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## An Exploration of Trust in Community Leadership Contexts

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# An Exploration of Trust in Community Leadership Contexts

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A Co-Authored Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Missouri-St.  
Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with  
an emphasis in Educational Practice

December  
2019

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative exploratory study of effective community engagement process examines community leader's perceptions of their experiences and the role fostering and building trust plays in producing sustainable change in a Midwestern regional context. The purpose of this study was to explore how trust interacts with asset-based thinking and social learning experiences, including trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making, and empathy, to support community engagement efforts. The research team interviewed 26 individuals who were selected via purposive sampling. Study participants were active in their communities and practitioners in their respective professions. The study identified five overarching themes that emerged from participant interviews, including themes related to community leadership and engagement; community leaders fostering trust by extending trust; the influences of trauma, meaning-making, and empathy; and the use of social learning experiences to build trust and enhance shared vision; and innovative strategies to foster community engagement. Community leaders demonstrated numerous forms of caregiving behavior and cultivated an empathetic approach to humanity. Similar to Barnes & Schmitz (2016), we conclude that effective community engagement is a profoundly transformational process that incorporates a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down approach. Our community engagement model shows a continual cycle of learning through trauma-informed practice, meaning-making, and the cultivation of

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empathy. When community leaders apply this learning to asset-based approaches, social behavioral change can be facilitated within community contexts. Our research suggests that each community member can be empowered with a voice, a voice that builds trust, a voice that is strengthened through community engagement.

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The academic journey I have been on as part of this cohort is an experience that has been truly life-changing. In 2016 I was working full-time in a volunteer management role, and mentioned to a volunteer (who is also a close friend) that I was exploring my options in pursuit of a Master's degree. This friend, Cynthia Rill, mentioned that I should apply for the Heritage Leadership EdD cohort, as she had just become acquainted with Dr. Theresa Coble. I met with Dr. Coble to hear more about the program and to see if I would even qualify for this opportunity. This sounded like the ideal academic and professional future I was looking for and didn't know I needed. Dr. Coble encouraged me that I could work through Masters credits while achieving my doctorate, something I would have never thought I could do. As I reflect on this experience, I have grown so much and have so many people to thank who have had a direct impact on my success.

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### Chapter 1 Introduction

Georg Simmel (1978), a German philosopher, highlights the importance of trust as follows:

Without the general trust that people have in each other, society itself would disintegrate, for very few relationships are based entirely upon what is known with certainty about another person, and very few relationships would endure if trust were not as strong as, or stronger than, rational proof or personal observation (p 178-179).

Trust is the glue that holds personal and societal relationships together. Trust provides the context within which relationships develop and endure. Trust is not predicated on rational proof. Baier (1986) emphasized that when people place their trust in us, we have a responsibility to exercise great care. Further, people pick up cues that demarcate the boundaries of the trust relationship.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's society, a lack of trust has negative effects on individuals, groups, and communities as a whole. Ross (2011) confirms that a lack of trust leads to social isolation, detachment from networks that nurture caring, aid, and reciprocity, a sense of vulnerability, a lack of faith in others, and a tendency to view others with suspicion. A lack of trust erects barriers, while "building trust removes physical, language or social barriers" (Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2015, p. 11). The Major Cities Chiefs

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Association (MCCA), the Major County Sheriffs (MCS), and the FBI National Executive Institute Associates (NEIA) emphasized, “Trust is the ultimate goal... [when] businesses, faith-based members, city leaders, students, and the police [interact]” (Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2015, p. 9). In the Metro St. Louis region, trust and mistrust manifest themselves in local community, government, law enforcement, and civic organizations:

- Hemphill, E. (2018, March 26). Building trust, combating violence among top priorities for St Louis police chief. *The Gateway*, p. 7.
- Bernhard, B. (2018, March 17). Medical researchers work to build trust with African-Americans to take part in clinical trials. *St Louis Post Dispatch*, p.19.
- Bogan, J. (2014, April 5). Normandy: Progress at the speed of trust. *St Louis Post Dispatch*, p. 4.
- Patrick, R. (2017, April 6). Metro-East official gets 5 years for stealing from impoverished East St Louis Township. *St Louis Post Dispatch*, p. 9.

Although there is evidence that civic leaders violate trust, when trust is cultivated, community leaders and residents can confidently tackle community problems, positively influencing city and county governance and building partnerships across jurisdictions (Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2015).

### **Trust and Community Engagement**

Merriam-Webster (2004) defines community as “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common” (p. 251). The Institute of Medicine (2002) expands this definition noting that a community is a group of people who share some or all of the following: geographic boundaries; a sense of membership;

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culture and language; common norms, interests, or values; and common health risks or conditions. Community fosters a feeling of fellowship with others through shared attitudes, interests, and goals (Pfortmuller, 2019). McMillan and Chavis (1986) indicate that community generates "a feeling...of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together" (p. 6). For positive outcomes to emerge, communities may require some degree of social coherence (MacIver, 1974). By combining geographic commonalities with a shared fellowship, communities are comprised of social groups that reside in a given area that have some degree of "we-feeling" (Bogardus, 1954, p. 122).

Garber (2017) notes that community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century goes beyond just joining a group; it is something that one chooses intentionally through a self-discovery process. Community is based on shared circumstances, and it promotes shared service to others:

Gifts to strangers affirm the solidarity of the community over and above the depersonalizing, alienating forces of mass society and market relations. They signal that self-interest is not the only significant human motivation. And they express the moral belief that it is good to minister to fundamental human needs, needs for food, health care, and shelter. These universal needs irrevocably tie us together in a community of needs, with a shared desire to satisfy them, and see them satisfied in others (Murray, 1987).

Community is an incubator for trust; when trust emerges; it nurtures and empowers its citizens. Putnam (2000) reaffirms that people who trust others are all-around good citizens. Covey (2018) notes in his book, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*, that there are five "waves of trust": (1) *self-trust*, or confidence in

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ourselves, (2) *relationship trust*, or consistent behavior and positive interactions with others, (3) *organizational trust*, or being embedded in structures and systems that create a culture of trust, (4) *marketing trust*, or trust that rests on credibility, and (5) *societal trust*, or creating value for others and society at large. As you engage in community life, you become more trusting and trustworthy.

Community engagement is a planned process with a specific purpose where individuals and/or groups of people representing various stakeholders work together to address issues affecting their community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Barnes and Schmitz (2016) emphasize using a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down approach to achieve full inclusion in community engagement efforts. Bottom-up approaches can be profoundly transformational. Murray (1987) claims we bring “gifts” into the communities where we live, participate, and hopefully flourish. We as human beings bring our culture and life experiences into community interactions. We learn to identify traits in ourselves that help us relate to society. It is through this process that community members establish trust within the group.

### **Community Empowerment**

Judi Chamberlin, a long-time activist for patients’ rights, wrote many articles and served on psychology boards for the U.S. National Empowerment Center. She created a working definition of empowerment that continues to evolve over time. Her working definition of empowerment includes: the feeling of hope that the individual can make a

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difference; not feeling alone; feeling part of a group; effecting change in one's life and one's community; changing others' perceptions of one's competency and capacity to act; and growth and change that is never ending and self-initiated (Chamberlain, 1997, p. 44).

Empowered community members cultivate trust within their communities. By establishing trust, citizens are empowered to participate in social change.

Empowerment is defined as a group-based, participatory, developmental process through which marginalized or oppressed individuals, groups gain greater control over their lives, and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization. (Maton, 2008, p. 5)

Community leaders empower community members by facilitating asset-based thinking. Pennell, Shapiro, and Spigner (2011) suggest that community engagement is about having meaningful influence in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services. An asset-based approach positions community members as key contributors to social change. “Engagement is nurtured by emphasizing the strengths of the youth, families, and community members and the resources they bring rather than [dwelling] exclusively on the problems.” (Pennell et al., 2011, p. 17)

In 2018, UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, Johnson C. Smith University, the Knight Foundation and the Google Civic Innovation Team explored how the local landscape influences civic engagement. Gavarkovich, Marcus, Williams, and Gutierrez (2018) identified a population whom they referred to as “interested bystanders”; that is, people who are paying attention to the issues around them, but not acting on those issues. The

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researchers reported that a lack of trust is a major barrier to making civic life more meaningful and inclusive for interested bystanders. Gavarkovich and associates (2018) explored the factors that led to distrust and detachment in Charlotte, North Carolina:

The city's paradoxical social milieu, the officer-involved shootings of African American men, most recently Jonathan Ferrell and Keith Lamont Scott, set off a political firestorm that sparked protests, demands for greater police accountability, and surfaced deeply entrenched racial tensions between law enforcement and communities of color. (p.1)

Gavarkovich and colleagues' highlight the need to examine the factors and processes that build trust, facilitate civic engagement, and nurture community empowerment.

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore how trust interacts with asset-based thinking and social learning experiences, including trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making, and empathy, to support community engagement efforts.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will address the following:

1. How do community leaders bring together community members with opposing viewpoints?
2. What experiences emerge from social learning while seeking to build trust in community engagement?
3. How do community leaders develop social learning activities to build trust within citizens for sustaining social behavior change?

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4. How does asset-based thinking influence community members while developing social learning experiences?
  - a. Investigating citizens as major assets projects?
  - b. Recognizing the presence of trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making and empathy in social learning activities?

Table 1

*Key Terms and Definitions*

Terms	Definitions
1. Trust	Positive element for enhancing relational qualities in a community setting. Concept that can be utilized as benefits it provides (cooperation, political cohesion, reliability, social order, etc.), or dispositions of those who give trust (affective, calculative, relational, pragmatic, etc.), or the character of the relationship between the trusting and the putatively trustworthy (contractual, dependent, exploitative, reciprocal).
2. Community	A group of people who share some or all of the following: geographic boundaries; a sense of membership; culture and language; common norms, interests, or values; and common health risks or conditions (Institute of Medicine, 2002). Community, in this sense, is not merely something that one fits into; it is also something one chooses for oneself, through a process of self-discovery (Garber, 2017).
3. Social Capital	The by-product of community engagement, which includes empowerment (Putnam, 2000).
4. Community Engagement	The process of working collaboratively with groups of people who are affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations with respect to issues affecting their well-being (CDC, 1997).
5. Community Empowerment	Empowerment is defined as a group based, the participatory developmental process through which marginalized or oppressed

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individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization (Maton, 2008, p. 5).

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 6. Empathy         | Empathy is generally recognized as a central component of the human condition; because it promotes prosocial behavior, it is an essential aspect of human social life (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe (2011).   |
| 7. Trauma          | Psychological/Physical- is a type of damage to the mind that occurs because of a distressing event. Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one's ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved with that experience. Trauma may result from a single distressing experience, or recurring events of being overwhelmed that can be precipitated in weeks, years, or even decades as the person struggles to cope with the immediate circumstances, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences. Because trauma differs between individuals, according to their subjective experiences, people will react to similar traumatic events differently. In other words, not all people who experience a potentially traumatic event will actually become psychologically traumatized<br>( <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_trauma">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_trauma</a> ). |
| 8. Logotherapy     | Clinical application of Frankl's existential analysis towards elucidating the meaning of life and will to meaning (Costello, 2016).  |
| 9. Social Learning | Individual learning that takes place in a social context and is hence influenced by social norms (Bandura, 1977).  |
| 10. Empowerment    | As community relates to empowerment, empowerment is a self-perpetuating process building upon previous successes moving the community.   |
| 11. AIR            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. <i>Asset-based</i> which is to discover and mobilize skills, talents, and resources that exists right now in local people, associations, and institutions.</li><li>b. <i>Internally-focused</i> relying first and foremost on the community's <i>strength</i> not on outside expertise or programs. Only after the gaps on local knowledge and resources are identified do you look for external assistance.</li><li>c. <i>Relationship-driven strategies</i> to overcome community problems should seek to connect local, associations, and institutions ins was that they previously have not.</li></ul>  |

# TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### INTRODUCTION

The literature reviews in this section highlights the relationship asset-based thinking has with developing trust and social learning experiences to foster community engagement efforts. This group believes that an asset-based thinking approach incorporates collecting data, identifying assets, and resources within the community.

### TRUST

Trust is an attitude that recognizes and responds to the freedom of individuals to make choices (Mayer, 1995, p. 248). For instance, Lewicki and Gillespie (2006) state:

In terms of the basis of trust (expected costs and benefits) knowledge of other, degree of shared value and identity. Measure by scale items where trust is rated along with different qualitative indicators of different stages...Trust begins at a calculative-based stage, trust initiated by reputation, structures that provide rewards for trustworthiness and deterrents for defection...Trust grows with a positive relationship history and increased knowledge and predictability of the other, and further when parties come to develop an emotional bond and shared values, Trust declined when a positive expectation is disconfirmed. (p. 994)

Bandura (1999) notes that social cognitive theories offer an agentic socio-cognitive view, individuals are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating. He further recognizes that individuals are not just reactive, molded, and easily led by external events. “People have the power to influence their own actions to produce

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certain results. The capacity to exercise control over one's thought processes, motivation, affect, and action operates through mechanisms of personal agency" (Bandura, 1999, p. 2).

From a sociological perspective, trust is conceived as a property of collective units (ongoing dyads, groups, and collectivities), not of isolated individuals (Lewis, 1985). For instance, Nummenmaa, Glerean, Viinikainen, Jääskeläinen, Hari, and Sams, (2012) discuss the contagiousness and volatility of social group behavior.

Human emotions are highly contagious. Feelings of anger and hatred may spread rapidly throughout a peaceful protest and turn into a violent riot, whereas intense feelings of excitement and joy can sweep promptly from players to spectators in an ever so important football final. It is well documented that observation of others in a particular emotional state rapidly and automatically triggers the corresponding behavioral and physiological representation of that emotional state in the observer. (p. 24)

It is the opinion of this research that basic trust development in community engagement may be the stimuli in a social learning activity where participants are actively interpreting empathy, trauma, or meaning-making. Thus, when trust is defined through a psychological approach, it could be transformational.

The action of community engagement leads to social behavior change. (Mayer et al., 1995) note that the psychological approach supports that consideration to the causes are the actions, expectations, and beliefs to the processes. For example, trust may allow a sense of empowerment in the development of community engagement. Additionally, "trust building is noted as an important leadership skill for community engagement and relationship development" (Lewis, 1985, p. 968). "To entrust is to expose voluntarily, to

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the discretion of another person, interests that one cares about, with a trusting attitude towards and usually also trusting expectations of that other person" (Harding, 2009, p. 253). "Although trust in general is indispensable in social relationships, it always involves an unavoidable element of risk and potential doubt" (Harding, 2009, p. 254). "There exists the mutual expectation that each will take the ambiguous path in a trust relationship" (Swinth, 1967, p. 336). Swinth (1967) goes to note that there is "... an implicit assumption that one person will not deliberately hurt the other to satisfy his own needs..." (p. 335).

## EMPATHY

"We flourish when we're seen, when our work matters, and when we connect with and understand one another. Are you willing to do the hard work of building meaningful relationships?" (Sinek, 2016, podcast)

Empathy is among many aspects that when bound with a prosocial attribute creates an environment of trust building. A segway to implementing this idea is through social learning experiences. "Empathy is generally recognized as a central component of the human condition; because it promotes prosocial behavior, it is an essential aspect of human social life" (Cikara et al., 2011, p. 150). Batson (2009) notes that beginning in infancy, people are affected by others' suffering. This idea is that they 'step into the other person's shoes', 'feel their pain', and are motivated to help. Prosocial behavior is behavior, which an individual expects will benefit the person or persons to whom it is,

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directed (Berkowitz, 1972). In essence, empathy is an emotional reaction to another's emotional state or condition and coupled with prosocial behavior offers an opportunity for positive social engagement. This foundational definition supports a more significant argument for empathy-based prosocial behavior eliciting trust as a necessary to sustaining community engagement.

Since the late 1970's, empathy has been defined in an even more specific emotional sense. It has been used to refer to one particular set of congruent vicarious emotions, those that are more other-focused rather than self-focused, including feelings of sympathy, compassion, and tenderness (Toi & Batson, 1982). The ability for individuals to view the world from a lens of others who suffer. This requires a person to be non-judgmental. "An attitude of empathy is enormously attractive because it keeps you open, and others feel that you are learning that you are influenced" (Covey, 2003, p. 116). The natural art of understanding another's feelings, to communicate this feeling, and to engage through community action to satisfy the emotional inequity.

This group is exploring the role of trust through identifying empathy. There is often a misconception between empathy and altruism. Empathy should not be confused with altruism. This research is not about what kind of act that one can do for another, but rather the drive to identify a connection that empathy has to prosocial behaviors for sustaining positive social outcomes. According to Konarzewski (1992), intrinsically a person may feel empathy, which thus explains human behavior. For example, empathy is displayed in an individual who shows an inclination to help another person. If that person

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has been incorporated into himself, in the sense that the fear and pain of another becomes his fear and pain, empathy is evident. He rescues others as he would rescue himself if he were in a similar situation. The other becomes the vicarious self. Rescuing of the other is rescuing the self-in-the-other. “Empathy-based altruism and egoistically motivated altruism; the individual performs a hedonic calculus before acting, seeking the least costly means to the goal of reducing distress in another” (Zahn-Waxler, 1991, p. 155). Although altruism can explain human action, the connection of empathy to social capital presents a structural approach to the antecedents, and subsequently the outcomes to a sustaining connection. This is what altruism cannot offer.

### **Trust and Empathy**

Trust relies on believing that a person will behave reasonably and will do what he or she says. Feelings of empathy with another person may also come into play. The more we empathize, the more we feel that the other person is like us and therefore trust them and because of hyper-emotional development, empathic communication can be very strong online (Preece, 2004). A person can display empathy towards an individual, but still not yet have trust in that individual. That same person who has trust in someone may have the propensity to be empathetic towards that same person as well. Lewicki and Gillespie (2006) state that most research of trust has been a quick static view.

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### **Trust, Empathy and Community Engagement**

Community engagement is a planned process with a specific purpose where identified groups of people representing various agencies work together to address issues affecting their community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Gifts to strangers affirm the solidarity of the community over and above the depersonalizing, alienating forces of mass society and market relations. They signal that self-interest is not the only significant human motivation. And they express the moral belief that it is good to minister to fundamental human needs, needs for food, health care, and shelter. These universal needs irrevocably tie us together in a community of needs, with a shared desire to satisfy them, and see them satisfied in others. (Murray, 1987, p. 31)

Research states that community leaders lead the way by demonstrating empathy for marginalized populations and greater inclusiveness. There is growing studies that express a strong desire to identify and engage with community participation in heritage management, interpretation, and conservation work. This can be viewed as community outreach or socio-cultural inclusion (Smith, 2006). Specific disciplines that engage directly with the heritage management process have also participated in extensive debates about community involvement in research and heritage practices, although these are often related to marginalized subfields, for instance in archaeological and historical debates about public archeology public history (Carman, 2002). There is a thought that community engagement is about having meaningful influence on how services are delivered. Engagement is nurtured by emphasizing the strengths of the individuals and assets of the community (Pennell et al., 2011).

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### **Trust, Empathy and Community Empowerment**

Social capital is an important asset that holds a community together. The shared knowledge, understanding, skills and offers opportunity to social learning to achieve shared goals, or help someone solve a problem (Putnam, 2000). This belief although not entirely inclusive creates a sustaining foundational element for which of social capital is mostly a natural component to relationships that are developing and sustaining. Social capital is the desired outcome of sustaining community engagement. Social capital is the sustained fuel for empowerment.

As one means to argue that empathy and trust are tantamount to the spirit of building social capital this literature seeks out examples where side-by-side communities have reason to be disdain, but through community engagement activities the scars of the past begin to fade. Groups of people in society who have experienced some of the most heinous acts and strife in their lives have a chance to heal. These are groups can be found as neighbors.

Intergroup play is at hand examples like these often argue the most difficult lines between a person's empathy and community engagement. Most often, the engagement of two or more groups used for healing in intergroup play is most seriously at odds with each other. In other words, to find evidence that micro-bacteria could have existed on Mars millions of years ago and then interpolate this to life did exist on Mars at one time. This same analogy could be applied as it relates to the interaction of two or more individuals socially and culturally; the displaying of empathy because of intergroup play

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suggests that overall man has a compassionate heart for humans alike and the willingness to help. According to Everett (2013), this considered a viable approach in the midst of racial segregation in America. Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact theory suggests that contact between members of different groups and under certain conditions can work to reduce prejudice and conflict. Allport (1954) also formulated an intergroup contact theory in 1954 with research revealing positive intergroup contact is associated with less prejudice. Intergroup theory mutually supports the contact theory and aligns with the ambitious nature of this research. “*Befriending the enemy: Outgroup friendship longitudinally predicts intergroup attitudes in a coexistence program Israelis and Palestinians*”, is a research article (Schroeder, 2014) on social outcomes of Seeds of Peace, a three-week long camp each summer in the woods of Maine. Camp participants are equally Israeli and Palestinian youth. This intergroup action is an example of a prosocial activity fostering an environment to promote empathy amongst groups where disdain is part of generational narratives. These groups often have little trust towards each other and evidently, lack the levels of empathy to heal. Longitudinal studies maintain an important advantage over both laboratory experiments that lack external validity and cross-sectional studies that are ill equipped to consider causality. Recent longitudinal students find beneficial effects of contact on intergroup attitudes (Schroeder & Risen, 2014). The literature is addressing what is considered the most extended study on intergroup contact.

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In another example of intergroup relations researchers, Dr. Jodi Halpern and Harvey M. Weinstein researched the Bosnian-Croatia war and the far-reaching impact that hatred and fear among neighbors and friends who became enemies because of the war. Although the research was focused on the healthy psychological and physical functions of communities impacted by the war, they concluded that healing could not start until empathic relationships developed. Such relationships, however, do not emerge unless individual interactions and encounters occur, exploration and acknowledgment of the past are allowed, which some level of openness or trust develops (Halpern & Weinstein, 2004). Their literature continues noting that although much of published research focuses on the repair of the social fabric for which desired efforts are often at the governmental or institutional level, little focuses on how individuals who were enemies and now once again living next to each other as neighbors can heal.

Despite work showing the unique harms inflicted by ethnic conflicts in which neighbors killed neighbors, relatively little attention has been paid to the fact that these people now must learn to live together on a daily basis - in shops, the market, schools, playgrounds, concerts, and coffeehouses. (Halpern & Weinstein, 2004, p. 563)

Putnam (2000) suggested that social capital is critical to the development of community and is a base to building networks of social relationships. This conception of bridging social capital is a process of reaching beyond one's own group to build interconnectedness and interdependence.

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### TRAUMA-INFORMED AWARENESS

As noted by a master clinician, Dr. Jamie Marich (2018), unhealed trauma can exhibit manifestations that often go unnoticed and /or are misdiagnosed. PTSD, which stands for post-traumatic stress disorder, is only one type of unhealed trauma. Acute Stress Disorder can be referred to as pre-PTSD and the symptoms are the same. It is noted that, usually, symptoms happen within the first month of the traumatic experience. Duration of symptoms longer than one-month can lead to PTSD. Shapiro (2016) researched the concept of large-T trauma and small-t trauma. Small-t traumas represent adverse life experiences. Typically, those small-t experiences, which do not qualify someone for a PTSD diagnosis, are “racial or ethnic discrimination, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, divorce, medical crisis, spiritual abuse, emotional blackmail or even losing a pet.” Shapiro states that if these experiences are left not personally addressed, a person may develop symptoms that are similar to PTSD. Large-T traumas are those associated with PTSD such as “rape, witnessing a murder, natural disasters, and wartime atrocities.” According to Dr. Shapiro’s (2013) models, PTSD can be associated with the above-mentioned clinically significant types of trauma. It is noted that with proper treatment and social support, coupled with good coping skills and resilience education, the likelihood of full-blown PTSD developing is greatly diminished. (Shapiro, 2013)

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### **Trust and Trauma-Informed Awareness**

In the neighborhoods of St Louis, Missouri, it is reported by local media that street violence is evident and that our youth are witnessing violence at home, on their own streets. Rice (2018), “Missouri Leads Nation in Black Homicide Rate, Study Finds.” Reported in April 2018 that Missouri had the country’s highest homicide rate of African-Americans. Citing from the FBI website that nationwide in 2015, there were recorded 7,014 homicide victims but as of April 2018 (only 4 months into the New Year), records show 7,039 homicide victims and of those 332 victims were killed in Missouri. As reported by Mohs (April 14, 2017) live from KMOV television station located in St Louis, Missouri. *Lawmaker pushes for mental health help for kids in violent communities.* Civic members are voicing support and a push for funding in behavioral healthcare. Missouri State Representative, Bruce Franks D-St Louis (June 3, 2018), “If we don’t get anything done on a political level, we’ve got our communities and neighborhoods.” Current St Louis community news agencies report that our streets are torn by economic ruin and violence. Community members witnessed by Gray (2018), “Marchers Take to the Streets in St. Louis, Calling for Progress on Gun Violence.” Our communities are suffering physical losses and evidence of acute trauma is being studied among our school age youth. A house resolution HCR 70 has been introduced in the Missouri Legislature to declare youth violence a “public health epidemic.” By initiating this directive, civic leaders have acknowledged troubled communities and are addressing the evidence of acute trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder within.

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Jenkins, Esther, & Bell (1994) examined variables that related violence exposure in a sample of 203 high school students within a predetermined violent area in Chicago, Illinois.

The adolescent group is of particular interest because their trauma reactions may include negative behaviors (i.e., delinquency, violence, and drug use) that are quite destructive for the individual and the community and may feed into and perpetuate the cycle of violence. (Jenkins & Bell, 1994, p 13)

Particular similarity can be recognized within the neighborhoods making up the surrounding counties of St Louis, Missouri. In Jenkins and Bell's study, correlations were made by gender "between the distress symptoms, frequency of the high-risk behaviors in the last 6 mo., and the 4 types of violence exposure: severity of violent acts witnessed, personal victimization of friends, and victimization of family members."

Qualitatively, Buka, Stichick, Birdthistle, and Earls (2010) have measured exposure to violence. Buka and associates (2010) questioned: "Does youth exposure to violence indicate that males, ethnic minorities, and urban residents are at increased risk for higher rates of PTSD, depression, distress, aggression and externalizing behavior disturbances?" Their research cross-studied indications that the above are increased for PTSD and are showing behavioral disturbances. The topics of family conflict, domestic violence and community process for healing are supported. Foa, Riggs, Dancu, and Rothbaum (1993) examined the reliability and validity of a brief instrument PTSD Symptom Scale (PSS) for assessing post-traumatic stress disorder. They administered the PSS to a sample of 118 recent rape and non-sexual assault victims. It was determined that the self-reported version of the PSS was more reliable than the interview version,

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meaning that people are more often apt to draw upon their true emotions when self-reporting versus opening up and speaking with others.

In the city of Ferguson, Missouri, the date of August 14, 2014, represents many contrasting memories. Visions of angry protest, violence, social unrest, military-style policing, and the shooting of an unarmed African American youth by the name of Michael Brown have been recorded by media. Folayan (2017) in the *Whose Streets?* documentary highlighted the extent to which trust in policing in Ferguson was challenged. Citizens questioned (1) the moral code in the Missouri Judicial system, (2) the local police department their efforts to provide a safe environment for the community, and (3) how having a community that's segregated by skin color affects trust. A visual representation of these concerns appeared on TV screens and news clips nationwide as the "Black Lives Matter" mantra reverberated across the airwaves. At this time, as a result of the visual evidence of civil unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, a voice was given to community members. August 2014 was further sensationalized by content that appeared in the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Footage revealed that communities pursued equity and social justice as a result of human loss. Some say police relations were accurately depicted; others viewed rampant street violence and concluded criminal charges and punishment were warranted. A lack of trust in the community led to a crack in community cohesiveness, an existential challenge to the infrastructure of community engagement. Reid (2015), in *Reflections on Ferguson*, investigated the impact of social

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media and the public's response. Social media broadcasted images of community stress and civil unrest, reinforcing anxiety and nudging collective memory toward acute trauma.

Kochel, in "*Views by St Louis County Residents Regarding the Police and Public Responses to the Shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014,*" investigated the perspectives by the residents in St Louis County regarding the police and public relations to the shooting of Michael Brown. He asked: Were the residents of North County affected in their perception of police or trust after experiencing the riots? "Twenty percent of the 389 residents interviewed participated directly in the protests" but all residents self-reported to be living in:

High crime, disadvantaged neighborhoods of St Louis County, Missouri... Three quarters of residents reported being impacted in some way. The most common negative effects were documented to be emotional, as well as the daily inconvenience brought on by closed stores and schools and traffic issues. Residents' opinions about police also suffered. (Kochel, 2014)

The most common positive impacts from this event were reported to be an increased awareness or utilizing one's *voice* about issues of racial tension, crime, and profiling.

Bloggers, including Newburn (2014) in his article "*Civil Unrest in Ferguson Was Fueled by the Black Community's Already Poor Relationship with a Highly Militarized Police Force,*" documented civil unrest in Ferguson. He stated, "It was fueled by the Black community's already poor relationship with a highly militarized police force." Newburn studied the community's reaction to the violence in black neighborhoods.

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Racism and discrimination are terms that sparked debates and civil unrest. Communities worldwide witnessed social media images of:

CS gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets, camouflage uniforms, snipers on roofs, armored cars, assault rifles pointed directly at residents and journalists, shotguns and automatics weapons appeared to be almost daily presence on the streets of St Louis. (Newburn, 2014)

In an attempt to better identify emotional triggers or independent variables, which may be attributed to acute trauma/PTSD researchers interviewed youth, Davidson and associates (1991), all leading researchers in PTSD, chose to investigate anxiety or lack of trust in the community. They studied 337 school-aged youth for “exposure to traumatic events (family violence, violent crime, death or illness of someone close to the child, accidents) and post-traumatic stress symptoms.” It was determined “the leading precipitating events for PTSD symptoms was death or illness of someone close to the child. Family violence, violent crime, but not accidents also resulted in PTSD.” Negatively, global attention has been fueling the anxiety associated with PTSD and trust in communities; conversely, supporting a new-found voice called empowerment.

### **Trust, Trauma-Informed Awareness and Community Engagement**

Lack of funding in communities, when combined with other adverse socio-economic variables, hinders community engagement efforts and can perpetuate urban racial inequalities. Rothstein and Wilder (2005), in “The Many Dimensions of Racial Inequality,” analyze disparities in cognitive social capital. They look at how healthcare,

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out-of-school opportunities, and access to preschool education contribute to academic achievement. Research supports that race is a controversial factor in promoting community resilience in PTSD. Wald and Losen (2003), in *Defining and Redirecting a School-to-Prison Pipeline*, focus on disparities and inequalities among students in high poverty conditions. They found that high minority schools face obstacles relating to race and class. To foster trauma resilience, more opportunities need to be available to youth at the community level. They addressed questions such as: What are the inequalities in early childhood and after-school experience; health, cultural, and family life; citizenship, and economic security?

If these independent variables that are associated with PTSD negatively affect mortality rates, what can communities do? The role of education in schools and communities is often emphasized. Sanders (2001), in *The Role of 'Community' in Comprehensive School, Family, and Community Partnership Programs*, explores the hallmarks of effective collaboration between local school districts and community partners. Sanders used surveys conducted in hundreds of schools through the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), a network that facilitates the development of strong school, family and community partnerships programs. The surveys were then analyzed to identify and categorize the community agencies and organizations with whom schools partnered, document the focus of partnerships, identify obstacles, and examine the factors that influenced school's satisfaction with these partnerships. The results listed that the majority of community relationships were business relationships

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that were student-centered. Universities or educational institutions, healthcare organizations, government and military, national service and volunteer organizations, faith organizations, senior citizens organizations and, finally, community individuals, followed this. Social capital is most evident when local community businesses are onboard with growth and engagement is sustained. By identifying the behavioral needs of youth and enlisting schools to foster traumatic informed practices, communities are enriched. Behavioral studies show a reciprocated connection between schools and communities. These partnerships strengthen citizenship and empower community members as a vital asset for growth.

Several researchers have investigated how acute trauma and diagnosed PTSD influence the level of anxiety that occur in urban settings such as the greater St Louis region. Seedat and associates (2004) studied trauma exposure and PTSD in urban African schools. They documented that a “lack of comparative data on the prevalence and effects of exposure to violence in African [not American] youth” exists: “More than 80% reported exposure to severe trauma, either as victims or witnesses,” although rates varied among the states. Gender may or may not affect community engagement outcomes: “Boys were as likely as girls to meet PTSD symptom criteria.” This study was referenced due to the representation to a variety of examples demonstrating violent stress, which is measured within the samples. Although a lifetime traumatic exposure was comparable to the children in Africa, Kenyan adolescents had much lower rates of PTSD. Research results may be attributed to cultural and other trauma-related variables. de Jong

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and associates (2001) identify the variables in conflict-related trauma after age 12. They suggest that the “importance of contextual differences in the study of traumatic stress and human rights violations.” By referencing the variety of trauma-informed studies, they intend to distinguish which trauma-related variables reduce mortality rates in communities. They encourage a behaviorally sound environment in which a sense of community engagement can be fostered.

Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, and Hamby (2005) examined:

A large spectrum of violence, crime, and victimization experiences in a nationally representative sample of children and youth ages 2 to 17 years. More than one half (530 per 1,000) of the children and youth had experienced a physical assault in the study year, more than 1 in 4 (273 per 1,000) a property offense, more than 1 in 8 (136 per 1,000) a form of child maltreatment, 1 in 12 (82 per 1,000) a sexual victimization, and more than 1 in 3 (357 per 1,000) had been a witness to violence or experienced another form of indirect victimization. Only a minority (29%) had no direct or indirect victimization. The mean number of victimizations for a child or youth with any victimization was 3.0 and a child or youth with one victimization had a 69% chance of experiencing another during a single year.

They provide sobering statistics that many youth face challenges associated with being a victim. A victim is much more likely to experience anxiety or a lack of trust in others. This fosters a breeding ground that can lead to acute trauma. How can a focus on educating youth and promoting empowerment lead to nurturing those who have been victimized at this point in their lives? Finkelhor and associates (2005) analysis of juvenile victims, nonsexual assaults, child abuse, and neglect contributed to the formulation of national standards at the Department of Justice.

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If variables such as socioeconomic factors, gender, race, cultural perspectives, education, or the experience of violence have been identified, all of which may attribute to PTSD, what can educators and parents do to support youth and foster resilience? Developing resilience is one way to promote empowerment. Do our students enter our schools without hope, lacking a desire to achieve? It is possible that empowerment may be fostered most effectively within family units. Vega, Moore, and Miranda (2015) addressed urban youth's perceptions of parental and programmatic support via a mixed method survey. The researchers used the Critical Race Theory (CRT) as well as Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to frame their research. They investigated the roles of parents, community, educators, and self in fostering acute trauma resilience through empowerment.

### **Trust, Trauma-Informed Awareness and Community Empowerment**

While research supports a focus on the role of PTSD in youth outcomes, the question remains: What can parents, educators, and community members do to promote asset-based thinking and social behavior change? Cognitive social capital can be strengthened in our school systems, and structural social capital can be measured by growth in community programs, but how can social capital be actualized with so much pain in our societies? Can we identify and treat PTSD before negative results such as death, low academic achievement, and depression occur? Roberts, Gilman, Breslau, Breslau, and Koenen (2010) researched differences with regards to traumatic exposures

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across diverse racial and ethnic groups. They concluded that “when PTSD affects US race/ethnic minorities, it is usually untreated” and this limits the opportunity to activate healthy social capital. In *“Schooling and Social Justice through the Lenses of Nancy Fraser,”* Keddie (2012) supports developing a multidimensional approach to engaging youth, navigating through the cacophony of justice issues in schools and communities, to address an underlying lack of trust. We must understand how these factors lead to PTSD, and how PTSD negatively influences people and communities.

Studies show that social media can create social-emotional problems for youth. Tynes and Mitchell (2014), in *“Black Youth beyond the Digital Divide,”* examined age and gender differences among Black youth in terms of “internet use, communication patterns, and victimization” experiences. It is an open secret that apps such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and even simple text messaging accelerate, exponentially, a variety of emotional issues for youth. It is feasible social media, in the hands of adolescents, creates stress, anxiety, depression, and even violence when used in a bullying fashion. Although, social media when used effectively can encourage positive relations.

Research suggests that technology can facilitate acute trauma among our youth, research also exists to the contrary. Molly Zielezinski (2016) is a proponent of technology in the hands of socio-economically underserved students. In *“What a Decade of Education Research Tells Us about Technology in the Hands of Underserved Students,”* she summarizes learning mediated by digital technologies in K-12 classrooms.

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She supports using technology for remediation, to provide opportunities for students to create original digital content (e.g., filming, publishing on wikis, blogs, leveraging social media), and to utilize “digital tools that promote interactivity and discovery, and honor students as experts, and let them share their expertise with an authentic audience.” To help our underserved students learn, Zielezinski believes that “we must eradicate all traces of the argument that access to digital tools is key to minimizing the digital divide, and instead advocate for changes in the use of these tools [technology] to better engage our underserved students.” Computers, social media, cell phones, and the daily news all publicize events, which can be traumatic to many. Zielezinski supports educating our youth with the necessary cognitive skills needed to decipher truths from projected media and to promote healthy knowledge of self and community engagement. She cites studies that support the positive use of technology and the possibility that technology serves, when taught effectively, a positive role in treating PTSD among youth. It can also be a much needed tool in the healing of self-traumatic exposure.

Lastly, it is worth exploring how individuals can move forward as a community after exposure to factors that contribute to PTSD or acute trauma. Sometimes it appears that society is cracking from within and that there’s a huge need for PTSD resilience. Increasingly, civic leaders are voicing an outcry for advocacy to address violence in the streets. STL.News, on June 27, 2018, in “Missouri Political News,” reported that a Missouri state senator turned social justice activist, Jamilah Nasheed, is using her voice to draw attention to these communities by asking our Governor to call for a State of

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Emergency due to homicides in St Louis while protesting with community members who called it a crime violence epidemic. The Department of Justice was called in to evaluate and restore civic opportunity in Ferguson, Missouri, from 2014 to present. The then acting Ferguson Police Chief wrote an autobiographical book citing experiences from his perspective. Jackson (2017), in “Policing Ferguson, Policing America,” states in his controversial book that community memories are stirred, emotions are provoked, and the local thread of trust is broken. Jackson admits,

I have no training in social work or urban planning, education or economic development, and still, as a public servant and citizen, as well as a police officer, I involved myself in various efforts in all of these different areas, not only because the public seems to expect that from cops, but because these are ways in which I can have a positive impact. (p.172)

Jackson challenged the community to “work with activists, politicians, citizen groups, and other governmental agencies, first to ratchet down the tension and hostility [*acute trauma*], and second, to create an atmosphere of mutual *trust* and shared purpose [*social behavior change*]” (p.172, insertions are our own).

## LOGOTHERAPY

Logotherapy can be viewed as the clinical application of Frankl’s existential analytic approach elucidating the meaning of his existence (Costello, 2016). Logotherapy is an existential psychotherapy that focuses on knowledge of the meaning of one’s life as an avenue to mental health (Mohabbat-Bahar et al., 2014). Costello (2016) suggests that *Logos* is translated from the Greek definition of “meaning” from Frankl’s interpretation

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of philosophical context. Therapy is a medical practice, which has emerged from Freud's psychoanalytic process. Thir and Batthyány (2016) contend that Frankl's formation was a result of self-discovery of life meaning following survival of concentration camps.

This sense of meaning is derived through the realization of three types of values. Those values were (a) creative values [what the individual gives to the world], (b), experiential values [what the individual receives from the world], and (c) attitudinal values [the ability to change one's attitude toward unchangeable circumstances]. (Esping, 2011, pp. 60-61)

Frankl postulated activating a person would to meaning he hoped to change the attitudes of his patients. Logotherapy contextual origins serves as a philosophically-grounded psychological model (Thir & Batthyány, 2016) which often is synonymous with existential analysis, and purpose. Wong (2014) stated that existential analysis implies a form of depth psychotherapy influenced by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. He identified the link between logotherapy and existential analysis as similar conceptions. Frankl, existential analysis is the therapeutic process of making clients aware of their spirituality and capacity for meaning. Historical narratives of logotherapy often see overlap within the usage of terms regarding purpose with the latter serving as the act of the other and interchangeably (Dewitz, 2004). Additionally, Frankl acknowledges existential analysis and logotherapy are used interchangeably (Wong, 2014).

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### Trust and Logotherapy

Trust when is viewed through the lens of logotherapy, it can be viewed as an emotional and psychological concept, actualized through action. Literature that furthers this research concludes that individual socioeconomic and demographic variables can lead to participation and civic engagement (Valdivieso & Villena-Roldan, 2014).

Valdivia's and Villena-Roldan (2014) often referenced Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* in his assessment that social capital literature supported social participation among multi-generations. Biological, social, and cultural which include age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors can be viewed as influential variables in assessing the mindset of the participants of a community (Valdivieso & Villena-Roldan, 2014).

Narratives provided by multigenerational perspectives become adopted by the community into forming its customs, culture, and heritage. The community as a therapeutic construct further supports that logotherapy and existential analysis exists on the subconscious levels of community engagement. In summary, concepts of: spirituality, empathy, trust, and logotherapy can be viewed as examples of psychological concepts. Thompson & Gullone (2015) identify empathy as a key attribute in adolescent behavior for prosocial change. Based on Vygotsky's social learning theory, once individual factors engage together from a scaffolding process; critical issues and concerns start to form an inter-related unit that acts as a catalyst for establishing trust and healing. Prosocial change

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can be viewed as an outcome nurtured by the community. The community and trust provide opportunity to nurture social behavior change.

### **Trust, Logotherapy and Community Engagement**

When looking into the perception of logotherapy and community engagement, literature references the psychological development of one's identity in the community, and how they find purpose as an individual involved in a community. Heuristics of community engagement and practices have long been researched from psychological perspectives for centuries. The mechanics and foundations of a community are structured through multi-generational perceptions and input by individuals, families, and assets that form the community. Meaning and purpose are often viewed synonymously, but are different in definition regarding engagement. Meaning can lead to purpose considered factors of community engagement. Carnegie Foundation considered one of the foundational indicators of community engagement was the “alignment of mission” one of the primary catalysts for change (Driscoll, 2010). The concept of a community engagement has included various meanings and interpretations which is consistent with the formation and identity of a community.

A community can be described as a group of people who share some or all of the following: geographic boundaries; a sense of membership; culture and language; common norms, interests, or values; and common health risks or conditions. (Institute of Medicine, 2002, pp.178-179)

Individuals bring to a community a personal history of involvement with workplace, social and familial groups whose norms may complement or conflict with one other. These conflicts need to be negotiated and

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reconciled at least in part if the individual is to achieve a coherent sense of self. (Handley et al., 2006, pp.642-643)

Phillipson (2009) stated that “Existence and responsible engagement are of central significance. Phillipson supported past literature’s conclusion regarding concept of self-exploration and engagement was paradoxical. There lies a constant dilemma of balancing the needs of the individual and the needs of the community that results in greater or lesser blocks to awareness for any particular individual (Palmer, 1999).

Vygotsky’s social learning theory, addresses the concept of transactional analysis while exploring the development of an individual in relation to their surroundings which led to the formation of zone of proximal development. Vygotsky’s defines:

The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86)

Social cognitive theory, and social emotional learning theory continue expand the metapsychology of the emergence identity while addressing the paradox to learning and participation (Chaiklin, 2003). Collaboration and participation create opportunities for prosocial behavior.

Historically, human growth and development has largely been assessed through the lens of social psychologist in the formation of various learning theories of participations. Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory developed in 1977 as psychological construct deals specifically with the control of human action through people's beliefs in their capabilities to affect the environment and produce desired

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outcomes by their actions (Stajkovic & Luthans 2002). From this theory, we can utilize a foundation for self-efficacy, and a sense of purpose and will to find meaning through community engagement. Self-efficacy can be viewed as an action and outcome of prosocial behavior and an individual's exercising their role to personal fulfillment. Bresó and Salanova (2011) define self-efficacy as a person's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to attain predetermined types of performances. The ability to act and respond allows the individual to view themselves as an active change agent in their surroundings.

### **Trust, Logotherapy and Community Empowerment**

The role of social learning constructs is foundational in analysis of an individual perception and interactions with their community. When revisiting the various domains of community engagement, trust appears to be the unifying gap that “creates opportunities that, when met with reciprocity, which is a pattern of mutually contingent exchange that results in social participation and cooperation (Carlin & Love, 2013). The researchers added that trust is a key determinant of social participation. Assessing the stages of change and multidimensional influences that can foster prosocial attributes such as trust, this research seeks to identify how trust is an outcome of social capital. Various degrees of trust can influence prosocial attributes that foster social capital. When assessing trust, social capital and community engagement, trust must be reviewed at

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multidimensional levels. Perkins (2004) further explored this concept by providing a four-part definition of social capital at the individual, psychological level:

Trust in one's neighbors (sense of community), and (2) belief in the efficacy of formally organized action (empowerment) form the cognitive components. The two behavioral components are (3) informal neighboring behavior, and (4) formal participation in community organizations. Each dimension of individual-level SC is distinct but related to the others. (p. 37)

Shifts in thinking have led to integration of learning techniques in community learning and behavioral outcomes. Clinical practitioners and educators have often adduced various behavioral constructs to learning whether it be extrinsic or intrinsic in nature. The processes between learning and development in an individual's construction of their identity, values, and meaning have evolved through modern literature. From contemporary to post-modern social psychologists, clinicians have changed from rigid therapeutic practices to more eclectic approaches to behavioral changes. The emergence of individual identity and learning mechanisms are not just formed naturally but socially constructed. Mahoney and Granvold (2005) identified parallels in Jean Piaget's constructivism and Victor Frankl's existentialism regarding the paradoxical influence of an individual learning and constructing their own reality and meaning. Psychological factors point to what motivates individuals to participate in particular settings and behaviors, how to maintain that participation, and how those motivations and behaviors interact with various settings and organizational characteristics to promote effective social capital (Perkins, Hughey, & Speer, 2004).

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### SOCIAL LEARNING

The way individuals learn, that is, their motives and approaches to learning, can say a lot about their involvement and perspective of how they view and interpret their communities or themselves as individuals. Various methods of experiential education and communication are becoming more commonly utilized in the rise of youth development, empowerment, and community engagement. In the late 1960's, the term non-formal education was introduced to engage students outside of the classroom and shed light on the importance of community resources for teaching and learning. 1970's social learning became a more frequent educational component for marginalized community audiences or youth and adults who would benefit from additional academic resources and experiences. Social learning and informal education assisted these audiences by bringing experiential opportunities for learning to this rapidly growing population needing more than formal education could offer. Informal education has also demonstrated some utility for youth and adults in responding to societal problems involving health, nutrition, employment, food production, and so on, that tend to characterize third world concerns (La Belle, 1982).

Alternative forms of education and learning contribute to the development of capacities and qualities of individuals, groups, and communities needed to meet the challenges of sustainability and social justice issues today (Wals, 2011). In *Learning Our Way to Sustainability*, Wals (2011) proposes new forms of learning that are emerging and

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shares characteristics that make it clear that motivation to learn about topics surrounding environmental sustainability cannot be limited to classrooms, corporate boardrooms, local environmental education centers, or under regional government authority. Learning in the context of sustainability requires cooperation between multiple sectors in society and the blending of formal and informal (unintentional) education. Both formal and non-formal learning is intentional. (Wals, 2011) states that informal learning in the context of sustainable development builds on action research, community problem-solving, grassroots learning, collaborative learning, and experiential learning. Wals' research reinforces that alternative forms of formal education are essential for expanding knowledge of issues related to community engagement sustainability.

Formal, non-formal, and informal education all have a conceptual framework for understanding their interrelationships substantiated by author La Belle (1982). La Belle, notes, “Educational resources must be viewed as interacting modes of emphasis rather than as discrete entities” (1982, p. 159). This study centers on the non-formal education notion, as examples of programs for differing ages, sexes, social classes, and ethnic groups. La Belle (1982) notes that these three types of learning are interactive such that all individuals are engaged in one or more learning experiences. The experiences may include compulsory, and be planning, intentional to unplanned, voluntary, or incidental. It is confirmed that each individual learner encompasses his or her own configuration of educational influences. The greatest benefit of this article is the fifth observation, demonstrating informal education as part of the social behavior change process. The

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author states that when the intent of informal education seeks social change, the potential for conflict exists, which emphasizes preconceived knowledge of this in the program planning process. This observation serves as a good reference piece for evaluating various forms of informal learning modes, their histories, effectiveness, and challenges.

Hansen (2011) elaborates through his research defining communication processes and trends in public and political media sectors through elaboration and identification of environmental issues. Hansen states that much of what we learn and understand about the environment, we know from the media, including our beliefs, knowledge, and aspects of the environment. This also extends into the ways in which individuals, societies, and communities view, perceive, value and relate to our environment. Based on this research, the author is interested in uncovering how communicative power in society is unequally distributed. Specifically, this suggested task is meant to reconnect, empirically and utilizes articulated theories and communication models, the study of production, content, and the social/political implications of environmental communication.

### **Trust and Social Learning**

With the notions of trust and cooperation demonstrating a significant impact on social learning experience for participants, trust plays a major role on an individual on a personal and group level. The process of social learning presents opportunities for participants to learn, sometimes the learning being disguised within an action or activity. Regardless of how the informal learning activity is presented or structured, the

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participants have to demonstrate even a small level of trust in those creating the experience/activity.

Having a level of trust developed within an individual comes from prior action of believing or having self-awareness. Youth who may find trust as a barrier or challenge could be apprehensive to work with adult mentors outside of a formal education setting. Youth who have experienced caregivers as unavailable or inconsistent [deficit thinking] and have models of relationships tinged with anxiety, anger, uncertainty, and mistrust may be less likely to see the value in turning to others in times of stress (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994). Social learning opportunities, whether in a group or independent environment, can serve as a benefit to youth who have had difficulty with relationships, a lack of mentors, or have experienced mistrust. When a young adult knows a mentor is a dependable source of protection and support if something should go wrong, the sense of security that results may allow productive exploration of the environment that leads to the development of knowledge, skills, and competence (Ainsworth, 1989; see also Bowlby, 1988).

Mentors can offer youth adult perspectives, advice, and suggestions that might be ignored if they were presented by a parent (Keller, 2005). By serving as a sounding board and providing a model of effective adult communication, mentors may also help youth better understand, express, and regulate both their positive and negative emotions (Pianta, 1999). By regulating affective experiences individually and in groups, mentors play an important role in the social learning process but also in the lives of youth participants. It

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is the opinion of this research team that the development of: trust, emotional and moral standing, problem-solving and communication skills, serves as a guide for mentors and community leaders who play a vital role in the connection between trust and informal learning.

Eveland and Cooper (2013) present the Integrated Model of Communication Influence on Beliefs in their research, combining multiple theories that have considered aspects of this process into a comprehensive model to explain how individuals identify their scientific beliefs. They summarize how science is presented in news and media forms; describe how individuals differ in choices related to communication exposure, process information on the effects of communication and how these effects can be altered depending on the characteristics and motivations. Results from this research state predicted and obvious data, simply that influence of communication on belief formation is complex. Belief in something or someone can provide the initial action one takes to participate in an action that they are unfamiliar. This belief is trust being carried into action through participation in an informal learning activity or experience.

Through successful action, trust continues to build and develop within an individual and potentially within a small group or community. With mentors or leaders assisting in the activity, the individual having the experience may grow their trust in the facilitator of the informal learning setting. Trust can be empowering and transformational for an individual as well as a community or group. Informal learning opportunities and environments provide a setting for the development of trust, self-efficacy, confidence,

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and positive development of an individual as well as an ideal opportunity for learning overall.

### **Trust, Social Learning and Community Engagement**

Identifying the steps of the learning process in problem-based learning is discussed in a study by Dahlgren and Oberg (2001). This study examines how problem-based learning can help the learner to associate scenarios in the learning process to real-life examples that can directly relate to their community or current situation. Researchers in Sweden utilized scenarios in a ten-week introductory course of a four-year environmental science undergraduate program. Data was gathered from students through a qualitative analysis of questioning which included the following kinds of questions: encyclopedic, meaning-oriented, relational, value-oriented, and solution-oriented. The overall aim was to encourage the students to deepen their understanding of the complexity of environmental problems and to start discussions and problem-solving regarding environmental issues. The intention is to get the students to associate scenarios presented with real-life situations and to illuminate student's reflections on the learning process. I appreciate that this article clearly identifies the steps of the learning process in problem-based learning as demonstrated with the student participants in this study. This research will be crucial when identifying questions and a problem design to interest student groups on environmental issues, education on various community-focused issues and as a resource for approaches to understanding informal learning.

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While much of the social and informal learning literature presented centers on climate change and sustainability-related informal education, Massey (1989) documents some very insightful research highlighting science education in the United States. This study emphasizes and advocates for the need to improve the quality of science education, including scientific and technical literacy of the public at large, and science, mathematics, and technical education for our future workforce. Massey includes in this research other related issues including international competitiveness, the need for minority and women scientists and engineers, and the necessity to have a healthy and vital scientific and technical enterprise in this country. The author proposes that in addition to supporting the government on this effort, the scientific community needs to demonstrate cooperation and support of efforts to better manage and allocate the nation's resources. Also, to make serious efforts to develop and establish mechanisms for setting priorities for the support of science and technology. This article serves as a helpful resource for background and options to increase support and awareness for science education, on a formal and informal level.

In addition to alternative forms of education, various forms of communication carry a strong influence on climate change information and distribution. Ballantyne (2016) assesses the current literature on climate change communication and identified primary themes in the context of communication theory. Climate change communication research is still in a mindset that highlights communication as the transmission of information and toward a meta-theoretical approach. The author found inconsistencies

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between articles in what was considered a "communication challenge" and suggests that climate change communication will be more effective if a meta-approach is utilized to facilitate discussion of the goals of the field and the challenges to be addressed. Similarly, researchers studying climate change communication can benefit from studying the robust field of communication.

Incorporating climate change and environmental science in social learning environments serve many benefits to educational spaces and the communities they serve. In his article "Communication and Experiential Learning Environments," Latchem (2014) examines the issues of open, distance and technology-based informal learning and non-formal education for individual and community development. He states that these two modes of education, constituting 70-90% of lifelong development, are insufficiently represented in the literature of distance learning and development (Latchem, 2014). Through observation and research of this topic, it has been identified that more needs to be done to indicate the ways in which these two formats serve the users, ensuring they can take place alongside formal education processes. Through exploring, examining and reporting on social and informal learning experiences, these opportunities and the positive effect they have on participants positively contribute to the benefits these experiences have on a group and individual level.

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### **Trust, Social Learning and Community Empowerment**

Social learning experiences or opportunities that empower teens to develop and exhibit trust within themselves, towards others, or resulting in trust for their communities can manifest in different ways. By exploring empowerment of a teen audience, research can demonstrate the impacts of empowerment from informal learning scenarios and engagement. Through a study by Fisher-Maltese and Zimmerman (2015), the value of garden-based learning through a focus on measures of learning associated with an informal learning environment comes to life in a school garden. Results from this study demonstrate the importance and impact informal opportunities for learning have on an individual and in a group setting.

## ASSET-BASED THINKING

According to Cramer (2019), Asset-Based-Thinking (ABT) is defined as a progressive mindset management process proven to promote greater resilience, optimism, and self-advocacy for individuals seeking to make a change in their communities. ABT is based on the Community Development (asset-based thinking) methodology that employs an inquiry-based strategy to probe the critical issues that impede the progress of transforming fragmented communities in innovative ways. Psychologist Dr. Kathy Cramer leader of the Cramer Institute pioneered the concept of ABT. Recent literature reviews on ABT suggest that it is a proven evidence-based psychological construct that positively influences social learning experiences by teaching people how to make subtle

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shifts in perception and thinking that lead to remarkable results changing the way they think (Cramer, 2019). Two schools of thought emerged from literature, Asset-Based Community Development Approach that is a revolutionary process that focus on what is right or strengths, as opposed to deficit-based thinking, which only focus on problems and other social ills instead of opportunities. The process of asset-based thinking manifest by using asset mapping as a tool to locate resources, skills, and hidden treasures within community. Asset-based thinking in practice explorer's pertinent strategies that promote sustainable development and change in various communities. The ABCD model empowers community members by equipping them with resilient coping mechanisms and solutions by giving individuals the confidence to feel empowered, expand their immediate circle of influence, and increase their personal impact on the world (Cramer, 2019). Since each community is unique in retrospect and has its own set of challenges and needs, the research team will explore diverse perspectives from various communities that include urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Scholarly researchers in the field of social science justify that the practice of mapping communities initiated many years ago from a deficit-based or problem framework to identify and probe out prevalent factors such as health risk based on intrinsic and extrinsic physical, social, economic, and environmental factors (Ayala, Cravey, & Webb (2005). Asset mapping has emerged as a popular tool for mapping communities because of its focus on assets and gifts rather than those deficits and

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encourages active engagement among all community members (Lightfoot, McClearly, & Lum, 2014).

Asset mapping is a tool for supporting health related issues such as personal tragedies and challenges in life [trauma-informed practice] that can become catastrophic and difficult to endure without therapeutic or self-regulating interventions. Not only does self-sustaining methods influence cognitive and behavior change, it also teaches members of the community survival skills and resiliency through the informal learning process, once trust is cultivated with sub components me, empathy, informal learning, trauma-informed practice and asset mapping according to community engagement model. The community engagement model was developed on the premise of Asset-Based Community Development Approach, which empowers people of the community by encouraging them to utilize what they already possess. The inquiry-based strategy prioritizes addressing public health concerns and socio-ass daily life challenges and pressures that can become overwhelming and spiral out of control by individuals, families, and communities (SCDC, 2011). Results from selected literature reviews on ABCD models, identify asset mapping as a primary tool for evolving self-healing communities into creating space and developing a shared vision for improving public health due to toxic exposure from elevated levels of trauma in various neighborhoods or communities (Porter, Martin, & Anda, 2016). According to recent literature reviews obtained from successful community engagement models that employ strength-based approach combined with asset mapping and a bottom up framework are classified as

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effective evidence based best practices. Asset-based thinking and asset mapping model are popular tools because of their adaptability to social science behavioral intervention techniques for stimulating healthy communities to promote positive cognitive and behavior change. Published research reference asset-based best practices that advocate for vibrant and thriving inclusive communities that empower individuals built on the back of residents in the community, when they combine their talents, skills, and wisdom together collectively to unlock their limitless potential. Despite a wealth of research on community-based activities, asset-based thinking approach in conjunction with strength-based and bottom-up framework yield healthy neighborhoods and communities based on the strengths and capacity of their residents (Duncan, 2016). Asset-based thinking has traditionally been considered as a valuable social work research tool for analyzing the unique attributes and needs of community. Participatory Approaches have proven to be effective specifically, when used in collaboration with asset-based thinking. Asset-based thinking is adaptable and considered a perfect fit for participatory models in the field of social science. A unique component of Community-Based Participatory Research is its compatibility and flexibility to adapt to ABCD strength-based approaches that study social issues (Lightfoot et al., 2014). Conventionally, asset-based approaches have a solid record of accomplishment for complementing public services and traditional methods for improving health disparities and addressing health inequalities. Asset-based thinking approaches have the potential to contribute to strategic, personal and trauma-informed

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practices designed for improving public health and economic conditions in diverse communities (Lightfoot et al., 2014).

Asset-based thinking approach deviates from the notion where traditional a method of delivering health and human services is dependent on providing services from outsiders that fail to have a stake in the community's needs and deficits. The asset-based thinking approach is focused on promoting self-sustaining skills and practices by nurturing independence and self-sufficiency based on discovering assets and gifts that currently exist in the community. The core principles of asset-based thinking are:

- **Asset-based** which is to identify skills and gifts of residents in community then allow residents to be active participants and take ownership in creating their own destinies and pathways in life.
- **Internal-focused** the overall objective consists of relying on the reliance and strength of the community member's expertise and knowledge. Only after every effort has been exhausted to utilize local knowledge and resources members of community will seek outside assistance.
- **Relationship-driven** strategies to address community issues should adhere to collaborative process involving local associations and institutions. “People must be connected” (Rowland, S., 2008, p 1).

This process of behavioral and cognitive change occurs when scaffolding process of sustainable community development is built on the skills and attributes of local residents. A more futuristic approach involves asset-based thinking shift from a social

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service model, which is deep, rooted in traditional models of patronage and charity, to a community-building model that advocates productive interaction and capacity building embedded in social capital based on ownership and secure sustainability (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1996). The Community Engagement Model based on asset-based thinking and asset mapping advocates face-to-face contact that serves as a technique for improving understanding between in-group and outgroup communities leading to high levels of trust combined with asset-based thinking, as opposed to deficit-based thinking, which tends to be toxic and counterproductive.

Relevant scholarly literature reviews suggest that asset-based working approaches are valuable tools for transforming grief-stricken communities that have been devastated by exposure to elevated levels of acute trauma, mental illness, and economic deprivation because of poverty. Asset-based approaches embrace a holistic perspective that builds on a foundation of human, social, and physical capital from within the community (Scottish Government, 2012). The literature selected in this section speaks to the primary purpose of this study because it defines asset-based thinking as an approach to a set of concepts for identifying and enhancing protective factors that significantly affect social and emotional well-being and behavioral change. The health and wellbeing of families, individuals, and members of the community is paramount to the transformation and revitalization process, before asset-based thinking can be implemented to improve economic disparities and social inequalities (SCDC, 2011).

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### **Trust and Asset-Based Thinking**

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) revolutionized the concept Asset Mapping as a community-planning toolkit based on the framework of community approach to asset development of community activity. The approach involves identifying and providing information about micro-level infrastructure, assets, and resources consisting primarily of local people and businesses in individual communities by encouraging ownership and stake in navigating or leading transformation efforts (Burns, Pudrzynska, & Paz, 2012).

The efforts of this study focuses on alternative processes of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in the field of social science that is compatible and adaptable with asset mapping model as a method of research to inform community engagement strategies for building community capacity, influencing cognitive and behavioral change, and generating social capital from assets within the community. (Lightfoot et al., 2014, p. 62)

Asset Mapping serves as a tool for identifying specific details about individual communities, by taking an inventory of assets and resources to develop solutions to specific social issues (Lightfoot et al., 2014). Social Issues such as mental health crisis among youth, poverty, and access to health care are current issues facing many diverse communities. The asset-based thinking approach gained popularity in the field of social science because it shares similarities with one of the prevailing models in social work, behavioral intervention (Lightfoot et al., 2014). The process works by investigating community needs by means of probing the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and families (Saleebey, 1992). In comparison to the strengths perspective, asset approach to community development supports positive attributes and capacity of communities to

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identify vital issues. In addition, an effective community development plan recognizes the significance of working with grassroots organizations, corporations, and institutions to develop appropriate solutions to complex community issues by utilizing community resources such as community members and assets to develop sustainable solutions to complex problems (Lightfoot, et al., 2014). Scholarly research in the field of social science suggest that asset-based thinking approach is unique and differs from important deficit orientation to community development, which has traditionally highlighted problems or risks of local communities that require professional resources and interventions outside the community (Morgan & Ziglio, 2007). Important attributes of asset-based thinking include a focus on assets within the community, rather than deficits, and its participatory approach. Assets may also include a wide range of skills and capacities of individuals. Other asset-based thinking elements include tangible resources and assets, such as local institutions, organizations, such as schools and congregations (Lightfoot et al., 2014). Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a methodology for sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potential (Lightfoot et al., 2014). It involves taking a comprehensive assessment of the resources, skills, and experience available in the community prior to, mobilizing members of community around relevant issues that move its members into action. This method utilizes local resources and efforts as basis for development; it challenges and empowers people of community to unite and collaborate to create their own outcomes and pathway in life (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1996).

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The gaps in the literature reflect that published research addresses a multitude of concerns on impact asset-based approach has on health and how it is limited in scope in social science scholarly research. After a careful review of evidence-based practices involving asset-based research studies, an argument can be made that future studies call for expanding research to get a better understanding of the processes that underpin these approaches including the types and scales that can be achieved (SCDC, 2011). Successful implementation and models of asset working approaches is currently developing in Scotland, however the model lacks a quantifiable method of measuring tangible assets is needed. Other considerations related to underpinnings include a need for systematic methods for measuring and identifying assets and greater understanding the best strategy for distributing assets at the individual and the community level (SCDC, 2011).

Sustainable solutions must understand the process of personal empowerment and social transformation in order for local ownership to take hold. Communities need to actively participate in planning, execution, and maintenance of any development solutions that affect them. Since interior growth takes time and is difficult to achieve, any effective development intervention will integrate the perspectives it confronts and translates key messages in terms that can be understood and valued by the community. This allows the community to engage the work in ways that conform to local traditions and ways of thinking. (Kretzman, & McKnight, 1993, p. 3)

### **Trust, Asset-Based Thinking and Community Engagement**

The first step in the asset-based thinking framework community engagement process begins by taking the time to build trust by engaging residents on a continuum over a period of time (Duncan, 2016). The concept of building trust starts by organizing

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resident engagement in collaboration with asset mapping process to identify potential connectors/leaders to facilitate networking in local communities. The trust phenomenon as it relates to resident engagement is based on effective partnerships that focus on a common purpose, relationships, and trust (Duncan, 2016). Some of the important attributes of resident team members that promote the trust phenomenon include selecting members that have passion and genuine concern for neighborhood and residents, members that have respectable reputation in the community, and members that have a record of accomplishment for getting things done in their neighborhoods (Duncan, 2016). This is why it is essential for community leaders and members to stay focused on building relationships and trust on an ongoing basis. A golden rule to effective community engagement emphasizes that organizations are not responsible to work together; it is the responsibility of the people in the community. The key to building sustainable relationships and partnerships in the community takes a considerable amount of time to form, therefore this process should not be expedited (Duncan, 2016). When there is a high turnover in leadership where key people transition in and out, the partnerships restart process over again (Duncan, 2016). The trust phenomenon highlights toxic communities that have experienced chronic underemployment, violence against self and others, youth hospitalization for suicides, are occurring at an astronomical rate in communities throughout the nation, justifying the need for embracing self-sustaining methods that lead to a passageway for healing (Porter et al., 2016). The framework for asset-based thinking approach is based on a foundation of psychological, human, social,

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and physical capital within the community that produces social capital in the form of self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and self-awareness (Porter et al., 2016). The article explores the process of asset-based thinking and its evidence-based practices that advocate change and nurtures prosocial behavior. A unique attribute of asset-based thinking centers around development and effectiveness of social and economic empowerment strategies that result in building trust with stakeholders, developing social capital, targeted at diverse communities. Asset-based thinking is considered as a tool kit for the community to share ownership and trust to empower themselves (Porter et al., 2016).

### **Trust, Asset-Based Thinking and Community Empowerment**

This literature explores asset-based thinking, core principles of asset-based community development, and an asset-mapping toolkit that are instrumental in transforming communities. asset-based thinking is a Community-Based Participatory Research model with a track record for transforming fragmented communities by implementing a bottom-up approach, shared vision, and a strength based plan for producing tangible and intangible examples of social capital that meets the needs of each community. In conclusion, this section is focused upon exploring core principles of asset-based thinking in practice that result in developing trust and empowering community members through asset-based thinking and social learning process. Evidence based-practices from current literature suggest benefits of asset-based thinking and social learning process inspires individuals seeking to make a change in their immediate

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communities to learn new cognitive, behavioral, and psychological interventions as a solution for achieving sustainable change.

## THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL

We developed a Theory of Change (TOC) logic model that depicts trust as the gap in the literature. Logic models are a visual method of presenting an idea. They offer a way to describe and share an understanding of relationships (or connections) among elements necessary to operate a program or changes effort (Knowlton & Phillips, 2013). This community engagement to community empowerment model depicts a qualitative exploratory approach to the many intricacies that community engagement offers in a belief that trust may be requisite to the asset mapping process.

The model leverages meaning-making, empathy, and trauma-informed awareness as a contributor to individual, group and community empowerment, leading to a sustainable approach to social change. Additionally, the social learning mechanism becomes a part of the convection in the asset mapping portion of the model. This group knows the principles and foundation to asset-based thinking engagement, as "AIR" or Asset-Internally focused-Relational based groupings, provide the framework for the asset mapping process.

The Theory of Change model can be defined in very simplistic terms, using a systems approach that recognizes and characterizes communities as complex adaptive systems consisting of multiple subsystems and parts (e.g. individuals, institutions, and

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infrastructure) that are interconnected, driven by some purpose, follow certain rules, and interact with each other and with their surrounding environment. The conceptual model in study provides community leaders in practice with an opportunity to integrate asset-based framework with a systems perspective for nurturing trust and community sustainability by developing solutions to common topics that plague communities today including economic development, poverty, mobility, and community capacity. The top heading or border of the model transforms from light blue to dark blue, illustrating the progression and steps in fostering trust in community. Asset-based thinking resources are identified as a three-dimensional figure in model that represent local hidden treasures and resources that are complex, intangible, and dynamic within the community. The model illustrates multiple strands and actions from asset-based resources (input) actively engaging with critical psychosocial strands trauma-informed awareness, meaning and purpose, and empathy to improve behavioral, social, and emotional competence that significantly affect the health literacy of the community. Social learning (output) serves as a theory of learning process that acts as a catalyst in model to promote effective learning in community resulting in agents of trust, voice, and empowerment. The rationale to integrate asset-based strands with psychological strands in TOC model is based on multidisciplinary research team working jointly on a common problem, each operating from own disciplinary knowledge base using a shared conceptual framework that draws from all disciplines.

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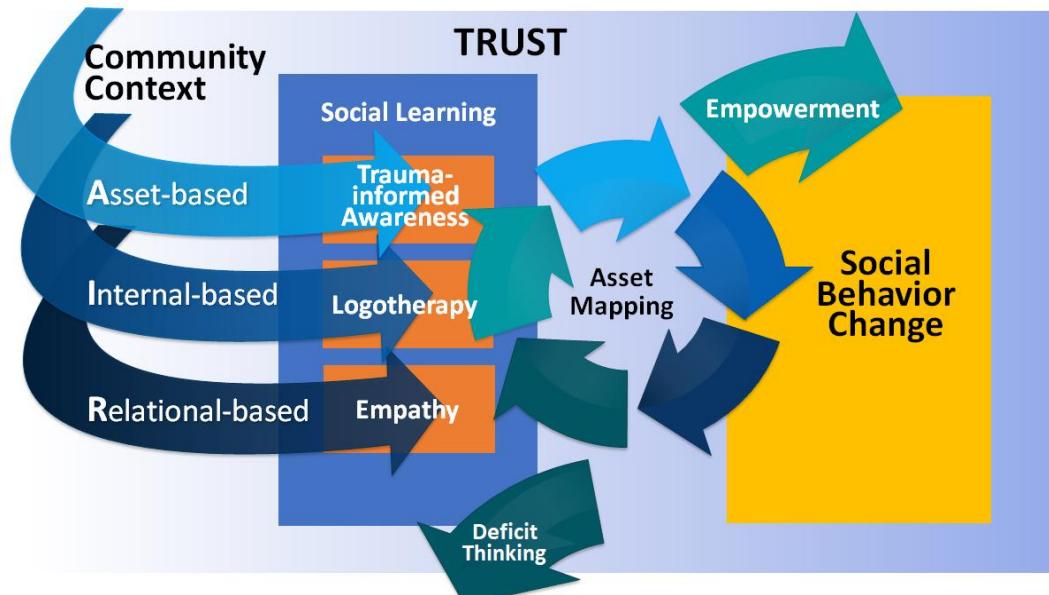


Figure 1. Community Engagement Theory of Change Model

Although this model evokes a linear visual layout, the complex processes in life are often not linear and at least convoluted. Most changes occur iteratively, or in cycles, and with multiple interactions among many features (Knowlton, 2013). Outward growth from the asset mapping process presents two tenets as it relates to those involved: empowerment or deficit in behavioral belief. By examining the relationship of trust to the psychosocial components of trauma, meaning-making, and empathy, explore how respondents learn about and engage trauma, logotherapy and empathy (TLE) individually and in groups, and probe how respondents apply learning to their community engagement work. The discovery of trust building or a disintegration of trust building is a view to social outcomes relating to efforts in transforming and healing individuals, families and multi-generational oppressed communities.

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### **Chapter 3 Research Methods**

#### OVERVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study is to explore how trust interacts with asset-based thinking and social learning experiences including: trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making, and empathy to support community engagement efforts.

This study views asset-based thinking and social learning as transformative in nature. Mertens (2007) notes that a transformative paradigm could provide a framework for research in social justice themes. Mertens (2007) further theorizes that these realities are constructed and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and racial/ethnic values. These are indicative of those of power and privilege are important determinants. Creswell (2014) notes that researchers often begin with issues of inequality, empowerment, domination, oppression, suppression, and alienation as focal points of their study. This qualitative exploratory study is on individuals involved in community engagement in the Midwestern area.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

The phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from psychosocial components in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2014). This qualitative exploratory

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approach uses methods of inquiry by conducting face-to-face interviews. Qualitative methods rely on text and image data, and have unique steps in data analysis (Creswell, 2014).

There are core characteristics of a qualitative research project according to Creswell (2014):

- Natural setting: Qualitative researchers ten for collecting data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study.
- Researchers as key instruments: Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants.
- Multiple sources of data: Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, audio-visuals is information rather than relying on a single data source.
- Inductive and deductive data analysis: Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing data into synthesizing more abstract units of information.
- Participants meanings: In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue

A design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants (Creswell, 2006). It can be seen as new methodology originating around the late 1980s and early 1990s based on work from individuals in diverse fields such as evaluations, education and management, sociology, and health sciences (Creswell, 2007).

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### SAMPLING STRATEGIES FOR INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

The purposive sampling process is an inquiry approach in the selection of potential candidates. The rationale for selecting candidates for this study evolved from an empirical perspective based upon our individual conceptions understanding of community activism. Each of the researchers lives and works within the selected communities; therefore, are identified as active civic members. Our professions include educators, counselors, non-profit community organizers and civic outreach proponents. The Interviewees comprise of various social service organizations identified as non-profit, education, and an integrated part of local communities regarding health, services, and growth. There are three predetermined, descriptive categories developed to group interviewee candidates:

1. Youth and Development- Defined as individuals who work with professionals that serve youth, adolescents and young adults.
2. Health and Environment - Individuals who are service providers in social service, non-profit community agencies that service area communities.
3. Community Development/Community Capacity Building - Individuals that are service providers in the industry of community development, small business owners and entrepreneurs.

This research selected interview candidates using a purposive and snowballing selection process. Initially 2-3 candidates were identified per researcher. Following this series of

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interviews, further samples are through a referral process of additional interviewees who meet the criteria for community agents. The objective is to obtain 3-5 additional suggestions for possible interviews from each initial interview in the listed criteria above. The following criteria set-forth the candidate interview pool.

Interviewee criteria is as follows:

1. Participants are involved in community-related activities: via social media, stakeholders, volunteerism, community social capital, etc.
2. Each participant is purposively assessed generally, as to how they have come to decide their role in community participation, their level of understanding of community assets as it relates to their professional field/occupation.
3. Demographically, the purposive candidates were chosen to represent the Midwestern area of St Louis, Missouri and the surrounding communities including Illinois. The identified Midwestern regions include various rural, suburban, and urban communities.

## **INTERVIEW PROCESS AND PROTOCOL**

The interview protocol lists the questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed. Patton (2015) notes that the guide provides subject areas for the interviewer to probe and ask questions that will highlight a particular subject. The interviewer is free to build a conversation within a particular

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subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with a focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined (Patton, 2015). Our interview protocol serves as the checklist ensuring the intended subject areas are addressed with consistency with all interviewees.

The interview protocol explores an asset-based thinking approach in the development of social learning experiences. Other topics include possible links between trauma-informed learning, meaning-making and empathy in relation to the social learning process.

During the interview process, the researcher conducted the following steps:

1. Prior to the interview, each community leader was prepped with the background of the research, and provided a sample set of questions to ensure clarity.
2. Interviews began with a brief introduction to the study.
3. Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities presented and signed.
4. Identified Community Location - Identified location of the Interviewee's understanding of their community.
5. Initiated interview questions.

The interview protocol line of questioning allowed the interviewer to ask the questions in succession while providing freedom to gather observations when the interviewee is sharing relevant examples. The description of the Interview Protocol is as

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follows:

A) Questions 1, 2 and 5 are about the importance of community reflections.

### **Community Engagement Trust and the Community Questions**

Let's start out with a little background information...

*[Show interviewee a map of the local area, Make a map accessible during the interview] make sure to draw connections to community consent form introduction to defining community. Please draw on map (L- live, W-work/engaged in)*

#### **Q1: What is your perception of your community?**

- *PQ: If so, where is that geographically?*
- *PQ: What community do you identify with?*
- *PQ: In what ways do you identify with your community?*
- *PQ: Are there any disconnects between you and your community?*
- *PQ: Is your community diverse in its attitudes, opinions and cultures?*
- *PQ: Please describe social events or activities that your community offers that may encourage participation.*

#### **PQ2: Have you ever had the opportunity to help nurture Trust in your community? What was the situation? Was it easy/difficult?**

- *PQ: Social change? outcomes, being a leader, did your activities bring out? Leadership qualities?*
- *PQ: What is the role of trust in your community?*

#### **Q5: What does trust look like in the community that you are involved in? PQ: how have you made it happen?**

- *PQ: Has this trust been cultivated across differences?*
- *PQ: How do you identify in your relationship with people who are different from you?*
- *PQ: Can you describe a time when you felt empathy for people who are different from you?*
- *PQ: How have these experiences influenced/affected your view of community?*
- *PQ: Can you ever give an example being included/excluded in your community?*

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B) Questions: 3, 7, 8, 9 focused on the individual's experiences and how they acknowledged trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making and empathy while being engaged in social learning processes.

[Being involved in one's community is an ongoing learning process]

**Q3: What motivated you to become active in your community?**

- *PQ: Share an example of your motivation.*
- *PQ: Did your advocacy bring out the outcome that you hoped?*
- *if trauma?*
- *PQ: What did you learn about yourself as a result of this program?*
- *PQ: Can you give an example of how this experience provides an opportunity for meaningful work in the future?*
- *PQ: Did you have leaders or partners that supported, motivated or guided you throughout this experience?*
- *PQ: Did this experience allow you an opportunity to generate trust (within yourself)?*

**Q7: What have you learned about yourself as a result of leading social change in your community?**

- *PQ: Has this example influenced your perception of yourself as a member of your community*
- *PQ: Has that learning process helped you?*
- *PQ: What is the most important thing that you learned?*
- *PQ: How has that transformed you?*
- *PQ: What causes you to be resilient in your efforts to be engaged in the community?*

**Q8: Do you believe that empathy plays an important role in community engagement?**

- *PQ: What are your reactions when a community member approaches you for help? What are your feelings?*
- *PQ: Do you believe empathy plays an important role in community engagement?*

**Q9: [Perceptions of trauma differ across ages, and community. Provide a list of possible examples: fire, flood, divorce, death of a pet, homeless, car crashes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, violent crimes, sounds of violence, victims of crime]**

- *Have you witnessed any life-threatening event or events that may have threatened harm in your community?*

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- *Have you ever been involved in a community that was unable to address their needs because they were so weighed down?*
- *Have you ever been involved in a community that was in deficit thinking, how did you respond, adopt an asset-based approach?*

C) Questions: Four and six further explore the understanding of advocacy and relationship building in community engagement.

*[Interviewer to Say: “When people are involved in solving problems, making decisions or creating plans, they typically develop a sense of commitment to a community”]*

**Q4: Describe a time when you brought attention to a particular need or advocated for an issue. How do you help make social change happen in your community? When you see something that needs to be changed, how do you make it happen? Or Earlier when...did you see change...?**

- *PQ: If so, can you describe your experience?*
- *PQ: If you had a chance to champion an issue in the community, what would that be?*
- *PQ: What influences you to be resilient in your efforts to be engaged in the community?*
- *PQ: How did your efforts lead to change?*

**Q6: As a community leader, how do you foster relationships of those who have opposing viewpoints, beliefs, and customs?**

- *PQ: What traits do you recognize to be necessary in developing Empathy across communities?*
- *PQ: Describe any professional development or informal training which may have influenced your community engagement leadership role.*
  - *PQ2.5: Share an example of an informal learning opportunity that has influenced your perception of your community?*
- *PQ: Was there ever a time that you failed?*
  - *PQ: What are the biggest challenges in your community to make this happen?*

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### DATA ANALYSIS

This qualitative analysis study identifies themes and single words that define the actions and characteristics of those engaged in a positive culture changing activities. This research group took an emic perspective on collection of qualitative codes and themes. Our metadata consists of recorded social conversations, physical interactions, accompanied by text narrations. This research addresses seven steps to approaching the analysis of qualitative data:

1. Organize and prepare data for analysis
2. Read and look at all the data
3. Coding
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis
5. Advance how the descriptions and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative
6. Interpretation in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007).

Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process (Table 3) will be utilized when identifying themes and descriptions. This is an essential first stage in researching the phenomenon. The researcher is strongly adhering the steps noted.

Overall, there were twenty-four interviews conducted throughout the Midwestern Region, which includes St. Louis County, St. Louis City, Franklin County, and St. Clair County (IL).

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Table 2

*Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process*

1. Get a sense of the whole.
2. Pick one document...ask the question, "What is this about?"
3. Create a list of topics generated from step 2.
4. Take the list and go back to the data. 4a. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text
5. Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other
6. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.
7. Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8. If necessary, recode your existing data

**Source:** Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

## RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity is through an exhaustive process of interviewing individuals who may display characteristics determined through a purposive process. This research group seeks saturation through a snowballing sampling process.

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### ETHICS AND HUMAN RELATIONS

Ethical issues encompass questions of how to protect research subjects during the research process. Ethical concerns need to be taken care of at each stage in the research, not only during the data collection process. Researchers need to protect research subjects, and develop a trusting relationship with them (Creswell, 2014). There was a minimal risk that participants might feel uncomfortable about being recorded. The group has an opinion on the role of trust in positive social outcome activities and has not been manipulated by the group for the sake of this research. The researchers believe that this information is valid to the study. The group reviewed UMSL's code of ethics and then submitted a proposal to, and obtained approval from, the UMSL Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In the interview process, the consent form was handed to the interviewee and thoroughly explained. The interviewees were told that they did not have to sign the form if they did not want to be a part of the study. Each researcher detailed the purpose of the study again in this stage. When each researcher interviewed a candidate the interview protocol was present in hand. Each researcher worked hard to avoid leading questions staying focused on the structured questions.

All interview results were coded and keeping the responses confidential protecting the anonymity of participants. While conducting the individual interviews with the selected respondents, the assignment of fictitious initials for use in their description

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and reporting the results. All study data, including the electronic files, interview tapes, and transcripts, will be kept in locked metal file cabinets in the researchers' office and destroyed after a reasonable period. Participants understand summary data will be disseminated to the professional community, but in no way; it will be possible to trace responses to individuals.

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### Chapter 4 Results

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LEADERS

Twenty-four community engagement advocates were interviewed. Genders ranged as 62.5% Female and 37.5% Male. The race of community leaders is identified as follows: 4.2% Asian, 37.5% African-American and 58.3% Caucasian. The identified age range produced a bell curve in results.

The design of the interview protocol analysis consists of face-to-face interviews of the participants residing in the Midwestern area. Interviewees are from St. Louis city and the surrounding counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Jefferson, Franklin and Warren, as well as Illinois counties of Saint Clair and Madison. The associated community demographics are reported as follows: Rural IL- 4.2%, Saint Clair County, IL- 20.8%, and Franklin, MO- 8.3%. St. Louis County, MO- 8.3%, St. Louis City, MO- 20.8% and those who identified with multi-Midwestern counties 37.5%. A majority of the interviewees identified with multi-counties showing that an outreach among community engagement is evident.

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Table 3

*Community Engagement Interview Participants*

Age(%)		18-25 (4.2%)	26-35 (12.5%)	36-45 (25%)	46-55 (37.5%)	56-65 (8.3%)	66-older (12.5%)
<b>Gender:</b>							
Female	63%	4%	8%	13%	25%	4%	8%
Male	38%	0%	4%	13%	13%	4%	4%
<b>Race:</b>							
African-American	38%	0%	0%	13%	17%	4%	4%
Caucasian	58%	0%	8%	13%	21%	4%	4%
Asian	4%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Education:</b>							
Some College	21%	4%	0%	13%	0%	4%	0%
College Degree	79%	0%	13%	13%	38%	4%	13%
Bachelors	50%	0%	11%	6%	22%	6%	6%
Masters	39%	0%	0%	11%	28%	0%	0%
Doctorate	11%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	6%

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Face-to face interviews allowed researchers the opportunity to observe intimate details such as body language and eye contact of interviewees during the interview process that revealed a wide range of emotion and energy. Utilizing the qualitative experience of the interview process, the interviewee's genuine passion and commitment in their role of community leadership was respected. Candidates elicited ranges of various reactions: *ah ha* moments, frustration, anger, hopelessness, to brief silences or pauses, to excitement, broad smiles and enthusiasm.

The interviewee's occupational roles are classified as one or more of the

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following: Youth & Adult Development, Health and Environment, and Community Development & Capacity Building. Data shows that 70.8% of the selected interviewees met requirements for all three predetermined occupational roles as a majority of 75% qualified for any two occupational roles. Purposive sampling strategies proved successful in reaching goals of over 91.6% of our interviewees working with community development and capacity building. By only having one interviewee who associated with only one of the three roles, we believe that the interviewee sampling has shown a successful representation of community involvement from our Interviews. The following table represents the interviewee predetermined selection criteria and the interviewees who identified with each role.

Table 4

*Interviewee Selection Criteria Categories, (N=24)*

<b>Youth &amp; Development</b>	<b>21/24</b>	<b>87.5%</b>
<b>Health and Environment</b>	<b>21/24</b>	<b>87.5%</b>
<b>Community Development &amp; Capacity Building</b>	<b>22/24</b>	<b>91.6%</b>
<b># Registered all 3 classification</b>	<b>17/24</b>	<b>70.8%</b>
<b># Registered at least 2 classifications</b>	<b>18/24</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b># Registered 1 classification</b>	<b>1/24</b>	<b>4.1%</b>

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Educational background was not a predetermined criterion in the selection of our interviewees, but noted in the post-analysis of each candidate's profile. As each interview progressed, valuing the qualitative approach, we magnified our attention to each attribute/asset that our interviewees encompassed. We determined that a well distributed bell curve ranging from GED (4.2%) , Associate Degree (4.2%), increasing to some college (16.7%) to the greatest amount of Bachelors (41.7%) then decreasing to graduate (25%) finally to doctoral level (8.3%). By Purposive sampling a substantiated educational background bell curve of our interviewees is measured.

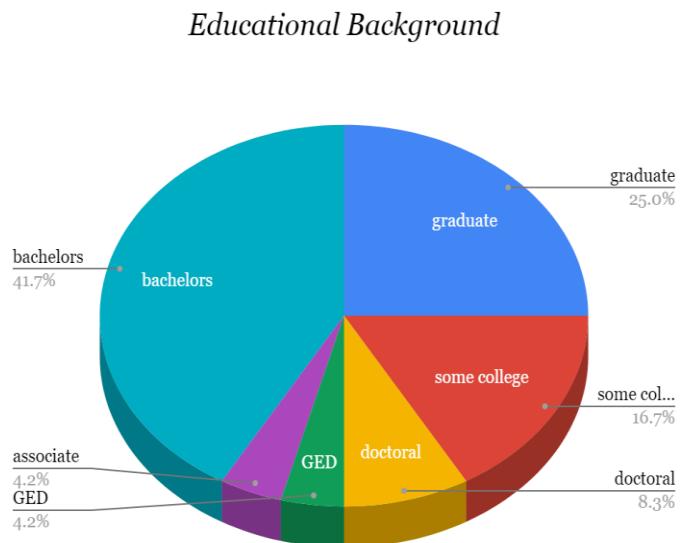


Figure 2. Community Leaders' Educational Background

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### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP THEMES

This group will present the interpretation of the interviewee's comments in five themes. It is also the intention when conducting face-to-face interviews that each participant was asked the same set of questions that focusing on how community leaders used asset-based thinking in community capacity building, expressed their understanding social learning and the relevance to trauma-informed practice, empathy, and logotherapy. Finally, the relationship of trust in all the processes that involve community leadership and engagement activities.

To summarize, the five themes that emerged from the data include:

Theme 1: Community leaders shared their experiences of being embedded in the community, illustrating how trust emerged through relationship building, reputations, trials and tribulations through the ongoing efforts of faith-based and civic organizations.

Theme 2: Community leaders identified the influences of trauma, meaning-making, and empathy to the inner-call of purposeful action in the community life.

Theme 3: Community leaders engage multi-generational residents in social learning experiences that foster trust to promote reflection, harness the power of collaboration and mentorship, and generate and sustain social change.

Theme 4: Community leaders implement community development projects that nurture the relational capacity of community members, help community residents co-invest in their own assets, and ignite the creative and often hidden potential of the community.

Theme 5: Trust is strengthened as community leaders open up and share their mistakes, as they advocate for and value diversity, and as they wholeheartedly pursue community well-being.

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### **Theme 1:**

Community leaders shared their experiences of being embedded in the community, illustrating how trust emerged through relationship building, reputations, trials and tribulations through the ongoing efforts of faith-based and civic organizations.

Leaders, directors, and volunteering individuals have identified with their communities and are embedded through their work. They describe having feelings of trust or a natural extension of trust as an important attribute to leadership when developing relationships with individuals within their community.

Truman, a life-long resident of a community, speaks to the many words of support and encouragement he frequently receives from his community's residents. He notes that at one- time in his life he was that individual who sold drugs and ran rampant through his community. Today he works to rebuild the community he once terrorized:

Yeah, they remember me like- wow remember what he used to be? You look at them now. So, it's like every time I go around people in the neighborhood and they see me- WOW! You are still doing it...that gives them hope that if I can do it, then they can do it. That's how I win my way over to get trust to the people and I don't set them up for promises that I can't keep. (Truman, personal communication, March 7, 2019)

This natural extension of trust allows a sense of empowerment to develop; a communication of support to individuals in the process of re-building community efforts. Embedded leaders noted this type of trust is at the center of civic engagement and relationship building. Gaye, a community partner of a non-profit, works to bridge

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community youth-to-civic involvement speaks to the role of building trust through youth engagement:

Here I am asking these teens who have not had prior experiences who do not have prior teaching experiences to represent the Zoo in this way. I think that because I have trust in them, they do take it seriously, they understand that responsibility. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Angelou, a life-long volunteer, also similarly noted when discussing the topic of relationship building:

However, to them this is showing me that giving a little bit of trust [to them] is like taking a leap on the moon. This fact that you picked them. (Angelou, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

In both notations, the strength of partnership and the affording of trust created the sense of empowerment further strengthening the relationship building process.

When the interviewees were asked the question: What does trust look like in your community? Many expressed a positive reputation that often preceded the person or the organization. These leaders also spoke to the existence of trust in their community or the “identity of trust.” Identity of trust phrases a natural inclination of an individual to acknowledge trust for a person or for an organization due to their established reputation or integrity.

Jones, a community volunteer, has spent most of her life working with youth in her community. She expressed that they have had a successful working relationship with individuals and organizations who had a positive community-effort reputation that preceded them. Jones notes her feelings of how this trust gives her a sense of comfort.

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So, I feel like this is what this trust that I've built in these different communities can allow me to just relax more and not be so guarded about everything and what people think because if I feel confident in that I trust people are like me and just kind of relax until someone gives me a reason not to relax (Jones, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Jackson, a life-long resident, business operator, and volunteer, empathized with the life-decisions of parents in their community when struggles pertained to the welfare of their children and family:

They come from poverty situations and different family dynamics and I think about the trust it takes for those parents and all parents to leave their kids in my care and in the care of camp. (Jackson, personal communication, February 28, 2019)

Interviewees spoke to the trials and tribulations when trust was lacking in their community. Communities that continually have been overlooked for years by local and state agencies for solutions to sustainable improvements to rebuilding schools, affordable housing options, employment opportunities perpetrated this demoralized narrative. In addition, the greater fight against drug addiction and gun violence seemed to over-shadow these pillared-needs of the community.

Morris, an elder in a local mosque, related this degradation of the local social-economic fabric to the lack of trust. He notes that this lack of trust is attributed to individuals and organizations who failed to keep their promises in community rebuilding efforts. This is a message repeated by other embedded leaders as well. This lack of trust is also often voiced as an old narrative echoing from one generation to another. Several interviewees had the same message as it relates to this lack of trust.

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Morris speaks to this degradation:

And there is a lack of trust there because of socioeconomic issues, renting, and things of that nature. You know they see things like expired tags, that's kind of a big deal! Right now, I am reading about that grass not being cut and things of that nature. (Morris, personal communication, April 1, 2019)

Aretha, a community member and volunteer, speaks to her perception of trials and tribulations as it relates to trauma and community degradation:

When a housing complex is being torn down...you know it brings to my thoughts from an outsider looking... who would want to live in that rundown place! That place was somebody else's home who was evicted! A home is home! (Aretha, personal communication, March 14, 2019)

Angelou also expresses that there can be a lack of trust building when a community member or organization does not keep their commitment.

So, I would say when you say about the word trust and when I think about trust it's sometimes it's hard to trust people when they say they're going to do things and then they don't follow through with that. (Angelou, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

She continues to state the idea of “doing what you said you were going to do” was often others interviewed. Angelou stated further, Trust is showing up; you know what I mean? They trust me to show up. (Angelou, personal communication, March 30, 2019)

Finally, faith-based and civic organizations have long represented the community-based values of its members. The institutions are centers for community residents to gleefully gather, share their stories, and offer support to each other. The loss of these institutions can have a negative impact on the strength of a

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community.

Twain, a juvenile detention center employee, expressed there is a relationship between trust, community and one's religious faith. He believed that losing a local church would further add to the decline of their community. The loss of a faith-based organization always affects a community under stress.

I think churches are a big factor. You know that [the churches] are receptive to people and are [the churches] are receptive to many folks. They have a tendency to look out for you and the community. I have community members come to the church and express that they want to church to stay in the community. (Twain, personal communication, March 15, 2019)

### **Theme 2:**

Community leaders cultivated trust through their understanding of trauma, their ability to build empathetic relationships, and their pursuit of meaningful action.

First, interviewees were asked to define trauma and then give an example of how they perceived trauma in their community or how trauma affected their community.

Interviewees were also asked how a community could heal from trauma. Because of the questions, trauma was broadly defined with a common belief that it is considered cognitive and long lasting. As noted by one interviewee:

But when your brain has been exposed to so much and so when you see somebody get shot on your street or when you are walking to school and there's a dead body over there in the alley...this affects you. (Lewis, personal communication, February 24, 2019)

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Subsequently, others noted that the lack of resources and perpetuating poverty drives a trauma effect. One interviewee noted that his neighbor is so poor that if a person were to bring home new TV, precautions were needed to keep it from being stolen.

I am living in the zone where I have to have security bars to my door and to my windows when I look out my bedroom window. (Lewis, personal communication, February 24, 2019)

This individual went on to note:

You got something new like a TV you have to bring it home under the cloak of darkness and you can't put the new empty TV box to the curb for the trash man for fear that the neighbors would find out that you have a new TV and break into your home to steal it. (Lewis, personal communication, February 24, 2019)

Children were the ones noted as most often taking the brunt of trauma experiences. The perpetuating cycle of murder, drugs, guns, and lack of resources creates a sustaining effect on children. Interviewees noted that more often than not, those who grew up, experience trauma in the community, and lived their adult lives in the community, often knew no difference to their culture and trauma; therefore, lived the life that they were frightened of as a child.

And then the next step is understanding that traumatic events can have a serious impact for people, which can lead to substance abuse/use, mental disorders, and physical illness. (White, personal communication, February 28, 2019)

*Community leaders empathize with others to facilitate purposeful actions.*

Community leaders identified empathy as an active agent of trust that facilitated

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the growth and development among directors, community activists, teachers, social service providers. Empathy traits were identified from the data when equating life experiences among community members.to facilitate meaningful relationships. These traits exemplified in the data by the interviewees as expressed a *call to action* and advocacy in their community for not simply empathetic but altruistic values. Social service directors and community leaders often expressed various traits essential to cultivating trust in relationships. Empathy was identified as independent of purpose in community engagement. While conversely seen as a helpful tool. One interviewee responded to questions of empathy's role in community engagement.

Yes, [Empathy] if the faith would give you empathy, even without the faith, some people have enough empathy to get out there and do things for others... Yeah, it's key. It is paramount. (Twain, personal communication, March 15, 2019)

Individuals appear to be strongly influenced by these concepts for formulating trust. Empathy appears to be a tool utilized by community experts as the “ice-breaker” for trust. “A personal situation, something that they've gone through, or they're worried about, or whatever. That is easy to empathize with. (Berry, personal communication, April 2, 2019) Additionally, Community leaders shared how important it was for others to be listening and understanding which included examples of how it helps with identifying and respecting differences.

A situation can make different people feel different ways and being open to the interpretation of the situation. You cannot argue with someone feeling different ways about a situation, you have to be open to listening. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

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Community leaders shared how listening and understanding further enhanced empathy, for improved community social and business relations.

I think you have to have an understanding first, which is what empathy is. So I think empathy is important because a lot of times the people who have a lot of power over the community are the ones who need the most change, who are not the people that live there, or might not have the right investment. So there has to be a level of understanding, there has to be a vehicle that is a shared [pause] vision...So again I think you being awareness and understanding are two different things... Awareness is the first step, and then go beyond that for empathy. (Carver, personal communication, February 25, 2019)

Individuals often shared an immediate desire for investing in the community, yet often placed the importance on others and not self. Empathy expressed in several interviews led to an enhanced awareness of the individual and their ability to empower others in the community. Board certified mental health clinician, and community leader shared the importance of beliefs and empathy in the community:

I believe that just having a philosophy that nobody is the same, and everybody has their place in the community. And not feeling like you know I am necessarily the expert you know everybody has their own skill set and assets to bring to any situation. (White, personal communication, February 25, 2019)

The *blending* of purpose and empathetic skills provided community leaders with ability to be genuine while seeking to engage others. Interviewees was asked to explain empathy. Once explained, they realized that empathy was used subconsciously in all of their efforts. One Interviewee, a supervisor at Midwestern Juvenile Center, furthered addressed the importance of projecting empathy in multicultural setting to build trust.

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While working here I deal with more African-Americans than Caucasians, probably ...Where I started, they [African-Americans in the facility] may not have respect for me because of what they know of white people. So I have to I get on the same page with them, earn some respect, give them respect, and then it just goes good from there usually...all those cases that are different than yourself that you can relate to them. And so you see what they need, and try to help them with that. That is going outside of those boxes that exist in some similar situation like with me dealing with kids of the opposite color.  
(Twain, personal communication, March 15, 2019)

Continuing the pursuit of trust, review of the responses from the interviews was consistent with the theme of the call *to action* or *sense of advocacy* in community engagement. These responses were often supported by *just doing what is right* or compassion for their community valued- response. However, responses to other questions of community values, identity, and perceptions yielded answers consistent with influences of community engagement were often shared to be inspired by spiritual, philosophical, and faith or trust concepts. One community member identified how spiritual you beliefs is blended with community identity. “I would say I grew up in that spirit of community, they were very involved in our community, both city and county church” (Gladys, personal communication, April 11, 2019)

Questions that sought exploration of the individual’s values of themselves, perceptions of community, and learning experiences consistent with social learning often involved “moral, faith, spiritual, and philosophical” beliefs that influence their actions. This reinforced the message of “purposeful action”.

Merely existing or merely pulling something together, that is not

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benefiting the community at all. Make it a sense of purpose. The spiritual side of me is how I really cannot evaluate the whole situation. And what I mean by that is. The purpose of the destiny that God put in my heart for this (action).... So that is the fulfillment for me. (White, personal communication, February 28, 2019)

Another community member equated the importance of self-discovery and meaning-making which leads to pride and fulfillment.

I have a sense of [self] what I have learned about myself, is that I have a sense of pride to my larger community and that is to African-Americans. For example, I know that I could be [living] in better places. But at the same time, I know that my experience culturally would be differently. I know that one day, Hey, I might have to move just for my grandchild to be in a really good school district because people don't care about St. Louis School District. You know, for real. At the same time, I know if I can make it work within my community that is where I feel a sense of comfort. So I just learned that being what I am and what I am is really important to me. So you know, I get offended when people ask me why don't I move out to the county and I might well for the same reasons why should I move from the city? You know the question I throw the back on them. You know, I just think that the same services and the same qualities should be provided everywhere because all our money is green. (Carver, personal communication, February 25, 2019)

Elements of purpose and purposeful actions were utilized in the interviews and later identified upon evaluation of the research data. Influences of “spiritual” and *fulfillment* were answered in other questions regarding community influences. Identity of the individual, awareness of community, and how it influences an individual’s desire to engage echoed meaning *to action* through belonging to the community. Finding purposeful action in community engagement was response provided when answered. An

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Early Childhood Learning Center Director shared what it meant to be active in community:

You know, I think it is imperative. I think that is what we are here for. We are here to be with others, to be engaged with others. So I can't imagine not being active [in the community]. (Jones, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Additionally, influences of “finding purpose” in community was helpful in career guidance:

Well it is very different in the sense of we all come from different places. We all have different backgrounds that sort of thing and we all chose to be in that community... we are all there for the purpose of like finding our careers finding what we are passionate about that sort of thing. (Davis, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

Finding purpose in engagement was utilized by International Neuropsychologist when reflecting on her motivations for engagement from a scientific level to personal meaning:

Neuroscience, I was always interested in the way of how we think as a human being. And counseling. As I was going along with neuroscience, I realized that things that really mattered to us in life, especially relationships and their competence. Almost all of our own identity, and the value of the meaning. All of the important things which makes us happy. All of those things are difficult to say at the level of neurological. And I [think] those are the things that determine the quality of life in this work. I personally experienced a lot of challenging, and I went through a lot of therapy myself. And eventually, I realized that this is a universal need. (Truman, personal communication, March 7, 2019)

The blending of empathy and purposeful action was also linked with spiritual influences

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for meaning-making relationships. Having a spiritual influence of empathy was shared by one community member in understanding empathy.

I would have to say as a summary of everything that I've actually said it's actually putting yourself in a person, position or visualize that person, um, situation...Well, I can't say I really sympathize because I haven't been in that actual situation. But I can say that I have empathy. Just like, you know, we served the same God; maybe we do not serve the same God. Still, we are a community, still warm in the eyes of God. But the fact is, you may be on a different path or this, that and another, but I could have empathy. (Jackson, personal communication, March 3, 2019)

From this spiritual understanding, purposeful action is defined in the community. Clark, Midwestern advocate for social justice stated “The purpose, the destiny that God put in my heart for this. He has allowed. Needed these to sustain. Because, I've I feel personally the need to be doing this job.” (Clark, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Purposeful action often influenced the need for “radical empathy” and community efforts. Finding meaning for purposeful actions were often paramount in addressing sensitive topics such as race relations in the community.

Just generally being very interested in being less racist today than I was yesterday, right, this has been a big motivation. I spend my time behind the camera in black-led spaces, I spend my time listening when black folks are talking, there's another aspect of that civil rights work that we call “white folks work” by engaging our cousins (all the white people in the world) to become less racist. As a good Irishmen, I will take an argument just about any day of the week, sometimes it is very gentle and sometimes it is not. Sometimes it is in person, sometimes online, through the work that I am doing, in whatever form it takes. I've been part of the group called the Black Lives Matter Racist Comment Response Team, which was very active from 2014-

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2016/2017, there was a semi-organized group that would go into comment sections, like STL-Today, and we would just do battle with the craziest racists. It would not be the assumption that we could change the minds of those people; it was so that those who stumbled upon the section would see that the comment section was not succeeded by the racists. (Ross, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Community leaders from the research demonstrated an awareness of multigenerational traumatic influences in the community, and the need to repair those relationships through understanding, which led to radical empathetic efforts in order to foster a foundation for meaning-making action.

### **Theme 3:**

Community leaders engage multi-generational residents in social learning experiences that foster trust to promote reflection, harness the power of collaboration and mentorship, and generate and sustain social change.

Through this theme, social learning opportunities serve as a vehicle that positively influences participants in a variety of ways. Being engaged with social learning experiences offer opportunities for community participants to develop trust through their interaction with the experience. To factor in social learning as an example of demonstrating trust, young adult participants distribute a level of trust towards the facilitator(s) leading them through their program or experience. They also show trust towards their fellow peers participating in these experiences with them collaboratively.

One community leader interviewed has extensive experience with at-risk young adults from the St. Louis community, who upon joining their social learning opportunity struggle to demonstrate trust. Interviewee “Wonder” facilitates a program for local young

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adults that engages participants about science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) topics, trains them to be able to teach in partnership with local elementary schools, and offers experiences within a social learning environment. This program provides a positive, productive, safe environment for young adult participants and allows trust to be developed and sustained because of this experience. Wonder describes how some of these participants first began the program and their struggles with trust.

Yeah, we have had teens who do not have very stable home lives and they do not trust people very much. They lack trust when they get here but the whole atmosphere here allows them to feel safe and related and it allows them to be themselves. (Wonder, personal communication, March 20, 2019)

Interviewee “Green” works predominantly with at-risk young adults through non-profit allowing participants a safe, creative outlet for self-expression. Green shared a moving story about one of their student participants and their powerful ability to trust despite trauma and loss.

We met a 24-year-old who came in as one of the artists, he had eleven losses in his life already and since we have known him since November I believe, he has had three more losses. I do not want to single him out because he is an example of someone who has suffered personal loss repeatedly as a young person, a young adult and is still able to care and love and express love and want love and want to help even while he walks through the city fearful of violence. So even people that are so traumatized and in pain are extremely capable of trusting people they have never met, it is incredible. (Green, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Another interviewee, “Gaye”, facilitates a social learning and leadership program for young adults in the local community. Gaye’s experience with young adult participants

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and their level of trust because of their time with the program has a similar impact as Wonder and Green's experiences.

They come from poverty situations and different family dynamics and I think about the trust it takes for those parents and all parents to leave their kids in my care and in the care of camp. For some of them, they have been [here] before and may already feel comfortable, but for those kids who are here on a scholarship, this might not feel like a safe place for them because they may not see the world as a comfortable or safe place. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Gaye mentions trust in relation to the parents trusting this program with their children.

This interviewee talked through some additional categories of trust dynamics that play a part as it relates to this social learning opportunity.

When it comes to our teen volunteers, I think about the trust I put into them to step it up when they are here. Many times, they have not had a job or have not had to be responsible in a professional environment before. I am trusting them to listen to our training, to step up and be a part of the adult counselor team and to do their very best...Here I'm asking these teens who have not had prior experiences, who don't have prior teaching experiences to represent [us] in this way. I think that because I have that trust in them, they do take it seriously, they understand that responsibility. With the counselors I also think of the trust I have in them, I get to empower the hands-on, front line counselors who are going to be mentors for kids in our programs.  
(Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Different layers of trust affect not only the participants directly, but also those connected to the participants, the leaders who facilitate these programs and individuals who benefit from the experience as a result. Having programs that offer social learning opportunities especially for young adults creates trust for an audience that may not have access or an understanding of how trust can affect them.

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Interviewee “Charles” works with young adults in social and formal learning environments, and is an active social justice leader within the St. Louis community. Charles mentions how essential it is for their young adult students to have opportunities to demonstrate the trust they have developed through their experiences.

In the photography class I’m teaching now, I think there’s a growing degree of trust among the students/apprentices. When their peers are photographing them, there is a level of trust that their vulnerability will not be violated. That may be a little thing but there is a heightened sensitivity to that for high school especially. (Charles, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

In addition to trust being fostered as a direct result of social learning experiences, multiple interviewees mentioned the importance of collaboration and mentorship as essential parts of these experiences. This research highlights multiple examples justifying the power of collaboration and mentorship because of community leaders facilitating social learning experiences.

There's not that many of us here, but I think everyone needs to get real and we need to listen to the young people. My role is the unconditional love for them even if I do not understand everything and even if I know they can do better. (Green, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

While Green’s message demonstrates a bond and level of support for participants, they also are advocating for them to be heard. Collaboration and mentorship establish trust, empathy, and relationships that may not have formed without this environment or opportunity. Many participants in these programs are at-risk young adults seeking an outlet for safety, relationship building and support. Interviewee Wonder highlights how important relationships have been for one particular individual, who struggles with

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behavioral issues at school.

Some of the other teens help offer to support just as much of the adults do. There was a teen a couple of years ago who didn't trust anyone when he arrived here and it really helped that there were other teens who were good role models for him here. Some of those teens have graduated now but just the fact that they supported him and were respectful, they did not make fun of him and that helped him so much over time to become more trusting. He had no behavioral issues here.  
(Wonder, personal communication, March 20, 2019)

Gaye mentioned what an impact relationship has on participants throughout their program and experiences together, helping participants to become leaders after this program.

They say the people that become their life-long friends are the people they meet here, not in school. The relationships they make here allow them when they go to college to keep being the leader or to start being a leader because they know they are not the only one. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

“Clemens” shares how the right group of people gathered can make for an impactful difference.

I think we have to start spreading the word. So, I think it is important that you find that people can make changes happen. I think that is part of the process. But there has to be more than just saying this is a good cause or a need this needs to change. I think gathering people together who also share those beliefs and coming out with what can we do to make things better. (Clemens, personal communication, March 10, 2019)

Many of these experiences foster group participation and allows the opportunity for

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those participating to work together in a diverse group. Green shares a reflection about the influence the participants have not only on each other, but in regard to the facilitators also.

Maybe using this as a platform to help some of our younger adults mature and having our community as a whole play a part in that. Because we do have many different ages here. We have many different backgrounds. I think the mentorship that naturally happens in this environment because it is what we fostered as a group. I would say we're improving the lives of our younger generation coming up through us. I think there's so much we can learn from each other. And I think we affects people socially more so than we know. And that goes both directions. These guys have influenced me tremendously.  
(Green, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

Interviewee Wonder mentions the benefit of the program they facilitate lasting multiple years, allowing for stronger relationships to be established. Having staff facilitators actively developing relationships with participants assists everyone involved while also increasing the success of the program.

One of the great benefits with this program is that we have them for four years so you are able to really have a relationship with the teens and even if they switch components or get a different supervisor, they know all the staff and know they are mentors. (Wonder, personal communication, March 20, 2019)

These programs and experiences offer benefits not only to the participants, but also provide ongoing support to the community. One of the questions asked as part of the interview, "How do you make social change happen in your community," falls within both social learning and meaning-making themes. This question allows the interviewee

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an opportunity to reflect on an action or perspective empowering them to make social change happen within their community. Interviewee “Robinson”, who works with young adults in an outdoor social learning program, speaks to perspective leading to social change in the community.

Across communities, positivity is one thing, something that you can bring, positivity, warmth, openness and energy. Enthusiasm is a way to categorize that energy, and there's probably a lot of other ways.

Bringing that with me into a lot of different situations can help... inspire social change, at least helping people to be a little more excited or curious about what's going on. Bringing in a positive outlook, an adventurous style, and an openness. (Robinson, personal communication, March 8, 2019)

As a follow-up to this question, interviewees were asked about seeing their community as an agent for social change. Facilitated social learning opportunities that all interviewees lead have direct connections with the local community. Many spoke very highly about their communities, sharing traits and attributes about the individuals and dynamics that make-up what they define as their community as an agent for social change.

I think that there are so many communities and there are so many awesome, like truly awe-giving things going on with people, what they can do, skills and personal traits that they bring, and some of these are really quiet people and you never learn about what they are doing, but there are some really energized people out there moving things along, some are yelling to big groups of people, some are leaders and some are doing their own thing but may be leading in a way. There are so many different diverse types of people in a given community, even in a small one, there is someone working on a different angle, so if you

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have one goal or a problem you're trying to solve, the communities I'm a part of are effective because there is a lot of people coming to an issue with a different angle or thought. That whole ecosystem of a community that combined can really move things along for social change and it can play out in ways you don't recognize all the time, it is cool. (Robinson, personal communication, March 8, 2019)

Working very closely within the St. Louis city community, Green notes improvements in the St. Louis community despite previous traumatic events.

I think St. Louis is doing better since Michael Brown actually, much better. There are 16,000 nonprofits in St. Louis, a sign that people are wanting to help our community. There's a realization that it is better together even if that doesn't happen, people are starting to realize that the disparity is bringing everyone, the entire region down. Even if they do not care or think it does not affect them it does, it affects everyone, and I think that's finally coming to life. (Green, personal communication, March 11, 2019)

St. Louis was also noted as a real starting point and setting an example for change within a community.

Right now, I think the St. Louis region/Ferguson is ground zero, a real starting point for international discussion. I see change that I think is generally for the better. I'm hoping there's some light at the end of the tunnel, but gotta wait ya know. (Charles, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

As the St. Louis community is experiencing positive change, Charles also explains how trust goes beyond the social learning opportunities themselves. This community itself is having trust at the forefront of the challenges and successes as more individuals participate in community-related action and support.

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Through other events ... you literally do see people have each other's back. When further trauma comes up, death of a loved one, there's quite often trauma piled onto trauma, whether it is folks providing shelter, housing, food, you see good chunks of the protest family taking care of each other. There's parts of that that allow a lot of that work continue that otherwise would not have without trust. (Charles, personal communication, March 21, 2019)

These research questions also validate observations [as well as] the effect of behavior change on individuals in social learning environments. The following two interviews were with facilitators working with young adults in the St. Louis community, in informal learning environments. Both facilitators share effective examples of behavior change from participants over time as a direct result of these social learning experiences, mentorships with staff, members of the community, and fellow young adult participants.

Yeah, I see things over time. We have done a couple of surveys over the course of the year. We do alumni reunions occasionally; we invite any former members and we do an open mic format where they can share what they are up to. They often talk about how their volunteer time has helped them, how it has become such a part of their life and they learned so much. Sometimes they make a change in their high school, they might start a green team, then when they get to college, they are blown away by the fact that there is no recycling. I think they really see themselves as agents of change once they leave here and go somewhere else... When they leave here and become a leader, I don't know if they could do that without this kind of opportunity or support. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Results gathered from these interviews support that social learning can manifest throughout themes by demonstrating trust as a vital result of these opportunities, the importance of mentorship and collaboration, and that generating and sustaining social

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change is an attainable outcome because of social learning.

### **Theme 4:**

Community leaders that implement successful community development projects nurture the relational capacity of community members, help community residents co-invest in their own assets, and ignite the creative and often hidden potential of the community.

Firstly, local community leader explains his efforts of adapting an “inside-out” community-based approach for implementing community development projects that nurture the relational capacity of community members. Results from an interview of former city official discuss his role and principal goal of neighborhood transformation by “community building.” Former city official describes significance of project to build senior citizen facility and grocery store as a historical accomplishment between Department of Housing, Urban Development, and private developers. One local community leader said:

One particular personal achievement that I am really proud of during my appointment as city manager for the City of St Louis, involved my efforts to organize a plan to build a senior citizen facility in St. Louis. The lack of senior housing was a major crisis in the city, therefore it was evident to consider building a senior only facility called Jazz. The facility was named Jazz @ Walter Circle included 74 state-of-the-art senior citizen units located at 12th and Bond Avenue. This was a private public partnership with the housing authority, private developers experimenting with creative financing options new market tax credits, and some public housing dollars. Results from a case study indicated a need to build a subsidized senior only facility with a retail component attached. (Lewis, personal communication, February 24, 2018)

Second, local community leader explains his rationale for leaving a very

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successful career as a Chief Operating Officer (COO) of a \$15 million dollar company, only to follow his dreams and passion of serving in multiple roles and making a difference in his local community. Local community leader elaborates on his mission and vision with Habitat for Humanity, a local grassroots organization that brings families, volunteers and resources together to build simple, decent, and affordable housing in low income areas.

Giving up the job as a construction executive, I was the Chief Operating Officer for a \$15 million dollar construction company, and to work in middle management for a non-profit has been part of taking the things that I've learned in my construction career into the community. I used some of the skills I learned about energy efficiency to work with Habitat for Humanity as a design consultant for energy efficiency of their homes. I spent six years on their board, of the St. Louis Artists Guild for some time and began to show art again. That launched my career with Habitat Construction. Habitat Construction was my day job. I attended community-planning meetings at night because I knew this was making a difference that was a positive impact, sharing what I know. Sharing things like energy efficiency, construction and sustainability experience, sharing that with the community. (Charles, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Third local community leader mentioned his desires to partner with other local grassroots organizations to combat some of the social ills that residents face on a daily basis.

This is one of the most distressed neighborhoods in the whole entire city. We have the highest crime rate in the city. We have the highest murder rate in the city, burglaries carjacking, and overdoses. Now, we are partnering with Operation Food search, my organization is Community Reconnect, and I'm connecting with the Wellston Luke CNC group. We do have the city St. Louis LRA doing vacant lots and

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trying to create a youth council, a teen council. I'm also partnering with the Story Stitches. Story Stitches is young group of teenagers that come from different parts of the city. There is 14 maybe 15 of them and they're all spread out to different parts of the city plagued with violence. They come in and they sing, help out with poetry. (Morris, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

The fourth community leader explains his experience of transitioning from former NCAA All-American Division 1 football player, captain, Butkus Award winner (Best Defensive Player in Division I Football), and former National Football League Player to pursue his entrepreneurial ambitions of co-investing in David Trucking and Bob Construction Company, LLC. Local community leader took advantage of his leadership skills and experience from the football field by applying them to the business arena co-investing and creating jobs in the local community where he grew up and attended school.

It was an easy decision for me to locate my business in the same community where I was born and raised. I understand wholeheartedly the sense of urgency to bring jobs to the city and help rebuild the crumbling infrastructure in E St Louis. After playing college and professional football, I decided to follow my passion to become an entrepreneur and owner David Trucking and Bob Construction Company LLC., which is located in E. St Louis, Illinois. My company has completed a lot of projects in St Clair County, Madison County, Peoria, and Bloomington area as well. But mostly do work in E St Louis, Belleville, Fairview Heights, and Dupo. We also do a lot of work out of town. I made the conscious decision to locate my business in E St Louis although, it was evident that I probably would have made more profit if I had relocated in another area. (Baker, personal communication, March 18, 2018)

Fifth community leader elaborates on his track record for building trust in the community and his role managing funds allocated for local teen summer jobs.

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I think like five or six businesses put in five six thousand dollars apiece to sponsor these jobs for these teenagers but they didn't want to do it with the city. So they asked if we would be the fiscal agent and that we would handle the money and pay out the money. Wow. Because they trusted us not to say I don't know what they are but I know what happened in the past or whatever the track record. But they said we will deposit this money into the account and you guys will handle it pay out the checks to the students when they turn in their time cards and all that. And so the city partnered with us to get the kids to hire the kids give them jobs throughout the community where they will work and when they turn to the time sheets and stuff and we would issue their checks and then make sure that taxes were paid. They just gave us the grant money. (Clemens, personal communication, March 10, 2019)

Local community leader has a mission and vision for attracting potential new businesses to relocate into community, invest in new business ventures, and manage existing properties in area more resourcefully. Leader discusses plan to maximize scarce community resources to stimulate local economy.

Yes so it's not so much trying to bring businesses and it's looking more at who's already in North County who might want to open a business. Who might have entrepreneurial spirit and resources readily available for them, just as a business can come in, it can go out. But if you're living in the region are you're more apt and prone to keep your business there longer hire people from within the region. And the big thing that we're looking at now is one of our assets is not only on land in North County but the empty shop and same stores because there are ways to grow food indoors and with the new medical marijuana law and dispensaries and the processing places. There are ways to grow that indoors. And if you can you know align some of these empty big box stores that have left and nothing's happening with them there's no job activity no economic development no taxation or anything happening. (Berry, personal communication April 2, 2018)

Jones explains the advantages of living in small communities allows local residents to surround themselves with supportive and caring people to create a network of

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shared responsibility. Leader elaborates on the importance of developing inclusive community development initiatives that connect sub-communities.

Community to me would be the people you surround yourself with. That would mean your work community family, friends, and neighbors. You know I think within a geographical or logistic community there are many sub-communities. That's kind of what I'm talking about. Those are the kind of people that you keep around you. That would be what I would consider community. (Jones, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Local community leader identified three hidden treasures that promote city as an excellent place to live, in addition to devoted organizations that have genuine care about the success of community, low cost of living, and low property tax.

My perception of it is its very active. There are lots of organizations that are very devoted and entrenched to the success of the community. I work here in Union so I observed the same thing and I visit many of the other communities in the county. So I observed similar traits. Each of those communities you consider Franklin County maybe as your working community or less so community. I think the cost of living is less than if you lived in a more urban area. I mean I think that's been proven. Taxes real estate taxes those types of things are less I'm not sure how us. Sure. To add to that so. (Berry, personal communication, April 2, 2019)

Local resident elaborates on American Legion Organization as a placed based asset in community for promoting values and purpose of community to residents through reciprocity and connectivity. Berry described the American Legion as:

Well, the sons of American Legion is a very active organization in our local community. We take it very seriously our purpose of promoting the community and Americanism for the betterment of the community. That's why I want to be here. But we do. We do various fundraisers throughout

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the year. We do a real big one in August that started as a fundraiser for Sarcoma Association because one of the Deputy Sheriffs died up there. The organization sponsors marathons. We also do fish fries. You know we just had a 5k run that. You have parades. We participate in prayer every time that there's a parade. We didn't sponsor the parade; usually the city puts it on or the Chamber of Commerce. (Berry, personal communication, April 2, 2019)

Reciprocity and connectivity seem to lie at the heart of theme four approaches, with people coming together around a common interest. Theme 4 was seen to be “citizen-led” and driven by the community thus acknowledging and building on what already exists and focusing more upon people and not services. There was also a strong emphasis upon co-production that is, working with communities as well as within communities. The American Legion serves as an important community asset where connections or links to assets toward not only reducing culture of dependency upon statutory services but also improving the quality of life.

### **Theme 5:**

Trust is strengthened as community leaders respond empathetically and share their mistakes, as they advocate for and value diversity, and as they wholeheartedly pursue community well-being.

Each of the interviewees meet criteria composed by the research team demonstrating active community engagement participation. First, community leaders are motivated by empathy and are able to attempt to foster trust among community members and apply asset-based thinking skills.

I see the needs; I have the compassion for the people. 1) to always

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make it better and 2) to make it better for my children and everyone that I know. (Turner, personal communication, March 18, 2019)

Community leaders apply empathetic mindsets to evaluate communities and problem solve. Community engagement is most effective when trust is nurtured and people feel comfortable enough to reach out and ask for help.

Being responsive to people's needs, seeing where they are, giving them the information, they need to get them beyond and barriers can help to nurture trust. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Reflections on experiences of our community leaders often exposed personal mistakes that could be viewed as a weakness in judgement.

I am an addict. I used alcohol and drugs to get what I wanted...was it manipulative, yes! Today, acknowledging that I am an alcoholic/addict and that I have turned my life around, those around me see that I am a person of my word. They can trust that I will do what I say and act as I need to in order to better our lifestyles. (Turner, personal communication, March 18, 2019)

Reflections on past mistakes helped our community leaders to better plan for the future in pursuing community well-being. In organizing an event for the first time, Davis recognized a dire need for a new path in her leadership. The community did not have the resources for homelessness. Davis found this out while hosting a community sleep in and conference at the local high school for supporting awareness directed towards those in need: addiction, poverty, lack of education, medical attention and behavioral counseling. It was through Davis' efforts that diversity in well-being was associated to create a social awareness to a community in need.

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I did not have the answers for this young lady. I could not help her, personally- but I knew the people who are attending in the booths, I was able to find the resources to help her. Even though I did not know anything about homelessness, I have had no personal experience, even knowing a homeless person, I could find people to help us. By willing to listen to others, I was able to make better informed decisions.

(Davis, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

Second, during asset-based thinking the community leader utilizes their personal relationships as motivation in pursuing community well-being. A community-based, asset-thinking approach begins with the knowledge of the physical attributes that a community can offer.

Location, location, location. We are in a prime spot for the location. I think that over the years, I perceived that sometimes the leadership has not made us, put us in a progressive position to make some positive things happen, and so because of that we've kind of got left behind.

(Clemens, personal communication, March 10, 2019)

Clemons reflected that he was part of the problem in the past, but has adjusted his frame of thought and moved forward within his community. Clemons along with other community leaders demonstrated being knowledgeable about their surroundings and that they wholeheartedly are pursuing the possibilities of community engagement.

The power to address social justice issues among community members was a call to action for Isley. An African-American woman, Isley stood in protest on highways and in the midst of danger. She admits that in the past she viewed poorer African-American people as, "...well, that's their problem, they don't work, they steal, and what do you expect?" Empathy and better research led Isley to turn her thoughts around. Isley

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works with colleagues who head research teams that investigate local housing, local merchants, local school funding, and local healthy food resources. Isley recognizes the power of local economic support and development:

So, for me one this is where I grew up you know where I'm always working and spending money because I believe in and supporting local businesses- that creates trust. (Isley, personal communication, April 1, 2019)

Isley is continually working to recognize diversity while attempting to create a culture of well-being among the community in which she lives and works.

Within each interview, citizens recognize that community leaders live, work and support locally. By being seen and actively supporting local business, trust is cultivated both economically and in a sense. Asset-based, inter-relational and intra-relational skills are utilized in order to achieve collaboration.

Community leaders recognize that community engagement begins with self-awareness. Before inter-relational skills are achieved, community members need to address personal limitations or mistakes.

We could probably recapture the neighborhood if that makes any sense because the human capital is lost, once you start dealing with the loss of self with alcohol and drugs. (Morris, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

By recognizing, a need for empathy motivates the desire to do more. Community leaders are brave enough to share their mistakes and genuinely express empathy for those who travel the same path. Empathy reciprocates trust within communities.

You know seeing that one of the most important things is you,

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collaboration and you know getting everyone on the same spot on, really the same page is -everyone working together. So, I guess it's just that there are other people, but that there's always a need. So, there's always something that we can be doing. (Turner, personal communication, March 18, 2019)

A variety of Interviewees share empathy because they live in the same neighborhoods, experience the same legal repercussions, have made similar mistakes and are neighbors within each community. It is these inter-relational skills that foster trust.

So, the community doesn't feel the trust, because they've been promised jobs, they've been promised help, they've been promised a lot of things and a lot of those promises have been broken. But now a person that's recovering like me, coming off the streets homeless drug addicts have affiliated with gangs, things like that. And now, I'm somewhat 18 years clean- later still doing what I said I was going to do to help them. I've built up the trust. (Morris, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

Community leaders demonstrate an ability to foster trust among community members. Trust is difficult to pinpoint when a community leader makes a decision. Trust is described as a *sense*, feeling, while engaging in efforts of resilience to help communities.

There is a sense of time; I was not trying to look for that word (trust). So there is a sense of when you...but then there's also the people that talk a good game. And then it's like there's just not the follow through. So, there's the sense of it. But, then there's also the actions associated with it. (Turner, personal communication, March 18, 2019)

Community leaders recognize that action takes place when people are aware of the problems, but utilize themselves as assets and seek solutions, collaboratively.

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Trust, is me and you. Like, I trust that what we are talking about will get to the right people, so that they can get into the solution, instead of the problem. (Morris, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

Community leaders combine relational strengths while fostering trust. They realize that their assets are the community members surrounding them.

And then, there is also a kind of seeing so, and especially when you're doing new projects like this. All are very ever-changing and dynamic and so you kind of get a sense of what you're good at and what you're not. And, also, you know that you can't...one person can't do everything. (Turner, personal communication, March 18, 2019)

Community leaders are the first to seek out help and advice from other leaders. The Interviews demonstrate that assistance is often valued by surrounding community members.

What I can tell you is that I have a coaching network of pastors, network basically just for me. (Clemens, personal communication, March 10, 2019)

Relational skills are most important to leadership roles. Social media is listed as a prime source for recruitment and empowerment. A sense of voice is recognized:

So anyway, that's when I realized I had a voice. So, what kind of got me spurred was more so just kind of my social media you know I am one of those types of people. It was really bad 2014 at the mike brown scale. But you know if I have something to say I say it and if people don't like it they can follow me unfriend me whatever. And what that led to is that actually led to a sense of trust because people began to it was not hard. Once I started A Red Circle, for people to trust that I was going to do- what I said I was going to do, because of my social media post; honestly, that was behind them. And the more I talked and

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shared and met people the more people wanted to hear from me and I began to realize OK we actually had a voice in North County. (Isley, personal communication, April 1, 2019)

Third, community leaders are able to bond with people who have opposing viewpoints, beliefs and customs different from their own perspective. They welcome the challenge and often learn new solutions by *thinking out of the box*. Problem-solving skills are facilitated among community members encouraging diversity.

I love that. I love to hear others. I love to hear differences. I love to get new eyes because I think that's where new ideas are born. I think that's where we get out of the rut that we're in or what the issues and the problems are. People have to bring some new things to the table. And, I guess that kind of goes back to trust, too. (Turner, personal communication, March 18, 2019)

During reflection, Gaye was motivated by empathy and the courage for diversity:

Seeing other people be so resistant to change has made me so aware of how much I'll do for a cause. I don't know if you call that risk-taking or maybe it's being open to change. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Diversity was also important, as noted by Morris:

I would like to think that working with those different entities, groups that it's all about the diversity. Diversity is our strength. (Morris, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

If working with people who have opposing viewpoints is confrontational, community leaders recognize how to ask for help from other community members in order to utilize the community as an asset. Community leaders learn from their engagement and try to

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facilitate trust.

We've been offered an opportunity to do violence interruption, so that means we were able to hire somebody that's going to kind of talk to these opposing parties with some pop off not to escalate, and to work with these individuals and groups to keep some stuff from happening all of the time. To squash that stuff. So, all that we know, they just came to us, basically because of the trust the community has, just kind of see our track record, and has been basically just trying to do the right thing. Being involved in this community is an ongoing learning process. (Clemens, personal communication, March 10, 2019)

Community members are multi-generational with varying concerns and mindsets. By recognizing a variety of age groups in our interviews, a wider lens can be appreciated. Community leaders facilitate diversity among community members with opposing viewpoints.

I see there are some collaboration starting to happen with the people in the '60s and '70s and also see some conflict because of mindsets. So, I think that right now, it is a kind of a tug of war on those concepts. Who's going, who's going to. You know are we going to do things the same old way or are we going to go a different direction? So, sometimes the struggle comes in is that I don't want to lose my power. I don't want to lose my position. And so, I will hold on to this even if it were not moving forward. (Clemens, personal communication, March 10, 2019)

Community leaders see their communities as an agent for social change while pursuing community well-being. Trust can be strengthened among community members as they engage and advocate for the value of diversity. Gaye, speaks to diversity and inclusion as being one unified process.

I think our philosophy of inclusion has something to do with that.

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Diversity and inclusion are often listed separately, we can't say one or the other, but people think of them in different ways. (Gaye, personal communication, March 12, 2019)

Community leaders pursue community well-being by recognizing that diversity and inclusion go hand in hand. We as a community can move forward and actively engage when trust is present.

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### **Chapter 5 Discussion**

This research proposes three contributions to community advocate's understanding of how trust interacts with asset-based thinking, and social learning experiences. This includes trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making, and empathy to support community engagement efforts. First, the qualitative results reveal the presence of trust and the relationship to community engagement. Second, the leadership roles identify with the concept of asset-based thinking to promote positive social change. Finally, community leaders facilitate social learning experiences to explore trust and its value to community engagement.

This chapter (1) explains the meaning to the research findings and the importance of the relationships; (2) acknowledges the limitations; (3) and provides recommendations for future research.

## TRUST: THE RELATIONSHIP AND EFFECTS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### ACTIVITIES

The results confirmed that individuals and groups are seeking to make a difference through positive values linked with trust. In *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, Batson (2007) explains that prosocial behaviors often refer to a broad range

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of actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself. These are behaviors such as helping, comforting, sharing and cooperation. Both empathy and trust influence individuals, groups, and communities who are supportive of cultivating these prosocial attributes and behaviors.

The findings from the interviews revealed that trust was often a latent motivator in developing relationships among individuals and groups. Trust fostered an environment of advocacy and empowerment. For many interviewees their narratives represent an instinctive understanding of the influences of trust in their community and the role of trust in community capacity building.

### **Trust and the Community**

The theory of change model proposed in this research supports the understanding that community leaders and advocates exhibit an immediate desire to act without incentives aside from devotion to the community. This desire to aid presents a notion that the community is a place of comfort and safe-place. Several words associated with this includes: the willingness to help, receptiveness to work with others, an urgency to listen and understanding of others.

Safety, stability, and comfort are terms linked with trust and community. For instance, when individuals improve their community through beautification projects, being able to see progress motivates trust within members. *Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future* (2019) speaks to their mission statement that social engagement contributes greatly to health. When neighbors know each other well, they feel safer. And

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those who are civically engaged improve not only their communities, but their own well-being. This improvement created a sense of pride.

The view of self develops from direct experiences with the environment and impressions gained from the actions of other people. The development of a community leader's sense of purpose and meaning in their environmental is viewed as foundational. Meaning-making concepts in community engagement include: understanding the informal applications and influences to constructing the values of an individual's desire to participate while development in natural settings. Dweck and Leggett (1988) stated that construction of identity in community formulation was centered on how goals created by individuals help define how they interpreted and reacted to events. Dweck and Leggett (1988) noted that task for investigators of motivation and personality is to identify major patterns of behavior and link them to underlying psychological processes. Their investigation in the pursuit of adaptive and maladaptive goals echo our exploration of community empowerment behavioral norms. The discussion of trust and mistrust in the community relationships were reported (Ross, 2003).

Trust, the opposite of mistrust, is a belief in the integrity of other people. Trusting individuals expect that they can depend on others. They have faith and confidence in other people. Trust and mistrust express inherently social beliefs about relationships with other people. Ross (2003) later added that trust is important because it allows people to form positive social relationships.

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### Four Elements of Trust

First, interviewees spoke of themselves and of the community participants as having a trust or *extending of trust* to community advocates in building capacity in their community. Bandura (1999) posits that individuals in a community have the power to influence their own actions to produce certain results. Interviewees articulated that the value of trust and its existence is noted and often granted, unconditionally, from the community participants to those involved in community capacity building efforts. These community advocates were often benefactors of the efforts due to the related capacity builders. It is presumed that without this presence of trust, many engagement activities are less effective or not initiated at all. In addition, interviewees noted that engagement practices extended trust in the form of responsibility; a sense of empowerment surfaced from those within the community.

The second element to arise is the role of *identity of trust by association*. This type of trust is often granted unconditionally. For instance, a Red Cross emergency vehicle pulls into a neighborhood after a trauma-inflicting storm. It is suggestive that the Red Cross is present to immediately to help. For individuals in a community, a basic extension of trust is granted when one sees the Red Cross logo on the side of the emergency aid vehicle.

Interviewees identified with this natural extension of trust, also had experienced a past traumatic childhood. One individual even could speak to his life as being one of the

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individuals who perpetrated the traumatic community cycle, such as gun violence, drugs, alcoholism when he was younger.

The third element, trust building, has strong tenets of leadership skills. Authentic community change moves at the speed of trust. And yet we spend so little time focusing on intentionally building trust amongst partners (Weaver, 2017). In many of the examples noted by the interviewee's, elements such as communication, accountability, and transparency are present. For instance, leading by example or showing up to do the work are suggestive as strong guides for trust building. The ability to build trust through communication and understanding is viewed as a skeleton key for building trust. Schroeder (2017) reinforces that building trust and understanding the role empathy is an integral part of breaking the cycle amongst groups where disdain is part of generational narratives. As noted in this dissertation literature review Schroeder (2017) studied the outcomes of the Seeds of Life Project. This is about trust building. Many interviewees believe that working together to achieve a common goal and displaying trust is *doing the right thing*. This trust is an identifiable commitment and an attribute of trustworthiness engagement. The presence of trust is established. Individuals seeking advocacy to trust others or exercise their patriotic duty will do their part for the betterment of the community. For example, during a winter storm, a community member would go out and assist others in shoveling snow. Trust is demonstrated by another individual replicating the act without assistance, and trusting that someone would see their actions and call to help. Zak (2017) reinforces this belief that by building a culture of trust is what makes

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meaningful differences. Employees in organizations that offer high-trust are more productive. These individuals tend to experience less chronic stress. As a result of this they are happier with their lives (Zak, 2017).

The fourth element of this research, *lack of trust/mistrust*, addresses a type of trust that surfaced when interviewees were attempting to typify the positive role of the trust process. Brown (2018) noted in *Dare to Lead* that when she interviewed individuals about trust, more often the interviewees could easily speak to mis-trust than trust. In situations where trust has already been broken, we tend to look at those who disagree with us as the enemy. We walk away from situations which we feel might be too difficult to resolve (Kahane, 2017). They struggled to talk about trust within the community members, because most of their lives they experienced mistrust. Weaver (2017) cites that our cities are working hard to develop solutions to solve increasingly complex issues. These complex issues require us to collaborate across sectors with people that we have not collaborated with before. At the same time, levels of trust between citizens and groups in society are declining (Weaver, 2017). It is this phenomenon that substantiates our theory of change model and the inclusion of trauma-informed awareness.

## REVISED THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL

In the creation of the revised model, team members could see connections between social learning and the following three themes: trauma-informed awareness,

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meaning-making concepts and empathy. The initial prediction in our proposal highlighted examples or experiences that would manifest through a social learning environment, which was later confirmed by a result of research questions based on social change, community engagement, and the initial *Theory of Change Model* themes. The vital components of the revised model encompass the sum of its parts (meaning each facet is being utilized), while being continually facilitated by the innate abilities of each community leader. The research supports that trust is not viewed as a gradient (developing over time) as originally represented in our model, but as a continuum facilitated by community leaders as visualized by the asset-based awareness and trust continuum flow of arrows. Evidence of trust is embedded within each desired community engagement outcome. Trust seems to be evident throughout each decision; yet, not identified as having trust by specifically using the word trust. Community leaders did not speak of trust as motivation in seeking community engagement. Leaders described various documented stories pertaining to miss-trust among community members and purely the need to achieve a specific social behavior change. The outflow of deficit thinking was substantiated by stories of miss-trust and truth in community leader's growth by acknowledging mistakes. Interviewees' data explored more examples/stories of miss-trust, which created a new need to investigate.

As evidence of trust evolved within each interview, acknowledgement of the presence of trust, not using the term specifically, in decision-making was justified. The subtraction of the circular revolution concerning asset mapping in achieving social

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behavioral change was eliminated. Trust became a monumental focus, evident in personal accounts not necessarily in the spoken term-trust. Trust was identified in presence, not necessarily in transcribed words. During the research of the trust phenomenon, five concurrent, flowing themes evolved: 1) identity of trust, 2) extending trust, 3) trust building, 4) trust worthiness, and 5) miss/lack of trust. These five themes seemed to be continually (circular propelling) evident in each community engagement process; thus, replacing the thought that asset mapping was the fuel. The circular image emerged substantiating the *five agents of trust*.

Asset- mapping was better defined as asset- thinking which proved to be an initial in the discovery of trust. Mapping infers a predetermined process, whereas asset-based thinking rests upon previous leadership experience and forethought. Previously, Community *Context* was honored as partial asset-based evaluation within a community, which was presumed to flow within social learning environments. Within our findings, asset-based thinking replaced community context and was determined to lead community leaders in their approach to community engagement. Our research displays evidence that community leaders may, unknowingly, utilize asset-based thinking during community engagement attempts.

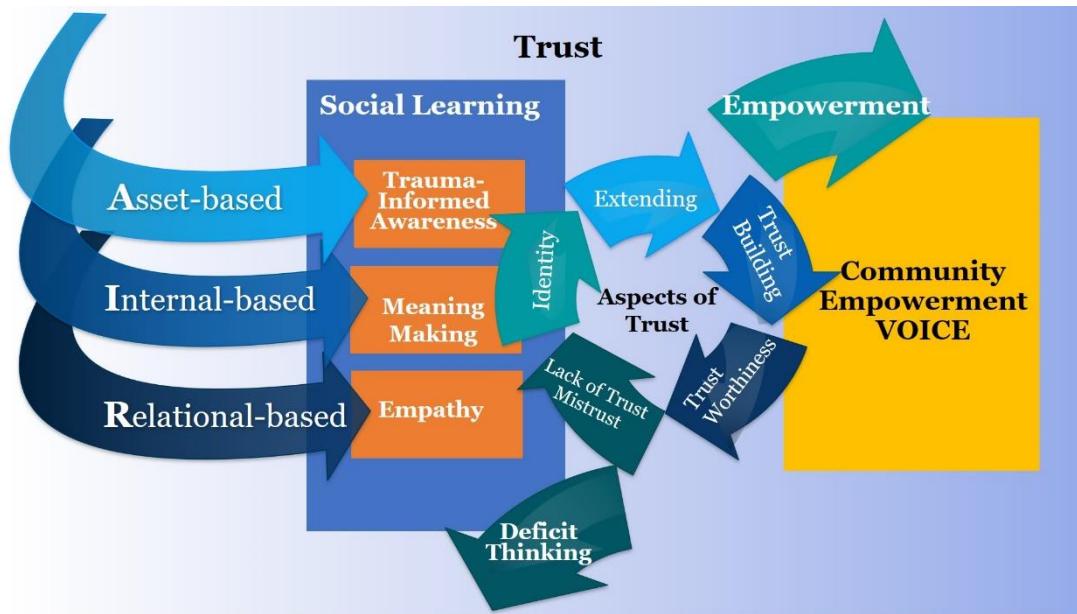
The newly defined model supports trauma-informed awareness as a measure that takes into account possible past traumatic experiences and the resulting coping mechanisms when attempting to understand social behaviors. The interviewed community leaders seek out community members who serve as assets who can better

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assist those in need. According to our model logotherapy is defined as meaning-making and purpose in life. Community leaders are aware that in order to help others, a deeper understanding of self is needed. The following question emerged from our interviews: How can you help others if you do not understand your own thoughts/ which foster trust? Empathy represents the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Leaders demonstrate the following themes: meaning-making, purpose, and empathy for humanity and mankind represent fundamental values in life according to our *Theory of Change model*. While investigating the term, *trust*, as it emerged in our interviews, the interview protocol provided data that enabled research to delve into the mystery of the term trust and its actual existence was documented in leadership decision making.

Finally, social change evolved into community empowerment. The personal accounts reflecting on leadership experiences seemed to substantiate a sense of empowerment among community members- perhaps a voice.

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*Figure 3. Post-Research Analysis: Revised Theory of Change*

### LEADERSHIP ROLES IDENTIFY WITH THE CONCEPT OF ASSET-BASED THINKING TO PROMOTE POSITIVE CHANGE

Primarily, effective leadership roles should identify with the concept of asset-based thinking by making a mental shift towards promoting positive social change by seeing potential in nearly every situation according to psychologist Dr. Kathlyn Cramer (2015). Leaders are faced with difficult decisions of exactly where to focus their attention. They often encounter dilemmas that include improving social ills in the community, problems of this magnitude or common among countless other leaders across the globe, in preparation to transform troubled neighborhoods. Cramer (2015) describes

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leaders that think in this manner as being misplaced in their vision because asset-based thinking draws upon bottom- up and strength-based approaches, rather than deficits and problems to construct stronger sustainable change in communities for the future.

Research to date seems to support leadership roles that focus on asset-based thinking to encourage positive social change revolving around rebuilding troubled neighborhoods from the inside out, as a pathway for finding and mobilizing community assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Kretzman and McKnight (1993) describe the process of asset-based thinking as an approach grounded in the makeup of skills from local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions. Asset-based thinking draws upon bottom- up and strength-based approaches that focus on community strengths rather than deficits and problems to construct stronger sustainable communities for the future. One of the primary roles of leaders that practice asset-based endeavors requires them to be a constant compass when it comes to implementing core principles of Asset-based thinking (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993)

Asset-mapping is systematically considered the tool-kit for exploring what skills, talents, knowledge, relationships, and other assets currently exist in the community. Results from local community leader's interviews revealed that people have a bias toward deficit-based thinking. "Apparently 80 percent of the time, we are only concerned with what is not working, what the mistakes are and what is the best remedy or solution to resolve the problem," (Cramer, 2015, p. 3). The rationale that supports this theory is a result of decades of historical trauma that many communities have experienced in the

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past. As a result, community leaders have to be intentional and practice asset-based thinking to avoid reverting to what Mother Nature programmed us to do and that is to look at the negative side of the equation according to Cramer (2015).

Evidence from current research seems to advocate that community leaders are primarily judged based upon their record of accomplishment for getting things done in the community. Our group also discovered the gap in literature that promotes community engagement and empowerment efforts as the three most important attributes of a community leader include accountability, transparency, and communication. It was also evident that when leaders demonstrate asset-based thinking, they are role modeling the behaviors they want to see in community members. This is what inspires others. If the community member can raise the positive outcome and really help others see the potential and sense of urgency in situations and then talk about it, then there is a greater chance that asset-based thinking will take hold (Cramer, 2015).

Leaders foster trust by adapting and binding trauma-informed awareness, meaning-making, and empathy. Psychological components trauma, meaning-making and empathy are defined as cognitive forces that initiate, guide, and maintain goal-oriented behaviors. Asset-based thinking, internal, and relational-based constructs correlate to the asset mapping process. The results of data analyzed from local residents' interviews revealed a direct correlation between common trends and patterns based on individual community dynamics and infrastructure of each perspective community. Perspectives and awareness that emerged from participant's interviews revealed that communities have

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various spoken and unspoken rules of engagement, such as differentiated viewpoints from multi-generational community members. Interviewees expressed insight regarding traits expected of leadership which includes accountability, transparent communication, compassion, and empathetic insight into traumatic themes. Interviewees shared concerns in multigenerational foundations of communities that address the misconceptualization of these rules of community engagement that govern practices and structures that these family foundations have created to maintain family involvement. Evidence-based results revealed that methods of doing things in communities change throughout times and older generations tend to be more conservative in approaches vs. younger or newer members in communities. The leadership's role in the community is to facilitate these norms, and values to ensure adherence of these cultural practices while enabling a forum for new avenues to ensure the sustainability of the community.

Trauma-informed practices are evident in flourishing communities that promote coping mechanisms such as self-healing strategies and self-regulating behaviors. The community leaders identified assets which provide a wealth of health services for mental and physical health issues, which tend to be successful in empowering community members to embrace prosocial behavior.

Social change involves alteration of the social order of a society. Leaders can continually stir this alteration as they facilitate trust with the five themes which evolved from our research. Leaders may identify using asset mapping changes in social institutions, social behaviors or social relations. Asset-mapping is the tool that probes the

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strengths and weaknesses of individuals, families, and communities in order to develop concrete solutions to critical community issues. Asset-mapping concentrates on the capabilities of the community involving the health well-being of residents, social service agencies, and organizations. Engaging the components Theory of Change Model with the newly identified process of trust and social learning are considered as essential elements for promoting positive social change leading to empowerment and social capital, resulting in successful engagement.

The investigation of motives and influences of human behavior falls into the realm of social psychology. Historically, literature into social learning theories of behavior influencing community engagement has centered on the collective group of individuals rather than the individual's motives. Exploration of social learning concepts of purpose, trauma, and empathy motives provides insight into various psychological, spiritual, and philosophical influences into community behavior.

## COMMUNITY LEADERS FACILITATE SOCIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES TO EXPLORE TRUST AND THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Social learning opportunities serve as a benefit to strengthen community engagement. For this research, social learning experiences offered to young adults in the St. Louis community demonstrate the advantages these opportunities have on participants as well as the facilitators themselves. Five of the community leaders that participated in

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interviews contributing to this research are all actively working with young adults in the local community. Their programs are utilizing social learning experiences as a vehicle for participants to develop and strengthen trust as a result of these programs, provide an opportunity for collaboration and mentorship with relationships established, and to feel connected and engaged with their communities despite trauma.

The results gathered from interviewees conclude that social learning experiences are an integral part of programs offered for young adults in the local St. Louis community. Lin and Bruce (2013) mention in their research that too often, young people experience disconnects between their educational experiences and both individual and community needs. Environmental sustainability is an important aspect for many of these social learning experiences and programs designed for this young adult audience. In *Learning Our Way to Sustainability*, Wals (2011) proposes new forms of learning that are emerging to inspire a variety of learning styles. Wals (2011) also shares characteristics that support a motivation to learn about topics surrounding environmental sustainability which cannot be limited to classrooms, corporate boardrooms, local environmental education centers, or under regional government authority. Multiple interviewees referenced activities and opportunities for young adults that give them exposure to nature

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and the outdoors, informal education experiences, and projects that encourage their work in team or group environments.

Another example of how social learning opportunity, in this example through art, can benefit youth participants: “Educating underserved youth through art has provided an approach to foster engaged citizens by encouraging youth to see how social, cultural, and political forces shape their experiences” (Lin, 2013, p. 337). As it relates to this research, some cultural factors that are relevant to young adults participating in these experiences may include the differences in where one lives, religious beliefs, ideologies, family background, and for this audience and community especially, where fellow participants go to high school. Having an opportunity to positively create, learn from and collaborate with fellow individuals outside of the classroom allows for an enriching, impactful experience. These programs place participants in social environments that are different from what they are used to in school or at home. These young adults are trusted with responsibilities, given tasks to take ownership of, they are given a space to be creative and artistic, are surrounded by supportive facilitators that serve as role models for them. All aspects that make up these programs allow for participants to grow as individuals and citizens of their local communities. The five interviewees that serve as facilitators of social learning experiences for young adults all mention the successful and positive outcomes as a result of these opportunities. They witness consistently how trust is

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developed and disseminated throughout these programs and instilled within these young adults to help shape their perspective on trusting themselves and one another.

Our research highlights multiple examples as part of the social learning process that justify the power of collaboration and mentorship as a result of community leaders facilitating social learning experiences. Collaboration and mentorship in the social learning environment create trust, the establishment of empathy, and serve as conduits for relationships that may not have formed without this opportunity. Programs for young adults designed different opportunities for social learning while incorporating participants to often work in small groups, pairs or teams.

Interviewees Gaye and Wonder specifically speak to the benefits of mentorship from the facilitators and fellow young adults that serve as role models for participants. Mentors can offer youth adult perspectives, advice, and suggestions that might be ignored if they were presented by a parent (Keller, 2005). Some examples of types of mentors mentioned from these interviewees include different members of staff facilitators, fellow young adult participants, alumni participants that continue to return and give back to the program, as well as staff from other departments. Wonder mentioned in their interview that the security guard has become such a strong mentor and role model for the participants in their program, providing a consistent welcoming presence when they arrive and as they leave. This security guard knows the young adults by name and is an adult they can confide in and look up. Research on mentors by Pianta (1999) states: “By serving as a sounding board and providing a model of effective adult communication,

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mentors may help youth better understand, express, and regulate both their positive and negative emotions.” While noted that many of these participants have issues with trust, it’s common that these audiences can lack positive role models in their lives. Having facilitators that listen to and relate to these young adults gives them motivation and a willingness to participate and immerse themselves in opportunities presented. By trusting them to carry out responsibilities and tasks, they are empowered from within to become confident in themselves for what they have accomplished or learned as part of the experience.

While working collaboratively in small groups as well as independently, young adult participants can thrive as active citizens in their communities. These programs are offering them the opportunity to work together to give back through physical tasks outdoors in nature, educating younger students in a classroom, engaging with visitors in an informal learning situation, or assisting a fellow participant with a task. Interviewee Charles teaches a high school photography class that is separate from the high school curriculum. This allows the facilitator a unique opportunity to engage with this audience in a condensed time-frame. Charles mentions how establishing and practicing respect plays an important part of this opportunity to learn for participants as they are photographers and models as part of the class.

In addition to learning from and growing as a result of these experiences, participants may also develop an interest in a future career path or profession relevant to this voluntary work they are engaged in. “Considerably more young people acquire

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occupational competences through an informal apprenticeship than would be possible in the framework of state projects and programs or those organized by non-governmental organizations” (Overwien, 2000, p. 626). Interviewee, Robinson, works with young adults that may be interested in the horticultural or environmental fields, providing them opportunities to install gardens in their local community, learn about growing their own food, providing horticultural maintenance and education about environmental sustainability. Through participation in these experiences, young adults are exploring potential career opportunities that will give back to the community, the environment and provide a fulfilling professional path forward.

### **Community Empowerment Despite Trauma**

As mentioned in the first two research contributions, those who experience trauma can have challenges with the establishment of trust. This research cohort finds that trust can serve as a catalyst for community engagement through relationship building and collaboration efforts and social learning experiences that give back to the community. Author Cohen states that community plays a crucial symbolic role in our sense of belonging, “as people construct community symbolically, making their community a resource and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity” (Cohen, 1985, p. 118). With the interviewee facilitators of these opportunities for young adults in the community, all five mentioned varying levels of trauma at the community level and described how this trauma has a direct effect on participants.

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In a focus group report commissioned by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, young adult participants in a focus group held near Washington D.C. explained that they want constructive activities to engage their bodies, hearts, and minds during the time they are not in school (Quinn, 1999 p. 97). While social learning experiences are not the solution to resolving or mitigating trauma in our communities, they offer those affected by trauma a safe, supportive environment away from the negativity and distress they may be experiencing. Interviewees Wonder and Green both work primarily with at-risk young adults that are seeking an outlet to feel supported, listened to, validated and respected. Both of these facilitators shared stories about how difficult it can be for these young adults to adjust to trauma, and how the programs and opportunities they offer can truly serve as a therapeutic benefit to their well-being. As these participants get to know and collaborate with individuals close to their own age, they have the ability to establish and feel empathy towards each other as a result of the trauma they are experiencing.

Trust, collaboration and mentorship intersect throughout these experiences to assist with empowering citizens to heal from the trauma they are experiencing within their communities. From this research, this cohort determines that social learning opportunities can benefit members of a community by serving as a critical component to the development of trust and empowerment of citizens.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY LEADERS AND PRACTITIONERS

1. When leaders don't make trust building primarily a focus, or when leaders lack skills in asset-based thinking, then typically, a lack of trust/mistrust emerges. Therefore, community leaders should prioritize trust building and asset-based thinking.
2. When leaders believe in the ability of community members to accomplish positive change, momentum and efficacy grows. Therefore, leaders should recognize the assets that community members bring and trust them to use those assets for public good.
3. Trust is to community as empathy is to advocacy. Therefore, leaders should cultivate empathy as a foundation for effective advocacy efforts.
4. Leaders would better serve their communities ensuring that trust building is an integral part of community engagement projects. Trust building is an integral part in community engagement efforts. Therefore, leaders should prioritize trust building, especially at early stages of community engagement efforts.
5. Trust is a catalyst for promoting community, safety, wellbeing and pride in the community; therefore, leaders should nurture trust while also monitoring emergent outcomes such as: perceptions of safety, well-being and pride in the community.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

The use of a survey would strengthen interviewee narrative themes.

- There is a missed opportunity to interview multiple people while limited purposive sampling was performed.
- Sample size: Number of interviewees: n=24
- Access to people: limited/denied

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- Cultural Bias: Interviews were conducted in Metro-St. Louis area where diversity is segmented in communities.
- Study results reflected the collective efforts of five researchers (represented culturally: 2 African-American males, 1 Caucasian male, 2 Caucasian females interviewing using the same interview protocol with differing interpretations on the understanding of the use of probing questions.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This paper has examined local resident experiences solely in Metro-St. Louis.

1. This study provides opportunity for additional qualitative exploration. By benchmarking the countless-upon-countless hours of interviews evidence may strengthen the theory of change model.
2. Related to our theory of change model, findings were never validated against a large sampling of those engaged in other communities.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. A quantitative measurement of trust in community engagement activities measured against neighboring communities.
2. A relational analysis that examines correlations between multi-demographic (i.e.: socio-economic), multigenerational data and segmented zip codes, in various (i.e.: urban, suburban, rural) communities.
3. Through the development of social learning opportunities and programs for the community, gauging learning styles to accommodate community needs to generate sustainability.

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4. Assessing trauma-informed practices while exploring the presence of therapy could be determined. The question and the possible stigma of asking for *help versus advocacy* within the community could be measured.
5. Assessment of evidence-based practices concerning asset-based thinking approaches could be studied in urban development programs.
6. Interview community members from various zip codes to see multi-demographic data.
7. Interview subset communities to acquire data that could be compared as a norm
8. Discovery of common themes in journal articles that address the difference and importance of "civic versus community engagement."
9. Another organic development was the mentioning of service/social learning, and whether perceptions of learning styles affected community engagement outcomes.
10. Various research articles have shown that the term of community engagement has multiple but similar interpretations despite use in the same context. Structuring how the lens of community leadership in a community setting can be framed and defined for social justice and higher education.
11. Assessing how business and community partners view their mission and purpose in creating opportunities for social justice initiatives.
12. Assessing trauma-informed practices in the community. The presence of therapy and stigma of “asking for help” versus “advocacy” within the community.

## CONCLUSION

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We all have valuable assets which we bring into the communities in which we live or even in which we participate. We as human beings bring our culture and life's experiences which have made us into who we are. We learn to identify traits in ourselves which may help us relate better to society and our friends. We discover our external assets which might be: our availability to resources such as: education, libraries, national parks, transportation, legal advice, social services or community-centered institutions.

We as humans will internalize our past and reflect on our personal assets such as (perseverance, understanding, trust, leadership, caring). Unfortunately, many have experienced various forms of acute trauma and developing resilience through social learning play a huge part in community engagement. We internalize divorce, death, poverty, violence and various other behavioral health studies, adversely, affects community engagement. Our communities already have in place assets such as: churches, recreational places, theaters, schools, parks, and we wonder how comfortable people are in participation within their communities? Do you have to live within the community in which you identify? Is there a process such as asset mapping in which community members can identify, relate to others and social behavioral change is recognized? Our cultural change model shows a continual cycle of learning through trauma-informed practice , meaning-making and development of empathy which viewed through the lens of asset mapping, social behavioral changes can be facilitated within community members-themselves. Through our research analysis, we can confidently conclude that every community member can be empowered with a *voice*, a voice strong enough to

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motivate community engagement! Communities are better served from within; each member is empowered with a *voice*, a voice strong enough to motivate community engagement!

### **Team Contributions & Autobiographical Reflections**

#### **Andrea Harper**

With a Bachelor's in Speech Communication and careers in various social learning environments since 2007, I have a professional and personal interest in utilizing communication skills to help individuals learn. Working in a variety of social learning environments has allowed me to fully utilize my communication and interpersonal skills to engage and educate visitors and work collaboratively and creatively with fellow colleagues and volunteers.

The past five years I have been supporting volunteers in a botanical garden setting, which has been a truly rewarding experience and served as vital inspiration for choosing social learning as a focus for this research. Working in this environment and others similar previously, I have seen the true importance, impact and effectiveness social and informal learning has on visitors, volunteers and staff alike. For my graduate research, I wanted to take this a step further and assess social learning, specifically how it impacts a young adult/teen audience and their engagement in the St. Louis community. In choosing candidates to interview, I specifically selected facilitators of programs working with teens in social learning environments within the community. These youth

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employment and volunteer programs have an environmental focus, encouraging participants to be engaged with the outdoors, potential careers in STEM/environmental science, and assists this audience to develop the necessary skills needed as they become adults in their communities. I feel strongly that young adults (18 year olds to early-mid 20s) are future leaders and working with and investing in them is vital for effective community development and sustainability.

### **Richard Hudanick**

I am the Dean of Career and Technical education for a community college in rural Missouri. I have been in career education training for almost nineteen years working with students to achieve their career pathways back into the community. Many of the students that I have helped over the years come from the very troubled communities involved in this research. Empathy is my focus in this research. My very own experiences in childhood life have always lead the way to the insights of the many ills that plague our communities and challenges to escaping perpetuating cycles of despair. This community engagement project has acted as a conduit for exercising a meaningful action plan for community empowerment. On a personal level, the hours and hours of interpreting interviewee's narratives who are the front-line advocates to community engagement has had an immersing effect on how I govern my actions towards those who need help. I have had a life-changing journey over an eighteen-month period assisting in the development of this project. The group has had its many ups and downs, moments of laughter coupled with out-right displays of anxiousness and scholarly debate. I am often asked if I had a

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chance to re-do the research process, would I avoid a group project? My answer is NO. I have developed friendships with four great people under the most unlikely terms and this in itself brings meaning to the journey.

### **Michael Miller**

I have been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work as a special education teacher and deputy juvenile officer for various public schools and detention centers in Missouri and Illinois. Both jobs encouraged me to be a life-long learner and an advocate for marginalized and underserved populations.

Firstly, I want to give a big shout out to Dr. Matthew Davis for facilitating numerous uncomfortable conversations in the course Critical Race Theory pertaining to inequities and disparities affecting people of color in school districts and other educational institutions. The course Critical Race Theory prepared me well for my ambitions to pursue my doctorate degree in the Heritage Leadership School of Sustainable Social Justice. As a result, I feel a sense of personal and professional responsibility to help uplift impoverished individuals, families, and communities.

Secondly, my lens and focus in study center's on asset-based thinking that probes community's health and wellbeing, improve economic disparities, and other social issues that negatively impact members of the community by preventing them from healing. The proposal serves as a blueprint or roadmap for best practices to transform grief stricken and ravished communities that have experienced historical trauma for decades.

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I recently joined forces with the Illinois Juvenile Justice Council as a member to collaborate with other social service agencies to develop a plan of action for implementing wrap around services for students k-12. The mission and vision of the organization embraces a mixed methods approach to addressing community problems by incorporating a needs-based and strength based approach against traditional service delivery models. Looking through my lens, I realize that it takes a village or collaborative effort from positive role models, mentors, and agencies to inspire students to succeed in life and reach their true potential.

### **Kimberlie Straatmann**

It is no secret in the neighborhoods of St Louis, Missouri that street violence is evident and that our youth are witnessing this violence at home, on social media and in their own neighborhoods! I have spent my entire life- 51 years: living, learning (attending K-12 grades and College), participating in the North County region of St Louis, Missouri and serving as an Educational stakeholder in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. I am a 29-year career Mathematics educator/athletics coach within the same district of which I am a proud byproduct.

Our North County community has experienced negative media attention starting before, *August 14, 2014 -Michael Brown Case*, yet it feels to me, things are regressing and violence is taking front stage. I am not sure if this is due to the aforementioned 8/14/14 date and the vocalization from national protests, but moral is down, people are moving out, violence is prevalent. My students are involved in gun crimes, two have killed others,

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I have attended 7 funerals due to gun violence and just this past semester on 1/9/19 three of my actual students shot into crowds in front of our school who were among 70+ people removed for mob violence. This occurred at 6:15 pm, I was there working the scores for the 2 basketball games, and complete traumatic chaos infiltrated an assumed safe haven.

While participating in the ED.D. program at UMSL, I have been inspirationally sparked to take further action by researching Trauma and its role in community by personally interacting within my community. I networked into our community and sought out volunteering/engagement organizations. By actively engaging via community volunteering with *A Red Circle* and by teaching, I purposively identified engaged members in the North County area of St. Louis, Missouri. While working as a volunteer and veteran educator, I explored the following themes:

1. Does trauma-informed Practice help to identify Trust within community engagement?
2. Why or why not are people actively engaged and if so, do they feel empowered?
3. Heritage Leadership to Community Engagement: looking for advocacy/leadership from demonstrating trust.

My vision, based upon our exploratory research, is focused on promoting healthy communities and sustainable partnerships that perpetuate engagement by means of establishing relational trust, improving the quality of life, social well-being of members of the community, and economic opportunities for residents. I look forward to seeing my students embracing their community empowerment by using their inspirational voices!

**Joshua White**

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Researching community engagement was the natural progression of my clinical journey. I am a dual-board certified, psychotherapist providing support for outpatient mental health advocacy in community mental health agencies, judicial treatment court, and correctional mental health care. My clinical background experience includes over 15 years which includes working with individuals with severe mental illness, addiction disorders, and learning disabilities in natural and controlled settings. My professional discipline includes cognitive behavior therapy, existential therapy primarily, meaning-making. The importance of meaning-making in community engagement provides insights in the informal applications and influences of an individual's development ability to connect in natural settings. Meaning-making is the clinically practiced application of existentialism. Dweck and Leggett (1988) noted that "task for investigators of motivation and personality is to identify major patterns of behavior and link them to underlying psychological processes." (p.256) Their investigation in the pursuit of adaptive and maladaptive goals echo our exploration of community empowerment behavioral norms and perceptions.

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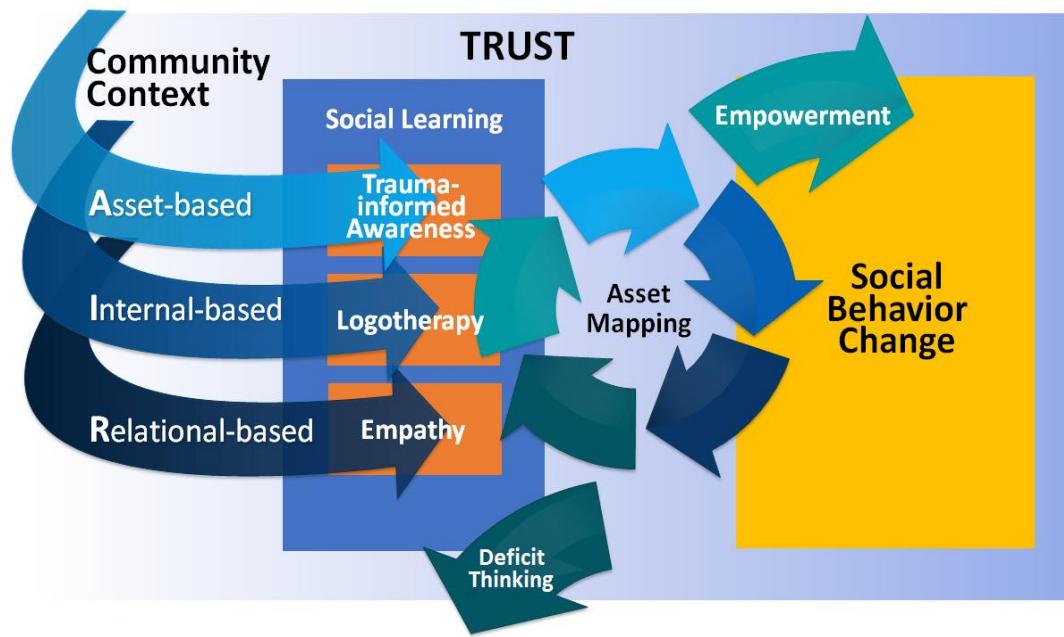
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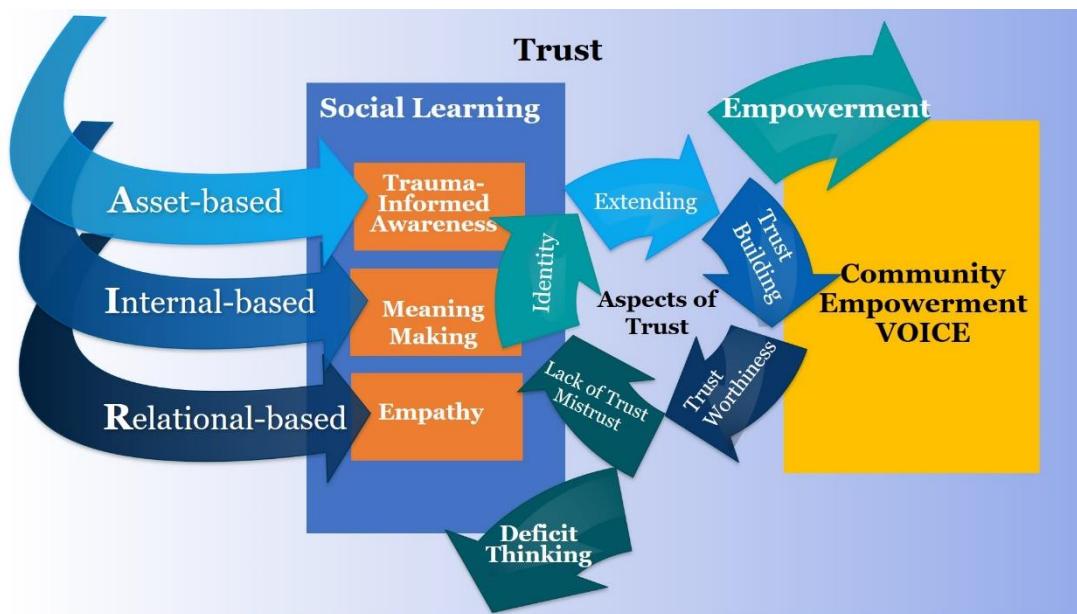
### APPENDIX A

Figure 1: Theory of Change Model



**APPENDIX B:**

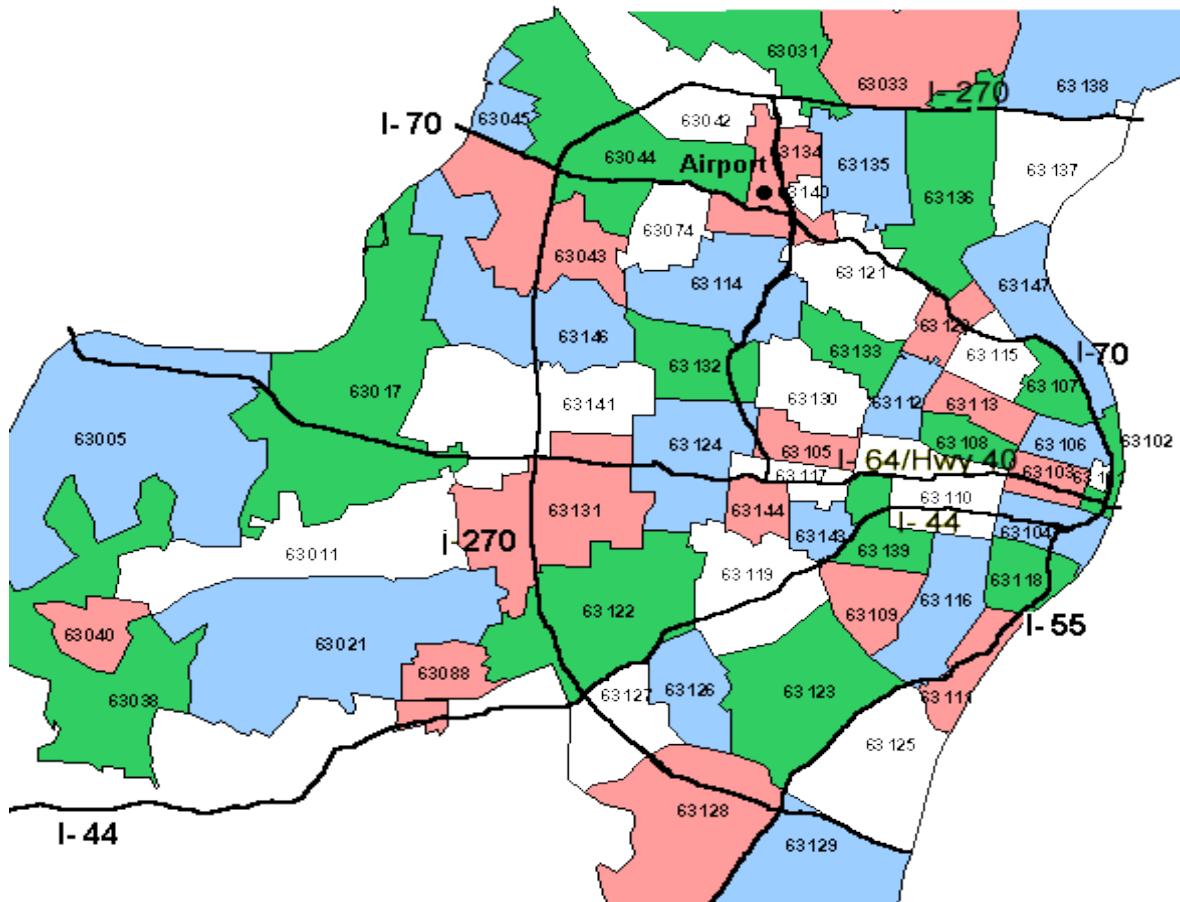
Figure 2: Post-Research Analysis Theory of Change Model



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## **APPENDIX C:**

## Community Engagement Interview Protocol Interview Community Participation Map



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### APPENDIX D:

#### Community Engagement Interview Protocol

Let's start out with a little background information...

Display a map of the metro region Indicating to the interviewee a connection to the community engagement consent form “Introduction to Defining a Community. Please draw on map (L- live, W-work/engaged in)

#### **Q1: What is your perception of your community?**

- *PQ: If so, where is this community geographically?*

(Note: Is there connection to working/living in same/different community?)

- *PQ: Are you able to speak to three to five attributes of this community you identify with?*
- *PQ: What areas/barriers does your community struggle with when engaging in efforts?*
- *PQ: Is your community diverse in its attitudes, opinions and cultures?*
- *PQ: Please describe social events or activities that your community offers that may encourage participation.*
- *PQ: What are the primary issues of concern that contribute to economic disenfranchisement for individuals that struggle in your community?*
- *PQ: What are the factors that contribute to economic empowerment in your flourishing community? Creating Jobs, Low-income housing, Job training opportunities, Educational, Technical, Access to Affordable Health Care*

#### **Q2: Define Trust. What does trust look like in the community that you're involved in? (What's the role of trust in your community?)**

- *PQ: What allowed you to build trust/what kept trust from developing?*
- *PQ: How do you identify in your relationship in your community with people who are different from you as it relates to trust and community engagement?*
- *PQ: How have these experiences influenced/affected your view of community?*
- *PQ: Did this experience allow for trust to grow from within yourself? Explain?*
- *PQ: How does the individual in the community learn to trust?*
- *PQ: Do you think the recipient of your efforts has a trust issue?*

#### **Q3: Have you ever had the opportunity to help nurture Trust in your community? What was the situation? Was it easy/difficult? What allowed you to build trust/what kept trust from developing?**

- *PQ: How have you made it happen? (How did your involvement influence this change?)*
- *PQ: Social change? Outcomes, being a leader, did your activities bring out? Leadership qualities?*
- *PQ: Do your efforts make a difference? Examples*
- *PQ: Has this trust been cultivated across differences?*

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- *PQ: Can you give an example of being included/excluded in your community? Example of witnessing others included/excluded in your community?*
- *PQ: As it relates to other community organizations do you feel that you are competing with them?*

[Being involved in one's community is an ongoing learning process]

### Q4: What motivated you to become active in your community?

- *PQ: What did you learn about yourself as a result of this experience-*
- *How did this influence your perception of yourself (in the community that you serve)?*
- *PQ: How did it make you feel?*
- *PQ: What was the process in your call to action?*
- *PQ: Did your advocacy bring out the outcome that you hoped?*
- *if trauma?*
- *PQ: Can you give an example for how this experience provide an opportunity for meaningful work in the future?*
- *PQ: Did you have leaders or partners that supported, motivated or guided you throughout this experience?*

[Interviewer to Say: “When people are involved in solving problems, making decisions or creating plans, they typically develop a sense of commitment to a community”]

### Q5: Describe a time when you brought attention to a particular need or advocated for an issue in your community?

- *PQ: If so, how did it turn out?*
- *PQ: How did you see change?*
- *PQ: Please describe how your efforts lead to change?*
- *PQ: What issue made you aware of this need?*
- *PQ: How were you motivated to change this need?*
- *PQ: What leadership qualities influences you to have resilience in your community engagement efforts?*

### Q6: As a community leader, how do you foster relationships of those who have opposing viewpoints, beliefs, and customs?

- *PQ: How did you learn to do that better over time? (as it relates to main question)*
- *PQ: Share an example of a time when you learned from people with opposing viewpoints.*
- *PQ: What traits are necessary to develop empathy within communities?*

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- *PQ: What access have you and/or community had to training that restores relationships or builds capacity within your community?*
- *PQ: How committed is your community to working together to accomplish challenges?*
- *PQ: How has this process unfolded over time?*
- *PQ: Do you believe that there is a shared vision between community members and leaders as it relates to transforming and improving community?*

### **Q7: How do you help make social change happen in your community? When you see something that needs to be changed, how do you make it happen?**

- *PQ: How do you see your community as an agent for social change? (working)*
- *PQ: What are your thoughts on things that you cannot change in your community?*
- *PQ: If you had a chance to champion an issue in the community, what would that be?*
- *PQ: What community transformation strategies do you recommend local community leaders adopt for implementing positive change bottom-up or top down approach?*
  - a. *Bottom-up (Citizens have a voice)*
  - b. *Top-down (Civic leaders make decisions without consulting with citizens)*
- *Is there any additional information about how a community can create a path to future prosperity?*

### **Q8: What have you learned about yourself as a result of leading social change in your community?**

- *PQ: What do you know about your “personal self” as an individual in the community you serve.?*
- *PQ: What was your perception of your community prior to engagement?*
- *PQ: Has that learning process helped you?*
- *PQ: Has this example influenced your perception of yourself as a member of your community?*
- *PQ: Due to your experience in working with the community do you have a different perspective of your community? Explain*
- *PQ: What is the most important thing that you learned?*
- *PQ: How has that transformed you?*

### **Q9: How does empathy plays an important role in community engagement? (When asking empathy, learning about it as an individual, in a group, from an asset?)**

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- *PQ: Can you describe a time when you felt empathy for people who are different from you?*
- *PQ: What are your reactions when a community member approaches you for help? What are your feelings? Are you feeling burdened? How so...*
- *PQ: Are you aware of your own ability to empathize with others? How much of yourself are you able to open up with developing empathy with a stranger? (still working)*
- *PQ: How do you feel that you can empathize with others in community that seem unapproachable?*
- *What allows a person to have empathy?*

**Q10:** *What is your definition of trauma? [Perceptions of trauma differ across ages, and community. Provide a list of possible examples: fire, flood, divorce, death of a pet, homeless, car crashes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, violent crimes, sounds of violence, victims of crime]*

- *PQ: Provide an example of how do you see it affecting your community? How did this affect you?*
- *PQ: How much was Trauma play in (Example cited)*
- *PQ: Have you witnessed any events that may have threatened harm in your community? (If not your community, societal influences?)*
- *PQ: Have you ever been involved in a community that was unable to address their needs BLANK their community?*
- *PQ: Have you ever been involved in a community that was in paralyzed thinking, how did you respond, adopt an asset-based approach?*
- *PQ: Is the community receptive to outside intervention?*
- *How does a family re-orient itself after trauma?*

**Q11: Is there anything else that you want to share?**

1. In order for the research team to strengthen the exploration of trust I am asking for your assistance one more time. I am seeking interviewee candidates that can strengthen the interview process. Candidates that may have come to your mind while you were answering the interview questions. Who is this person that identifies with our discussion today?
2. Do you know of three referrals?
3. (*If the interviewee provides name(s)*) Do you have their contact information so that I may reach out to them and ask if they are interested in being an interviewee candidate?

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

After completing the interview questions, the interviewer asks the participants for a list of 2-3 individuals (referrals). The interviewee will be asked to provide basic contact information and permission to use their name as a referral. Interviewers **WILL** safeguard all information as it relates to identities and responses of all interviewees.

Thank you for your participation. I greatly appreciate your time and input!

**APPENDIX E:**

Revised Interview Protocol

**Community Engagement Interview Protocol**

Let's start out with a little background information...

Display a map of the metro region Indicating to the interviewee a connection to the community engagement consent form "Introduction to Defining a Community. Please draw on map (L- live, W-work/engaged in)

**Q1: What is your perception of your community?**

- *PQ: If so, where is this community geographically?*

**(Note: Is there connection to working/living in same/different community?)**

- *PQ: Are you able to speak to three to five attributes of this community you identify with?*
- *PQ: What areas/barriers does your community struggle with when engaging in efforts?*
- *PQ: Is your community diverse in its attitudes, opinions and cultures?*
- *PQ: Please describe social events or activities that your community offers that may encourage participation.*
- *PQ: What are the primary issues of concern that contribute to economic disenfranchisement for individuals that struggle in your community?*
- *PQ: What are the factors that contribute to economic empowerment in your flourishing community? Creating Jobs, Low-income housing, Job training opportunities, Educational, Technical, Access to Affordable Health Care*

**Q2: Define Trust. What does trust look like in the community that you're involved in? (What's the role of trust in your community?)**

- *PQ: What allowed you to build trust/what kept trust from developing?*
- *PQ: How do you identify in your relationship in your community with people who are different from you as it relates to trust and community engagement?*
- *PQ: How have these experiences influenced/affected your view of community?*
- *PQ: Did this experience allow for trust to grow from within yourself? Explain?*
- *PQ: How does the individual in the community learn to trust?*
- *PQ: Do you think the recipient of your efforts has a trust issue?*

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Q3: Have you ever had the opportunity to help nurture Trust in your community? What was the situation? Was it easy/difficult? What allowed you to build trust/what kept trust from developing?**

- *PQ: How have you made it happen? (How did your involvement influence this change?)*
- *PQ: Social change? Outcomes, being a leader, did your activities bring out? Leadership qualities?*
- *PQ: Do your efforts make a difference? Examples*
- *PQ: Has this trust been cultivated across differences?*
- *PQ: Can you give an example of being included/excluded in your community? Example of witnessing others included/excluded in your community?*
- *PQ: As it relates to other community organizations do you feel that you are competing with them?*

**[Being involved in one's community is an ongoing learning process]**

**Q4: What motivated you to become active in your community?**

- *PQ: What did you learn about yourself as a result of this experience-*
- *How did you this influence your perception of yourself (in the community that you serve)?*
- *PQ: How did it make you feel?*
- *PQ: What was the process in your call to action?*
- *PQ: Did your advocacy bring out the outcome that you hoped?*
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- *PQ: Can you give an example for how this experience provide an opportunity for meaningful work in the future?*
- *PQ: Did you have leaders or partners that supported, motivated or guided you throughout this experience?*

*[Interviewer to Say: “When people are involved in solving problems, making decisions or creating plans, they typically develop a sense of commitment to a community”]*

**Q5: Describe a time when you brought attention to a particular need or advocated for an issue in your community?**

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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### **Q6: As a community leader, how do you foster relationships of those who have opposing viewpoints, beliefs, and customs?**

- *PQ: How did you learn to do that better over time? (as it relates to main question)*
- *PQ: Share an example of a time when you learned from people with opposing viewpoints.*
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- *PQ: How has this process unfolded over time?*
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### **Q7: How do you help make social change happen in your community? When you see something that needs to be changed, how do you make it happen?**

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- *PQ: What are your thoughts on things that you cannot change in your community?*
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  - a. Bottom-up (Citizens have a voice)
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- *Is there any additional information about how a community can create a path to future prosperity?*

### **Q8: What have you learned about yourself as a result of leading social change in your community?**

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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- *PQ: What is the most important thing that you learned?*
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**Q9: How does empathy plays an important role in community engagement? (When asking empathy, learning about it as an individual, in a group, from an asset?)**

- *PQ: Can you describe a time when you felt empathy for people who are different from you?*
- *PQ: What are your reactions when a community member approaches you for help? What are your feelings? Are you feeling burdened? How so...*
- *PQ: Are you aware of your own ability to empathize with others? How much of yourself are you able to open up with developing empathy with a stranger? (still working)*
- *PQ: How do you feel that you can empathize with others in community that seem unapproachable?*
- *What allows a person to have empathy?*

**Q10: What is your definition of trauma? [Perceptions of trauma differ across ages, and community. Provide a list of possible examples: fire, flood, divorce, death of a pet, homeless, car crashes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, violent crimes, sounds of violence, victims of crime]**

- *PQ: Provide an example of how do you see it affecting your community? How did this affect you?*
- *PQ: How much was Trauma play in (Example cited)*
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- *PQ: Have you ever been involved in a community that was in paralyzed thinking, how did you respond, adopt an asset-based approach?*
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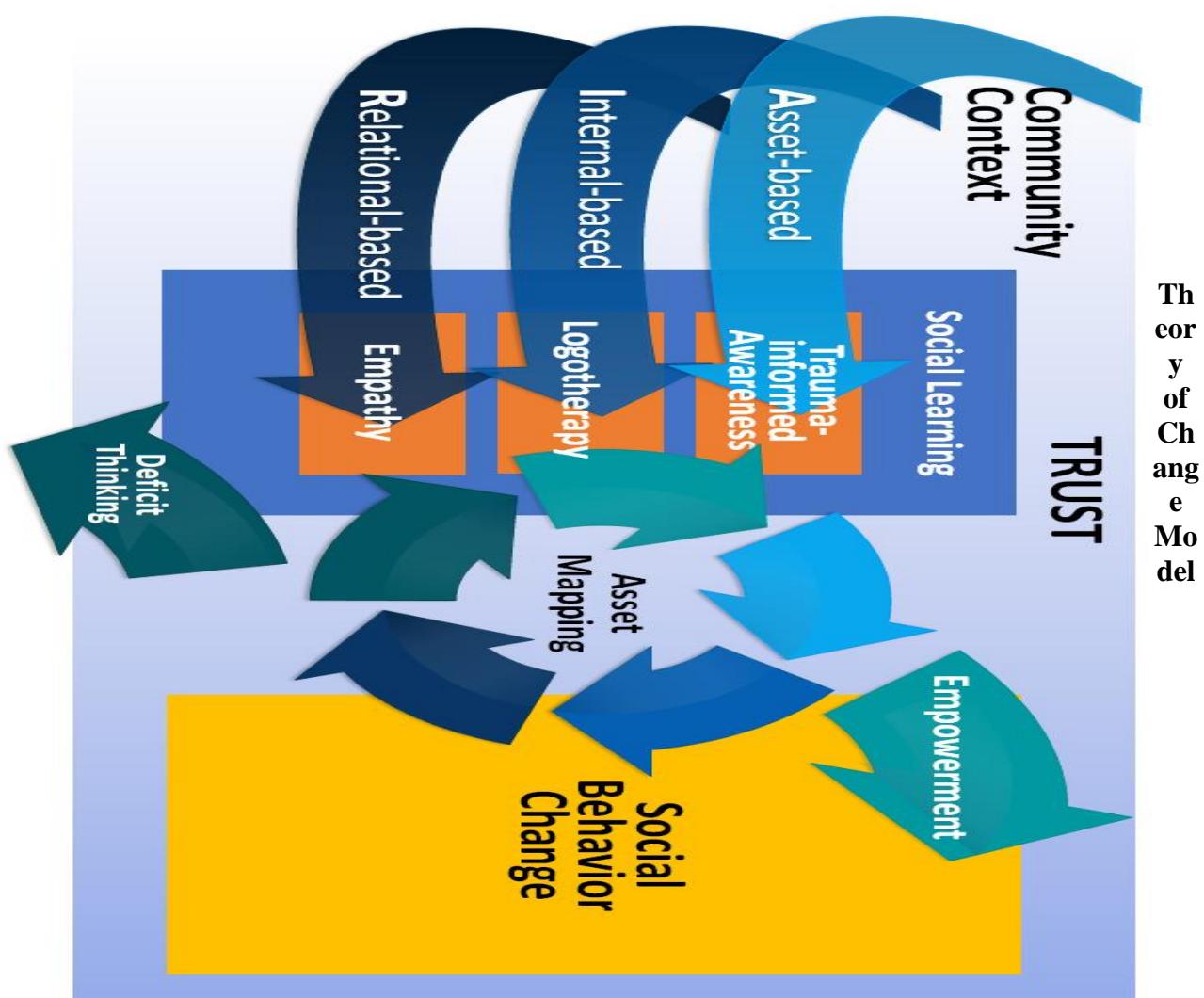
**Q11: Is there anything else that you want to share?**

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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

After completing the interview questions, the interviewer asks the participants for a list of 2-3 individuals (referrals). The interviewee will be asked to provide basic contact information and permission to use their name as a referral. Interviewers **WILL** safeguard all information as it relates to identities and responses of all interviewees.

Thank you for your participation. I greatly appreciate your time and input.

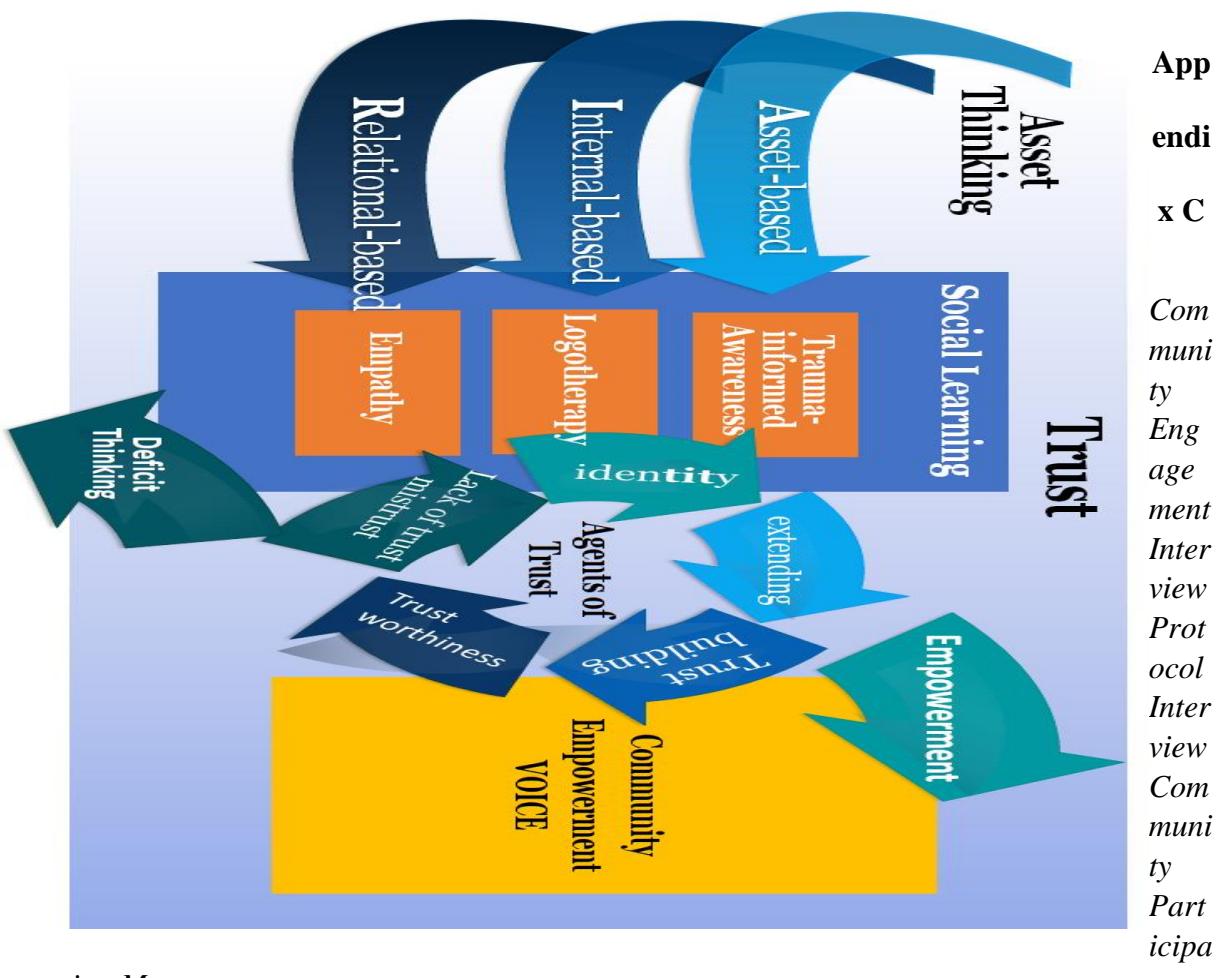


Theory of Change Model

Appendix B

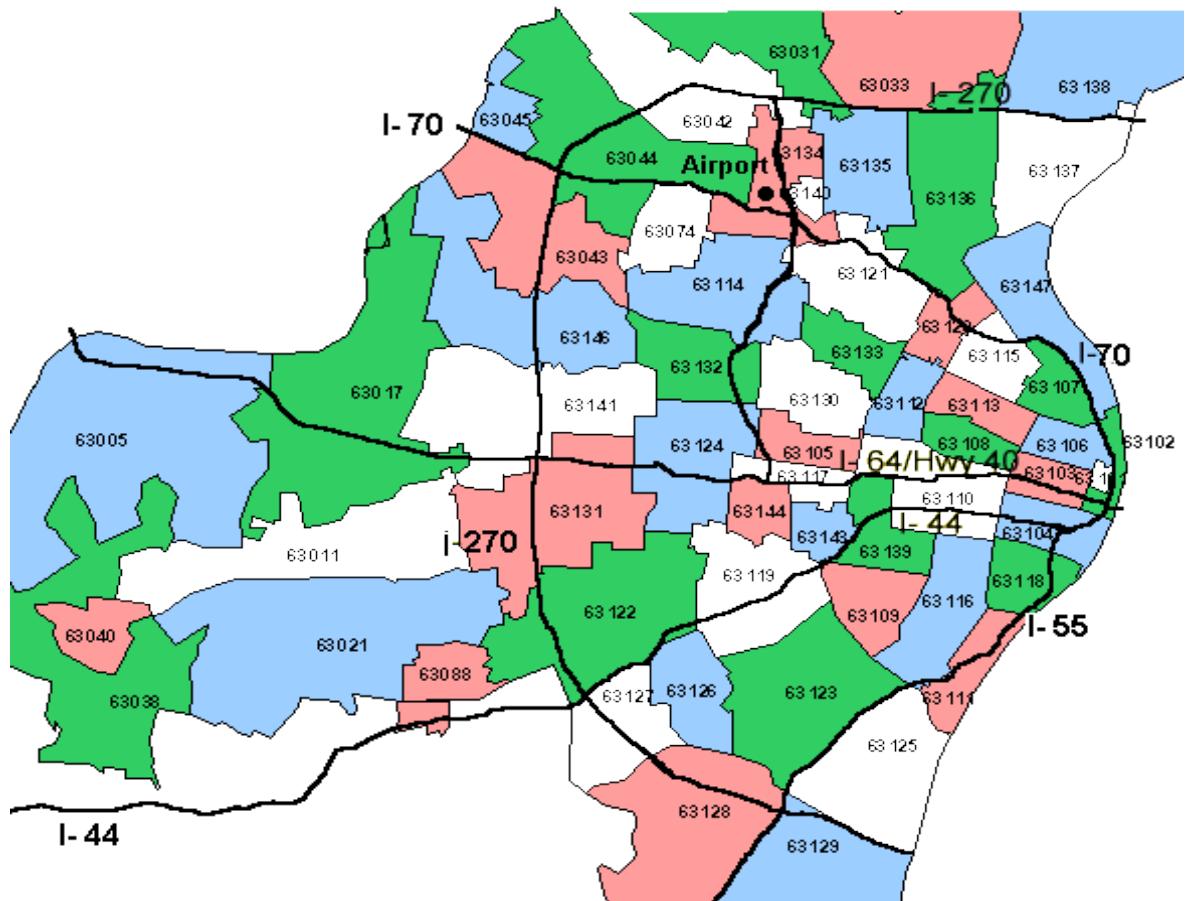
Figure 2

Post-Research Analysis Theory of Change Model



tion Map

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## Appendix D

# **Community Engagement Interview Protocol**

Consent Form	Informed Consent Form presented, signed by the interviewee and then safeguarded by an interviewer.
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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Greeting	Express the appreciation for the interviewee's time to participate in this study.
Introduction	The purpose of this interview is to discover if there is a relationship of trust to engagement activities where individuals and or groups are seeking to make a difference in a community. The methods of research will include interviewing individuals in the Midwestern region identified through a purposive sampling process. These participants are of various social service organizations identified, examples include non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and other integral parts of local communities such as health and community services. The amount of time required for the interview will be no more than 60 minutes, followed by a referral question soliciting "liked-minded" interviewees (snowballing sampling).
Environment	The interviewers (research team) on an individual basis will create a comfortable environment for all interviewees, indicating that their participation is voluntary and they may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw their consent at any time. They may also choose not to answer any questions that they do not want to answer. They will <b>NOT</b> be penalized in any way should they choose not to participate or to withdrawal. The interviewers will also note that there is no right or wrong answer. Finally, they are free to ask questions and express their ideas freely during the interview.

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Trust <i>(All interviewers) (7 questions)</i>	<p>Let's start out with a little background information...</p> <p><i>[Show interviewee a map of the local area, Make a map accessible during the interview]</i></p>
<i>2-3 Key questions 4-5 Extra questions</i>	<p><b>Q1: Do you feel like you identify with your community? What community do you identify with?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● If so, where is that geographically?</li></ul> <p><b>Q2(L): What motivated you to become active in your community?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>PQ1:</i> Was it positive or negative?</li></ul> <p><b>Q3 -PQ2(T): Do you feel safe living or working in your community?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Yes: what factors attribute to your feeling safe?</li><li>● No: what factors attribute to your feelings of uncertainty or danger?</li></ul> <p><b>Q4 (asset-based thinking): What influences you to be resilient in your efforts to be engaged in the community?</b></p> <p><i>Interviewer to Say: "When people are involved in solving problems, making decisions or creating plans, they typically develop a sense of commitment to a community". (probing to find L, E, AIR)</i></p> <p><b>Q5: Have you ever taken an interest in a topic to become an advocate to bring attention to a particular need? ex: volunteerism, funding, etc.?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● If so, why?</li></ul> <p><b>Q6: Does trust influence or hinder this processes? Why?:</b> (No: con't with probe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>PQ1: Do you bond with people who are different from you?</i></li><li>● <i>PQ2: Do you feel included/excluded?</i></li><li>● <i>PQ3: Describe what that trust looks like. What can improve it?</i></li></ul> <p><b>Q7(E): Do you feel that you bond with opposing viewpoints, beliefs, and customs different from your own perspective?</b></p>

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- *PQ1:* Do you believe that you can empathize with them?

**Q8(SL): What informal or formal learning experiences reinforced your attitude and belief?**

**Q9:** (SL/asset-based thinking/L) **What intrinsic and external factors did you learn about yourself as a result of this program?**

**Q10:(L) Do you feel a sense of fulfillment through your engagement in the community?**

**Q11:** *Is your community diverse in its attitudes, opinions and cultures? (probing to find Trust, I, R, E)*

**Q12:** *How do the asset, internal, and relational based principles share in the process of developing trust in community engagement activities? [Interviewers shows examples of what “AIR” are so that interviewee has a reference point]*

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<p>Trauma (All interviewers) 1-2 Key questions</p>	<p><b>Trauma happens to people of all ages. Provide a list of possible examples: fire, flood, divorce, death of a pet, homeless, car crashes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, violent crimes, sounds of violence, victims of crime</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Have you witnessed any life threatening event or events that may have threatened harm in your community?</b></li> </ol> <p><b>PQ1:</b> Do you feel safe living or working in your community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Yes: what factors attribute to your feeling safe?</li> <li>● No: what factors attribute to your feelings of uncertainty or danger?</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2. Describe the resources (people, places or organizations) your community has that may help support mental behavioral health in your community?</b></li> </ol>
<p>Logotherapy (All interviewers) 1-2 Key Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. So I have a few questions that address logotherapy or the “meaning of life ...</b></li> </ol> <p><b>PQ1:</b> What inspired you to become engaged in your commun <b>PQ2:</b> What does it mean, “to be engaged in your community?”</p>
<p>Empathy (All interviewers) 1-2 Key questions</p>	<p>The following questions are considered <b>probing</b> questions and will be asking as subsequent questions as it relates to “TRUST”.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. What are your reactions when a community member approaches you for help? What are your feelings?</b></li> <li><b>2. Do you believe empathy plays an important role in community engagement?</b></li> </ol>

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<p>Social Learning (All interviewers) 2-3 Key questions 4-5 Extra questions</p>	<p>Candidates being selected have participated previously in an informal learning experience that positively contributed to their community as part of the St. Louis Youth Conservation Corps program, the Missouri Botanical Garden's <i>Students As Garden Educators</i> (SAGE) program or Eco-Act program participants.</p> <p><b>PQ1:</b> Why did you select this program to be a part of over a part time/seasonal job? What were your expectations of this opportunity before you started?</p> <p><b>PQ2:</b> Tell me about your experience working with this program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Did you enjoy working outside?</li><li>● Did you spend a majority of the time working independently or in a group setting?</li><li>● What did you learn from this experience?</li></ul> <p><b>PQ3:</b> Did your time and work with this program influence your perspective or allow you to view your community differently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Did this give you a new perspective of your environment and nature?</li><li>● Did this opportunity encourage you to spend more time outside?</li><li>● Are you more active and involved in your community now as a result of your time within this program?</li></ul> <p><b>PQ4:</b> What did you learn about yourself as a result of this program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Has this made you consider an academic or career path in an environmental field or a field that supports the community?</li><li>● Did you have leaders and partners that supported, motivated or guided you throughout this program?</li></ul> <p><b>PQ5:</b> Did this experience allow you an opportunity to generate trust and a sense of leadership within yourself?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Would you recommend this program/experience to other young adults your age, why or why not?</li><li>● Would you do this program again?</li></ul>
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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<p>Community Engagement (All interviewers) 2-3 Key questions 4-5 Extra questions</p>	<p><b>Does your community offer places for families to go to such as: playgrounds, parks, recreation centers, sport fields, gardens?</b> (probing to find AIR)</p> <p><b>PQ1:</b> Are they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● in good conditions</li><li>● safe</li><li>● affordable</li><li>● clean</li><li>● well maintained</li></ul> <p><b>PQ2:</b> Do you utilize these facilities? Why?</p> <p><b>Do you participate in local parks, parades, town hall discussions, block parties?</b> (probing to find AIR and celebrating community identity)</p> <p><b>PQ3:</b> If Yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Please list: a)....b)....c).....</li><li>● Why were you motivated you to participate?</li></ul> <p><b>PQ4:</b> What causes you to be resilient in your efforts to be engaged in the community?</p>
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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<p>Conclusion (All interviewers)</p> <p>1 Key question Transformation?</p> <p>Interviewee Referral</p>	<p>We have concluded with the interview and now I have a few closely questions...</p> <p>1. Do you have any final questions, comments?          2. In order for the research team to strengthen the exploration of trust I am asking for your assistance one more time. I am seeking interviewee candidates that can strengthen the interview process. Candidates that may have come to your mind while you were answering the interview questions.          Who is this person that identifies with our discussion today?          3. Do you know of three referrals?          4. (<i>If the interviewee provides name(s)</i>) Do you have their contact information so that I may reach out to them and ask if they are interested in being an interviewee candidate?</p> <p>With completion the interview questions interviewees will be asked to recommend an exhaustive list of individuals (referrals) that they feel are good “candidates” to interview based on the nature of the interview questions. The interviewee will be asked to provide basic contact information and permission to use their name as a referral. Interviewers <b>WILL</b> safeguard all information as it relates to identities and responses of all interviewees.</p>
<p>Thank-you</p>	<p>Thank you for your participation. I greatly appreciate your time and input!</p>

### Appendix E

#### **Revised Interview Protocol**

#### **Community Engagement Interview Protocol**

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Let's start out with a little background information...

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*(Note: Is there connection to working/living in same/different community?)*
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### **Q2: Define Trust. What does trust look like in the community that you're involved in? (What's the role of trust in your community?)**

- *PQ: What allowed you to build trust/what kept trust from developing?*
- *PQ: How do you identify in your relationship in your community with people who are different from you as it relates to trust and community engagement?*
- *PQ: How have these experiences influenced/affected your view of community?*
- *PQ: Did this experience allow for trust to grow from within yourself? Explain?*
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### **Q3: Have you ever had the opportunity to help nurture Trust in your community? What was the situation? Was it easy/difficult? What allowed you to build trust/what kept trust from developing?**

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## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- *PQ: Social change? Outcomes, being a leader, did your activities bring out? Leadership qualities?*
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[Being involved in one's community is an ongoing learning process]

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- *PQ: Can you give an example for how this experience provide an opportunity for meaningful work in the future?*
- *PQ: Did you have leaders or partners that supported, motivated or guided you throughout this experience?*

*[Interviewer to Say: “When people are involved in solving problems, making decisions or creating plans, they typically develop a sense of commitment to a community”]*

### **Q5: Describe a time when you brought attention to a particular need or advocated for an issue in your community?**

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- *PQ: How did you learn to do that better over time? (as it relates to main question)*

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- *PQ: Share an example of a time when you learned from people with opposing viewpoints.*
- *PQ: What traits are necessary to develop empathy within communities?*
- *PQ: What access have you and/or community had to training that restores relationships or builds capacity within your community?*
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  - b. Top-down (Civic leaders make decisions without consulting with citizens)*
- *Is there any additional information about how a community can create a path to future prosperity?*

### **Q8: What have you learned about yourself as a result of leading social change in your community?**

- *PQ: What do you know about your “personal self” as an individual in the community you serve.?*
- *PQ: What was your perception of your community prior to engagement?*
- *PQ: Has that learning process helped you?*
- *PQ: Has this example influenced your perception of yourself as a member of your community?*
- *PQ: Due to your experience in working with the community do you have a different perspective of your community? Explain*
- *PQ: What is the most important thing that you learned?*
- *PQ: How has that transformed you?*

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Q9: How does empathy plays an important role in community engagement? (When asking empathy, learning about it as an individual, in a group, from an asset?)**

- *PQ: Can you describe a time when you felt empathy for people who are different from you?*
- *PQ: What are your reactions when a community member approaches you for help? What are your feelings? Are you feeling burdened? How so...*
- *PQ: Are you aware of your own ability to empathize with others? How much of yourself are you able to open up with developing empathy with a stranger? (still working)*
- *PQ: How do you feel that you can empathize with others in community that seem unapproachable?*
- *What allows a person to have empathy?*

**Q10: What is your definition of trauma? [Perceptions of trauma differ across ages, and community. Provide a list of possible examples: fire, flood, divorce, death of a pet, homeless, car crashes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, violent crimes, sounds of violence, victims of crime]**

- *PQ: Provide an example of how do you see it affecting your community? How did this affect you?*
- *PQ: How much was Trauma play in (Example cited)*
- *PQ: Have you witnessed any events that may have threatened harm in your community? (If not your community, societal influences?)*
- *PQ: Have you ever been involved in a community that was unable to address their needs BLANK their community?*
- *PQ: Have you ever been involved in a community that was in paralyzed thinking, how did you respond, adopt an asset-based approach?*
- *PQ: Is the community receptive to outside intervention?*
- *How does a family reorient itself after trauma?*

**Q11: Is there anything else that you want to share?**

1. In order for the research team to strengthen the exploration of trust I am asking for your assistance one more time. I am seeking interviewee candidates that can strengthen the interview process. Candidates that may have come to your mind while you were answering the interview questions. Who is this person that identifies with our discussion today?
2. Do you know of three referrals?
3. (*If the interviewee provides name(s)*) Do you have their contact information so that I may reach out to them and ask if they are interested in being an interviewee candidate?

After completing the interview questions, the interviewer asks the participants for a list of 2-3 individuals (referrals). The interviewee will be asked to provide basic contact information and permission to use their name as a referral. Interviewers **WILL** safeguard all information as it relates to identities and responses of all interviewees.

## TRUST AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Thank you for your participation. I greatly appreciate your time and input.