Sense of Community in Young Adulthood and its Relation to Early Childhood Experiences

Madeline Gritzan
grit5890@mylaurier.ca

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Sense of Community in Young Adulthood and its Relation to Early Childhood Experiences

by

Madeline Gritzan

Honours BSC Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour, McMaster University, 2018

THESIS

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Abstract

The present study focused on sense of community and community involvement in emerging and young adulthood and examined how these relate to involvement in an early childhood developmental (ECD) program. This study explored the effects of early childhood participation in the Better Beginnings Better Futures (*Better Beginnings*) program on entrance into communities later in life. The research objectives were to (i) identify factors related to developing sense of community in emerging and young adulthood and (ii) understand differences in adulthood sense of community based on early childhood experiences. The sample consisted of young adults who participated in three *Better Beginnings* sites across Ontario (*n* = 9, mean age 27.67) and young adults from two comparison communities who did not participate in such a program (*n* = 9, mean age 28.10). Community stories were collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews and analyzed between and as a combined group (*N* = 18). Findings illustrated an ecological framework of interacting factors related to sense of community, including personal, interpersonal, organizational, temporal, and sociocultural factors. Qualitative differences between the two groups included higher levels of community involvement and positive descriptions of self-growth from community experiences for the *Better Beginnings* participants. Findings have implications for understanding the development of sense of community and for the continued support of ECD programs and their ability to impact participants’ lives years later.
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Community and Psychological Sense of Community

Social belonging is a significant factor in the health of individuals, both in the prevention of physical and mental illnesses, and also in the promotion of health and well-being (Kitchen, Williams, & Chowhan, 2012). This sense of belonging sometimes consists of individual relationships, but is usually connected to groups. Individuals seek interaction, identity, and common values within communities of people, however, the concept of community has been historically difficult to define (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Three main typologies for communities are demographic, such as individuals of the same age or ethnicity, land-use, such as geographical neighbourhoods, and organizational, such as school or church groups (Hunter & Riger, 1986). The overlap and combinations of these groups in an individual’s life make understanding community a complex task. Some of the dimensions that community has been defined through include sharing of values and lifestyles, physical proximity, familiarity with others, and affective ties (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Sense of community is commonly understood through the individual’s perception of these dimensions in their social settings.

Psychological sense of community (PSOC) was defined by Sarason (1974, p.157) as “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure.” Many positive psychosocial outcomes correlate with PSOC, such as increased social support, quality of life (Mak, Cheung, & Law, 2009), and social well-being (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007), fewer internalizing symptoms of depression and anxiety (McMahon, Singh, Garner, & Benhorin, 2004), and higher levels of citizen participation (Ohmer, 2007). Healthy relationships to communities are seen as a protective factor against negative outcomes from traumatic experiences by providing social
support, an opportunity to positively influence others, and feelings of mastery from working toward shared goals (Greenfield & Marks, 2010).

A common model for conceptualizing and assessing PSOC comes from McMillan and Chavis (1986) and includes four components: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Membership refers to a sense of belonging to a group of people, implying boundaries and exclusion of some individuals. Influence is described as bidirectional between the individual and the group, which is important for attraction to the group and cohesiveness. This cohesion can be helpful for shared identity, but can also be detrimental if it leads to loss of freedom and individuality. Integration and fulfillment of needs is described in terms of a positive benefit to being part of the group, such as status, provision of physical needs, and social support. Finally, shared emotional connection is created through having close interaction, identifying with a shared history, and the quality of positive experiences within the group.

This model has been used in the development of quantitative measures of PSOC, such as the Sense of Community Index (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999), and in creating codes for qualitative data collection about community experiences (Hasford et al., 2016). However, criticisms against the model include its focus on individualistic constructions of community (Puddifoot, 2003) and its reliance on a needs-based framework, ignoring a sense of responsibility to the community as an underlying factor (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). Due to its limitations, a predetermined framework for sense of community may not be the most appropriate means for understanding individuals’ lived experiences of community. Qualitative methods that allow for the emergence of new themes and exploration of topics from the participants’ perspective may be more useful for exploring these complex processes (Janzen et al., 2010).
Narrative accounts of community experiences have been useful in expanding theoretical constructions. Within the early literature, PSOC was conceptualized as a unipolar construct, suggesting that its presence would be inherently positive to the individual. Brodsky (1996) interviewed African American women living in high crime, low-income neighbourhoods and found that having a negative PSOC acted as a protective factor for the women and their families. Furthering this work, a negative PSOC acted as a motivating factor for women attending a job training center (Marx, 2000).

A negative PSOC is conceptualized through inverses to the traditional McMillan and Chavis (1986) model. Rather than feeling a sense of membership, influence, and emotional connection within the group, individuals distinguish themselves and choose to abstain from community participation. They see the community as unsuitable to meet their needs, seeking needs fulfillment from elsewhere (Mannarini, Rochira, & Talo, 2014). The outcomes of a negative PSOC could be positive for an individual in terms of safety, motivation, and problem solving (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). This research highlights the importance of viewing PSOC as a bipolar construct and examining person-environment fit.

Person-environment fit is understood as a dynamic relationship between the person and aspects of their setting, where certain aspects of each correspond to or match with the other. This construct has been understood in four main ways—interactions with a job, organization, group, and supervisor (Chuang, Shen, & Judge, 2016). There are many potential benefits to a strong fit, including a positive correlation with classroom satisfaction, school performance (Pawlowska, Westerman, Bergman, & Huelsman, 2014) and job satisfaction and a negative correlation to job burnout (Andela & van der Doef, 2018). One’s perception of their environment is influenced by
a combination of individual and community-level characteristics (Brodsky, O’Campo, & Aronson, 1999).

Community-level characteristics can be understood both from taking data about the community directly, such as average income and crime rates, and through exploring individuals’ perceptions of these factors. These two types of measurement may not always converge. For example, one study did not find a link between fear of crime and actual levels of crime in one’s neighbourhood (Perkins & Taylor, 1996). This means that the way an individual perceives their community may play a different role in shaping their PSOC, beyond the community dimensions themselves. Some factors that have been identified as important include perceived neighborliness, sense of security, and levels of engagement of other community members (Puddifoot, 2003).

Another construct that is often understood at the community-level is social capital. This construct has been defined as the connection or ‘glue’ between individuals, including relationships, networks, and competencies that allow for collective action and productive capacity (Pooley, Cohen, & Pike, 2005). Aspects of social capital that have been identified include efficacy of organized collective action, citizen participation, and neighbouring, which is described as informal assistance and social support. All three of these dimensions have been positively associated with PSOC (Perkins & Long, 2002) suggesting a need to further study the relation between these two constructs.

The construction of PSOC has also expanded since early research to explore multiple senses of community (Brodsky, Loomis, & Marx, 2002). People are members of many, often interrelated groups that serve different needs and purposes (Hunter & Riger, 1986). There may
be a correlation between individual’s PSOC in distinct neighbourhood and school settings (Pretty, Andrews, & Collett, 1994), while different settings may highlight varying priorities. In one study, individuals involved in neighbourhood and cultural associations focused on shared values and codes, while individuals in political activism and volunteer positions focused more on the practical aspects of community work (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Research into networks of various community contexts allows for further understanding of how individuals navigate different contexts and experience community differently depending on the setting.

### Developing a Psychological Sense of Community

The development of PSOC will occur differently depending on the context, while some conditions appear consistently: recognition of membership, quantity and quality of interaction, commonality in expectations and goals, and trust developed through benevolence and credibility (Rovai, 2002).

One line of research on how individuals develop a sense of community focuses on experiences after immigration. Latina immigrants to the United States demonstrated a four-step process as they integrated into their new residences: an initial loss of PSOC for their native community, identification of barriers that kept them from integrating into the new setting, participation in activities that helped them to integrate, and finally, developing trust for the new community (Bathum & Baumann, 2007). Individuals who moved from South Africa to Australia were able to establish bonds in their new communities through the co-creation of symbols, stories, and norms (Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Many individuals in this study were moving in order to increase work opportunities and to escape politically oppressive environments. The circumstances in their new homes fostered fulfillment of needs and a sense of membership, two of the components of McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) model of PSOC.
Another body of literature that focuses on community building and developing a PSOC is educational research on learning communities. Three key components of developing community in this context are: a formation phase where the group and individual’s roles are defined, an exploration phase where shared purposes, values, and tasks are established, and a productive functioning phase where challenges are addressed (Graves, 1992). It is through this process that individuals develop a group identity and bond.

**Emerging Adulthood and Young Adulthood**

Emerging adulthood, defined as the period ranging from late teens to mid to late-twenties, is identified as a period of instability and transformation, where individuals develop and refine their personal and social identity (McAdams, 2013). This time is argued to be a period of life distinct from both adolescence and adulthood, as individuals have more volition to explore different life directions (Arnett, 2000). The period after emerging adulthood, known as young adulthood, is characterized by role immersion, where individuals have become invested in particular contexts. The transition between these two phases, while often cited at age twenty-five, may happen at differing times depending on the path taken through these phases. Factors such as increased time spent on education and older ages of marriage and parenting have extended the period known as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2012).

This age range may be a valuable time for studying the development of PSOC and its relation to community involvement as individuals in this stage of life are expanding their social networks and finding their place within them. While a number of factors in this phase lead to increased independence, such as more self-direction and greater geographic mobility (Shanahan, 2000), these could also present challenges to the development of PSOC. For example, rates of loneliness are often prevalent among university students and correlated with the development of
depression and anxiety (Diehl, Jansen, Ishchanova, & Hilger-Kolb, 2018). In their study of university students, Diehl et al. (2018) found that emotional loneliness was more common than social loneliness, meaning that participants felt lonely despite having social interaction and community contexts.

The effects of sustained loneliness over childhood and emerging adulthood have been linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease, independent of factors such as socioeconomic status, weight, and health behaviours at age 26 (Caspi, Harrington, Moffitt, Milne, & Poulton, 2006). Understanding the development of meaningful community experiences during this phase of life has clear implications for physical and emotional health.

Community experiences are integrated into a young person’s sense of self, with various identities and membership becoming salient in different contexts (Campbell, 1995). Salience is defined as the degree to which membership in a group is cognitively accessible, dependent on factors such as recency and frequency of engagement and affect toward the group. Salience of group membership is a significant predictor of one’s PSOC for that particular context (Obst & White, 2005) and may therefore be useful in looking across multiple senses of community.

Early research of PSOC focuses on adult experiences, and these constructions may not be transferable to the adolescent and emerging adult context (Evans, 2007). For example, positive psychological outcomes for teenagers were predicted not only by a sense of school belonging and community involvement, but also through role models as an interpersonal and community-level factor (McMahon et al., 2004). In another study, having adult support was important for teenagers’ sense of community, as well as experiencing voice, power, and influence in social contexts (Evans, 2007). While there may be overlap between adolescent and adult constructions of PSOC, particular factors may be emphasized for each of these developmental stages.
Research on adolescent community involvement shows a positive correlation with parental PSOC (Kegler et al., 2005), as well as consistency in participation over time. Hasford, Abbott, Alisat, Pancer and Pratt (2017) found that an individual’s involvement at age 17 positively correlated with levels of involvement, as well as prosocial content, meaning-making, specificity, and impact of personal stories at ages 26 and 32. These findings suggest a possible feedback process where having positive experiences of involvement increases PSOC, which may further motivate a person to be involved. In support of this hypothesis, PSOC and participation studied longitudinally were found to contribute significantly to each other at future time points (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). The potential stability of community involvement over time illustrates the importance of early positive experiences with community for later adolescence and adulthood.

**ECD Programs and Psychological Sense of Community**

Few early childhood developmental programs have been studied longitudinally for benefits of involvement into later youth. Some of the programs that have been studied long-term include the Perry Preschool Project in Michigan (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1981), the Abecedarian Project in North Carolina (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002), and the Better Beginnings Project in Ontario (Peters, Petrunka, & Arnold, 2003).

These programs have found benefits for participants in a number of areas including: school commitment and achievement, conduct and delinquent behaviour (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1981), math and literacy skills, and educational attainment (Campbell et al., 2002). Many of these outcomes focus on individual factors related to education and the absence of socially problematic behaviours, such as lawbreaking and drug use, while there is less focus on relational and community-level experiences.
Better Beginnings Better Futures Model

The Better Beginnings program began after a Child Health Study in 1993 demonstrated that one in six children in Ontario had an emotional or behavioural disorder. The study also found that low socioeconomic status neighbourhoods had higher associated risks for these problems. In response to these results, the three initial goals of the program were to prevent developmental problems in young children, promote healthy development, and enhance family and community capacity to meet children’s needs (Peters et al., 2003).

Better Beginnings sites were established originally in three communities: Highfield, Sudbury, and Cornwall, Ontario. These sites have a number of programs based on locally developed plans such as: nutrition programs, in-class supports, family support groups, and after school programs in the 4-8 age range and infant health and early literacy programs in the 0-4 age range. The model for the program was developed with seven main characteristics: to meet local site-specific needs, to be high quality and evidence-based in its programming, to involve multiple components in comprehensive planning, to be integrated with existing community supports and partners, to involve parents and community in planning, and to be holistic in addressing well-being and development (Peters & Russell, 1994).

The outcomes of involvement have been studied longitudinally with the three original sites. Two comparison sites - Etobicoke and Ottawa-Vanier - were chosen for similarities on demographics of single parenthood, family income, cultural background, and parental education (Peters et al., 2003). Outcomes have been measured at the child, family and community-level including a range of psychosocial outcomes, education, use of health and social services, and community inclusion. Cost-benefit analysis has been conducted to assess a reduction in health, social service and education costs associated with program participation (Worton et al., 2014).
Better Beginnings Better Futures and Community Related Outcomes

The longitudinal study of Better Beginnings highlights program benefits specifically related to PSOC and community involvement for both participants and their parents. At the grade six follow-up, parents of Better Beginnings children indicated a higher sense of community involvement and satisfaction with their neighbourhood than comparison parents (Peters et al., 2010). This difference may be a result of involvement with the program specifically, as parent engagement is one of the core characteristics of the model. Findings from qualitative interviews support this notion, as many parents stated that they made new friends and experienced less isolation through Better Beginnings (Nelson, Pancer, Hayward, & Kelly, 2004). Given that adolescent involvement may be positively correlated with parental PSOC (Kegler et al., 2005), these findings have potential impact for the participants as well.

Better Beginnings participants at ages 18-19 were found to have higher shared emotional connection and specificity in their narrative stories about community experiences (Hasford et al., 2016) and higher levels of community involvement (Janzen et al., 2010) than comparison participants. Through the use of coded turning point stories, program participants showed statistically significant differences in coherence and meaning-making around their experiences compared to controls and this was positively correlated with scores on the Community Involvement Index (Nelson et al., 2012). These results point to a benefit of program involvement in early childhood for later PSOC.

Research Objectives

Through a review of the literature, there is evidence to support both the importance of PSOC and the benefit of experiences in ECD programs for future conceptualizations and experiences of community. Many outcomes related to psychosocial well-being have been
positively correlated with PSOC (Albanesi et al., 2007; Mak et al. 2009; McMahon et al., 2004; Ohmer, 2007), while it is also important to explore community factors and view this construct as bipolar and continuous (Brodsky, 1996; Mannarini et al., 2014). Early childhood developmental programs, such as the Better Beginnings program in Ontario have explored benefits to program involvement on PSOC and community involvement for both parents (Nelson et al., 2004, Peters et al., 2010) and participants (Janzen et al., 2010; Hasford et al., 2016; Nelson et al., 2012). Current evidence on the benefits of ECD programs is used to improve program planning and provide an argument for ongoing funding and policy changes related to early childhood health and well-being. Research in this area therefore has the capacity to influence local contexts, as well as larger societal levels and systems.

Areas for future research include exploring how personal history shapes the development of PSOC (Brodsky et al., 1999) and how different communities experience this process (Hasford et al., 2016). Further work on the benefits of community-based prevention programs through qualitative approaches can help illustrate the outcomes and values of participation (Janzen et al., 2010). The current research project aims to address these areas. First, by exploring how early involvement in an ECD program influences later PSOC, the study explores one of many aspects of personal history. Second, by contrasting between groups of individuals who either did or did not participate in these programs, comparisons can be made across geographical communities: three Better Beginnings sites and two comparison sites. Finally, by employing a qualitative approach, the study can highlight values of community-based prevention programs and identify emergent themes to expand on theoretical constructions of these processes.
Research Questions

Based on the above literature review and identified future directions, this study explores the development of PSOC in emerging adulthood and the influence of ECD program involvement. The two research questions were:

1) What factors contribute to the development of sense of community in emerging adulthood?

2) How do emerging adults who were part of an ECD program differ in their experiences of sense of community from emerging adults who did not participate in such a program?

The first of these questions was assessed across groups and used to further understand the process of developing PSOC. This question was answered through semi-structured interview questions regarding entrance into new community settings. New settings were operationalized as any geographical or relational groups that participants entered starting in the period of emergent adulthood (from age 18, which also aligns with the time of the last Better Beginnings data collection phase). The questions were worded in a way to be unbiased toward negative or positive PSOC and to have the opportunity to explore factors at multiple levels, including individual, community, and larger sociopolitical characteristics. The second question involved comparison of the Better Beginnings and comparison site participants on PSOC and community involvement. This question was answered through life history questions about the influence of past community experiences, as well as through comparison of responses between the two groups.
Methodology

Research Paradigm

The aim of the present study is to learn more about how participants develop a psychological sense of community when entering new geographical and social contexts. The research paradigm that informs this work is constructivism. A constructivist paradigm is based in an ontology of relativism, meaning that reality is made up of multiple local and constructed realities. The epistemology of this paradigm is transactional and subjective, meaning that any discoveries throughout the research process are created through the interaction of researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, the methods that are often the most suitable for exploring realities through this paradigm are qualitative. Qualitative methods are deemed worthwhile in exploring the benefits of community-based prevention programs because they give participants an opportunity to reflect on their past experiences, while also providing contextual detail and a chance for depth in the information provided (Janzen et al., 2010).

In understanding myself as a subjective part of the process, I attempted beforehand to be aware of my own biases and assumptions relating to community and sense of community. This reflection was not made as an attempt to remove the subjective aspect of this research, but rather to understand what ideas I was bringing into the conversation and to give space for differing assumptions and ideas about these topics.

Personal Reflexivity

I believe that my personal lived experiences make me well suited to carry out this research. As a child from a single parent household with no financial support from the other parent, my mother relied on government subsidized programming to afford daycare for her two children. Daycare was an opportunity to develop social skills and relationships, but it was also
necessary for my mother as she needed to work full time. Other community supports, such as neighbours and our church community, were important links for provision of childcare and social support for my mother. Through my later childhood, I saw the importance of these formal and informal networks and the value of sense of community for my mother and for us.

Throughout my education, I have always been interested in working in early childhood programming, partially due to my lived experiences. In my undergraduate degree, I learned about community-based research and came to understand the value that research can have for informing program development, policy, and government spending on these programs. My values for social justice, inclusion, community well-being, and recognizing people as experts in their lived experiences align well with this research project. I also see research as a subjective and value-laden process, despite the common belief that it should be objective. As an individual who is close to the age range of the participants, I believe this offers me a unique opportunity to connect with some of their experiences. My research explores community experiences in new contexts, such as new educational or work settings, and new geographical neighbourhoods. These are all changes that I have experienced in the last several years as an emerging adult, so this project allows me an opportunity to reflect on my own realities as I explore others’ realities as well.

I may be a relative insider or outsider to the experiences of my participants. In regards to age, I may connect with their experience, but could differ in other areas, such as culture and religion. There can be unique pros and cons of insider or outsider status, as being an insider could help build rapport (Greene, 2014), but could also lead to not following up or probing on certain topics in depth because of an assumed understanding or misunderstanding in language or experiences. Based on the constructivist nature of this study, these potential differences are not
seen as a weakness, as any possible interviewer might bring out different experiences from participants, but all of these possible dynamics would reflect aspects of their lived realities.

**Establishing the Quality of the Data**

To establish the quality of data in qualitative research, different criteria have been discussed, but four commonly used ones are credibility, transferability, confirmability, and reflexivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Each of these will be discussed as they relate to the present study.

**Credibility.** Credibility is defined as the truth value of the data and the extent to which findings confidently reflect the participants’ views (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Common methods to establish credibility included prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member-checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In this study, I had prolonged engagement with the data through creating the interview guide, conducting the interviews, transcribing audio files, writing case studies, coding each interview, and analyzing the findings. High levels of familiarization can help to establish rich data and a comprehensive account of participants’ experiences.

Multiple coding, a form of investigator triangulation, involves the independent coding of data by at least two researchers and then cross checking of these codes (Barbour, 2001). The first two interviews were coded by myself and Dr. Colleen Loomis. We then compared code by code with a high degree of alignment. In some cases, one of us explained or justified a code that was missed by the other. In each of these cases, the other person agreed with the addition of the missed code. There were no incidences of disagreement. These first two interviews were used to establish a baseline for developing the codebook—all subsequent interviews were coded by myself.
Member-checking or respondent validation involves presenting research findings to the participants to check for credibility from their perspectives. This is especially important because the participants themselves are best suited to describe whether themes are credible to their stories and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were contacted by email about the findings of this study after analysis was completed, both in written format and with the models developed to represent the findings (Figures 1 and 2). They were given the opportunity to comment on, expand, or question anything presented. Of the 18 participants, ten responded to the email and none of these respondents had any concerns or questions about the findings presented. With only affirmative statements made, this strengthens the trustworthiness of the data interpretation.

**Transferability.** Transferability is related to the applicability of the findings to the reader (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), therefore it is the reader that makes this judgment. The researcher can enable the reader to make this judgment by providing thorough detail on the context of the research, the participant demographics, the research process, and transcript examples that support the interpretations made (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

**Confirmability.** Confirmability is the degree to which interpretations made by the researcher are clearly derived from and grounded in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While the subjectivity of the researcher plays a role in the process, there should also be a level of neutrality where interpretations are logical to the reader. A strategy for confirmability is establishing an audit trail (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), where the research process is transparently stated, records are kept of this entire process, and there is thorough documentation of the raw data that forms the basis of the analysis.
**Reflexivity.** Researcher reflexivity is an ongoing form of reflection where the researcher critically engages with their positionality and the social and cultural contexts that shape their interpretations of the study. A way to demonstrate reflexivity is for the researcher to self-disclose personal biases, assumptions, values, and beliefs about the research topics and procedures (Creswell & Miller, 2000). These reflections were made and written by myself in the development of the interview guide, before the interviews, and during the analysis process.

**Method**

**Research Context**

This research project is part of the longitudinal study of the *Better Beginnings Better Futures* program in Ontario. *Better Beginnings* is a community-driven healthy development program for children aged 0-8 years (Peters & Russell, 1994). Programs are designed in partnership with communities and include multiple components focused on health and well-being, such as nutrition programs, kindergarten readiness programs, in-class supports, and parent support groups. *Better Beginnings* originated in three sites across Ontario: Cornwall, Highfield and Sudbury. Two comparison sites - Etobicoke and Ottawa-Vanier - were chosen based on similar demographics for single parenthood, cultural background, family income, and parental education (Peters, Petrunka, & Arnold, 2003). These sites have been studied for long-term child, parent, and community outcomes at grades 3, 6, 9, and 12.

The current phase of the longitudinal study is the first follow up for past *Better Beginnings* and comparison participants since the grade 12 data collection. Participants are now in their late twenties. The longitudinal study uses a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and cost-benefit analysis to explore a range of factors, including educational attainment, psychosocial health and well-being, empowerment, civic engagement, and
government cost-savings. The findings from the whole study will be used to inform program
development, policy, and government spending on early childhood prevention programs.

The study is funded by a SSHRC Insight Grant awarded in the spring of 2016. Dr. Colleen Loomis at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) and Dr. Janette Pelletier at University of Toronto are the lead researchers. Dr. Loomis has been actively involved with the project since 2007 and Dr. Pelletier is new to the project bringing a lens for the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework through her ongoing work at the Institute of Child Study. Dr. Carrie Wright acts as a consultant as a developmental psychologist and former senior policy analyst for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. My project within the longitudinal study is supervised by Dr. Loomis, who brings her skillset as an expert in international early childhood education and resources through her lab at WLU.

Research Design

My project within the longitudinal study focuses specifically on sense of community and community involvement through qualitative, semi-structured interviews. These interviews were analyzed for themes that emerged around the development of sense of community in new contexts for the participants. These data were compared for differences in emerging themes across the Better Beginnings and comparison groups.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions have been a common method for studying both constructions of PSOC and benefits of involvement in the Better Beginnings program (Hasford et al., 2016; Janzen et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2012). This method is useful in understanding both individual-level experiences and individual perceptions of community-level factors (Puddifoot, 2003).
Participants

The sample for this project was taken from the larger *Better Beginnings* longitudinal study, which is expected to have approximately 1200 participants. The researchers estimated a sample size of 10 individuals for the *Better Beginnings* condition and 10 individuals for the comparison condition, for a total of 20 participants. The final numbers for this study were nine individuals in both conditions, for a total of 18 participants. See Table 1 for demographic information about the participants. The current age of the participants corresponds with the end of the phase known as emerging adulthood and the beginning or middle of young adulthood depending on varying life paths and directions. Since the last data collection phase for *Better Beginnings* happened in grade 12, no data about communities in emerging and young adulthood has been collected previously for this sample.

Table 1

*Site and Age Demographics of Participants*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sample (n)</th>
<th>Mean Age</th>
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<th>Etobicoke (n)</th>
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Interview Protocol

The interviews used open-ended questions (Appendix A) to explore themes of PSOC and involvement upon entry to new communities and contexts, including questions regarding community entry, role, challenges, and benefits. Examples of possible contexts included new
work or educational settings, new geographical neighbourhoods or community groups. The interviews expanded on multiple senses of community, giving participants choice in which community contexts they wanted to discuss and employed retrospective questions about the influence of past community involvement to understand how history affects the development of PSOC. By giving participants choice, it is expected that salience of group membership played a role in the content that was discussed. Additionally, the way that participants define community would also influence which social groups or contexts were mentioned. At least two different present contexts were discussed, allowing for contrasting of two potentially unique experiences of community within an interview.

**Procedure**

**Recruitment and sampling.** Participants were selected for this study from the original cohorts of the longitudinal study of the three *Better Beginnings* sites and two comparison sites. These individuals were 4-8 years of age at the program’s inception and are now in their late twenties. Participants needed to be available for an in-person or phone interview at a location and time of their choice to participate. Due to the comparative nature of this project, participants were selected and recruited to have balanced numbers of the *Better Beginnings* and comparison group.

An online survey was launched in January 2018 to collect quantitative data as part of larger *Better Beginnings* longitudinal study. In the consent form for the survey, participants had the option to consent to being contacted about further research involvement. Individuals that provided consent to be contacted were then emailed with information regarding this particular study, including the compensation of $25 by either direct deposit or gift card for participation (Appendix B). Participants that responded to this email and consented to participate (Appendix
C) were invited to set up an interview time until slots were filled for Better Beginnings and comparison participants. Participants were asked if they consented to the use of individual quotes in any written reports or knowledge translation pieces. Participants would still be able to participate if they declined the use of quotes and their data would be understood through emergent themes across and between groups.

**Conducting the interviews.** A one-time, one-hour qualitative interview was scheduled with participants with the option of being over the phone, skype or in person. All participants opted for a phone interview. Participants were asked for permission to be audio-recorded in order to capture the full narratives.

**Analyzing the data.** Audio recordings were transcribed to electronic documents with the assistance of four researcher assistants that are part of the Better Beginnings study. The transcribed documents were then uploaded to NVivo. Case summaries were written for each participant’s interview to gain a better understanding of their story as a whole, beyond the individual codes. Appendix D shows an example of one of these case summaries.

All documents were thematically coded with a bottom-up approach, meaning that codes were drawn from the content and not from a theoretical framework or predetermined codebook. New codes were added to the working codebook as they arose across interviews. Once all the transcripts had been coded once, the codes and interviews were reviewed. All codes were defined with attention to discrepancies and overlap, leading to multiple revisions of the codebook. The first iteration of the codebook contained only raw codes, without parent and child nodes and then these were developed in future iterations based on the relations between the codes. Appendix E shows the final version of the codebook.
Exclusion criteria was decided for codes that did not have enough density either within or across interviews. In this case, if a theme was coded once for only one participant, a decision was made to exclude it from analysis. If a theme arose for more than one participant or arose multiple times for a single person, it was included in the analysis. In some cases, a code was mentioned, but not expanded on by the participant, so a decision was made to include these in the findings without the use of quotes.

Once the codebook was finalized, all of the codes were charted in an Excel spreadsheet for their presence or absence within each individual interview, totaled for each group, and totaled for the whole sample. This chart was used to understand trends across and between the two groups, and used in cross-reference with the quotes that corresponded to each code in order to make sense of the data. Quantitative differences in the presence of themes were used as a starting point to identify these trends, however, the quantifiable differences were not statistically analyzed, nor are they the focus of the findings. The lived experiences and examples of these themes beyond these differences in numbers form the basis for answering the research questions.

**Knowledge transfer.** As this project is nested within the longitudinal study of Better Beginnings sites, it is important that the research findings are made available to all people involved with the project and interested in the study of early childhood developmental programs. Researchers aim to contribute to existing literature on PSOC and its relation to early childhood experiences, and therefore intend to publish in community psychology journals. The research findings will also be shared at community psychology related conferences, such as the International Conference for Community Psychology and the Society for Community Research and Action Conference.
A couple avenues will be used to present findings back to community members. Each *Better Beginnings* site has a community forum once a year where they share updates on the site’s work, as well as ongoing research being done for the project. The research findings from this study will be presented along with the larger findings from the longitudinal study. The work done in this phase will also be presented on the *Better Beginnings* website with links to relevant journal articles and descriptions presented in an accessible way on the ‘Research’ and ‘Reports and Past Publications’ pages. These methods of knowledge translation will be used to bring information back to participants, as well as help inform the ongoing development of programming.

My research findings will expand on knowledge about the impact that early childhood experiences have on later conceptualizations of PSOC and community involvement. This is important as a positive PSOC has been associated with various measures of well-being, including fewer internalizing symptoms and more positive assessments of one’s social functioning. My research will hopefully shed light on the importance of early childhood community programs for this purpose.

**Findings about the Development of Sense of Community**

This section illustrates the findings about factors in the development of sense of community. This question was explored across the whole sample. All quotes have been de-identified and are written in a de-naturalized approach. While transcription was originally done with pauses, ums, and other non-content words, these have been removed from the final presentation for ease of reading (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005).

**Community Settings**
In the interview, participants had the choice about what present-day community settings they would like to discuss. The different settings that arose across participants were workplaces, neighbourhoods, churches, schools, volunteer organizations, hobby or interest communities, online communities, and long-term friend groups. Family was mentioned, but not discussed in any of the interviews.

**Definition of community.** Below are a couple examples of participants’ personal definitions of community.

“That word for me would basically… community, I guess just having people around, not necessarily the community I live in, but friends-wise.”

“I think it’s, I mean, I think it’s more about seeing the same people month in, month out and keeping up with their lives and kind of a loose group of friends that gets to know each other over time.”

“It means that I feel like I belong but also that there’s sort of not only shared experience, but there’s a shared moral lens and interest.”

**Sense of Community Model**

All four aspects of the original sense of community model—provision of needs, membership, influence, and shared emotional connection—appeared in the interviews through a bottom-up analysis of themes without being explicitly probed for in the interview guide. Participants described the presence and absence of these factors across different settings.

**Provision of needs.** One participant described different settings in her life where she has felt both a sense of reciprocity in needs being met and a lack of her needs being met.

“For me, my friends who I’m very close with now and my husband, they’re all very kind people who will do a lot for the people around them, so I think that for me is very important because I’m someone who gives a lot in my relationships and I don’t like things to be one-sided, so I appreciate my friends who are able to be there for me like I’m able to be there for them.”

“I’ve kind of lost friendships with people who were not as friendly in that way and weren’t as, weren’t there for me when I needed them.”
**Membership.** Participants varied in their feeling of belonging across different contexts.

One participant described a unique feeling of belonging she had with a specific group.

“I don’t really feel like I relate to most of the population at large, so they make me feel like there’s like a microcosm of people who like, share my interests, share my experiences, share my values, whereas if I talked to just anybody on the street, that might not be the case.”

Another participant shared about not feeling a sense of belonging with any group in particular.

“So, for that reason and I was, never really hung on to a specific group, I’ve always been the type to mingle with everybody. So, I think I felt for the first time that I had to, that I didn’t belong anywhere specifically.”

**Influence.** For one participant, a lack of influence was a factor in choosing to leave a setting, while having a sense of trust contributed to feelings of satisfaction in a new place.

“I think as I was managing the team, everything, things would get micro-managed. There was a lot of questions about individuals and what they’re up to at the moment and why they were completing such tasks and why things were done in a certain way, so I think there was a lot of micro-management at my previous job and it was largely unnecessary, whereas I’d say that isn’t the case at all at my job, that yeah, the how and why are less questioned and yeah, tasks are just given and we have autonomy on how to complete it.”

**Emotional connection.** One participant described his feelings of camaraderie at a new workplace.

“It’s the best, sort of, family feeling amongst individuals or colleagues that I’ve ever had. It’s the greatest. I haven’t been a part of a lot of groups but so far it’s the best, best group that I’ve been a part of and everybody gets along well and we crack jokes at each other and we’re just, you know, we work well together with a great, great, great synergy.”

**Factors related to the Development of Sense of Community**

In exploring participants’ experiences of entering and establishing multiple senses of community, factors at different levels played a role in their level of involvement and their feelings toward the group.
Personal Factors

The following section describes findings at the personal level, described by participants as factors about themselves that affected sense of community in a group.

**Personality traits.** Quotes were coded as a personality trait when participants described stable aspects of themselves. Sometimes self-identified personality traits were viewed as beneficial for facilitating relationships in new community contexts.

“I’m pretty personable, so I can make friends with anybody. For the most part, I’m shy, but I’m not hard to get along with, so it’s not like, the first impression of me is probably like ‘oh wow, she’s so quiet’, but I’m easy to get along with, so I never really had any trouble making friends.”

“I feel like compassion goes a long way and I feel like people can tell that I’m genuinely compassionate and genuinely care.”

Other times a participant saw aspects of their personality that acted as a hindering factor for developing new relationships.

“I can be pretty reserved and pretty introverted, so it took a while for me to feel comfortable around other people.”

**Pro-social behaviours.** Quotes were coded as behaviours when participants described specific actions or activities that they had done. Some participants described their role in initiating new relationships, either for new people entering one of their settings or when they entered a new setting.

“I think when anybody’s new to any place, people have told me I’m a very people person. I’m pretty friendly. I’m pretty talkative, so if there’s anything I can do to make a new person welcome or make things easier for them or if they have any questions I’m always here to answer their questions or help them out because I know that everybody always goes through hard times and it always makes a difference if there’s just that one person there to make the transition a little bit easier.”

“I can talk to anybody now. I can, I have no problem going up to, going up and talking to anybody I think, so like I’ve said I’ve made friends or even colleagues or anything along those lines. I’m now the person that initiates it.’
Other participants described their role in connecting people they knew from one setting to another setting in their life.

“There were some people that I thought from school, for example, that you would really love this style, this would look so cool on you and it seems to jive well with your other interests so why don't you check out this forum to see if you, you know, you think it's cool, so why don't you come to this meet up, this event that we’re having and if you're having a good time with it, so I have introduced people to those communities.”

**Neighbouring.** Some participants provided examples of providing informal support to their neighbours.

“I look after their house, I check out their mail, you know, take care of any problems.”

“We do speak to our adjoined neighbours, attached to us, quite frequently. We shovel each other’s driveways.”

“We sort of help each other out with regards to babysitting and stuff like that. Like, I have another mom here that she works nights sometimes and so does her boyfriend, so once in a while they’ll ask me, if their parent who usually watches their son is away, they’ll ask me to watch him for a few nights while they’re both at work, which is, I think, helpful to them, and I don’t ask for them to pay me, so it’s sort like a favour and all that kind of stuff.”

**Keeping to people already known.** In some new settings, participants did not feel a desire to meet new people or felt that they already had enough close relationships in their life.

“Whenever I see them, I just, I just wave hi, but I don’t know them more than that nor do I personally want to. It's not really, it's not something, that it's not that I don’t like anyone. It's just that I’m happy, I’m happy with my life and group of people that I know.”

**Focusing on tasks.** When a new setting was job or education-related, some participants decided to focus their energy on the work that needed to be done rather than on new relationships.

“I didn’t really hang out with a lot of people in law, you know, I had a couple that were really close friends, but mostly I would just literally go to class, study. That was my whole thing.”

“I went to class and I kind of kept my head down and did what I needed to do, but I did my work at very different hours than all the other people.”
**Investment in the setting.** When a participant was interested in the topic area of a setting, they described a higher level of investment in that context.

“I have a really high interest in this field, so I think that makes a huge difference if you’re, it creates motivation, if you’re interested in what you’re doing, like, I wasn’t really motivated in high school.”

“But then when I went into college, I was a lot more focused because I was doing something that I enjoyed doing, so I put more effort into my studying, getting my name out. I did do some volunteering in college with Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and I was more successful in my college years.”

**Commuting.** When a participant did not live directly in or close to a setting, it sometimes was difficult to build and maintain relationships.

“My experience in university was really different from the experience of my friends who lived at their school. I feel like they all had this really strong sense of community with people that they met in university that they had in their dorms, and they had a lot of like social activities that they would do. I didn’t really have that because I was just commuting.”

Other personal factors that were mentioned, but not expanded on, included factors that were viewed as barriers to participation, such as busyness, health issues, and financial constraints.

**Interpersonal Factors**

The following section describes findings about community at the interpersonal level, often discussed at the dyad level between the participant and other individual members of a setting.

**Welcoming behaviour.** When people in a new setting exhibited helpful or prosocial behaviours from the beginning, this helped with initial positive feelings toward the group.

“All my coworkers were very welcoming and nice and you know, some of them went out of their way to provide extra training and give me some support that way.”
“I think that one thing that workplaces do whenever there’s a new person is kind of go around and introduce that person to every single person there, so they kind of get this introduction and they feel welcomed and knowing that I know Joe’s name and John’s name and I can turn to him and ask him for help.”

In some settings, participants remembered a specific person that went out of their way to welcome them and introduce them to the new setting.

“She was nice enough to take me around, you know, desk to desk and office to office and introduce me which she had, didn’t have to do, but she thought was really important, and she always, she was always so kind to me, like every single day and she helped me to kind of come out of my shell and speak cause I always just sat at my desk and just did my work and you know, not talk to anyone. But she, she helped me open up.”

**A connection from a previous setting.** In some cases, participants were introduced to a new setting by someone they knew from a previous setting.

“A friend of mine has the exact same job and she thought that I’d be a good fit for it based on my past experience and just what she knew of my skills, so I applied for it and it sounded like a really fun opportunity.”

**Similar interests.** One factor that drew a participant to someone initially was common ground over an interest or hobby.

“I guess I was more drawn to people that were more active and I wasn’t really into the artsy stuff, so I didn’t really, I guess, mingle with people who were into the artsy stuff or even reading, I was never a big fan of that, so yeah I guess I was more drawn to those who were more outgoing, not afraid to get dirty or you know, catch frogs or whatever.”

When a participant did not feel they had any interests in common in a setting, it affected their sense of belonging to the group.

“Our interests were definitely different, so it took a little bit of adjusting on my part, so because I felt kind of like no one else here has the same interests as I do, I felt like I had to take on some of their interests to kind of fit in”

**Personality traits.** Specific traits of other people in a new setting attracted participants to build relationships.

“I feel like I got along with people who don’t take things too seriously and who joke more about stuff going on in the community rather than the people who are very strict,
that think there should be very strict rules about how you engage in these communities. I’m aware of these things. When people have a more care free, easy-going spirit that’s when I gravitate towards them.”

“Now I find I’m looking a lot more for people who are trustworthy, who have a positive outlook on things, who aren’t always negative, you know, who listen, who I’m not afraid to confide in and I know they won’t go tell twenty other people.”

**Shared values.** Having the same core values was important in establishing connections.

“I don’t really think there was that much difference, just being friends with a good person and people who are honest and don’t cheat or try and find the fast way out of life type of thing, so I guess basically you just try and find someone with the same morals and beliefs as yourself.”

In some cases, having different values was a deciding factor in letting go of new or developed relationships.

“It’s like, if it’s for some LGBT stuff, if you don’t think that these people deserve rights or whatever then you think I don’t deserve those, so why are we friends? Why would I hang out with these people?”

**Similar experiences.** When other people had gone through similar life experiences as the participant, this facilitated bonding in the new setting. For example, one participant described her initial feelings of being a mature student and meeting another mature student.

“She was going through the same thing I was going through, like it’s almost shameful that you’re going back to school, but after being here she realized everyone was in the same position and you don’t have that feeling anymore.”

**Shared experiences.** Going through experiences alongside people in a new setting helped to deepen connections.

“There’s this weird kind of, I don’t know, this camaraderie that comes with having to work retail for so long and having to experience sometimes, some clients that are not so nice, so you’re almost kind of like this team that gets even stronger because you have to deal with these weird scenarios with these customers. And so kind of going through that stress together kind of holds, kind of builds this bond that you weren’t necessarily searching for.”
Cultural or racial background. For some participants that identified closely with a cultural or racial group, they had an easier time connecting with other people from that same group.

“If someone's not from the same race as you, you’re not going to not be friends with them, obviously I would, but sometimes you just have more in common with that person, and you just have things more to talk about, so that might be another thing that, you know, cause majority of people who I’m really close with are actually from the same cultural background as well.”

“I think that’s one of the biggest things. You felt comfortable right away, so you knew even if you guys didn’t experience 99.9% of the exact same thing, there was one per cent for sure that you guys could connect on to work through the same kind of issues or hardships, same kind of, you know, family life, things along those lines, so I think that made it easier that you would gravitate towards those people that you could kind of relate to. I think that’s what was easier for me, because we knew we had some kind of commonality even before we talked.”

Other interpersonal factors were mentioned, but not expanded on. For facilitating new relationships, these included being a similar age to other people, having similar goals, and having different perspectives. For hindering new relationships, these included busyness of other people, gossip, and social comparison.

Group-Level Factors

The next section describes factors at the group-level, described by participants as relating to the setting or group dynamics as a whole.

Proximity. The physical proximity of members of an identified group was identified as a potential factor leading to an increased sense of community within that group.

“I started renting commercial space in the building and that was when I noticed, kind of, that a lot of my professional relationship were starting to become some of them we were actually becoming friends on a personal level, and I’m not sure if it was because of the proximity I could see these people every day and at the same time we’re also working together just because we were close together. I don’t know if that’s why.”
Alternatively, if a participant felt that proximity was the only factor binding a group of people together, this led to a weaker feeling of community. One participant described her feelings about her work setting and not being particularly close to any of her colleagues.

"I think that it’s kind of like high school. It’s a lot of proximity, so I don’t know if I ever, like some people hang out outside of work, but I don’t know if I’d ever be that interested.”

**Technology.** The use of technology, specifically social media, was described as a helpful tool both for meeting new people and for increasing connections to people in new settings.

“I was definitely not meeting people through work and so, I needed a larger pool of people I could draw from and like I had, I don’t need to necessarily be there in person to connect with someone.”

“We started a Facebook group too, where we kind of just talk and things like that, so maybe that will help foster some friendships as well.”

**Development of previous relationships.** When a participant entered a new setting where they felt that the other relationships had not yet fully formed, they described it as easier to become part of the group.

“I think part of it was a lot easier because the year that I went to a new school was the same year that two schools had been amalgamated together, so I wasn’t walking into a situation where everyone knew everyone very well.”

On the other hand, when it felt like relationships and sub-groups had already developed before their entry, the participant found it harder to find their place in the group.

“I feel like, even by that point, a lot of friend circles had formed already which was true because again with that high school a lot of the people had known each other from, since elementary school so, I just wanted to go back to what I, I mean I guess a lot of it was just change, like I wasn’t, I didn’t want that to change.”

**Competition.** A setting that fostered competition amongst its members was seen as a challenge to developing community.
“I think majority of people there do not want to be friends with you because everyone is anti-social because it so competitive so no one wants to help out anybody and everyone’s trying to get ahead.”

Unequal relationships. Participants described cases where they had varying levels of closeness with individual members of setting, which affected their overall assessment of the setting.

“There’s always people that you definitely get along with more, you might get along decently with everybody, but you know, usually, in a big group, there’s usually a couple people that you have more in common with and hang out with more.”

Size of the setting. Participants had varying preferences for the ideal size of groups. Some described feeling specifically more comfortable in small settings.

“I had one close friend or two close friends and that’s pretty much it, so it was, I always had very close-knit friend circles. I didn’t really try to go beyond, yeah and whenever it was kind of expanded upon, that’s when I felt most uncomfortable.”

Others described settings where it was beneficial to them to have a larger setting.

“The more people we have in the community, the more sort of man power we have to put on big events. For example, one of the events I run in May, it currently, we have 180 tickets that we still need to sell for it and that’s gone up from 50 tickets and back in the day when we only sold 50 tickets, we would get cool guests flown in to the convention, we needed to prove that we had an audience to have conventions and big corporations want to bring people here for us to meet and hangout with and buy stuff from so we need to prove we’re a big market that we should be taken seriously. We’ve done that over time by growing our community.”

Other group-level factors that were mentioned were having consistency in people in the setting and knowing some people in a new setting already as factors that facilitated sense of community. A lack of consistency in members, geographical distance between members, and not knowing anybody initially were seen as hindering sense of community.

Boundaries between Settings

The following section details themes related to boundaries and balancing of multiple settings in participants’ lives.
Balancing different groups. Participants described needing to balance and prioritize many different relationships and groups that were specific to different settings.

“Maybe balancing that out I need to work on, but there’s just so many, it’s just so many different people in so many different groups. There’s, like I said, I’m really never a part of one specific group so it’s easier if everyone was one big group where you could see each other all the time.”

Overlap between settings. In some cases, participants found that relationships in their lives existed across multiple settings.

“Sometimes we would come to find out we had interests outside of the communities that we were currently existing in, so then we start talking about that stuff and hanging out in different social contexts and stuff like that.”

Filling different needs. Different settings fulfilled different needs and goals in a participants’ life.

“I think a community at work helps me really excel in my work problems and all that work support, but I think for any personal issues I would have it’s not the community I would turn to. I would more turn to my friends and my family.”

Organizational Factors

The following section describes factors pertinent to work, school, or other institutions that were viewed as affecting sense of community.

Attracting similar people. For some participants, a specific field or organization attracted like-minded people in terms of values or interests. These similarities helped create initial and ongoing cohesion in the group.

“I think that maybe the industry we’re in, so we’re all customer service people, so we’re all really good at communicating with one another and with others cause, that’s sort of our specialty. That’s what we were hired to do, so we take our mastery of dealing with interpersonal situations and also apply it to our everyday life situations that were going through with each other.”
Resources. The amount of resources, tangible or social, at an organization helped determine feelings of satisfaction with that setting. One participant described the contrast she felt with two past settings.

“I think people are more happy. I think that’s what it is, when you have more, better clubs, you have better teachers, you have better opportunities, I think people as a whole either work harder, they want to go to school, they want to be happier, they want to have more interactions with other people.”

“I think middle school wasn’t the greatest because we didn’t have the greatest support system. Like what I mean by that is, we didn’t really have a lot of like resources at that school because it was more like I guess the area is kind of like more poverty ridden so you don’t have AP classes and all that stuff.”

Management. Relationships and impressions of management played a large role in participants overall opinions of the organization. One participant described a good working relationship with his boss and how this affected his feeling of having influence at the company.

“If you have any problems or anything’s weird, you can just tell him and it’ll get dealt with. And that’s just a nice feeling when you can actually talk to the higher ups and have something come out of it. You know what I mean? Cause if you’re in a company with 30, 40,000 employees, good luck talking to an owner and getting anything to happen.”

Another participant discusses how a lack of a feeling influence has created frustration at her workplace.

“Sometimes that politics in the background can be a little frustrating, so with the union and stuff I know there’s a lot of things my co-workers are trying to get and they’re having a little bit of trouble with that, so it’s a little bit tense at the workplace.”

Workplace culture and policy. When participants viewed work cultures positively, in terms of both staff and structures, they were more likely to want to stay at the organization long-term.

“I think the culture of the company, that particular company is very open from the top down so, everyone from the CEO at the top is very open with communication.”

“It seems like the company is doing well. It seems like they have a very low attrition rate, compensation’s good, people seem to be satisfied there, yeah. There just seem to be a lot of pros to this company.”
**Person-environment fit.** A participant’s feeling of fitting in at the organization, which could be seen as a balance of personal and organizational factors, was important to their impression of community. One participant described switching from working for an organization to being self-employed because of fit.

“It was a good job but it, I felt like it wasn’t kind of hands on enough and I couldn’t, there was kind of no room for creativity and so I started taking work on the side.”

“I think why I’m self-employed because I get to sort of create the sort of schedule I want and I mean, the biggest, if I’m not as wealthy financially especially the wealth of time that I find myself having and that’s kind of, that’s been the most interesting”

“I let go of a lot of different work either because it wasn’t working or it wasn’t really the type of work I wanted to do and I’m not sure if it’s because I found, I’ve been lucky enough to find people that now it kind of works better.”

**Neighbourhood Factors**

This section outlines aspects about geographical communities that influenced participants’ sense of community.

**Walkability.** Participants showed a preference for areas that were accessible by foot. Not only did this affect the ability to obtain tangible resources, but it also contributed to an emotional feeling of community.

“Just like downtown areas and areas where there’s a lot of stuff going on and just like walkable areas, where people are out walking, that it really changes everything, so the walkability seems, for me walkability is the most important.”

“It was more that you would see people walking around in the neighbourhood, you would see them there, you would see them here, you would see them at the Giant Tiger, you would see them at you know, and that’s what made it feel like a community.”

**Resources.** Along with walkability to get to resources, some participants described an appreciation for specifically local settings.

“There not these huge big box kind of franchise things, which is fine, I like going to Loblaw’s at night and walking around aimlessly, but I really do appreciate the really small grocery stores, very good butcher, the products are really great. I know who owns it. I like talking to them. I like that part of it.”
Other resources that were viewed as valuable were community programs that were accessible regardless of income.

“I mean growing up here it was nice to have the programs that are put in place, like I know going to camp and stuff, the community centre was free just cause of the neighbourhood that we’re in and had we lived in another neighbourhood, I don’t know if my parents would have been able to afford to send us to summer camp.”

**Gentrification.** The increases in rent and relocation of neighbours were factors that negatively affected participants’ impression of their geographical community and sometimes affected their decision to stay.

"You look across the street and there’s million dollar condos, so it’s just a strange environment to be at right now and I can kind of see where it's going where the working class and homeless population will, within the next ten years, not be here. So it’s kind of, yeah, it’s a little bit hard to deal with. They’re just moving people around.”

“It’s interesting because it’s getting pretty heavily gentrified. It’s funny were talking about this because I’m actually probably going to move at the end of the summer, you know, it’s just, it's flipping a lot.”

**Privacy.** Personal preference played a role in whether someone saw privacy as a positive aspect of their community.

“They were friendly. I mean everyone kind of keeps their distance, I guess. Not as close as it was in the previous neighbourhood, but very friendly and welcoming.”

“I think there’s privacy. Nobody really needs to know too much about you. And there’s been changes with the neighbours as well in this, in this neighbourhood. So it’s never really been, you know a long time. The neighbours haven’t really stayed here such a long time. So I don’t know, I think I like the privacy.”

**Type of developed area.** Many participants showed clear preferences for urban or rural settings. Both kinds of settings had the potential to facilitate community, depending on person-environment fit. One participant described her reason for liking the city.

“There’s a lot more stuff to do, there’s a lot more people that you can talk with and like, people are less interested in what you’re doing. They don’t care, so you don’t feel the same awkward community pressure, but at the same time you can find more people that are interested in the same things you are.
Other neighbourhood factors that arose, but were not elaborated, were perceptions of crime and safety, levels of cleanliness, public transit, and public events.

**Sociocultural Factors**

The following section outlines social, cultural, and historical factors that affected participants’ community experiences.

**Industry culture.** In some cases, a participant saw challenges in their field or industry of work. One participant described working in the entertainment industry.

“Especially in any sort of entertainment industry, it’s only just now starting to move away from a strict hierarchical system.”

“What the current structure does it, just kind of like, are you proper for me now, ok great, I’m going to take all the profit I can now and I don’t care about you in five years and that’s it, yeah, that’s the current clash happening.”

“I’m the one who’s here to call them out since they see that and see that the line ups have become slightly more diverse, they’ve become slightly more inclusive.”

**Cultural traditions.** For some participants, traditions passed down in their family affected their relationships.

“You’re supposed to marry within the religion, marry within the culture, you’re supposed to, there’s even a caste system you’re supposed to marry within as well. That’s kind of ingrained in you, but as I was born in Canada. I’m Canadian. I’m Indian. I’m both of those things, so when, once, one thing that it’s very difficult to break that outer shell if you say I’ve brought home somebody that wasn’t the same culture or caste or the same ethnicity, there would be some initial hesitation.”

“There’s initial hesitation. That’s just how it is, but once that initial hesitation is broken you’re family, my family can accept that.”

**Immigration experiences.** One participant whose family immigrated to Canada described how aspects of their experience affected entering new communities.

“My parents, being immigrants, I was just like, they work seven days a week both of them and on top of that they didn’t know what to, kind of, put somebody in and what to, kind of, what sports or what programs to put in.”
“A lot of people have this traditional mindset to stay very interconnected, to stay very interrelated. I agree to an extent, but when you don’t let them leave you’re not going to see the world for what it is.”

“When you have people coming in, I think the best thing you can do is give them a helping hand, give them a place to stay, but also have them intermingle with people they wouldn’t intermingle with normally. I think that’s very, very crucial for them to have a successful life here.”

**Social services.** For one participant, the availability of social services affected her decisions about where to live, even if she had social connections in a previous location.

“My husband really wants to go back to [city] and I’ve always dreamed of living in [city], so we’re just waiting for things to calm down a bit and see what happens and then we’ll probably move back east.’

‘Oh okay, what do you mean by calm down?’

‘The politics of both provinces and also I really rely on social services so it’s, if certain governments get elected, I’m better off in [province] where the social services are going to increase in the next few years.”

**Time as a Factor**

The next section describes aspects of the participant and their communities over time.

**Consistency in passions.** Many participants described an ongoing and sometimes lifelong interest in a particular activity or hobby. This passion affected their decisions about entering new communities and their impressions of those settings.

“I was always a fan of cars but in the last, in the last year or two since I stopped, yeah. Probably in the last couple years, it’s really taken off because it’s really the one thing that I’ve never lost interest in and I loved it with a passion.”

**Quality over quantity.** Participants described a preference for deepening the quality of their relationships as they got older, even if it meant having fewer close friends.

“I mean, in hindsight, I’d say the people that I considered friends in high school are just more acquaintances, and I guess it’s because we all went to the same, we all went to the same place, that’s kind of why, I don’t want to say we were forced, but that’s why we consider each other friends.”
“I feel like over the years I’ve reduced the amount of friends, but the friendships I do have are better quality.”

“I’m more sheltered in that I don’t know this person well enough, so I want to get to know them to quote unquote consider them my friend whereas as a kid I met you for five minutes and now you’re my friend now.”

**Meeting fewer people.** Regardless of a preference for having fewer close relationships, participants also described overall having less opportunities to meet new people in adulthood.

“You meet less people as you get older I think because you know, you’re not following around the same group of people every day, but it’s yeah, I think, people aren’t, people have their own lives and stuff.”

“As you’re younger, you try to have these friends and these circles in communities, but I feel like as you become older, people become more anti-social, like I see it through all my friends because I don’t know maybe they have less time or you just realize that there’s a lot of people out there who pretend to be your friend and they’re not.”

**Flexibility in social circles.** Participants described having more flexibility in their social circles as an adult, whereas as a child and teen these were more fixed.

“I think I am just less concerned as an adult than I was as a child about, yeah, losing social circles or that type of thing. Your friends are probably of the utmost importance when you’re a child and, you know, now when you’re an adult, there’s lots of ways to keep in touch and make new friends or, so I think it was, just became less of a concern as I got older.”

“When you’re in high school and that, where the thing happened and you have to go there every day it’s really difficult to take space away because you’re going to see that person all the time and there’s going to be conflict, so that was sort of the issue that I had there that I don’t have nowadays in personal relationships because like if a breakup happens or something bad happens you can just stop talking to and seeing that person in your adult life as long as you don’t work with them. Whereas, in high school those are the people in your social circle all the time every day.”

**Less extracurricular involvement.** Participants showed a decrease in involvement in extracurricular or volunteer settings in adulthood compared to childhood. Fifteen out of eighteen participants mentioned being in some type of club, group or hobby as a child or teen. This number dropped to eight in adulthood. This decrease may be related to lack of time.
“I feel like it’s a lot harder when you’re out of school, an adult trying to build those communities because you have a lot more on your time in a lot of ways, so it’s kind of unfortunate I think.”

**Discussion for the Development of Sense of Community**

The first objective of this study is to understand factors that influence the development of sense of community in emerging and young adulthood. These factors appeared at many levels of the setting, from the person and their immediate relationships to larger structures and traditions. Some factors always arose as either facilitating or hindering sense of community across participants, while others depended on the person’s fit with their environment.

The dispersal of these factors aligned with the general framework of Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory, which describes the different environmental systems that individuals interact with and are effected by, including immediate groups and institutions, as well as larger cultural factors and policies. These levels and the interactions between these levels form the basis for studying individuals’ relationships with their community and society. The levels presented in this study are not directly mapped to coordinate with the levels presented in Bronfenbrenner’s framework—though many of them could be mapped—but reflect the same way of thinking about individuals and communities.

**An ecological model for development of sense of community.**

The present study organized factors in an ecological system. Factors have previously been organized in this fashion, at least in regards to personal and community characteristics, in past research on PSOC (Brodsky, O’Campo, & Aronson, 1999; Puddifoot, 2003). In this study, not only were some settings nested within other settings—for example, a friend group in a workplace—but participants’ understanding of their settings consisted of factors nested within other factors. The focus of the participants’ reflections existed at various levels of the micro and macrosystem. These levels included personal factors (e.g. passions and values), interpersonal
factors (e.g. feeling welcomed by individual members), group-level factors (e.g. size and consistency of the group), organizational factors (e.g. workplace management and policy), neighbourhood factors (e.g. perceptions of safety and walkability), sociocultural factors (e.g. cultural traditions) and time (e.g. preferring quality over quantity in friendships).

To capture and better articulate aspects of this ecological way of understanding the development of sense of community, the lead researcher conceptualized and developed a graphic to depict two visual representations. Figure 1 shows the first of these. The model is organized around a person’s sense of community. Each petal represents a different community setting, which may have different factors depending on the context. Personal factors are displayed as the first ring because aspects about the individual affect all settings they enter. Time is displayed as the stem of the flower because over time, different settings may appear, grow, shrink or disappear from a person’s life. If a snapshot was taken at different points of person’s life, the flower would look different in its arrangement of petals, and its stem would grow over time. Sociocultural factors are reflected in the soil because these factors do not seem to always be as noticeable or identifiable, but affect the overall dynamics of communities.

All of these factors played a role in aspects of a person’s PSOC, from helping them decide to join a group to influencing their impression of the group once joined. These factors arose as being related to and interacting with each other. This was best seen in examples of person-environment fit, where certain factors appeared as facilitating or hindering PSOC depending on different participant’s interests and values. Certain factors displayed both facilitating and hindering effects on perceptions of community for a single individual. For example, difficulties with management, while being a challenge to person-supervisor fit, increased solidarity with co-workers. These findings demonstrate that PSOC, even within
Figure 1. An ecological model for understanding factors in the development of sense of community.
a specific setting, is not a consistent or static feeling across the whole context. Attempts to capture an overall value of PSOC could miss nuances of unique relationships and challenges within the network.

This model is in no way meant to represent a prototype for what communities and social networks always look like, nor to be prescriptive about what they should look like. To best represent this, an alternative version of the model (Figure 2) was created. In this depiction, three different flowers are present to demonstrate three different people’s environments. Each person has differing numbers and types of social settings in their life. Additionally, the size of petals within a person’s environment are different. This is used to depict differing and multiple senses of community, as PSOC is not a static or consistent construct across settings (Brodsky, Loomis, & Marx, 2002). These findings illustrate the complexity of conscious and unconscious factors that play a role in decision-making around sense of community. Perceptions and impressions of the community setting arise from a number of interrelated aspects of the person and the setting.

**Person-environment fit in sense of community.** Across all of the ecological levels, there were examples of the importance of fit between the person and their environment. Desired traits or aspects of communities were not consistent across participants or even across different settings for the same participant. Findings displayed the four typical areas of discussion for person-environment fit—job fit, organization fit, group fit, and supervisor fit, (Chuang et al. 2016), but also diverged outside these realms. For example, preferences around rural or urban settings and privacy played a large role in a participant’s satisfaction with their neighbourhood, but this does not fit into the areas of jobs, organizations, groups, or supervisors. These four areas may better correspond to workplace settings, indicating where the focus of research in this area may be located. This study lends insight into other potential aspects of fit for different settings.
Figure 2. An alternative version of the model for understanding factors in the development of sense of community.
It also sheds light on the complexity of person-environment fit, as a preference for rural or urban settings could be influenced by a number of different impressions, perceptions, and past experiences. With person-environment fit in mind, any attempts to create meaningful community experiences for people could never be a one-size-fits-all solution.

**Aspects of emerging and young adulthood.** While a number of factors found in this study could be related to any developmental phase, some aspects of development of sense of community linked directly to this period between exploration and role immersion. For example, some participants highlighted that they are not searching for any new groups right now. This may indicate a settling into role immersion in their existing groups (Arnett, 2012). Others discussed challenges to developing and maintaining relationships that were not present for them in adolescence, such as having less time and meeting fewer new people in their day-to-day life. At the same time, the ability to choose the areas that they wanted to study and work allowed them to meet people that have similar values and interests to them.

Participants expressed a change from adolescence in appreciating the quality of relationships over quantity. While this shows promise in the ability to have meaningful social interaction, it is dependent on the accessibility of finding people that match their personal definition of quality. A number of participants described having long-term friend groups that fit this need. Others turned to online communities when it was not being met in other areas of their life. Like previous research on multiple senses of communities (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009), participants relied on different community settings to fulfill different needs.

The variations in community settings mentioned across participants reflects the different paths in emerging and young adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Some were looking for work, some had multiple jobs, some were still in school, and others had started their careers. In this way,
different markers of emerging and young adulthood were present in varying ways. The division between these two phases was not clear, as someone may have been immersed in marriage, but still exploring vocational options. These findings shed light on the individual variations and fluidity of these proposed stages.

**Findings for Group Comparison**

This section illustrates the findings around differences between the *Better Beginnings* and comparison samples. Again, quotes have been de-identified and are written with de-naturalization.

**Community Settings.** Participants had choice in which settings to discuss. With each participant, different community or social settings were probed in the beginning and then between two and four were expanded on during the interview. Common settings that were mentioned included workplaces and education settings, neighbourhoods, long-term friend groups, online groups, and community groups or volunteering. Table 2 provides information on which settings were discussed by each participant and totaled for each group.

**Table 2**

*Settings Discussed by Participant and Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Workplace/Education</th>
<th>Friend</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Community Group/Volunteering</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Involvement. Settings that were included in the community groups/volunteering category were any groups that participants were part of excluding workplaces, schools, and informal networks, such as friends, family, or neighbours. These community groups included churches, hobby and activism communities, and volunteer settings. These settings had an element of formal membership, some level of structure and established commitment, but no obligation or necessity to join. In other words, participants were part of these community groups in their free time, without monetary incentive.

One Better Beginnings participant described the process of her joining a boxing gym and then becoming a coach on the side and increasing her involvement there.

“There’s something about coaching that brings out something in me that I never really, I don’t know, viewed in my day-to-day life. There’s something in coaching that just brings out this, just almost pure, happy [name] and, very animated, which I feel like I’m not like generally.”

Another Better Beginnings participant discussed starting a band initially because of a shared goal, but then forming a group from that.

“We initially formed the band so we would be able to bring these songs to life and at first it was way more sort of a very large group. I was getting a lot of people together to play that we, just because, why not, and I think it was to make the songs come to life, whatever crazy ideas we have and that sort of ended up forming a core group, and in the last two years we’ve been usually five people on stage.”
Some comparison participants, when probed for more community settings they were part of, specifically stated a lack of involvement.

“I’m not really part of any groups to be honest.”

“I don’t know if I’m in any social groups right now.”

“I’m not part of any volunteer groups or any community, any community outreach or anything of that nature.”

**Self-Growth.** While not specifically probed for, some participants discussed how they had changed or grown from the community experiences they had. Of the Better Beginnings participants, seven out of nine mentioned aspects of self-growth specifically because of a setting in their life, while one participant from the comparison group mentioned these changes.

One Better Beginnings participant described her development in identity from joining a group in university.

“I feel like it really helped me develop a sense of community and really helped me discover my identity because I feel like when you’re in your early twenties, you’re still kind of figuring all that out, so it was a really positive experience for me because I had a lot of support and space to muddle things out and kind of work it out.”

“I feel like I’m more firm when I do take a stand, but I also feel like I do a lot more active listening and, so being more proactive about letting marginalized people speak and like, listening to them.”

Another Better Beginnings participant described pushing herself to be the person she wanted to be through her experiences in college.

“For me, I wasn’t very happy with the person I was. I wanted to be more outgoing and to be more comfortable socially, especially since that was the kind of job I wanted to do, so I pushed myself to be uncomfortable in situations, so even if I didn’t want to do something I would do it just to get the experience, so in college, we had to a lot of presentations in front of the group, so that kind of forced me to be more comfortable and then once I got that confidence things got a lot better and they just kind of snowballed from there, but really just pushing myself to break those barriers and yeah, with time things got better.”
One participant in the Better Beginnings group described a deepening over time of the meaning that a church community has for her.

“Of going to church, well it just depends on the kind of spiritual person that you are, I mean, just growing up as a child you don’t really understand it. You get older, you compare it to experiences and stuff and some things as a child were never understood.”

**Enjoyment of School.** Better Beginnings participants were more likely to describe enjoying school as a child and less likely to mention disliking aspects of school. Seven Better Beginnings participants said they enjoyed school as a child, while two said they did not. For the comparison participants, these numbers were more balanced, with four enjoying school and five disliking it. Below are two descriptions of school from Better Beginnings participants.

“I think socially I was pretty good, I always felt pretty comfortable at school and it was always pretty stimulating for me socially. I think, I can’t think of that many times where it was, where I had a real bad time, yea I can’t really pinpoint any moments.”

“Yeah I really liked it. It was probably the best years of my life when I was in school. Especially elementary and middle school. It was super, super fun. I felt like I was always making new friends always able to play with the friends that I had”

A comparison participant described his impression of school.

“I wasn’t really into school. I did well, it wasn’t something that I truly enjoyed. It was just something that your parents kind of forced you to go through, forced you to go through the motions.”

**Discussion for Group Comparison**

The second objective for this study was to explore differences between the Better Beginnings and comparison groups in their experiences of sense of community.

**Community involvement.** Better Beginnings participants, collectively, shared more community settings and stories than did comparison participants. Better Beginnings participants were more likely to discuss having long-term groups of friends and were also more involved in community settings, such as religious groups, volunteering, and hobby communities.
Involvement in these communities was in addition to workplace or educational settings. These findings correspond to the follow-up at ages 18 and 19 of the longitudinal study, where *Better Beginnings* participants had higher levels of community involvement (Janzen et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2012). The consistency of these findings aligns with research showing that levels of community involvement are often stable between ages 17, 26, and 32 (Hasford et al., 2017).

These findings also correspond with data from the grade six follow-up, where parents from the *Better Beginnings* site reported higher levels of community involvement and satisfaction with their neighbourhood (Nelson et al., 2004; Peters et al., 2010). Parental PSOC is correlated with adolescent children’s levels of community involvement (Kegler et al., 2005), so the benefits of the *Better Beginnings* programming focused on parents, such as support groups, may have also created an indirect benefit to their children. Positive early experiences of community for both the parents and children may have shaped participants’ perceptions and then increased the likelihood of future participation. These findings provide insight into the importance of supportive community settings early in life.

**Self-growth.** *Better Beginnings* participants were more likely to describe their growth and development in their illustrations of community experiences, something that was not explicitly probed for. This finding corresponds to past *Better Beginnings* data, where participants of the program had high levels of meaning-making around their community experiences at ages 18 and 19 (Nelson et al., 2012). It may also relate to their levels of community involvement, as higher levels of involvement are correlated with meaning-making, specificity, and impact of personal stories (Hasford et al., 2017). Enhanced early opportunities in community, as well as supportive environments for social and emotional development, may have played a role in identity development and maturity in understanding one’s role in these contexts.
A potential limitation of this study may have been that both groups of participants have been asked about their community experiences at multiple times points over their lives, which in itself could have primed individuals to think more about their development in these contexts. Even with this aspect consistent between groups, themes of self-growth were more salient with the Better Beginnings participants.

**Enjoyment of school.** In remembering past experiences, Better Beginnings participants were more likely to describe enjoying school in their childhood. The Better Beginnings program was designed as a school and neighbourhood-based program in collaboration with school staff, parents, and the larger neighbourhood. A number of these programs directly impacted school functioning, such as kindergarten readiness programs and literacy supports, while other programs related to social cohesion, such as after-school programs (Peters et al., 2003). These different types of programs under the Better Beginnings umbrella could have all played a role in shaping the school climate and participants’ experiences of school. This finding may play a role in the longitudinal nature of community experiences, how community involvement appears to be consistent over time (Hasford et al., 2017) and how parental experiences connect to childhood experiences (Kegler et al., 2005). Psychological sense of community predicts involvement at future time points (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990), therefore, the salience of enjoying school for Better Beginnings participants may relate to the findings in this study around community involvement. The finding that Better Beginnings participants enjoyed school more than comparison participants may relate to further outcomes within the longitudinal study, such as educational attainment, choice of profession, mental health, and wellbeing.
Limitations

Since participants had choice over which community contexts to discuss rather than being prompted by the interview, the salience of these settings in their life may have factored in to what was discussed. As salience may be correlated with a positive PSOC (Obst & White, 2005), there may have been a bias to discuss communities where participants felt more positive feelings. Personal definitions of community may have also shaped this discussion. For example, family was sometimes mentioned, but never discussed by the participant, so it is possible that participants do not view families as a ‘community’.

As data was only collected first-hand from participants, the salience and knowledge of different factors within the ecological framework would determine what was discussed. Personal and interpersonal factors tended to be the most commonly discussed, as this information may be the most accessible in a person’s understanding of their community. On the other hand, sociocultural factors were mentioned far less. This may not actually reflect the relative importance of this level, but rather the immediate salience of these aspects in a person’s day-to-day community experiences. Research that took data from multiple levels of a community setting may shed insight on the varying effects and interactions of these different levels.

Over the course of twenty years, many different community experiences would have an impact on the individuals in this study. The effects of an early childhood program could become diluted or less visible over the course of their lives. For this reason, it is not surprising that drastic differences were not found between the Better Beginnings and comparison groups. While the comparison communities did not have programming similar to Better Beginnings at the start of this longitudinal study, participants from these sites could have gone on to future contexts with similar benefits to community.
The sample for this project was recruited from the larger sample of the Better Beginnings study on a first-come basis until spots for interviews were filled. There could have been a self-selection bias with this sample. It is possible that participants from both groups would be more likely to volunteer for a study related to community if they have had generally positive experiences with communities. While examples of negative PSOC were described in this data, it may have been skewed to more positive PSOC due to the selection process. Differences between the two groups could then appear less noticeable.

Reflecting on my Role

A constructivist approach was used in this study, with an understanding that the interaction between myself as the researcher and the participant influenced the nature of what was discussed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). New understandings of community experiences arose during the interviews. For example, some participants told me that a question I asked encouraged them to think about a past community experience in a way that they had not done before. They found new meaning in the experience and for this reason, the interview was not purely an extraction of data. The interview was a collaboration and a co-construction of information. A different researcher may have elicited different meanings or salient features from the participant.

As part of this interaction, I may have been a relative insider or outsider to various lived experiences of my participants. However, since all of the interviews happened over the phone, there were no visual cues for the participant to judge this status. From the sound of my voice, they may have assumed aspects of my identity, such as age and gender, but I do not know to what extent they considered me an insider or outsider. There were specific cases where the participant temporarily put the focus on my experience of the topic, which were brief opportunities to build rapport as a relative insider before bringing the focus back to them. In
other cases, I asked clarification questions about an unknown topic, which would identify me as an outsider, but also give the opportunity for more richness of information. I view neither of these as a limitation, as they both had their benefits, but rather as part of the transaction that occurs in qualitative research.

**Future Directions**

This study presents factors that appeared in the development of PSOC across multiple levels of the community context. These findings were taken exclusively from firsthand data of individuals. Future research in this area could explore these factors in more detail, especially through a triangulated analysis of multiple individuals, groups, or community level data. Additionally, certain factors were more salient for different individuals. When a person identified with a specific cultural or racial group, this was more likely to be mentioned as a factor in interpersonal relationships. Future research could explore comparisons of these factors across culture, gender, or varying life experiences.

This study focused specifically on the development of PSOC. Themes around the maintenance and exiting of communities were coded in the original analysis of the data, but were not discussed as they were outside the scope of the research. Both of these processes represent areas of further research, particularly related to conflict and decisions to leave a community setting.

Longitudinal studies offer valuable insight into the role of past experiences. Ongoing and future study of this cohort of Better Beginnings participants could provide deeper understanding of long-term benefits to early community experiences. Triangulation of this data with quantitative data from the longitudinal study could provide further insight of the relationships between community involvement, self-growth, and aspects of health and well-being.
Conclusion

The development of sense of community in emerging and young adulthood is a complex process, reliant on numerous interrelated factors at different levels of the ecological system. These factors, including personal, interpersonal, group-level, setting-level, temporal and sociocultural influences, interact with the individual in ways to facilitate or hinder their impression of their community environment. While certain conditions appear widespread across different people’s senses of community (fulfillment of needs, influence, emotional connection, and membership), the way to achieve these conditions is often individualized. Person-environment fit plays a large role in determining satisfaction and belonging in these contexts. Involvement in an early childhood development program, such as Better Beginnings, shows benefits to these processes later in life, including a sustained increase in levels of community involvement, deeper reflections on one’s own personal growth from these experiences, and more positive impressions of school as a young child, which may have an impact on their current levels of involvement. The findings from this study provide support for the long-term value of participation in an early childhood developmental program.
References


Appendix A: Community Experiences Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. As you know, you’ve been invited here to share about your experiences in new community settings, as well as past childhood experiences of community. I’d like to begin talking generally about the communities and groups you are currently part of. If you would like, I have paper and you can draw a visual using circles to represent the different groups. You can overlap the circles to show if some groups are connected or nested within other ones.

Now I’d like to talk further about one of these groups that you’ve joined more recently (since 18 years old). For example, this could be a new job, new school program, new club or organization, or a new neighbourhood. You can pick which one you’d like to discuss and if there’s time we can talk about more than one of them.

1. Please describe this community/setting.
   Probe: Roles, relationships, activities, and resources of setting.

2. What led you to join this group/move there/choose this job/program etc.?

3. What was it like when you first started attending?
   Probe: How did you feel? What did you like about it? What made it easy to join this group? What made it difficult? Were there any challenges? How did they make you/not make you feel welcomed?

4. How do you feel about the group now?
   Probe: What do you think led to this change/lack of change?
   What do you think are the strengths of this group? What, if any, problems or difficulties exist? How are these addressed?

5. What are your thoughts about staying in this group? If so, how long?
   Probe: What reasons do you have for this decision? What does this group provide you? What do you provide the group?

6. Is there anything else you’d like to add?

We’re going to shift gears now and talk about past childhood experiences with community.

1. Going back to the different circles we talked about at the beginning, can you tell me about any other groups you used to be part of as a child and teen?

2. How do you think these communities are similar to ones you are part of now? How are they different?

3. How do you feel being part of these communities/groups in the past influences how you enter new settings?

4. Is there anything else you would like to add?

In closing, if you could share advice about what community groups can do to make new people feel welcomed and included, what would it be?
Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Madeline Gritzan
Graduate Masters Student
Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo ON, N2L 3C5
Email: grit5890@mylaurier.ca
Phone: 519-884-0710 ext. 2879

Dear Better Beginnings research participant,

You are receiving this message because you gave permission for Better Beginnings researchers to invite you to participate in future research.

The purpose of this study, titled “Sense of Community in Emerging Adulthood and its Relation to Childhood Experiences” is to understand your experiences entering new communities, as well as your experiences of community as a child. This project is part of a larger ongoing research study about wellbeing, education, and employment.

I invite you take part in an interview that can be scheduled in person or over the phone, depending on your availability. The interview is expected to take approximately 60 minutes and you will receive $25 for your time. If you decide to participate, you will get to choose whether you want an electronic transfer or a gift certificate worth $25 to Sobeys, Zehrs, Tim Horton’s, Starbucks or Visa.

If you are interested, you can reply to this email or call me at 519-884-0710 ext. 2879. I can give you more information about the study and you can decide afterward if you wish to participate.

Sincerely,
Madeline Gritzan
Appendix C: Consent Form

Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research  
Wilfrid Laurier University and OISE University of Toronto  
Informed Consent Statement

Sense of Community in Emerging Adulthood and its Relation to Childhood Experiences  
A Project of  
Examining the impact of an early childhood intervention on individuals’ wellbeing, education, and employment 20 years later

Madeline Gritzan, Dr. Colleen Loomis and Dr. Janette Pelletier

You are invited to participate in a research study about communities you are currently part of and were part of as a child. The purpose of this research is to understand your experiences in community settings, including entry, role, benefits, and challenges. This project is part of a larger ongoing research study about wellbeing, education, and employment. The principal researchers for this project are Madeline Gritzan, who is a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Wilfrid Laurier University and Dr. Colleen Loomis, who is a professor in the Psychology Department at Wilfrid Laurier University, along with Dr. Janette Pelletier, who is a professor in the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto.

INFORMATION
This research is part of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures research in which you have participated in 2008. Over 1,200 adults from neighbourhoods in Sudbury, Highfield, Cornwall, Ottawa-Vanier and Etobicoke are being invited to participate in the study of what happens 20 years later. This aspect of the research invites approximately 20 adults to participate in a one-time interview. The interview may be completed in person or over telephone at a time and place that is convenient for you.

The interview has a number of questions about your experience of entering new communities since 2008. Examples of these communities include a new neighbourhood, school, job, church, or community group. You will get a choice in which community setting(s) you wish to discuss. You may choose not to respond to any question. The interview will take approximately one hour. There is no deception involved in the research.

Your responses will be stored electronically in a password protected file secured at Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Toronto-OISE and as in previous years, will be kept indefinitely.

RISKS
We do not believe that you will experience any major risks to your wellbeing by participating in this interview. It is possible that if you have had a negative experience in your life, that you may find yourself becoming upset recalling such an experience. These feelings are normal and should be temporary. Please know that you are free to skip any question or procedure and/or withdraw from the study at any time. If you experience any persistent negative feelings
as a result of participating in this study, please contact the researchers and/or a local mental health care resource (Ontario Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600, http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/).

BENEFITS
We do envision significant benefits to your participation in this study. First of all, you may find it interesting to reflect back on your life and some of the experiences that you have had. Second, your experiences in the community and participating in community programs could be useful in improving community programs and services for others. Finally, the results of this study will make a contribution to government, funders, and the research literature on the importance of programs for children, families, and communities.

CONFIDENTIALITY
We will keep everything you report confidential and private. Only Madeline Gritzan, Dr. Colleen Loomis, Dr. Janette Pelletier and their research assistants (Christina Dimakos, Lexi Gilmer and Sarah Ranco) will have access to your data. Your personal information (i.e., name, contact information) will be stored separate from the data. Your interview responses will be identified by the same code used for past participation in this research and will be provided to you in a separate message. Data will be stored in a locked/password-protected electronic file in the researchers’ locked lab/office at Wilfrid Laurier University and OISE University of Toronto. The data will be maintained indefinitely and may be analyzed in the future as part of a separate project (i.e., secondary data analysis).

Any quotations used in write-ups or presentations will not contain your name or the names of locations and groups you are part of. These quotations could still be potentially identifiable if someone recognizes an aspect of your story. You will have the option to vet any quotations before they are used or decline the use of any quotations at all.

COMPENSATION
You will receive $25 in appreciation for participating in an interview. You can choose to receive your compensation as cash (i.e., via Interac transfer or Paypal) or gift card (Sobeys, Zehrs, Tim Horton’s or Starbucks). If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will still receive the same amount of compensation. Any compensation related to the participation in this research study is taxable. It is the participant’s responsibility to report the amount received for income tax purposes and Wilfrid Laurier University will not issue a tax receipt for the amount received.

CONTACT
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, or if you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact Madeline Gritzan at grit5890@mylaurier.ca, Dr. Colleen Loomis at (519) 884-0710 ext. 2879 or cloomis@wlu.ca, or Dr. Janette Pelletier at janette.pelletier@utoronto.ca. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (REB #5222), which is supported by the Research Support Fund. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Robert Basso, Research Ethics Board Chair, Wilfrid Laurier University, 519-884-0710 ext. 4994, rbasso@wlu.ca

PARTICIPATION
You have the right to decide that you do not want to take part in the research. Your decision to take part or to not take part will in no way affect your usual educational, health, or community services. If you withdraw from the study, we will not use any of your responses to the interview questions and every attempt will be made to have your data destroyed. You have the right to not respond to any question(s) you choose. You have the right to choose not to be quoted. You will still receive $25 even if you do not answer all of the questions or choose not to be quoted.

FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION
The research team will prepare a summary of the results. A summary will be sent to you when all the data have been analyzed by August 31, 2018. In addition to the summary for participants, we plan to present the results of the research at professional and scientific conferences and to publish the findings in professional and scientific journals. The findings may also be made available through Open Access resources.
WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL HELP OR RESOURCES IF I NEED THEM?
During the interview there may be things that are asked which you may have concerns about. If you have any questions or concerns about yourself or your family, please refer to the resources provided at the beginning of the survey; it contains a list of names and phone numbers of people and agencies that can assist with any questions or concerns that you might have.

If you have any questions concerning the collection of this information, please contact:

Dr. Colleen Loomis  
Department of Psychology  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5  
1-519-884-0710, extension 2858 or email: cloomis@wlu.ca

BETTER BEGINNINGS, BETTER FUTURES  
RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

I have received a copy of the INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT. I have read it or had it read to me and understand it. It describes my involvement in the research and the information to be collected from me.

I agree to participate in this interview for this research.  
Yes_______       No_______

I agree that the research may quote me and that I will not be named or identified.  
Yes_______       No_______

I agree to be contacted in the future about the use of quotes. At that point, I can choose for any quotation(s) to be removed from use.  
Yes_______       No_______

Preferred method of contact __________________________

Participant's signature __________________________
Date _________________

If applicable, researcher’s signature __________________________
Date _________________
Appendix D: Case Summary Example

BB1 Case Summary

Summary by: Madeline Gritzan

Jennifer lived in the same neighbourhood in Ottawa for her childhood and teen years. She was part of Partir d’un Bon Pas as a child, but “I don’t have any memory of that” and “I know my mom always spoke very highly of it”. She tried different sports, but “never really stuck to one thing”.

Jennifer said she “wasn’t a very big fan of school” and “had issues academically”. She was diagnosed with borderline dyslexia and ADHD in grade nine, so by that point “I was pretty old” and before that “I didn’t really understand” why she was having those difficulties. After the diagnosis, it “definitely got better over time” and she learned to “manage my weaknesses”. It was Jennifer’s mom that “pushed me really to get some assessments” and “she was there a lot to help me”.

Jennifer described herself as “shy” and “socially anxious”, so she found making friends to be a “little difficult”. As she got older, she found that this got “a little better” as she found a group of friends that “I really got along with very well”. Into college, “I really pushed myself” because “I wasn’t very happy with the person I was”. After pushing herself to step out of her comfort zone, she found that she got “confidence” and then things “just kind of snowballed from there”.

She switched high schools from one that was “super duper small so the quality of the classes weren’t the best”, but “my closest friends were from that original high school”. She was involved in a volunteering club where she enjoyed the “community aspect”, “to be in charge of things” and to “spend time with friends”. Her friend group had similar interests and “I found my
people if that makes sense”. She enjoyed spending time with someone who was “laidback” and “fun”, but at the same time, “wants to do well”. When Jennifer went to the new school, she would walk on her lunch time to see her old friends. Her second high school was “better academically”, but “I didn’t find my so-called people”.

Jennifer feels “like over the years I’ve reduced the amount of friends, but the friendships I do have are better quality”. As she’s gotten older, the quality of being “kind-hearted” has become increasingly important. She cares about having reciprocity in friendships. “I’m someone who gives a lot in my friendships” and “I’ve kind of lost friendships” when people “weren’t there for me when I needed them”.

Jennifer works as a counsellor with teenagers who are struggling with a variety of issues. “I always very much liked helping people” and “it makes me feel good”. She says that she gives “a piece of me” to her job and that it takes “a lot of energy and emotion”. She wanted to work with teenagers “because of my experiences as a teenager” “somewhat rebelling” and “still finding a lot of resilience”. She also felt that “the people who tend to do that work” are very kind and similar to her, which is why she “fond those bonds there”.

At the beginning of her work, Jennifer found it difficult to balance her role with the youth. “It was very hard for me to listen to all these… tragic stories” and “I wanted to fix it all”. Over time she learned that “it’s just my job to support” and “I gradually learned where my limits are”. She has found that support from other coworkers and training has helped her to “understand my role” and “avoid burnout now”. She noted that from the beginning, her coworkers were “very welcoming and nice” and that some “went out of their way to provide extra training”. Jennifer believes that it was this feedback and support that “created, like, a very good friendship”. The team also started traditions together like “we would go out for lunch together every Tuesday”.
Jennifer found some challenges with upper management at her previous job, which created stress, but also created solidarity with her other coworkers. “We were all in the same boat”. The team worked together and “tried to get some changes”, but “we didn’t have a lot of power over that stuff”. She said that “just being able to vent to each other” was a large piece of support if they couldn’t create change. It helped them to “release all that negativity”. Jennifer ended up leaving that workplace and her choice was “often to related to pay”. She says of her previous team “even though we’ve all left that workplace… we still keep in touch”.

Jennifer has been at her new organization for about a year but is now on maternity leave. It was difficult for her to leave because she felt “connected with my clients” and “it made me sad to say bye”. She described herself as “super, super close” with her new colleagues. She has gone back to her workplace to “show off the baby and to say hi to people”. In terms of upper management, she says there are still “some politics” and that her teammates spend “time to vent about work” and “sometimes we end up counselling each other because that’s what we all do”, but sometimes they “make a point to not talk about work” and “just spend time with each other”. Jennifer has been better able to “set some boundaries” at this job compared to previous ones because she is “permanent”, a “good worker” and has “a good relationship with my manager”.

Jennifer is part of two different Facebook groups, one for her neighbourhood and one for new moms in Ottawa. She describes herself as a “private person” and “I don’t like talking to my neighbours”, so she likes the neighbourhood Facebook group “because I felt like I knew what was going on in my neighbourhood”. Her Facebook group for moms “gives me support if I’m going through something similar” and makes her feel that “I’m part of something bigger”. There are some people she knows in these groups, but otherwise, her interactions have stayed online.
## Appendix E: Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Current Settings</td>
<td>Settings identified by the participant as one of their communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Workplace</td>
<td>Participant currently has work as a setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Many jobs</td>
<td>Participant currently has two or more jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Looking for work</td>
<td>Participant is currently looking for employment</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. One job</td>
<td>Participant currently has one job</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Participant mentions geographical neighbourhood as one of their communities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Education</td>
<td>Participant is currently in an education setting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Community involvement</td>
<td>Participant is involved in a community group or organization outside of work and school</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Long-term friends</td>
<td>Participant has a long-lasting group of friends</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Online</td>
<td>Participant mentions an online community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Family</td>
<td>Participant mentions family as a social group</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Definition of community</td>
<td>Participant describes what the word community means to them</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Friendships</td>
<td>Participant has friendships as a part of their definition of community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sense of Community Model</td>
<td>Sense of membership participant has in a setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Belonging</td>
<td>Sense of membership participant has in a setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Lack of belonging</td>
<td>Participant describes feeling of not belonging or being part of setting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Sense of belonging</td>
<td>Participant describes feeling of belonging or membership in group</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Emotional Connection</td>
<td>Participant describes shared emotional connection within group</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Influence</td>
<td>Level of influence participant has in setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Lack of influence</td>
<td>Participant experiences feeling of not having control or trust to make decisions in the setting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Having influence</td>
<td>Participant feels like they have some power and control at the setting</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Provision of needs</td>
<td>Giving and receiving of tangible or intangible support in a group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Lack of needs being met</td>
<td>Participants describes needs not being met in a setting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Helping others</td>
<td>Participant helps or supports other people in a setting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Others providing support</td>
<td>Other person(s) provide help or support to the participant</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Reciprocity</td>
<td>Participant and other person(s) in setting give and receive support</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal Factors</td>
<td>Factors about the individual that affect their development of a sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Facilitating factors</td>
<td>Personal factors that help the participant create a sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Acts as a connector</td>
<td>Participant describes past actions of them being the person that connects someone to other people or resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Acts as an initiator</td>
<td>Participant describes past actions of them initiating relationships in a new setting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Neighbourliness</td>
<td>Participant describes doing acts of kindness for people in their neighbourhood</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Personality traits</td>
<td>Participant mentions traits that help them create new relationships</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hindering factors</td>
<td>Personal factors that limit the development of sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Busyness</td>
<td>Participant describes their own busyness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Commuting</td>
<td>Participant describes not living directly in the community setting</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Financial considerations</td>
<td>Participant describes decisions made based on financial restraints or opportunities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Health issues</td>
<td>Participant describes health concerns making it difficult to participate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Keeping to people already known</td>
<td>Participant stays with people they know in a new setting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Personality traits</td>
<td>Participant describes traits they have that limit their engagement in new settings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Task focus</td>
<td>Participant describes a task or work being their priority in a setting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Dependent on fit</td>
<td>Personal factors that depend on fit with setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invested in setting</td>
<td>Participant describes being invested in the setting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of investment in setting</td>
<td>Participant describes lack of motivation to participate in setting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose</td>
<td>Participant describes having a sense of purpose from a setting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Interpersonal Factors</td>
<td>Factors about relationships that affect development of sense of community</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Facilitating Factors</td>
<td>Relational factors that contribute to positive sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Cultural or racial background</td>
<td>Participant describes looking for people with similar cultural or racial background</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Diversity of perspectives</td>
<td>Participant likes interacting with people who have diverse perspectives from their own</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Personality Traits</td>
<td>Participant describes traits in another person that they look for</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix. Similar experiences</td>
<td>Participant describes having similar experiences to other members of group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix. Similar interests</td>
<td>Participant describes being drawn to people with similar interests</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Shared experiences</td>
<td>Participant went through life experiences with the other person(s)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Shared goal</td>
<td>Participant describes having the same goal(s) as others in setting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Similar age</td>
<td>Participant describes being drawn to people of similar age in setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>x. Shared values</td>
<td>Participant describes being drawn to people who share values with them</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xi. Welcoming behaviour</td>
<td>Participant describes gestures that were made to welcome them to a new setting</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hindering factors</td>
<td>Factors about relationships that hinder positive sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Busyness</td>
<td>Participant describes busyness of other people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Different interests</td>
<td>Participant describes having different interests from other people in setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Difference in values</td>
<td>Participant describes having different values than people in setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Gossip</td>
<td>Participant mentions people talking about others behind their back</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Social comparison</td>
<td>Participant describes people making comparisons and judgments in setting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Group-Level Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Facilitating factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Consistency of people</td>
<td>Participant describes people in setting staying constant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Group not yet established</td>
<td>Participant enters group where they feel the group has not formed yet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Knowing some people already</td>
<td>Participant knows some people in a new setting</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Proximity</td>
<td>Participant describes group having proximity</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Someone acts as connector</td>
<td>Participant mentions a person that connected them to a new setting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Someone acts as initiator</td>
<td>Participant describes someone in new setting that goes out of their way to welcome new people</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Using technology</td>
<td>Participant describes using technology as a way to connect to groups</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hindering factors</td>
<td>Factors about group dynamics that limit development of positive sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>References</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Competition</td>
<td>Participant describes competitive atmosphere in setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Geographical distance</td>
<td>Participant describes group being geographically distant from each other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Group already established</td>
<td>Participant describes feeling that a group they entered is already formed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Lack of consistency</td>
<td>Participant describes lack of consistency of people in setting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Lack of direction*</td>
<td>Participant describes group not having a common purpose or vision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Not knowing anybody</td>
<td>Participants enters a setting where they do not know anybody</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Unequal relationships</td>
<td>Participant describes having varying levels of closeness with people in group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Dependent on fit</td>
<td>Factors of group dynamics that depend on fit with participant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Size of group</td>
<td>The size of the setting playing a role in whether the participant develops a sense of community</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Boundaries of Different Settings</td>
<td>Navigating different, multiple, and overlapping communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Balancing different settings</td>
<td>Participant describes having to balance various settings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Filling different needs</td>
<td>Participant describes different groups meeting different needs for them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Overlap in settings</td>
<td>Participant describes overlap between groups</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Setting specificity</td>
<td>Participant describes lack of overlap between groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Neighbourhood Factors</td>
<td>Factors about geographical neighbourhood that affect participant's sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Facilitating factors</td>
<td>Neighbourhood factors that help the participant develop positive sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ii. Accessible transit</td>
<td>Participant describes places being accessible by transit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>References</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii. Cleanliness</td>
<td>Participant describes neighbourhood being clean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Resources</td>
<td>Participant describes resources such as parks, libraries and shops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Safety</td>
<td>Participant describes neighbourhood being safe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Walkability</td>
<td>Participant describes neighbourhood being walkable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hindering factors</td>
<td>Neighbourhood factors that limit the participant developing a positive sense of community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Crime</td>
<td>Participant describes criminal activity in neighbourhood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Gentrification</td>
<td>Participant describes increase in prices that push people out of neighbourhood</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Dependent on fit</td>
<td>Neighbourhood factors that depend on fit with participant for development of sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Privacy</td>
<td>The level of privacy in a neighbourhood playing a role in participant's sense of community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Type of developed area</td>
<td>The type or area (e.g. urban or rural) playing a role in participant's sense of community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Organization Factors</td>
<td>Factors about organizational structure that affect development of sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Facilitating factors</td>
<td>Factors about organization that help create positive sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Attract similar people</td>
<td>Participant describes organization drawing similar people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Management</td>
<td>Participant describes positive aspects of management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Resources</td>
<td>Participant describes the organization having resources</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Workplace culture</td>
<td>Participant describes a positive workplace culture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hindering factors</td>
<td>Factors about organization that limit participant's positive sense of community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Lack of resources</td>
<td>Participant describes organization lacking resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Lack of support</td>
<td>Participant describes lack of organization structures to support staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Management difficulties</td>
<td>Participant describes issues with management</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fit</td>
<td>Participant describes their fit with the organization</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Sociocultural Factors</td>
<td>Factors about society and culture that affect development of sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Access to social services</td>
<td>Participant describes access to social services within a society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Cultural traditions</td>
<td>Participant describes cultural traditions that affect entry of new individuals to community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Immigration</td>
<td>Participant describes aspects of immigrating to new country</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Industry culture</td>
<td>Participant describes culture within the industry they work in</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Treatment of bullying</td>
<td>Participant describes how bullying is handled in society over time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Time as a factor</td>
<td>Factors related to time and development that affect sense of community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Consistency in passions</td>
<td>Participant describes a long-term interest or passion</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Fewer new friends</td>
<td>Participant describes meeting fewer new people into adulthood</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Flexibility in social circles</td>
<td>Participant describes social circles being more fluid into adulthood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Less involvement over time</td>
<td>Less involvement in adulthood compared to younger years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Child and teen involvement</td>
<td>Participant describes being in extracurricular activities and groups as a child and teen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Lack of adulthood involvement</td>
<td>Participant describes not being part of groups in adulthood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Less free time</td>
<td>Participant describes having less free time in adulthood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>References</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Quality over quantity</td>
<td>Participants describes caring more about the quality of their relationships than quantity in adulthood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Self-growth</td>
<td>Participant describes a process of change within themselves</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Vague recall</td>
<td>Participant has trouble remembering details of involvement in early childhood</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Salience</td>
<td>Aspects of childhood and teen years that stand out to participant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Enjoying school</td>
<td>Participant describes enjoying school when younger</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Not liking school</td>
<td>Participant describes not liking school when younger</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>