interviews. Just as the Welcome Inn's statement that everyone has something to give at all times is transformative, so can be the affirmation that we are all in need at all times. It levels the playing field and encourages people to care for one another in their humanness.

Defining people by their strengths and providing opportunities and support for the sharing of gifts -- however unconventional and without standards of comparison -- is a core value and practice at the Welcome Inn; it is one of the ways social inclusion is most clearly enacted. By valuing people's gifts and finding a place for people to use their gifts within Welcome Inn community, and challenging dominant societal discourse and hierarchies around poverty that label people as 'needy' and 'impoverished' or worse, Welcome Inn fosters an inclusive environment and promotes a 'judgement free space'. The personal transformation experienced by staff members and volunteers at Welcome Inn similarly challenges firm distinctions between "helper" and "helpee" and fosters nuanced understandings of poverty, power, and privilege. The Welcome Inn's flexibility and openness in finding a fit for people in particular role(s) and/or program(s) allows for people's mediation of their involvement and level of personal disclosure. At the same time, Welcome Inn is involved very little in efforts for systematic change to the root causes of poverty.

With an intentional reducing of barriers between staff and community members, more intimate relationships are possible, as lauded by Ungar (2004) and Maidment (2006), and bringing social work back to its 'first voice' (Dybicz, 2012). This both facilitates positive transformation and sometimes leads to challenges. Staff members assessed the state of staff boundaries at the Welcome Inn over the last several years quite differently: some celebrated permeable boundaries, others celebrated recent progress toward healthier boundaries, and still others saw the need for clearer boundaries. Divergent opinions on boundaries among colleagues are not unexpected according to Reamer (2003), based on his study of social workers' perceptions of professional boundaries.

While the descriptions of inclusion, acceptance, and community at Welcome Inn depict an egalitarian organization with little to no distinction between staff, volunteers, and community members, tensions with decision-making, role clarity, power imbalances, and boundary clarity point to a more complicated lived reality. This is apparent in a myriad of ways, from a community member who feels she is valued higher as a volunteer than as a program participant, to a staff member identifying the limited depth of staff relationships and the disjoint between the Board and staff, to frustration and conflict, to tolerance of nasty and inappropriate behaviour that goes against Welcome Inn core values. Similarly, the former church was described as welcoming and at the same time difficult to get in from the outside.

The theme of family was common across interviewed staff, volunteers, and community members. In his book *Welcoming the Stranger,* Keifert (1992) challenges the common notion of churches as family, arguing that a sense of family can be intrinsically exclusive, turning a public space into a private one. The tension between stranger and family, public and private space, inclusion and exclusion is clearly at play at the Welcome Inn. While the sense of belonging and

family at the Welcome Inn is a testament to social inclusivity, it may also be a means of social exclusion at times. Close staff-community member relationships may heighten this exclusion.

Decision-making at Welcome Inn is described at times as collaborative and inclusive, and at others as top-down. For an organization that purports equality and inclusion, there are limited ways for community members and volunteers to be involved in decision-making. The primary method of participation in decision-making at the Welcome Inn is input, gathered through casual conversations and sometimes more formalized feedback surveys and focus groups. While volunteers and program participants interviewed felt they are able to offer suggestions and feedback to staff, staff have decision-making power within their programs, with more or less input from the Executive Director. Staff meetings and conversations are a mechanism through which staff views can be brought to the Board of Directors. Feedback from staff and community members is shared with the Board, which has final authority in overarching directions and decisions. Welcome Inn does not currently have program participant representation on the Board of Directors, but has in the past.

The casual and relational interactions among and between staff, volunteers, and program-participants at the Welcome Inn seem to facilitate volunteer and participants' feelings of inclusion and agency, and decrease power differentials. However, when examining Welcome Inn practices around decision-making, most of the involvement in decision-making is input only, with community members able to offer suggestions to staff, but staff having full power over programs and the Executive Director and Board having full power of organizational decisions.

The Welcome Inn seems to walk a careful line between challenging the dominant system and its values, while simultaneously helping people to survive and participate in the system. In some ways, its programs could be called 'band-aids' that help prop up the system: for example,

the food given out at the food bank and the goods bought at the thrift store help people to meet their basic needs, without necessarily encouraging systematic income inequity. Other programs help people to exit the cycle of poverty by improving job skills, helping people start or expand small businesses, increasing health, supporting children socially and educationally, and/or helping people to save for education or a home. However, the approach to community-building, relationships, and value of people's strengths that runs through all of the Welcome Inn's programs opens up possibilities of transformation that transcend the confines of societal norms. At its best, the Welcome Inn creates a place of healing and relationship that values people and their contributions, and thereby helps to empower people as well as to encourage values that contrast with dominant values of consumption, wealth, and commodification.

In terms of boundaries, opinions and experiences were even more divergent among staff. Some staff members denied any boundaries between staff, volunteers, and program participants: "We all live in the neighbourhood…we're neighbours so it's just cool" and "We feel that we are all in this together and try not to make distinctions between staff and volunteers or staff and participants." Another staff member talked about introducing boundaries that were not previously present as a healthy culture shift:

> "I, together with a whole new staff, worked diligently to shift the culture to one of
> healthy relationships and clear boundaries and moved people away from that sense of
> entitlement towards a sense of I can do things to help myself and have confidence
> that WI will help when I really cannot do it myself… I think that while I am a part of
> the community I have been responsible for some major shifts and changes and those
> have been hard for people … So, I think that there is still a healthy sense of distance
> that enables those hard decisions to be made."

Staff and volunteers also talked about burnout from the Welcome Inn Church after years of trying to meet everyone's divergent needs and keep the church going with little support and leadership in the community. Staff named both former and ongoing boundary crossings by staff, and wondered if there was something in the structure and casualness of Welcome Inn that encouraged the pattern.

Two paradigms operate simultaneously at Welcome Inn. On one hand, there is a community story of interdependence, equality in roles (e.g. staff, volunteer, community member) and mutuality, and rhetoric of 'family.' This is spoken of positively by staff members, volunteers, and program participants alike. On the other, staff experience volunteers and program participants as entitled, wanting 'service' on their own terms, and community members experience staff as authority figures. The coexistence of these paradigms and viewpoints is a continual source of tension. While the benefits of relaxed boundaries are apparent, at the same I contend that the duality of these paradigms and the resulting tension arise from ambiguous and changeable boundaries at Welcome Inn.

Further Exploration of Boundaries at Welcome Inn

Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2001) contend that boundaries can actually hinder social work practice in the community by maintaining systematic and institutional hierarchies. At Welcome Inn, the two paradigms create an uneven environment where flexible and changeable boundaries sometimes break down barriers, and sometimes reinforce power imbalances and hierarchies; the latter is not part of Welcome Inn's story of itself, and rarely recognized by Welcome Inn staff and Board amidst an institutional story of acceptance, inclusion, and equality.

Informal relationships at Welcome Inn, with the aim of fostering inclusivity, breaking down barriers, and allowing for personal transformation of everyone involved, are highly valued.

At the same time, issues of boundary clarity, boundary inconsistency, and boundary crossings abound, affecting the very relationships that Welcome Inn strives to nurture among and between staff, volunteers, and community members.

In my experience as a staff member at Welcome Inn, there were several additional examples of tension related to boundaries. Firmer boundaries between staff and community members were desired by some staff members, while others appreciated the flexibility and casual nature of current relationships and boundaries. Tension also arose in when to say 'no' to and/or exclude volunteers and community members who behave in ways that counteract Welcome Inn's core values (Appendix A). Further, some staff members were uncomfortable when different staff members have different comfort levels with boundaries, especially around how much support and assistance to offer community members, ensuring safe practices, managing self-care, avoiding burnout, and encouraging capacity and autonomy and/or encouraging reliance on other supports. This is further complicated because most staff members live in the North End neighbourhood along with Welcome Inn volunteers and community members.

In addition to the examples from interviewees in this study, I experienced the following examples of boundary tensions in my time at Welcome Inn:

1) One staff member who lived very near Welcome Inn found that the youth were dropping by her house in non-program hours on a regular basis, talking with her on her front porch. She articulated her struggle to set boundaries, afraid that doing so would compromise her relationships with the youth. She valued the relationships, loved the youth, and was glad that they valued and trusted her as well. At the same time, for her own well-being, she needed more separation and time away from work while at home. Welcome Inn rhetoric of 'family,' 'inclusion,' 'community,' and 'mutuality' contributed to the challenge here, as in similar

cases, of separating 'home' and 'work,' something 'friends' and 'family' don't need to do in the same way.

2) In consultation with his pharmacist and one of our long term community members, we held medications for pick-up daily so our community member would take them as prescribed and would have a touchstone and outing daily to aid in his recovery. This caused discomfort for staff members who felt that this was too risky, too accommodating, and/or replicated pharmacy services (i.e. that if he switched pharmacies, they could be delivered to his door). Different understandings of Welcome Inn's role as support in people's lives were evident. When told she did not have to be part of this situation, one staff member was relieved but also felt like she was letting down the team or not meeting expectations. While the situation came to an end, the process revealed challenges in communicating, living out, and decision-making around boundaries among staff members. It would have been helpful to have a staff conversation and participatory decision-making process prior to entering this arrangement with the community member.

3) Community members often offer small gifts to staff members on special occasions and/or as thanks. While gifts under $25 are allowed in Welcome Inn's policies, it is interesting to note that when the previous Executive Director was pregnant, the community held a baby shower and many people brought gifts. Collectively, the gifts far exceeded $25 in value. The value of mutuality was uplifted in many of these moments; while no staff member asked for or expected gifts, it clearly meant something to community members to share gifts of celebration with staff members.

4) When a long time community member was facing a critical though temporary situation without housing, one staff member offered that she could stay a night or two in her home.

While the community member ended up staying at Welcome Inn, the staff member indicated she would still have offered her home a couple of years later when it came up in a staff meeting about boundaries. Other staff members would not offer their homes, and one felt it was inappropriate for the first staff member to do so. Because this situation was historical and had not actually occurred, it was only explored theoretically. The staff team did not come to agreement, and no guidelines nor policy have since been considered.

5) Additional past examples of community members calling Welcome Inn staff instead of other supports such as 911 include a) late at night a woman with a physical disability fell in the bathtub and called a Welcome Inn staff member to help her up, and the person went; and b) Hugo Neufeld, in his book *The North End Lives,* describes going to a community member's house when her autistic son was violently upset and wielding a knife, becoming involved in the situation as support and de-escalator (p. 146-148). Many community service organizations would consider this inappropriate, especially without appropriate training in home visitation and crisis intervention. Because the source of the second story is a book, I'm not sure what tensions Hugo Neufeld felt in that situation, though he does name that it was a stressful situation for him. In the first case, the staff member felt uncomfortable with the request but struggled to set a boundary with this person, who he knew trusted him more than other supports at the time.

6) In several situations, volunteers acted out in a variety of ways, including swearing at staff, racism toward other community members, shouting out of frustration at other community members, stealing food from the food bank after agreeing not to, and making harassing phone calls from Welcome Inn's phones while volunteering. The usual staff response to this was to send the person home, and to negotiate any return to volunteering based on a reiteration of

Welcome Inn's values and volunteer Code of Conduct and a personalized plan for future

behaviour (reduced hours, increased supervision, restricted roles, etc.). However, with repeat

offences, questions about where to draw the line emerged. Some staff members wanted to

give more opportunities to vulnerable volunteers who, though they acted out, obviously found

volunteering at Welcome Inn central to their lives, sense of self-worth, and well-being. Other

staff members felt that the same standards should be upheld for all volunteers and that the

broader Welcome Inn community needed to be protected from the impact of the concerned

volunteers' behaviours. A new policy for managing difficult and dangerous behaviour was

under development at the time that I left Welcome Inn; even the creation of this policy,

however, was challenging in that diverse personal and organizational values held by various

staff and board members were in conflict and dialogue.

7) Some staff members criticize volunteers and community members for certain actions,

including, for example, a) telling staff what to do in response to a particular situation, b)

giving instructions to other volunteers, or c) expecting immediate help upon arrival. At times,

this was labelled as 'entitlement' by staff. Some staff members were frustrated by this but did

not speak with the community members involved, while other staff responded by asserting

boundaries and informing that their behaviour was unacceptable. This topic was a frequent

focus of conversation and tension in staff meetings; staff members were encouraged to

respond with compassion and firmness as appropriate and at their discretion. The deeper

tensions of entitlement as a way of expressing empowerment were not addressed, and staff

members continued to respond in their own ways to these situations.

8) An extramarital affair between two prominent staff members at Welcome Inn more than 10

years ago significantly affected the health and wellbeing of the Welcome Inn Church

community, with several more capable and financially secure families electing to leave the church. Resulting actions included involvement of the Board of Directors and representatives of the Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada. In the end, both involved staff members left Welcome Inn.

9) With less controversy, more recently a Welcome Inn staff member dated and then married another staff member, her subordinate, which caused tension at times among other staff members. Staff members talked with one another about the situation; to my knowledge, it was not brought to the attention of the Executive Director or Board of Directors.

10) When a Welcome Inn community member was convicted of sexual abuse of a child in the neighbourhood (not on Welcome Inn property), Welcome Inn's support of sexual offenders came under question by parents in the community. Welcome Inn was perceived to care less for victims than the perpetrators of sexual violence, and many community members and volunteers, especially parents with young children, left the Welcome Inn Church. A letter was distributed anonymously in the neighbourhood, accusing Welcome Inn of providing space for sexual offenders at the expense of the safety of families and children. Open meetings of Welcome Inn Church and community members were held to discuss people's reactions and next steps. Eventually, new policies were put in place to protect vulnerable people and children, and Circles of Support was no longer part of Welcome Inn's programming, though some former participants in the program remained connected to Welcome Inn.

Different staff members have different approaches, and while Welcome Inn has an ethos of acceptance, a variety of stories and cultural norms around boundaries exist within its past and present. Due to the level of tension for and between staff members, and the negative impact on

both staff members and the whole Welcome Inn community of past boundary crossings and violations, a new approach to boundaries is necessary. Since Welcome Inn's commitment to inclusion and mutuality requires a more flexible approach to boundaries than in contexts where the first commitment is to service, more boundary issues will arise and a more nuanced and intentional navigation of boundary concerns is needed.

Embracing the Grey Zone: A model for navigating flexible boundaries

As previously noted, Doel et al. (2010) contend most agency policies do not address shadow or grey areas of social work practice. With relationship at the centre of social work practice, and especially at Welcome Inn, grey areas abound. Based on issues identified in the literature review, including relationship with other staff members, professional codes of ethics, potential impacts on 'clients' and their families, and risks of burnout and impact on staff members, as well as findings from this research that demonstrate the benefits and risks of ambiguous boundaries at Welcome Inn, I propose a model of boundaries that is grounded in relationship and embraces the grey zone of practice, assisting helping professionals in navigating, rather than avoiding, the grey zones. The first stage of development of the model identifies the potential relationships affected by boundary issues (Figure 1). Please note that this model is for situations in the grey or ambiguous zone of professional boundaries, including dual relationships, accessibility, level of intimacy in relationships, mutuality, etc. It is not intended for situations commonly agreed as boundary violations, including sexual relationships and abuse of power, among others (see literature review on boundary violations).

Figure 1: Relationships affected by boundary issues
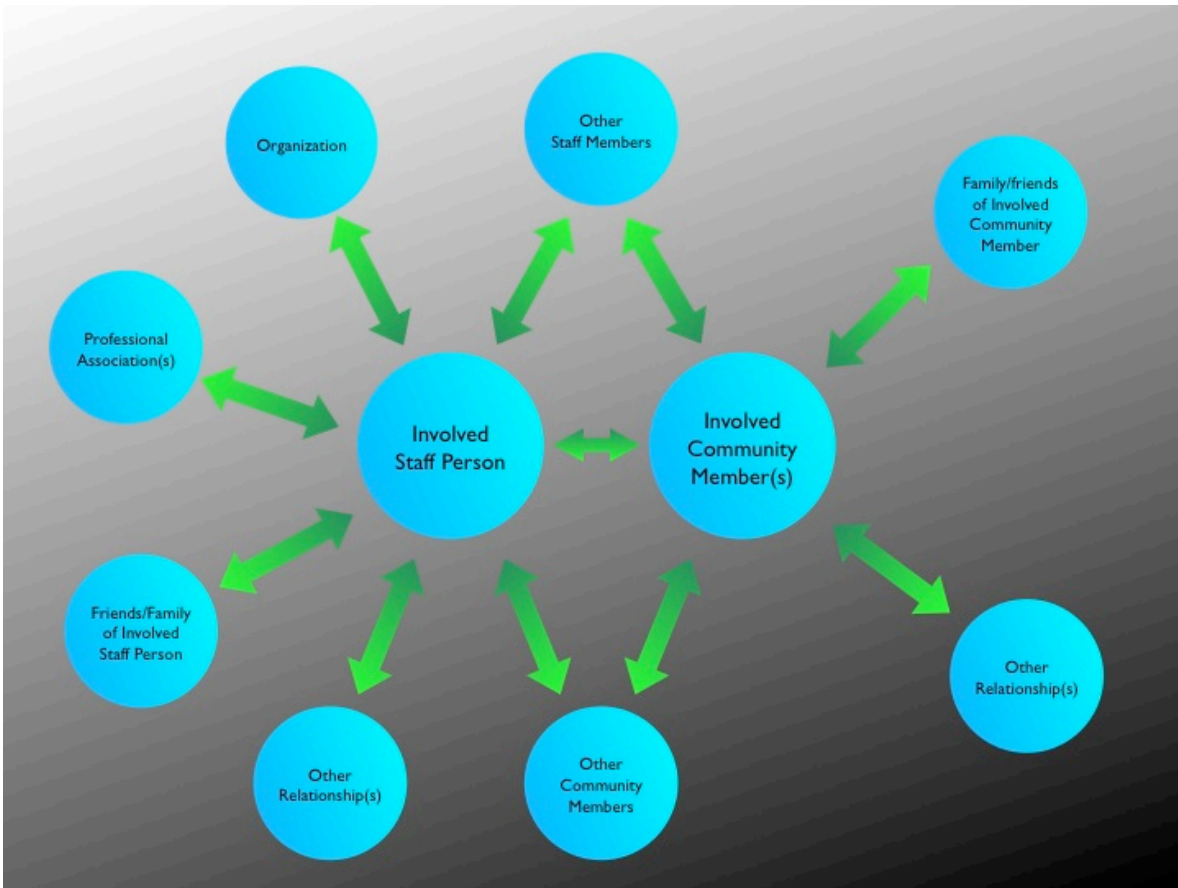
Green arrows represent relationship between people or groups. For any potential boundary related decision or incident in the grey zone, the staff member and community member(s) involved are at the centre of the model, as is their relationship. At the same time, the staff member and community member(s) are balancing several other relationships that may also be impacted by their actions, including other staff, other community members, professional associations, the organization, and their family and friends.

In the next stage of the model development, the community practitioner is to consider the potential benefits and harms of the proposed action (or for each of several potential actions in response to a boundary concern) on each affected relationship, both for the present and in the future. What is the precedent set by this decision for all of the affected relationships? Rather

than providing concrete answers or solutions, the model encourages staff members to stay in right relationship with all of the important relationships in their lives, and helps identify potential areas of concern. Relationships can be numbered (not all would be relevant in every situation) and explored with colleagues, supervisors, and/or individually before making a decision (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Relationships numbered, and questions of benefit, harm, and risk management identified
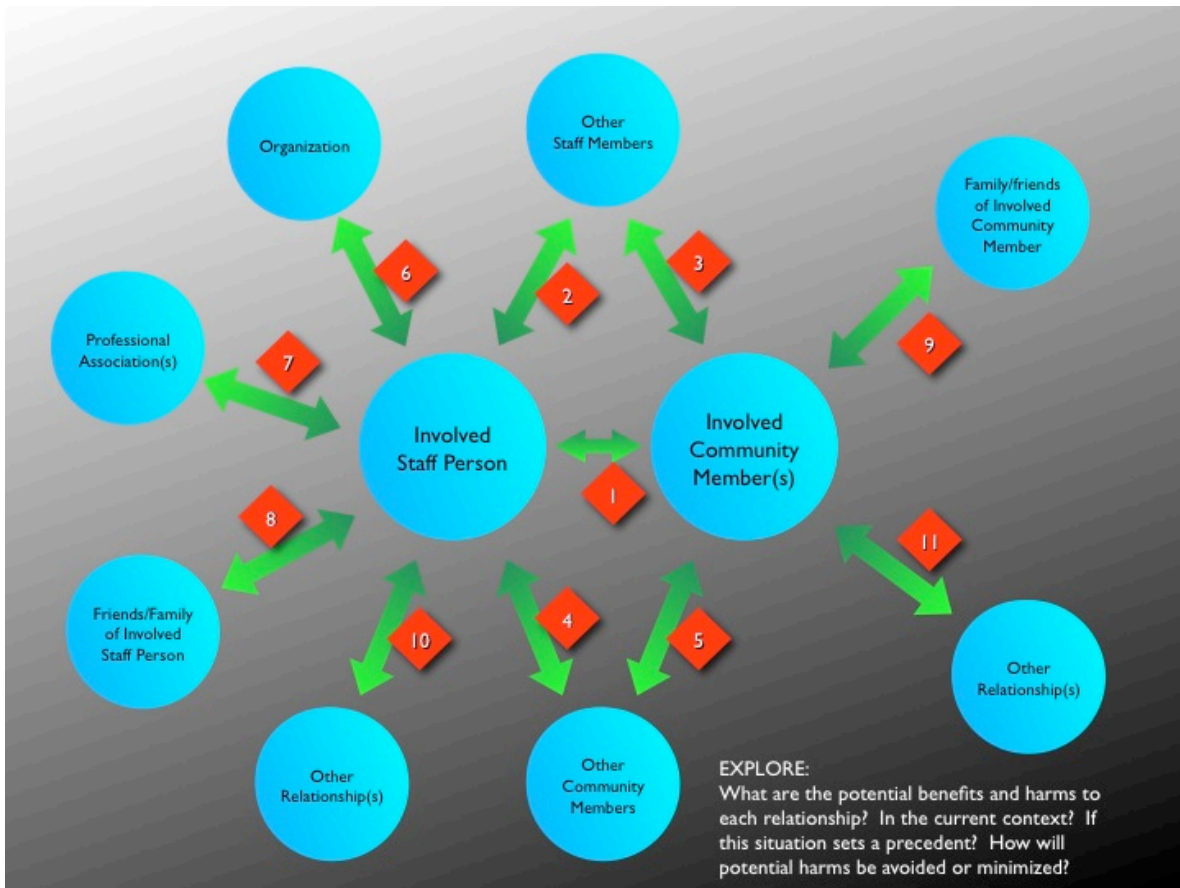
Where the 'grey zone' begins and how large it is depends on context. At Welcome Inn, the grey zone may be larger than at organizations with more professional social workers and/or stricter codes of ethics. Clearly acceptable and unacceptable behaviours can be defined for every

organization and every profession. But there will always be a grey area of some size; as Doel et al. (2010) remind us, "It is highly unlikely that a breach of professional boundary was caused by the absence of a bullet point in a code of practice" (p. 1884).

Power and Flexible Boundaries

One of the significant ways the Welcome Inn challenges societal norms and ideas of poverty is by providing space for middle class people to understand poverty in new ways. Developing relationships with people struggling daily with poverty provided middle class people, both staff members and volunteers, with opportunities to reflect on their own lives and to share some of their power in relationship. As evidenced by Hugo Neufeld's self-reflective writings, as well as participants in the current study, this awareness can lead to significant personal growth and new or renewed commitment to social action. This is an intentional part of the Welcome Inn's philosophy and programming, and can be considered an act for social change on some levels.

No matter how relaxed and informal relationships and boundaries are, power and privilege dynamics still exist between professional helpers and 'clients' (Pugh, 2007). As noted by Grant and Cadell (2009), the strengths perspective needs to incorporate considerations of power. At Welcome Inn, the dominant story of mutual relationship obscures this reality; not one staff member named their power or privilege in the course of the interviews, despite the fact that they were, by a large majority, white, educated, middle class staff members working with community members from various marginalized backgrounds.

It is important to note that even in setting boundaries, the responsibility and therefore the power rest with the professional helper; the community member may want a friendship or dual relationship with the professional helper, or to call them in off-work hours, but the control of the

how and when of the relationship rests with the professional. This means that any dual

relationships that form may reduce this power in some ways, but ultimately follow the same

pattern of power and privilege at the level of decision-making and discernment. In these cases, a

rhetoric of equality and/or 'family', such as is employed at Welcome Inn, can mask and

perpetuate inequality and separateness.

As such, the 'Embracing the Grey Zone' requires an additional element: understanding of

power (Figure 3). Just as the community member has less power than the staff member, the staff

member is subject to the power of their employing organization and their professional

association (if applicable). The power dynamics present in each relationship impact any

boundary decisions in the grey zone; they are an important consideration both in ethical decision-

making and, ongoing, in navigating relationships that follow.

Figure 3: Power considerations in 'Embracing the Grey Zone'
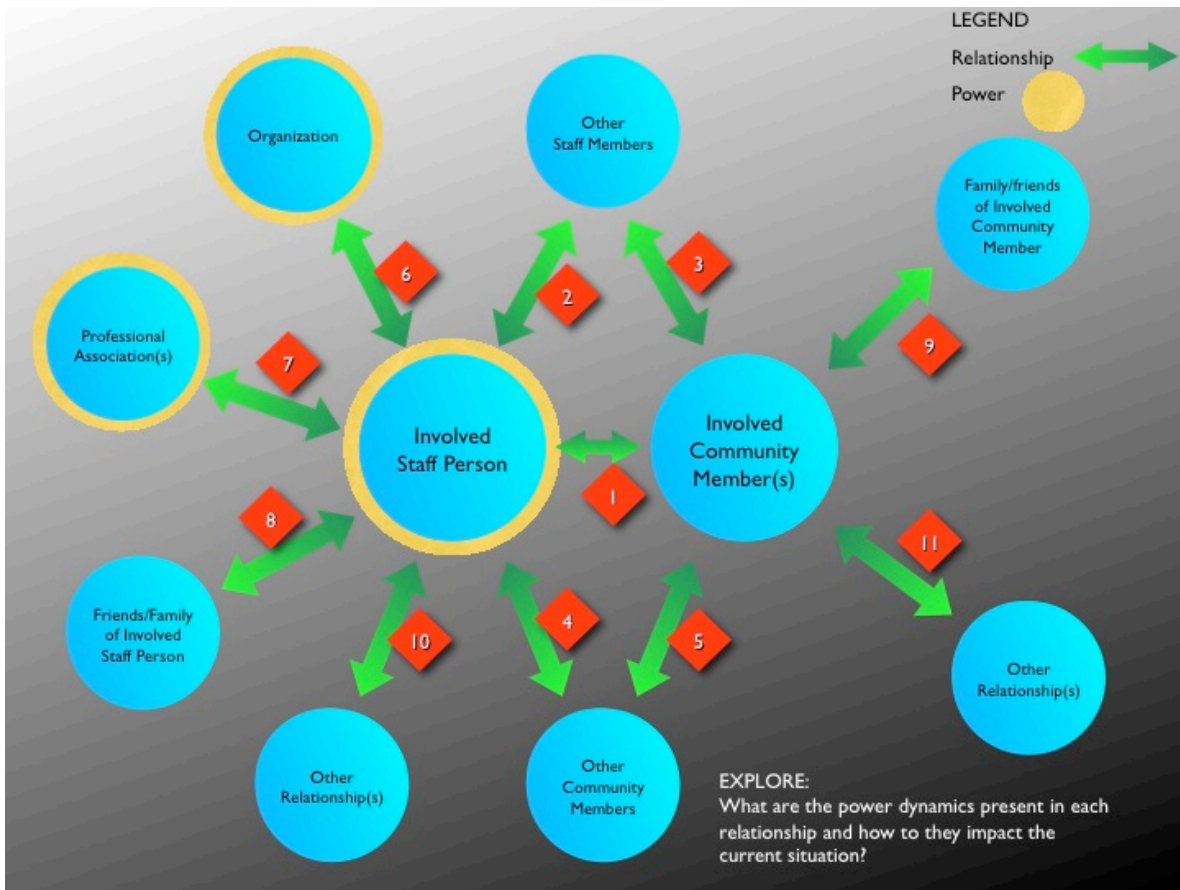
An understanding of their power and privilege is therefore critical to the model, and an important consideration in all of the relationships depicted.

A full depiction of the fully developed model, incorporating all of the above figures, is shown in Figure 4 below. Note that the language has been adapted, naming the 'Involved Community Practitioner' and his or her 'Colleagues and/or Other Staff Members' to include community practitioners in various settings who may or may not work for an organization or with colleagues directly.

Figure 4: Embracing the Grey Zone

EMBRACING THE GREY ZONE
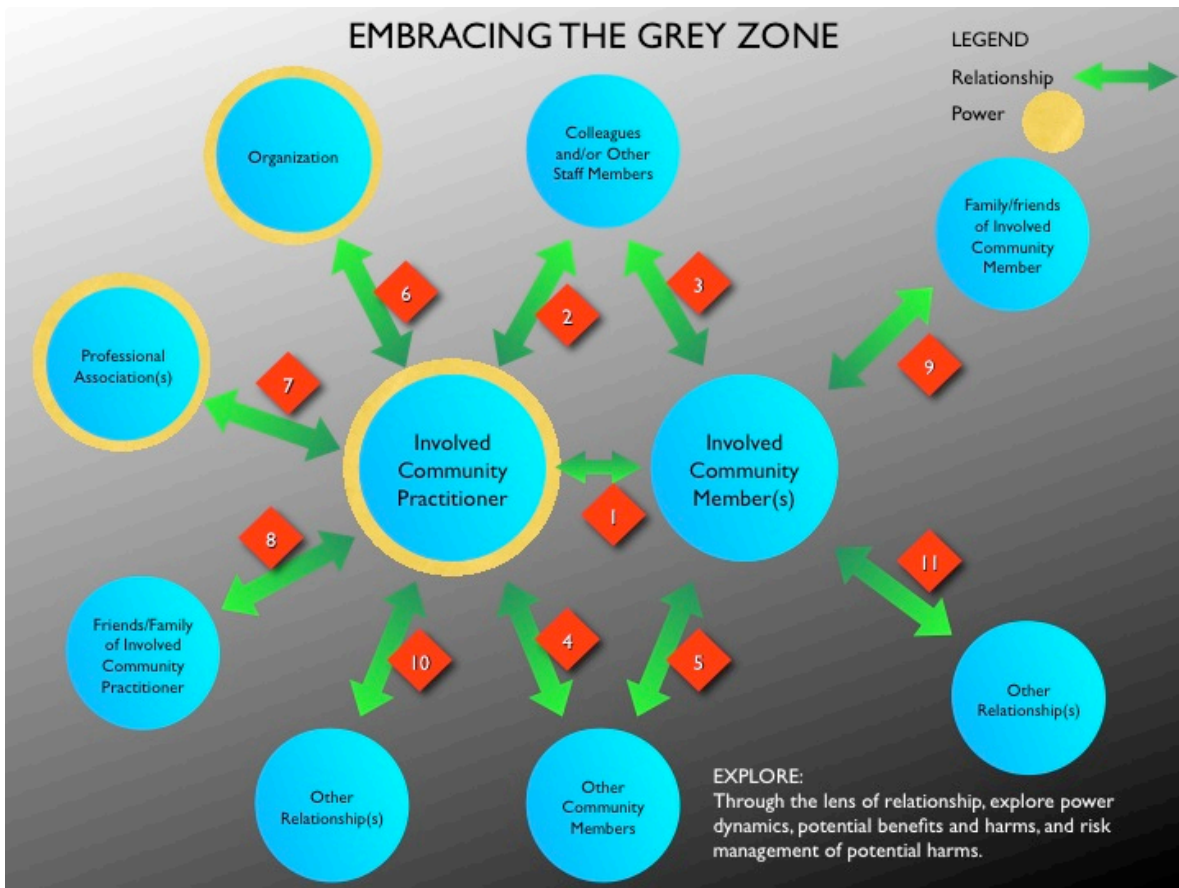
Application to Ministry Settings

As a joint Master of Divinity and Master of Social Work student, I am interested in the application of this model in both social work and ministry settings. The model is therefore adapted in Figure 5 for ministry settings. Ministry is also an inherently relational vocation. Ministers have diverse roles in the congregation, including pastoral care and counselling to individual members and families, administration, organizational leadership including theological and worship leadership, and community development. It is important to note that the relationship with the congregation is different than the relationship with an organization, and is dependent on the polity model employed in the faith tradition or denomination. In Unitarian Universalist communities, the congregation is self-supporting and has independent decision-

making authority, including hiring and firing of ministers. Thus while the minister has authority over the congregation and its congregation as a result of their expertise and position, the congregation as a whole has authority over the minister. The complexity of this power dynamic adds additional dimensions to consider in navigating flexible boundaries. In other religious traditions where ministers (or priests or pastors) are appointed by a denominational authority such as a diocese, an additional relationship with that body would be added.

In Unitarian Universalist communities, the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, separate from the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (professional association), has the authority to grant, suspend, or remove ministerial fellowship. As such, "Ministerial Credentialing Body" is added as an additional relationship (number 12) in the ministry model version of embracing the grey zone. 'Colleagues' (number 13) are also identified as a separate category in ministry as many ministers work as the sole minister in a congregational setting and rely on relationships with colleagues in other congregations for collegiality.

Figure 5: Embracing the Grey Zone in Congregational Ministry

EMBRACING THE GREY ZONE

LEGEND
Relationship
Power

Ministerial Credentialing Body

Congregation

Other Staff Members

Family/friends of Involved Community Member

Professional Association(s)

Minister

Involved Congregant(s)

Friends/Family of Minister

Colleagues

Other Relationship(s)

Other Community Members

Other Relationship(s)

EXPLORE:
Through the lens of relationship, explore power dynamics, potential benefits and harms, and risk management of potential harms.

12 6 2 3 9 7 1 8 13 10 4 5 11

Using the 'Embracing the Grey Zone' Model: A tool for practice

As noted in the literature review, practice is an important and often absent part of strong boundary formation. In the case of flexible boundaries, intentionality and awareness of potential boundary concerns is even more important. Intentional and regular use of the 'Embracing the Grey Zone' model (or other models) for navigating flexible boundaries is necessary at several levels, including for individual practitioners, among staff as a team, and organizationally. As such, individual practitioners should regularly practice awareness of boundaries in their practice. Because each individual in isolation understands boundaries differently, and may be more prone to overlooking important considerations, it is also important to work through boundaries with others. For staff teams, regular engagement in case studies and exploration of boundaries as a

team is recommended, allowing dialogue with one another and application of organizational values and expectations. In supervision, exploration of boundaries through particular situations can also be explored.

In Figure 6, a tool for applying the model to a particular situation is proposed. The chart can be filled out for each proposed course of action in response to a potential boundary issue or concern. Starting with naming the situation and proposed course of action, and then identifying all affected relationships by the proposed course of action, power dynamics, potential benefits and harms, and strategies for risk management for each relationship are then explored. In each case, the potential for benefit can be weighed against the potential for harm with appropriate risk management strategies in place. The severity and likelihood of the potential harm may impact both risk management strategies and decisions to go forward with a particular course of action. Note that a separate chart should be filled out for each proposed course of action if more than one is under consideration.

In order to mitigate power differentials between community practitioners and community members, community members might be invited into the conversation about the potential boundary issues. Using the chart as a guide if not an actual tool in the conversation, the involved community practitioner and/or a third party could talk with the involved community member(s) about how the proposed course of action may impact their relationships with the community practitioner, other staff members/practitioners, other community members, and relationships with their own friends and family (i.e. potential benefits and potential harm to each relationship). This may be particularly powerful when it is the community member expressing a desire for a dual relationship or boundary crossing, for example a friendship, with the community practitioner. The decision of whether or not to include the community member in the decision-

making process, and whether to explicitly use the tool or have an informal conversation based on the tool, may depend on the capacity and role of the involved community member. Figure 7 outlines a modified tool for use with community members.

These tools are offered as a framework for exploration and discernment rather than a prescription or rules. After identifying affected relationships and their power dynamics as well as potential harm, benefits, and risk management strategies, a practitioner must still weigh the relative merits of different courses of action. Factors to consider in this weighing include their own ethics and values, their professional experience, the values and expectations of their organization and/or professional association (as applicable), and the net sum impact on all of the affected relationships they've identified. This discernment may best occur in the context of supervision and/or peer consultation, especially if the decision is a particularly difficult one or if risk of harm is higher.

It is important to note that these tools refer to the discernment and potential initiation of dual or boundary crossing relationships; they do not address the ongoing work and discernment of enacting those relationships once started. Continual reflection, assessment, and management of power, benefits, harm, and the well-being of each person in the relationship is crucial. The tools below may be adapted and used for ongoing assessment of such relationships.

Figure 6: A Tool for 'Embracing the Grey Zone'

Name[4]: _____

Situation: _____

Proposed Course of Action[5]: _____

Relationship	Power Considerations	Potential Benefits	Potential Harm	Risk Management
Identify all affected relationships	What are the power dynamics in this relationship? Who has power over whom? How much? In what ways?	What benefits may come to this relationship from the proposed course of action?	What harm may come to this relationship from the proposed course of action? How likely and/or severe?	Taking into consideration the potential relationship harms, identify strategies to manage the risk.

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[4] Name of community practitioner, staff member, minister, etc., who is directly involved in the potential boundary issue. Note: it could be more than one person.
[5] Complete a separate chart for each proposed course of action if there is more than one

Figure 7: A Tool for 'Embracing the Grey Zone' with Community Members

Name: _____

Situation and Action being Considered:

_____
_____

Relationship	Potential Benefits	Potential Harm
Name of involved community practitioners		
Specific names and/or all other community members		
Names of other staff members/community practitioners		
Family and friends		

Conclusion and Recommendations

At Welcome Inn, relationships are highly valued and grounded in a commitment to acceptance, inclusion, support, and mutuality. With a strengths-based orientation that has been practiced and cultivated at Welcome Inn over the last 50 years, each person is honoured for their gifts, their ability both to give and to receive, their uniqueness, and their resilience.

The strength of Welcome Inn's approach lies in the personal transformation, sense of self-worth, and depth of community experienced by staff members, volunteers, and program participants alike. Welcome Inn's approach, especially the commitment to mutuality and finding each and every person who walks through the door a way to identify and share their gifts with the community, is one well worth sharing and replicating in other social service settings.

Welcome Inn's programs are strong in building individual and community capacity, but in many ways treat symptoms of poverty rather than root causes, and are similar to those offered by many other social service agencies focused on poverty alleviation. While personal transformation and community capacity building are tools that can help improve lives of people living in poverty, and thereby challenge systemic poverty on a micro level, they do not address macro level inequalities such as income disparity, unequal access to resources and services including health and mental health care, inadequate social assistance rates, homelessness, or unemployment. It is important to note that Welcome Inn's programming has shifted in the direction of addressing root causes of poverty in the last decade with the introduction of bizPLAN, its microbusiness training program, as well as education and financial literacy training for children, youth, and adults, and job skills training through its thrift store.

The challenges of Welcome Inn's approach to relationships and community building, or at least its application, include difficulty navigating boundaries and discord between a commitment

to mutuality and realities of separation between staff and community members in terms of boundaries and decision-making. In order to maintain and benefit from mutual relationships at Welcome Inn, boundaries need to be both flexible and intentionally navigated. The intentional navigation of boundaries has been largely absent, with different staff members understanding and applying boundaries in diverse ways, and boundary crossings and violations occurring as a result.

Relationships are foundational to social work practice, and whether in rural or urban, large or small organizations, counseling or community settings, the intensity of relationships in social work practice inevitably result in the need for boundaries. In this thesis, the merits of flexible boundaries were explored through both the literature review and the experiences of staff members, volunteers, and program participants at Welcome Inn Community Centre. Practice was identified as the most effective tool in navigating boundary-related decisions, and the idea that a single code or set of rules could guide all practitioners in all settings was challenged. As such, the model of "Embracing the Grey Zone" for navigating flexible boundaries as well as tools for its application were developed and presented in this study.

The model and tools developed here are recommended for use in individual, staff team, supervisory, educational, and organizational contexts. Having developed this model while working at Welcome Inn and still, under those circumstances, struggling to find time to apply it in the ways recommended above, I also recommend that workshops and educational tools for community practitioners be employed in both social work training and in community settings to facilitate engagement around boundaries. As evident in the literature review, boundary ethics and education are lacking in social work education, and in the field, practitioners rely most heavily on their own values in making boundary decisions. By focusing on boundary issues, and

focusing on embracing the ambiguity or grey zone rather than trying to enforce rigid boundaries, the overall culture around boundaries in social work practice will become more nuanced, intentional, thoughtful, and, ultimately, more ethical, moving from floundering in the grey zone to embracing the grey zone.

Determining additional strategies for community practitioners to share power with community members around boundary issues, including talking about boundaries with volunteers and participants in both theoretical and practical contexts, may be beneficial. Future research on boundaries might explore how to do this in ethical and compassionate ways.

Another area for potential future research is how to build respect and support for one another's boundaries in the grey zone, when staff members make decisions that differ from their colleagues. How can people continue to work together and yet approach boundaries in the grey zone differently?

The model 'Embracing the Grey Zone' and accompanying tools proposed in this study are a starting point in more intentionally navigating boundary issues in community settings, with attention to relationship, power, and risk management.

Appendix A: Current Welcome Inn Statements

Adopted December 2012

Vision:

We envision a Hamilton where people from all walks of life work together to end poverty.

Mission:

To achieve our vision, we:

1. Offer programs to children, adults and seniors that support basic needs, enhance potential, and nurture spiritual life.

2. Empower people to develop skills & share their strengths.
Together, we build capacity in individuals and resilience in our community.

Core Values:

Welcome Inn is a Christian community centre committed to alleviating poverty in Hamilton. Our core values flow from and express our faith. We commit to working with others from all backgrounds and faith traditions who share these values:

We welcome and accept all people as we are.
We are all unique and worthy human beings. At Welcome Inn, all people are accepted unconditionally and celebrated regardless of religion, ethnicity, colour, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status.

We practice kindness and respect for everyone.
We recognize that we do not all hold the same values or perspectives. Out of respect for one another we offer service and care to each other without judgement.

We all have something of value to share and receive.
All of our lives, we are all in need and we all have something to give. We call forth the good in all people and strive to be a place where everyone can give and receive equally.

We are responsible to ourselves and to each other.
As a community, we hold one another accountable for our actions, choices, and responsibilities.

We are all part of building a healthy community.
We value our relationships with one another and strive to connect people and inspire community. We support one another in times of joy and in times of struggle and challenge. We

strive to reduce barriers between us by reconciling one to another. We value dealing with conflict in healthy and open ways. We commit to being a safe, healing, and welcoming place for everyone.

Slogan:

Short: Community: It's a Two-Way Street
Long: Connecting People and Building Resilient Community: It's a two-way street

Appendix B: Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources

Principles

We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;

- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Sources

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;

- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;

- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbours as ourselves;

- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of

science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;

- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support (Canadian Unitarian Council, n.d.).

Appendix C: Pre-Interview Script

Before you sign the consent form, do you have any questions or concerns about the consent form or the research study?

As noted in the consent form, the interview today will ask about both positive and negative experiences you have had at the Welcome Inn. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. If you do have any negative experiences to share, your comments will not be judged and will be kept confidential. If they are used in the thesis or any other reports, they will not include identifying information. Any constructive criticism you have to offer may help staff improve programs the Welcome Inn.

Do you have any (additional) questions or concerns before we begin?

Appendix D: Consent Forms

Consent Form – Staff

Wilfrid Laurier University

Exploring Socioeconomically Inclusive Community:

A case study of the Welcome Inn Community Centre and Church

Principal Investigator: Carly Gaylor
Student (In progress: MSW and MDiv)
Faculty of Social Work/Waterloo Lutheran Seminary
Wilfrid Laurier University
905-628-0384
gayl2275@wlu.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Anne Westhues
Professor, Faculty of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-1970 ext.522
awesthue@wlu.ca

_____

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to explore inclusive community building at the Welcome Inn Community Centre and Church. This study is being conducted by Carly Gaylor, Master of Social Work and Divinity student at Wilfrid Laurier University and supervised by Dr. Anne Westhues, professor in the Faculty of Social Work at Laurier. The results of this study will be used for the investigator's Master's thesis.

Procedure

You are invited to participate in this study because you are a staff member at the Welcome Inn Community Centre.   If you volunteer to participate in this study, your participation will involve:

- A one-on-one, one hour interview with the investigator regarding your experience of community-building at the Welcome Inn. This interview will be audiotaped.
- Consent to the investigator spending time as a participant observer in the role of volunteer with your program(s). The purpose of these activities is to give the investigator the opportunity to observe first hand the ways in which community-building is undertaken by Welcome Inn staff, volunteers, and program

participants. The investigator would take notes as part of the exercise, but would not identify any program participants or volunteers.
- (Optional) Participation in a one and a half to two hour focus group of Welcome Inn staff, volunteers, and program participants to review and give feedback on the findings of the investigator's interview and participant observation data and analysis. Affirmations, challenges, and suggestions made will be incorporated into the final thesis document.

Initials:

Benefits

You may benefit from the ability to communicate and reflect on your experiences of inclusive community building in a safe, non-judgmental setting. In addition, your participation will benefit other professionals, organizations, community groups, researchers, and policy makers working with marginalized communities by providing insights into inclusive community building.

Risks

Participation in this study is not anticipated to entail any physical risks. Because you will be asked about both positive and negative experiences at the Welcome Inn, you may feel stress or discomfort. If you experience stress or discomfort at any time, you are under no obligation to continue with the question and/or interview process. If necessary, the Research Coordinator will refer you to appropriate services and resources to ensure your support needs are met.

Confidentiality

Audiotapes, transcripts, and investigator's notes will be kept in locked filing cabinet. All documents that are kept on a computer will be password protected. Audio files will be destroyed once transcripts are completed.

You may choose to have a pseudonym used in place of personal identification in the final thesis report. If you choose use of a pseudonym, the following precautions will be taken to keep your identity strictly confidential:
> All identifying information will be removed from the data
> A pseudonym will be used in all documents up to and including the final thesis report
> All identifying information will be kept separate from the data
> Identifying information will not be emailed to anyone at any time
> It is anticipated that 18 people will be interviewed: six staff, four volunteers who are also program participants, four volunteers only, and four program participants.

Compensation

No remuneration will be provided for your participation in this study.

Contact

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or if you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the Research Coordinator through the Welcome Inn at 905-525-5824. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in th[e] form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the cour[se of] this project, you may contact Dr. Bill Marr, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, extension 2468.

Initials:

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, you will have the option of removing your data from the study. You have the right to omit any question(s)/procedure(s) you choose.

Feedback and publication

A focus group for any interested participants will be held prior to the completion of the thesis. The purpose of the focus group will be to review and give feedback on findings from and analysis of research findings from interviews and participant observation.

Research findings will be made available electronically to participants through the final thesis project report to be completed by June 2011. The Welcome Inn will receive a hard copy.

Consent

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study. Further:

> □ I consent to audiotaping of my one-on-one interview and for (non-identifying) quotations to be used in the final thesis report and/or other workshops/publications.
> □ I consent to have Carly Gaylor spend time as a participant-observer in the role of a volunteer in the program(s) I lead.
> □ I would be interested in participating in a focus group to review and give feedback on the findings.

Would you prefer that a pseudonym be used in place of any personal identification?
                    Yes   □   No   □

        If yes, what would you like it to be? _____

_____

Participant's signature   Date

_____
Investigator's signature   Date

Consent Form – Volunteers and Program Participants

Wilfrid Laurier University

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH – Program Participants and/or Volunteers

Exploring Socioeconomically Inclusive Community:

A case study of the Welcome Inn Community Centre and Church

Principal Investigator: Carly Gaylor
Student (In progress: MSW and MDiv)
Faculty of Social Work/Waterloo Lutheran Seminary
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You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to explore inclusive community building at the Welcome Inn Community Centre and Church. This study is being conducted by Carly Gaylor, Master of Social Work and Divinity student at Wilfrid Laurier University and supervised by Dr. Anne Westhues, professor in the Faculty of Social Work at Laurier. The results of this study will be used for the investigator's Master's thesis.

Procedure

You are invited to participate in this study because you are a program participant and/or volunteer at the Welcome Inn Community Centre. If you volunteer to participate in this study, your participation will involve:

- A one-on-one, one hour interview with the investigator regarding your experience of community-building at the Welcome Inn. This interview will be audiotaped.
- (Optional) Participation in a one and a half to two hour focus group of Welcome Inn staff, volunteers, and program participants to review and give feedback on the findings of the investigator's interview and participant observation data and analysis. Affirmations, challenges, and suggestions made will be incorporated into the final thesis document.

Benefits

You may benefit from the ability to communicate and reflect on your experiences of inclusive community building at the Welcome Inn in a safe, non-judgmental setting. In addition, your participation will help the Welcome Inn, as well as other community groups and services, to strongly promote and support community building.

Risks

Participation in this study is not anticipated to entail any physical risks. Because you will be asked about both positive and negative experiences at the Welcome Inn, you may feel stress or discomfort. If you experience stress or discomfort at any time, you are under no obligation to continue with the question and/or interview process. If necessary, the Research Coordinator will refer you to appropriate services and resources to ensure your support needs are met.

Confidentiality

Audiotapes, transcripts, and investigator's notes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. All documents that are kept on a computer will be password protected. Audio files will be destroyed once transcripts are completed.

You may choose to have a pseudonym used in place of personal identification in the final thesis report. If you choose use of a pseudonym, the following precautions will be taken to keep your identity strictly confidential:
- All identifying information will be removed from the data
- A pseudonym will be used in all documents up to and including the final thesis report
- All identifying information will be kept separate from the data
- Identifying information will not be emailed to anyone at any time.
- It is anticipated that 18 people will be interviewed: six staff, four volunteers who are also program participants, four volunteers only, and four program participants.

Initials:

Compensation

No remuneration will be provided for your participation in this study.

Contact

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or if you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the Research Coordinator through the Welcome Inn at 905-525-5824. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Bill Marr, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, extension 2468.

Initials:

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, you will have the option of removing your data from the study. You have the right to omit any question(s)/procedure(s) you choose.

Feedback and publication

A focus group for any interested participants will be held prior to the completion of the thesis. The purpose of the focus group will be to review and give feedback on findings from and analysis of research findings from interviews and participant observation.

Research findings will be made available electronically to participants through the final thesis project report to be completed by June 2011. The Welcome Inn will receive a hard copy.

Consent

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study. Further:

□ I consent to audiotaping of my one-on-one interview and for (non-identifying) quotations to be used in the final thesis report and/or other workshops/publications.
□ I would be interested in participating in a focus group to review and give feedback on the findings.

Would you prefer that a pseudonym be used in place of any personal identification?
Yes   □   No   □

If yes, what would you like it to be?   _____

_____
Participant's signature   Date

_____
Investigator's signature   Date

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Individual interviews with Welcome Inn staff:
- How long have you been involved at the Welcome Inn as a staff member? What position(s)? Have you been involved in any other capacities?
- How would you describe the Welcome Inn community?
- What role would you say you play (as a staff member) in the WI community?
- How would you describe interactions at the Welcome Inn among staff members and between staff members and community members?
- How would you describe decision-making procedures at the Welcome Inn (i.e. programs, services, policies when a large or small decision needs to be made)? Within your own program? In the Welcome Inn as a whole? Administrative decisions?
- What are the greatest strengths of the WI community?
- What are some of the potential areas for development/growth/improvement within the WI community?
- What experiences of and insights into community did you bring with you to the Welcome Inn? Have your ideas changed and/or has the Welcome Inn been impacted as you've shared your insights and gifts around community-building?
- What has your involvement at the Welcome Inn meant in your life (community, spirituality, world-view, understanding of poverty, opportunities to give and/or receive, sharing your gifts, etc.)?
- In what ways, if any, is the Welcome Inn different from other community groups you are part of?
- How do you see your work at the Welcome Inn in the larger context of issues of poverty, marginalization, and/or socioeconomic systems?

Individual interviews with Welcome Inn volunteers only:
How long have you been involved at the Welcome Inn? In what ways?
In what ways do you feel as though you are a part of the Welcome Inn community (if you do)?
Are there any ways you feel excluded at the Welcome Inn?
In what ways and to what extent do you feel able and supported to share your gifts at the Welcome Inn?
In what ways and to what extent do you feel able -- or unable -- to have input in the Welcome Inn's programs, events, and policies?
What has your involvement at the Welcome Inn meant in your life (community, spirituality, world-view, understanding of poverty, opportunities to give and/or receive, sharing your gifts, etc.)?
What is most special about the Welcome Inn to you?
If you could change something about the Welcome Inn, what would it be?
In what ways, if any, is the Welcome Inn different from other community groups you are part of?

Individual interview with long-time Welcome Inn volunteer and board member:
Could you tell the story of the origin of the Welcome Inn, including vision and mission?

How has the vision and mission of the Welcome Inn changed over time?

In what ways do you feel as though you are a part of the Welcome Inn community (if you do)?

Are there any ways you feel excluded and/or distant from the Welcome Inn?

What has your involvement at the Welcome Inn meant in your life (community, spirituality, world-view, understanding of poverty, opportunities to give and/or receive, sharing your gifts, etc.)?

Has involvement in the Welcome Inn's beginnings and ongoing existence impacted the Hamilton Mennonite Church? If so, in what ways?

Do you see an impact of the Welcome Inn on the North End community? If so, in what ways?

How would you describe interactions at the Welcome Inn among staff members and between staff members and community members and staff members and board members?

How would you describe decision-making procedures at the Welcome Inn (i.e. programs, services, policies when a large or small decision needs to be made)? Within the of the board of directors?

What is most special about the Welcome Inn to you?

If you could change something about the Welcome Inn, what would it be?

In what ways, if any, is the Welcome Inn different from other community groups you are part of?

Individual interviews with Welcome Inn volunteers who are also program participants:

How long have you been involved at the Welcome Inn? In what ways?

In what ways do you feel as though you are a part of the Welcome Inn community (if you do)?

Are there any ways you feel excluded at the Welcome Inn?

In what ways and to what extent do you feel able and supported to share your gifts at the Welcome Inn?

In what ways and to what extent do you feel able -- or unable -- to have input in the Welcome Inn's programs, events, and policies?

What has your involvement at the Welcome Inn meant in your life (community, spirituality, opportunities to give and/or receive, sharing your gifts, etc.)?

Does it feel different at the Welcome Inn when you're volunteering from when you're participating in programs yourself? If so, how?

What is most special about the Welcome Inn to you?

If you could change something about the Welcome Inn, what would it be?

In what ways, if any, is the Welcome Inn different from other community groups you are part of?

Individual interviews with Welcome Inn program participants only:

- How long have you been involved at the Welcome Inn? In what ways?
- Do you feel like you are part of a community through your involvement at the Welcome Inn? Why or why not?
- Are there any ways you feel excluded at the Welcome Inn?
- In what ways and to what extent do you feel able and supported to share your gifts at the Welcome Inn?

- In what ways and to what extent do you feel able -- or unable -- to have input in the Welcome Inn's programs, events, and policies?
- What has your involvement at the Welcome Inn meant in your life (community involvement, spirituality (for people involved in faith-based activities), opportunities to give and/or receive, sharing your gifts, etc.)?
- What is most special about the Welcome Inn to you?
- If you could change something about the WI, what would it be?
- In what ways, if any, is the Welcome Inn different from other community groups you are part of?

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