AMBROSE UNIVERSITY

Rights, Capabilities and Obligations: New Perspectives on Child Poverty in Calgary

Final Report of the Multidimensional Definition of Child Poverty Project

Executive Summary

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CANADIAN POVERTY INSTITUTE

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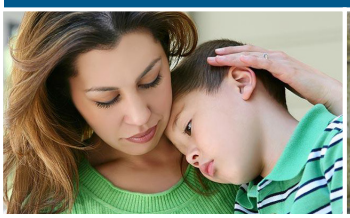
Abstract

In 2016, the Canadian Poverty Institute began an investigation into child poverty in the city of Calgary. The project was mandated to develop a multidimensional definition of child poverty and to measure the alignment between the new definition of child poverty and current practice in the city as a conduit to informing practice. Phase I consisted of a scan of socio-economic policy to determine what implicit and explicit definition(s) of child poverty guide decision-making and programming. In Phase II, the objective was to work with diverse stakeholders to develop a multidimensional definition of child poverty. The objective in Phase III was to assess the alignment of the new definition of child poverty with current policies and practices, after which a pilot phase will be launched. Phase II, which ushered in the active field research phase, commenced with two workshops to harness the collective insight of service providers, parents and other stakeholders. Information from the workshops was treated as data and also used to produce interview guides for the field research. The research was framed through the child rights, intersectionality and capabilities lenses. The child rights framework drew on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its associated indivisibility of rights, and the fact that, as per the convention, childhood is entitled to special care and protection to keep the focus on the societal obligation to children. The intersectional framework emphasized the convergence of situations that produce a child's living circumstances, whilst the capabilities framework was used to identify the individual and societal factors that enhance or inhibit a child's ability to live an enriched childhood. Interviews were held with 37 study respondents including children (12-17 years), families, service providers and adults with a lived experience of poverty. The interviews sought insights into participant's conceptualizations of child poverty and wellbeing, their choices, frustrations, communities, and, among others, their ability to meet survival needs. Transcribed data was analysed using narratives and thematically. Preliminarily, five themes emerged from the data: *ideas of poverty, parenting and parental resourcefulness, identity and belonging, system connections to poverty and child resiliency*. Out of the preliminary themes, 4 higher level, commonly occurring themes, were extracted as key areas for deriving a multidimensional definition of child poverty. These 4 higher level themes were then framed around the idea of "capital" to derive *Standard of Living, Child Self-Perception, Structural and Child Relationship Capital*. Each of these capitals was envisioned as a range between endowment and deprivation and mapped as matrices, mapping standard of living capital to the other three types of capital to derive various types and intensities of child poverty. Subsequently, five scenarios of child poverty have been delineated—*Child Self-perception Poverty, Structural Capital Child Poverty, Relationship Capital Child Poverty, Standard of Living Child Poverty* and *Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty*. Mapped as a Venn diagram, Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty is defined as the convergence of disadvantage in all four capitals. Conversely, where a child is attaining highly in all four capitals, they may be described as being multidimensional non-poor. This definition was then assessed for its alignment with socio-economic policy and key programs for children and families in Calgary. It was found that such an expansion of the definition of child poverty has implications for both policy and practice, particularly regarding funding, assessment of service provision and as a tool for identifying the particular needs of families and children.



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Introduction

Late in 2015, the newly established Canadian Poverty Institute, located at Ambrose University in Southwest Calgary, was funded for an audacious project. The mandate of the Institute was to develop a multidimensional definition of child poverty with the hope that it would inform the practice around child poverty in the city. This development came after a summer 2015 literature scan that revealed a stunning gap around child poverty in Calgary and Canada more broadly—there is no widely accepted definition of child poverty. This resonated for Calgary because Briggs and Lee's (2012) research for Vibrant Communities Calgary admitted that there is "no consensus around a definition of [child] poverty" and research needs to focus on "developing consensus on the depth and scope of the problem". The literature also revealed that child poverty is linked to the child's parents' financial status, where a child's socio-economic status is determined by the parents' annual earnings, which are then compared to the prevailing Low Income Cutoff (LICO), Low Income Measure (LIM) or Market Basket Measure (MBM).

Other facts that came to light as a result of the summer 2015 literature scan are that there is a library of information on the cognitive, psychological, mental, emotional and social effects of poverty, but the definition of poverty generally and, more specifically, child poverty, do not reflect the spectrum of experiences that can impact a child's quality of life. The inherent risk in separating child poverty into lack of money and the impacts of lack of money could lead to policies and practices around child poverty that are superficial. The concentration on the lack of money could also deprioritize other aspects of a child's life that could be described as poverty, but are not, because the frame of reference for child poverty is singular. Based on this singular conceptualization of poverty, the fact that child poverty is stubbornly high at between 13-15% in a well-endowed country such as Canada is a paradox. It is an even bigger paradox when put in the perspective of the 1989 pledge to 'eradicate' child poverty from Canada by the year 2000. Subsequent to this research, other trends regarding Canada's underperformance in responding to child poverty came to light, such as among the world's wealthiest countries (i.e. the OECD), Canada performs toward the bottom third of rankings for child poverty and child wellbeing.

The OECD in 2013 opined that child poverty amounts to a "well-being failure" that "is multi-dimensional and goes beyond material conditions"[1]. Since 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has computed the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), highlighting that it "complements monetary measures of poverty by considering overlapping deprivations suffered at the same time"[2]. This is in overt recognition that experiences of poverty cannot, and should not, be construed as being only monetary in shape or form. This also implies a growing awareness that there is value to constructing poverty and child poverty in a plural sense. The Canadian Poverty Institute (CPI) views poverty from a holistic angle, treating it as a social, spiritual and material experience. Socially, it is seen "where people are isolated and lack the formal and informal supports necessary to be resilient in times of crisis and change"; spiritually, it is treated as "where people lack meaning in their lives and connection to a faith community that sustains them"; and materially, it is deemed to exist "where people lack access to, and or the skills to acquire sufficient material and financial resources to thrive"[3].

In view of these and the perceived gap in the conceptualization of child poverty in Calgary, which also remains at a stubborn high of 13.8%[4] , the CPI was funded to fulfil the following mandates:

1. Develop a multi dimensional definition of child poverty in Calgary that accounts for factors such as material, economic, social/cultural, psychological, spiritual and moral needs.
2. Assess the alignment between a multi dimensional definition of child poverty and key social and economic policies and programs impacting children and families in Calgary, Alberta.

The rest of this Executive Summary will condense the processes and practices that enabled the fulfilment of the project's mandate. It will address the academic underpinnings of the project, key events, data analysis, definition derivation, policy and practical implications, as well as some new directions of research this study could trigger.

[1] *OECD (2013). "The OECD approach to measure and monitor income poverty across countries (Working Paper No. 17).*
[2] *http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi*
[3] *http://www.povertyinstitute.ca/about-poverty*
[4] *www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/index.php/resources/digital-resources/a-espc-documents/a06-newsletters/a06c-research-updates/701-the-path-forward-opportunities-to-end-child-poverty-in-alberta/file*

Academic underpinnings: Planning for a multidimensional definition of child poverty

Early in the inception of the Child Poverty Project, as it came to be called, a concerted effort was made to bring into the project the relational aspects of poverty to serve as a lighthouse and a yardstick of thinking about and developing a research strategy for the project. This happened with the gathering of information on the four types of poverty and treating them as core aspects of the development of the project. These four types are the Monetary, Social Exclusion, Participatory and Capabilities Deprivation aspect of poverty. In line with the default idea of poverty, the Monetary dimension of poverty measures a person's ability to meet basic needs based on their income or, put another way, how far a person deviates from the poverty line set for their community. It is within the realm of the Monetary views of poverty that Canada diligently computes the LICO, MBM and LIM numbers, assuming that children's poverty is a function of their parents' poverty. Thus, children stand to receive social supports as long as their parents are accounted for in the income and revenue accounting mechanisms of the country. This type of poverty can be absolute or relative, where absolute poverty defines a stage of poverty in which a person is unable to provide even their most basic needs. With relative poverty, the person may be able to provide survival needs for themselves and maybe, their dependants, but in comparison to the standard of living in their locale, they will be falling short. The monetary view of poverty is the commonest measure of poverty. It is also the measure used to deduce the prevalence of child poverty in Calgary and in Canada.

The team also studied Social Exclusion poverty, which is the inability of a person to fully or partially participate in their society because they may be too poor to participate. Over time, the idea of Social Exclusion poverty evolved to include arbitrary exclusions and unintended exclusions. These are summarized in the ideas of *relativity, agency and dynamics**; where relativity refers to exclusion that is relative to exclusion in a particular society; agency refers to social exclusion resulting from the action of an agent or agents such as officials, service providers, peers or even family; and dynamics recognizes that future prospects as well as current circumstances are relevant for life's experiences. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has explored social exclusion in poverty, making bold recommendations toward addressing social exclusion as a risk factor for poverty. This can be found in the report *"Poverty and Social Exclusion: Solving complex issues through comprehensive approaches"* [5]. This idea of poverty was the brainchild of the European Foundation in the mid-1990s and has remained the cornerstone of some of the more responsive poverty interventions in European countries. This idea of poverty forms part of the rationale for UNICEF's Child Deprivation Index that recognises the link between purchasing power and the ability of a child to feel included in terms of things children deem important—such as having toys, friends over for a birthday party, some new clothes and books to read.

The third type of poverty is the counterintuitively named Participatory Poverty, which takes stock of the actual words and voices of monetarily poor people as part of the arsenal of information needed to think about, plan for, and respond to poverty. This type of poverty was popularised through Robert Chambers' work in developing countries especially in Africa, where he discovered that although monetary concerns are included in poor people's conversations about what it is like to be poor, lack of money was not the first point that proceeded from their thoughts. In fact, he reported that on 20 analytical items that emerged from conversations with poor people, lack of money was number 10 in the list of criteria that people thought made them poor. This idea comes from a place of indignation against society's privileged 'responding' to poverty without knowing what poor people have on their minds. He discusses this in terms of the proverbial top-bottom mismatch where the voices of "economists dominate, expressed in poverty thinking concerned with income-poverty, and employment thinking concerned with jobs"[6]. One of the influential pieces of literature on participatory poverty was penned by Fitzen and Smith in 2008 and is aptly entitled *"Experiencing Poverty: Voices from the Bottom"*. Unfortunately, the book was written of American experiences and thus, is of limited value for Canadian contexts, policies and practices. In Canada and in Calgary, participatory poverty voices are few and far between. This became apparent when

[5] *http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba_Pubs/2008/Poverty_and_Social_Exclusion.pdf.*
[6] *Chambers, R. (1995). "Poverty and livelihoods: whose reality counts?" Environment and Urbanization 7(1): 173*
* *Laderchi et al (2003). "Does it matter that we do not agree on a definition of poverty?" A comparison of four approaches.*

a CPI environmental scan was launched to assess the extent to which the various dimensions of poverty are represented in research and policy. In Calgary, though, a classic example of participatory poverty was captured by a Poverty Talks participant who stated that *"emptiness, destitute, hopelessness, helplessness, sadness, darkness, lost, no identity, no self-esteem, coldness, ashamed, no voice, no family, no grandchildren, no smiles, no privacy, no laughter, no happiness—this is what living in poverty means"* [7]. In terms of children's participatory voices there was nothing in the Canadian or Calgarian literature that we could find. This was a surprising gap that underscores Chambers' participatory perspective—how can we be planning to address, and even eradicate, child poverty without knowing what children are saying about what it means to be poor?

The research team also studied in depth the Capabilities Deprivation approach to poverty. Capabilities Deprivation is premised on Amartya Sen's idea of a valued life, where a *valued life* consists of being able to attain the things a person values being or doing [8]. Another word for this valued life is *functionings*. In terms of *functionings*, poverty will be an inability to attain functionings as individually and societally defined. Capabilities Deprivations poverty is also predicated on *basic capabilities* which Sen and Nussbaum theorize about slightly differently. For Nussbaum, basic capabilities are "the innate equipment of individuals that is necessary for developing the more advanced capabilities"[9], but Sen posits that basic capabilities have to do with the freedom to do basic things considered necessary for survival and to avoid or escape poverty. [10] He adds that relative income deprivation results in absolute capability deprivation. Sen also clarifies that basic capabilities are "not so much in ranking living standards, but in deciding on a cut-off point for the purpose of assessing poverty and deprivation". [11] Taken together, these imply a recognition that capability and functioning deprivation are tied to income and that appropriate capabilities deprivation assessments should inform the magnitude of intervention delivered. In the midst of these conceptual differences it is important to highlight yet another difference—the difference between capabilities and basic capabilities. As summarized in the online Stanford Encyclopedia, "capabilities refers to a very broad range of opportunities, basic capabilities refer to the real opportunity to avoid poverty or to meet or exceed a threshold of well-being". The study used the functional meaning of basic capabilities to foreground the least common denominator any child must attain in order to be deemed not living in capability deprivation induced poverty.

Underpinning frameworks of the multidimensional definition of child poverty

Having considered these types of poverty in-depth, the team had to strategize about the angle on poverty that had the most potential of reaching the multidimensionality of the definition mandated for the project. Although the preeminence of the monetary notion of poverty was acknowledged, it appeared that trying to close a research gap would serve two purposes—contribute to the extant literature and line up for the caliber of definition sought. The participatory idea was decided on quite easily, with the reasoning that the voices of the respondents, and especially children, would be a great vessel for channeling the spindles of the definition under development. We reasoned that through the voices of project participants, views of monetary deprivation and social exclusion would be highlighted. Although these were not reduced in importance in terms of the broader project, the team reasoned that a child resiliency angle would be beneficial to telling the multi-pronged "story" of deprivation. This meant that a base concentration on basic capabilities and functionings was in the cards.

Given that Sen's approach to the capability deprivation poverty body of work has a strong undertow of human rights (see for example *Development as Freedom or The Idea of Justice)*, it was logically coherent to approach the derivation of a definition of child poverty that sets a high bar. To this end, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by Canada, became a key piece of literature consulted. The rights approach was also appropriate in the sense of the indivisibility of rights as for anyone and, in the case of this study, as for children—"all children have the same rights [and] all

[7] *http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Documents/Social-research-policy-and-resources/What%20is%20Poverty.pdf*
[8] *Sen, A. (1999). Development as Freedom, Oxford University Press. p. 75*
[9] *Nussbaum, M. (2000). Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*
[10] *Sen, A. (1999). Development as Freedom. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
[11] *Sen, A. (1987). The Standard of Living. The Standard of Living: The Tanner Lectures on Human Values in Sen et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*

rights are interconnected and of equal importance" [12]. It is not possible to separate out what rights a child is entitled to and what rights can wait. By the wording of the Convention, children are entitled to special care and protection and in instances where the rights of the child cannot be provided by their primary caregivers, "states" are enjoined to bring these rights to fruition. The obligation of society to maintain its social contract with children exerted a strong pull on the rights framing of this project because of the ability to bridge the gap between children's rights and societal obligations to preserve the relationship of trust with children. Following these logics, the idea was to study the facets of child poverty through the families, institutions and organizations entrusted with their care.

Since the project was mandated to produce a definition of child poverty, it enjoined the team to find a theory of social science that captures the complexity of the experience of child poverty. Much as the team would have loved to tell an upbeat story of poverty right through to the end of the project, the reality of poverty is that it is not an upbeat experience. The framework of intersectionality was adopted to firstly show the convergence of disadvantage that produces a poverty experience for a child or children. Intersectionality was used to examine the interaction between multiple types of causalities that produce adverse or unique outcomes for particular populations. For the purposes of this study, 'marginalized' was deliberately not visualised as the typical image of living in poverty to keep alive the possibility that a seemingly well integrated child could be lacking basic capabilities necessary for their total growth and development. The team also settled on the intersectional approach to keep the focus on distributive justice, power and government function [13] to dig into the broader questions outside the control of children and their primary caregivers. A basic framing question in this regard was the extent to which failures of distributive justice and the fulfilment of the social contract result in the convergence of disadvantage that compromises a child's functionings, thus returning to the theme of capability deprivation.

The last, but not least, framing mechanism of the project was the already hinted at idea of child resiliency to which Hammond has devoted a sizable portion of his career. Resiliency is an individual's capability to cope successfully in the face of stress-related, at-risk or adversarial situations. [14] The way it is framed, child resiliency is not the preserve of children that are from economically sanguine backgrounds. Any child can be resiliency compromised. Going off the premise to not underestimate the value of resiliency building to a child's wellbeing, this examination of child poverty also focused on situations in which children demonstrated resiliency or the lack thereof. To enable an in-depth analysis of the data collected for multi-dimensionality, we employed Hammond's resiliency wheel that filters a child's resiliency-related experiences through a network of community cohesiveness, relationships, role environment and the family environment. This was also a logically sound current to harness to examine the factors that can give a child living in poverty (however defined) the tools to nurture resiliency.

Key project events

The project, as conceived, had to have consultations with the Faculty Advisory and Community Advisory Committees. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which was composed of stakeholders in the industry, represented Aspen Foundation, Calgary Neighbourhoods, Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary, Palix Foundation, Vibrant Communities Calgary, Calgary Women's Centre and The United Way of Calgary. The CAC was very instrumental in shaping the development of the project through questions that were of relevance from a practitioner's perspective. The details of the conversations are contained in the main report, but basically they included focussing questions such as the purpose of the definition, the purpose of expanding the definition beyond monetary considerations, Adverse Childhood Experiences as non-selective experiences that can impact any child, as well as discussions about the intersectionality and rights frameworks. Three meetings were held with the CAC during the project's shaping phase: in preparation for two World Cafès (to be discussed next), to comment on the World Café results and to similarly comment on the preliminary definition(s) of child poverty. The Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) was invited to join the

[12] *UNICEF (2016). "Understanding the CRC." from https://www.unicef.org/crc/index_understanding.html.*
[13] *Hancock, A. (2007). "Intersectionality as a normative and empirical paradigm." Politics & Gender 3 (2): 248-254.*
[14] *Hammond, W. (2003). "Understanding the Resiliency Framework ". From http://www.oninjuryresources.ca/downloads/training/WayneHammond-Understanding%20the%20Resiliency%20Framework.pdf.*

CAC for the meeting immediately following the World Cafés and the preliminary results session. Both meetings were very insightful in terms of cautioning the project committee to keep the focus on children and revise the phrasing of some definitions and diagrams.

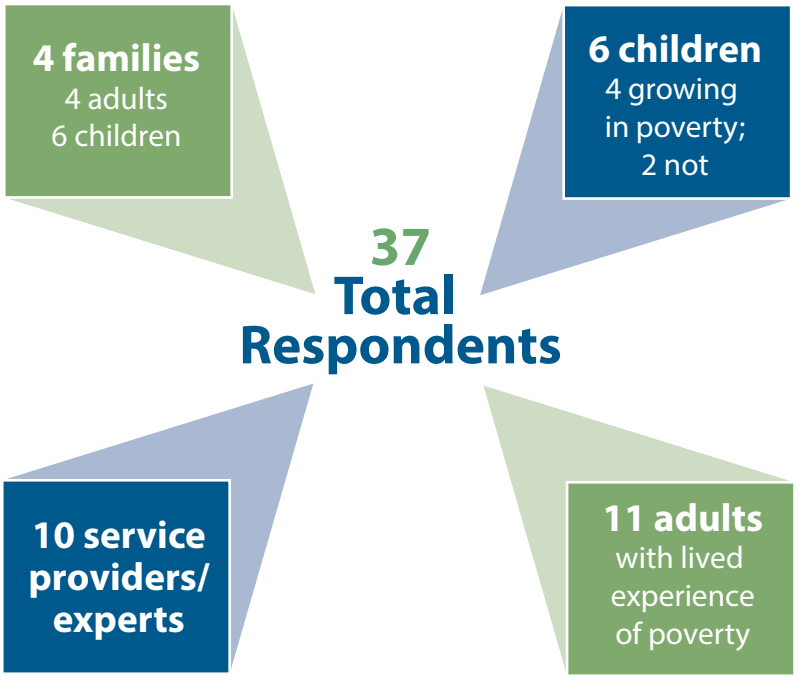
The first major events related to the project that were open to the public were the two World Cafés intended to be conversations between the project team, the practitioner community and adults who had a lived experience of child poverty, however they define "poverty". The first real influence of the CAC was at the World Cafés, where their input played a key role in deciding the focus of the workshops. The Cafès were very well attended, attracting almost 50 people, and were run on a rights based framework. Participants were asked to reflect on the role of the right to play, get an education, an adequate standard of living, healthy identity formation and to safety in relation to child poverty. Notes from these round table discussions led to the emergence and/or consolidation of notions of toxic stress, cultural capital, childhood narratives, inclusivity, food and housing insecurity, problems accessing social supports, cultural differences, cultural (in)competence, among others.

The data from the world cafes (it was explained to participants that their discussions would be used as data) guided the development of the research instruments, which were basically interview guides for service providers, adults with a lived experience of poverty and children living in various intensities of poverty. The label "poor" was not a criterion for inclusion. In fact, seeking participants did not follow a set sampling logic but was allowed to develop organically, based on the broad brush of participant categories. Thirty-seven people were interviewed (Figure 1). The sample comprised of 12 children who were interviewed with or without their parents—5 boys and 7 girls. Service providers were all female except in one instance.

Of the adults with a lived experience of childhood poverty, all were female. And of the 6 families interviewed, only 1 family involved a male as the parent present. There were 2 instances in which grandparents played an active role in raising the children as a result of family circumstances.

Ethnically, participants with lived experience of poverty were Caucasian and indigenous, with 1 participant of Asian descent. They were found through agencies such as Sunrise Link, The Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, the Bowwest Community Centre, the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary and CanLearn Society. Others were interviewed who were not recruited through an agency but heard about the project and wanted to share their perspectives.

Figure 1: Respondent total by category



Data analysis and emerging research themes

This study, as a qualitative one, was interested in the voices, stories and perspectives of study participants. To this end, 2 main approaches for analysing the transcribed data were employed—narratives and thematic analysis. Nine full narratives were written covering the life and work of 3 service providers, and 6 families and children. Three of the lived experience narratives *(I Am Going to be a Vet, Be a Good Noodle… A Good Egg, A Tale of Two Brothers)* were family based interviews; two, *Child to Adult in Two Weeks* and *Dysfunction* were with adults who alluded to children in their care. *The Way I Wished Things Were* involved a child interviewed alone. The purpose of the narratives was to reveal in as much detail as possible and with as much context as possible, the ways in which study participants reacted to interview questions. Narratives were also included to demonstrate to the reader the humanity of the study participants, the power of their words and emotions, and to manage the risk of reducing study participants to numbers. Thematic analysis, which included all interviews, followed the style of deriving the commonalities between respondents' perspectives, deliberately blurring the line between service providers' and lived experience participants' perspectives. The rationale was to reveal the pull of the emergent themes as important connections for defining child poverty multidimensionally.

The thematic analysis yielded 5 results as follows:

a. Poverty, impoverishment, wellbeing and non-material poverty
b. Parenting and parental resourcefulness
c. Identity and belonging
d. System connections for child poverty
e. Childhood resiliency

These themes are summarized in the following sections.

a. Poverty, impoverishment, wellbeing and non-material poverty

Regarding *poverty, impoverishment, wellbeing and non-material poverty*, respondents generally had very conventional notions of poverty in general, and child poverty in particular. There were clear expressions of poverty as it relates to income and the allied things an income could provide for a family and by extension, a child. Food or adequate nutrition was most frequently the first point mentioned. Others discussed poverty in terms of the kind of food kids brought to school, as well as the lack of, or inadequacy of, shelter, clothes, Christmas presents, game consoles, participation in after school activities and medical coverage. One respondent used the phrase *"limited options because of limited finances"* and *"accessing community supports as indicator of poverty"*. In a few instances, respondents mentioned *"unmet spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs of the child"*. As portrayed in the narrative *"Dysfunction"* the inability to pay bills was an important aspect of poverty. A cross section of respondents pointed out that just because parents have shallow pockets does not mean their children live in poverty, because most parents and guardians sacrifice their needs so the children have a little bit more. Although living in Calgary Housing and struggling to keep up with subsidized rents in the midst of competing demands was frequently mentioned, "house poor" also came up. "House poor" is when a person owns a house, but where a disproportionate amount of their income goes to service the mortgage payments, leaving little for other necessities.

The idea of impoverishment as opposed to poverty emerged early in the research process at the World Cafés. Probing this further in interviews, results not too different from the World Cafes were obtained. Respondents maintained a differentiation between "poverty" and "impoverishment". Poverty was constructed as more of a state of being whilst impoverishment was seen as a state of being as well as an ongoing process. Examples of impoverishment included, but were not limited to:

- An unattractive environment in the community and in the home.
- Lacking strong adult advocates.
- Physical and emotional neglect.
- Abusive parenting.
- Allowing children to watch pornography at a young age.
- Lack of experiences of mastery or success in the child's life.
- Poor love and respect for the child.
- Not celebrating holidays or receiving gifts.
- Exclusive thrift shopping.
- Bullying.

- Expressing sadness through complaints of physical pain.
- Lack of a sense of purpose, especially in older children.
- Lack of opportunity to explore activities that interest the child.
- Isolation and lack of probing regarding concerning patterns of the child's life.
- Racism and low self-esteem.

On the other hand, features of the non-impoverishment of a child included, but were not limited to:

- Access to outdoor play areas.
- When a child has enough of food and other survival necessities.
- Friendly neighbors and community cohesiveness.
- Having healthy connections to their community(s).
- Access to child friendly amenities.
- The capacity to fit in with the child's peer group.
- Children realizing their right to an education.
- Strong presence of parent and other positive role models.
- A positive vision for their own future.
- Healthy intergenerational connections, for example, grandparents, cousins, nieces, nephews.
- Having opportunities to try new activities as a way of self-discovery.
- Spending time with their parents.
- Feeling safe and parents knowing where their children are.
- Having a capacity to make choices and know their preferences.
- Being a child, free of adult cares.
- Guidance for social, emotional and intellectual development.
- A child's ability to self-advocate.
- A child's ability to freely engage in cultural expression.
- Having a spiritual/religious practice.

b. Parenting and parental resourcefulness

Parenting was conceptualized in this study as the quality of guidance and handling parents have on their children. It hovered around a parent's ability to positively influence their children, concerned the kind of environment parents created for their children and whether or not, as a result, children experienced impoverishment. Service providers, although not referring to their children, provided insights on this topic as well. One service provider was convinced that *"most kids, no matter their situation, still want to be living with their parents"* and another haboured *"a stellar belief that every parent wants what is best for their child"*. All the parents interviewed declared their love for their children and that they want the best for them. Regarding parenting, child impoverishment appeared to be of most concern or the most prevalent sub-theme as opposed to poverty per se, as the following diversity of opinion and experiences show:

- Link between good income and parenting for child wellbeing is strong *ceteris paribus*.
- Lack of parental care due to stress or packed schedules leaves children to make choices, good or bad.
- Poor parents sometimes overemphasize grades, which can lead to undue pressure and lack of bonding.
- Poor parenting, irrespective of finances, can breed poor behaviour in children.
- Parental shame about living in poverty, overheard by a child, made the child feel ashamed too.
- Financially poor parents/guardians expressed the fear that their children will also live in poverty.
- Parenting difficulties and single parenthood.
- Diminished confidence of parent resulting from recent immigration and financial poverty, i.e. parent-child role reversals due to a language barrier. This means children become privy to details they should not.

The opposite end of the spectrum demonstrates that in spite of difficult socio-financial circumstances parents can still deliver good parenting, have a comfortable handle on their children and control the narrative of raising their children. On this topic, the following points were raised by study participants:

- Strong parental identity.
- Tapping into community and family support systems to help with parenting positively.

- Keeping in close touch with children to know who is where and what they are doing.
- Depending on co-workers to cover shifts if there is a must-attend event for the children.
- Recognizing that being a low income parent does not mean parents cannot establish boundaries.
- Modelling honesty to their children.
- Teaching children boundaries.
- Poverty and heightened sense of concern for children.
- Childcare-parenting link: childcare workers can influence a child's life.
- Parenting communally and sharing resources between families is beneficial to children.
- Parenting includes going without to meet children's needs (sense of security for the children).
- Managing mood swings to reach volatile and/or unusually subdued children.
- Coming to parent-teacher interviews and showing children that school is important.
- Modelling good behaviour with teachers to children.
- Sometimes ignoring expert advice and doing what a parent thinks is best for their child.

Parental resourcefulness refers to the extents parents and guardians will go to glean the necessary resources to enhance their children's basic capabilities and put them in better stead to attain functionings. Parental resourcefulness came through in the data in the following ways:

- Parents harvesting fruits and berries from City parks instead of buying fruit from the store.
- Meeting a child's needs without revealing financial circumstances.
- To avoid/reduce childcare costs, parents created support groups to share child care duties.
- Monitor the advertisements children see to limit exposure to new, mostly unaffordable toys.
- Re-purposing old items, thrift shopping and garage sales.
- Creating positive alternative narratives for children in relation to monetary deprivations.
- Finding societal resources through agencies and institutions. For example, seeking out summer camps, publicly funded counselling services, taking advantage of City fair entry programs, calling in to radio programs, couponing and price matching. One respondent summarised this as "maximize everything".
- Parental advocacy and teaching children to advocate for themselves.
- Observe the skills/behaviours that make children thrive and hone them.
- Teaching children to discern between wants and needs.

It was a very interesting pattern to note that, irrespective of whether parents had a handle on adequately parenting their children, they all had a plan and their unique ways of gathering resources for their children, mostly connected to survival needs. This illustrates that parents do not easily give up on their children.

c. Identity and belonging

Children need a clear sense of identity and belonging, which translates into an even clearer sense of security. This segment of the research and its later development into an important analytical code was inspired first by the World Café consultations held in May 2016, augmented by several articles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For instance, Article 8 states that *"States, parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference"*. Article 14 provides for *"respect of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion"*. The articles specified play an important role in the way a child perceives themselves, which in turn is an intrinsic part of identity and continued identity formation. From the World Cafes, service providers with vast experience working with children from across the economic spectrum, but particularly from economically poor and/or visible minority backgrounds, observed that some children did not appear to have self-narratives driven or augmented by their sense of identity and belonging. They reported that some children had no childhood fantasies of what they want to be when they grow up, some did not appear

to appreciate that they were capable of attaining beyond a High School education and others did not even seem to realize they owed it to themselves to have several words to complete an "I am …." or an "I will be …." statement. This was troubling enough that the research team decided to explore the theme of identity and belonging. Three angles of analysis were pursued:

- How children described themselves in as many words as possible,
- How children talked about their aspirations for the future,
- How Immigrant/visible minority youth perceive themselves in relation to their visible majority peers.

The following points shed light on the key themes that emerged from this angle of analysis:

a. *"German, British, Italian and Hispanic descent. For my birth things, I am in horoscope a Scorpio; for the Chinese New Year, a Snake, and my spirit animal is a bear. I like drawing and origami"*. He described his family as *"caring, loving and generally sticks together"*, but did not include this father in that category. Considering other details contained in the longer report, it is not far-fetched to suggest that he sees himself as a loner who is also low in confidence.

b. *"Sassy, bossy, mean, self-centered… kind, loving, loyal"*. This is from a 12 year old girl who in the span of the interview (about 1 hour) revealed her sassy, bossy nature. When her mother suggested she is not bossy, she replied *"Mom, you know I boss you around!"* When her mother tried to suggest she might be using self-centered incorrectly, her daughter interjected *"when you think only about yourself!"*

c. *"Supportive, helpful, loving, guiding, positive"*. This 14 year old boy is looking to be an electrical inspector or *"something in engineering or architecture"*. He self-identifies math as his *"very strong suit, and Science I really enjoy and am pretty good at"*. He is also aware his mother's work at a university in Calgary will enable him to get a discount on tuition so to him, there is a path to realize his dream.

d. A 17 year old boy, who was initially quite closed off about his family, divulged that he is trying to live his life apart from his family because he wants better for himself. He mumbles his words, looks at the floor whilst speaking and only occasionally makes eye contact. He describes himself as a person *"on edge because I don't know what the person I am telling could be capable of, or wanting to do, wanting to know for whatever purpose. I will share that my family is just terrible. Most of them are into crime and that sort of stuff and so nobody needs to know"*. He is struggling to find role models from his family unit, except his uncle who has a garage and who got him interested in mechanics. He is upgrading his high-school grades so he can study mechanics at SAIT. On the whole he has a bleak demeanour even though he is intentionally charting a new path for himself.

e. The final selected account of identity and belonging was shared by a service provider who has deep insights into the experiences and perspectives of immigrant youth in Calgary. The service provider shared that biracial children experience racism in the community that compromises their sense of belonging. According to the respondent, most youth from ages 15-30 report that *"they [are] facing racism and discrimination and they did not know how to deal with it"*. Using a quintessential Canadian identity — the 'multicultural society' — that espouses inclusiveness, the service provider described the conflictedness of immigrant youth: *"we all belong, but up until I don't"*. Elaborating on this, the service provider discussed a conversation clients are likely to have when, for instance, there is a major event involving an identity a youth identifies with —*"so there is a bombing somewhere and all of a sudden, 'explain why this dude'. 'I don't know! I am sitting here with you'"*.

    - There was also a subtle, yet potentially consequential, phrasing used by immigrant youth —"Canadian" and "Canadian Canadian". A Canadian Canadian is a Canadian citizen who is not likely to get the question *"where are you from?"* because they are a part of the visible majority. The youth this service provider sees identify as Canadian because they see themselves as visible minorities. They normalize this distinction until it is pointed out that there is only one category — Canadian. The provider believes the distinction is an indicator of these youths sense of belonging and more so, if they are at risk youth.

In summary, a sense of belonging is a fundamental human need. A clear sense of identity is essential for aspiration building, choices made and the kinds of rights or responsibilities children think they have. Relevant questions arising were: what impact does a low sense of belonging and fuzzy sense of identity have on the psyche and wellbeing of a growing child? What types of groundedness can children derive from their sense of identity and belonging? Do these questions have a role to play in rethinking the meaning of child poverty, thinking about child poverty from a multi-dimensional perspective?

d. System connections to child poverty

The sense from the interviews was that the system is not deliberately set up to undermine child welfare and family assistance, but the protocols produce unintended consequences that entrench children in situations of deprivation, if not worse deprivation. However, on balance, respondents focused on cracks in the system and how these could be mended. The positive ways in which institutions and agencies have aided children include:

- Access to support through an agency or social worker can help with the provision of survival/basic needs.
- Waiving school fees for families that cannot afford to pay their fees.
- Programs such as MASST[15] that offer positive role models for youth and children are beneficial.
- Agencies help new immigrants with settling in supports especially when they have children who need help integrating into school and/or parents who need help getting to know how their new society works.
- The child welfare system is improving in terms of cultural competency and keeping families together.
- One respondent described their sense of security when they acquired a home through Habitat for Humanity.
- Government cheques help to alleviate some of a family's hardships such as money for groceries and rent.

On the other hand, there was a proliferation of ways in which study participants thought that child poverty is not responded to properly. It must be pointed out that the majority of respondents did not confine their discussions of child poverty to the lack of money, as will become apparent from the following:

- Accessing services is sometimes too public of an experience.
- Community support programs handout assistance that may not be necessary.
- The income cut-offs for availing services are arbitrary. This was a very common issue raised by both service providers and participants with a lived experience of poverty.
- It gets more difficult to find supports for children as they become older children and teenagers.
- Programs children benefit from may be cut off (sometimes abruptly). [16]
- Some service providers, parents and guardians raised the issue of lack of coordination of service delivery. One mother was more specific about this problem, stating that available resources are dispersed through out the city increasing the time spent searching for and shuttling between places to gather resources for her children.
- Programming for vision-impaired children can also be inconsistent, cumbersome to access and inaccessible.
- Some frontline workers felt that policies and guidelines of practice prevented them from being as helpful as they could be to the children they worked with.
- Individuals without legal residential status in Canada have difficulty accessing services; their children get caught up in the quagmire.
- Service providers thought that sometimes the requirements for parents to win back custody of their children are counter-productive. Parents spend so much time attending parenting programs and classes that they are unable to work, which then calls into question their ability to provide for their children.

[15] *Multi Agency School Support Team*

[16] *For example, a mother recounted her fear regarding her 5 year old who has Global Developmental Delay. According to the mother, her daughter is severely speech delayed and has weak core muscles making it difficult to move and accomplish "simple" tasks for her age but her PUF funding was expected to be discontinued when she turned 6 in late 2016; with regard to MASST, another family was sad to see their son taken out of the program; there was the case of the granddaughter whose guardians did not understand how she could go "from child to adult in two weeks"; and also the case of an autistic child whose social supports were curtailed, resulting in a service provider's concern that the child would not thrive in regular school.*

- Social workers also discussed the asymmetrical relationship between rich individuals and the social services system. *"Go talk to my lawyer"* was a common phrase they heard on doorsteps.
- Those service providers that worked with new immigrant families that have language barriers contended that the system is set up in a way that children may be unnecessarily removed from their homes.
- Families that used the food bank thought the food was not nutritious and is usually canned or dried. They understood they are getting assistance, but the contents of the hampers reinforced to them that they cannot buy their own food.
- The system does not adequately acknowledge the existence of racism in Canada.
- Sometimes, the service delivery system penalizes poor parents and guardians, and judges them for making choices that seem incongruent with the frugality needed when one lives in poverty. For example, officials raise a red flag if it emerges a poor family went out to dinner.

There was a lot about how the child welfare and benefit system is setup and/or run that leaves service providers and families feeling trapped. On balance, it is a broken report card that offers insights into how well-meaning systems, programs and services, complete with checks and balances, and even fail safe mechanisms, can inadvertently lead to capability deprivation. These deprivations deny children the resources institutions are obligated to provide in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Child. Failing capability enhancement, children are hampered in functioning attainment and, as a corollary, hampered in their ability to live a valued life.

e. Childhood resiliency

Hammond, one of the foremost thinkers and advocates of childhood resiliency, sees resiliency as the capability to cope successfully in the face of stress-related, at-risk or adversarial situations. [17] From the standpoint that children are in development flux, it is appropriate that resiliency emerged as a major theme in the discussions around how to re-conceptualise child poverty. Hammond's resiliency wheel identifies five environments in which child resiliency can be nurtured: commitment to learning, relationships, role environment, community cohesiveness as well as, family support and expectations. At the core of the resiliency wheel are social sensitivity, employment, self-control, self-concept, empowerment and cultural sensitivity. These issues have been alluded to in the previous sections. Specific ways respondents referred to resiliency building or the lack thereof are summarised. First, respondents' perception of how children are already building resiliency or how they are helping them in that regard.

- A mother raising 2 bi-racial children identified 4 principles she is using to instill resiliency in them *"providing supportive adult-child relationships, scaffolding learning to build a sense of control, strengthen children's adaptive and self-regulatory skills, [and] using faith and cultural traditions for stability and hope"*.
- Healthy and strong mentorship relationships. Helping youth with skills such as resume development.
- Children are more resilient than adults realize because they have a better capacity to be open.
- Encouraging children's identity formation with affirmative words: *"you have good ideas", "walk tall"*.
- Parents rephrasing their inability to provide in terms of *"we will get it, but not today",* arguing that it teaches children the value of waiting.
- Teaching children to compensate feelings of isolation with their identity and goals.
- Children having visions for their future, but there were varying degrees of conviction these would pan out.
- Internalized self-confidence expressed by children interviewed showed that confidence was a recipe for good resiliency. One child talked about not being fixated on letter grades, but on the effort put in; another spoke about how discovering photography has re-plugged him into life's excitements.
- An aspect service providers and parents/guardians discussed was the ability to show respect.
- Another theme parents discussed was teaching children to contribute to a better world.

[17] *Hammond, W. (2003).Understanding the Resiliency Framework: http://www.oninjuryresources.ca/downloads/training/WayneHammond Understanding%20the%20Resiliency%20Framework.pdf*

- Not allowing oneself to be a pushover but standing up and speaking out in pursuit of one's interests.
- Teaching children to always make an attempt—*"Failure is an opportunity to try harder and improve next time"*.
- Having something to retreat to when one felt low.
- One woman attributed her resiliency to wanting *"that degree"*.
- Opportunities through play and exploration to try different things and discover new talents.
- Shaping the narrative of their lives: *"That was my biggest message to my children and any other person who is having to raise their children in poverty is to change that narrative and be positive"*.

On the other hand, a few reasons why a child's resiliency building could be stunted were apparent:

- Lack of a sense of purpose.
- Children being in a dysfunctional home environment.
- Self-centeredness, said one grandmother, who worries that her granddaughters are not imbibing the same sense of social justice she instilled in her son.
- Some youth suffer from identity poverty. It increases the risk of stunted resiliency because "*you are restricted and then there are systemic issues that come in to put restrictions on you because of who you are"*.
- Recently immigrated children may adapt to their new environment, but past trauma could still hold back resiliency building in terms of their self-image, view of their abilities and confidence.
- Poor sense of dignity stunts resiliency building in children depending on the implicit messages the people they interact with send. For example, if they get the message that they are undeserving, this becomes internalized.

A careful examination of our data, in relation to child resiliency, shows credits and deficits in various parts of Hammond's thinking around resiliency. There are personal, societal and systemic connections to poverty, but on balance parents, guardians and service providers are doing more for children's resiliency. Still, the factors that could inhibit resiliency building are key in the context of an exercise aimed at reimaging the definition of child poverty.

Deriving a multidimensional definition of child poverty

The bandwidth of child poverty

Springing off the idea that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance, coupled with the variance embedded in the experiences of poverty from the data, it behooves on parents and society, indeed, all stakeholders involved in making childhood a positive experience, to maintain a mindset of constant improvement. The UNICEF Innocenti Report Cards compare child wellbeing and child poverty in the world's 29 wealthiest countries and in each area it is clear that Canada can only do better in responding to child poverty (Table 1).

Table 1: Canada and two developed countries, child statistics ranking [18]

International ranking of 29 developed countries			
Indicator	**Netherlands**	**Iceland**	**Canada**
Average Ranking (Overall Wellbeing)	2.4	5	16.6
Material Well-being	1	4	15
Health & Safety	5	1	27
Education	1	10	14
Behaviours and Risks	1	3	16
Housing and Environment	4	7	11

Similarly comparing Canada to countries in its wealth cohort on a different set of indicators (Table 2), Canada again lags behind, suggesting that there is room to improve.

Table 2: Canada and two developed countries, additional child poverty indicators

Indicator	Netherlands	Iceland	Canada
Relative child poverty rate	6%	7%	14%
Infant mortality rates	3.7%	1.8%	5%
Participation in further education	89%	85%	81%
Overweight	8%	14%	20%
Teen births	5%	14%	13%

[18] *Adamson, P. (2013). Child Well-Being in Rich Countries: A Comparative Overview. Innocenti Report Card (Table 2 also)*

Following this data, we have developed a *bandwidth of child poverty and wellbeing* (Fig. 2) to capture the idea of child poverty and child wellbeing on a spectrum. Keeping with the spirit of this project, the bandwidth of childhood poverty and wellbeing has a multidimensional focus. The lowest point a child can be in is construed as *multidimensional abject child poverty* on the negative end of the spectrum, to *multidimensional child wellbeing*, which is deliberately marked by infinity. Infinity suggests that there is no end to striving for a better childhood for all children. Using a number such as 1 for wellbeing would suggest (perhaps too optimistically and dangerously) that at a certain numerical point, child poverty can be considered to be a dealt with. Infinity enjoins communities and societies to keep raising the bar of child wellbeing so that progressively, more children can experience the best childhood that their society can provide. The 'widths' of child poverty and wellbeing are yet to be filled with specifics because it allows for a notion of child poverty that is dynamic and contextualized.

Figure 2: Bandwidth of child poverty and child wellbeing

Dimensions of child poverty

Further to the narrative and thematic data analysis, the 5 themes which have been summarised in the section "data analysis and emerging research themes" are reproduced for ease of following the lineage of the developing definition of child poverty: *Poverty, impoverishment, wellbeing and non-material poverty; parenting and parental resourcefulness; identity and belonging; system connections for child poverty; and childhood resiliency.* Although these 5 themes appear to be independent of one another, commonalities between them abound. These commonalities (or higher level themes) have been identified as *children's standard of living, self-perception, relationships, and systemic obligations and/or needs*. Keeping with the logic that child poverty and child wellbeing are the extreme sides of the same coin with degrees of intensity in-between, these 5 categories necessarily must be viewed as potentially enhancing or impinging on child poverty. A careful examination of these 5 threads also shows interconnections where, for instance, a parent's phrasing of the narrative of poverty affects a child's perception of whether or not they are poor. Another example could be an end to social supports that puts an extra burden on families to meet the survival needs of their children. Continuing along the intersectional and capability deprivation/enhancements train of thought, it stands to reason that there is an inverse relationship between the intersections of deprivation and the wellbeing status of a child. This reasoning also suggests that there is a direct relationship between capability enhancements and child wellbeing. Conversely, intersections of capability deprivation increase the risk of child poverty. Given there are various combinations of intersections, it is plausible to suggest that the aggregation intensity of capability deprivations will be related to the intensity with which child poverty is experienced. Within this milieu, children's resiliency can be nurtured by compensating circumstances or be mired by gaps in their resiliency wheel.

In order to delimit child poverty multi-dimensionally, the ideal situation, *child non-poverty or wellbeing, was envisioned. Our notion of child non-poverty or wellbeing is seen as life circumstances in which the stars line up in the child's life and all their needs and wants are met. Using the higher level themes that emerged from the primary data, child wellbeing will be present when a child is sanguine in the areas of their self-perception, their standard of living, the relationships they enjoy as well as the status of systemic obligations to the child.* Deviations from the ideal then indicate child poverty and the intensities of it. In this project, child poverty and child wellbeing are seen sides of the same coin. Between the "sides" are the obscure areas that must be attended to—if they can be seen with clarity. The strategy of this project is also to illuminate these hidden aspects of child poverty which impact the richness of the experience of childhood.

Another step in the derivation of the definition of child poverty was to adapt the idea of "capital" from the Asset Pentagon as used in the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. The 4 high level themes derived from the primary data were "converted" to capital. Capital is seen as the quality or quantity a child has sufficient amounts of that sets them on a desirable path, or compromised amounts of that increases their risk of experiencing poverty. To this end, 4 types of capital were identified as important for a child and from the perspective of a child:

- Child standard of living capital
- Child self-perception capital
- Child structural capital
- Child relationship capital

Continuing the derivation of a multidimensional definition of child poverty, it was important to show that child poverty is not a singular experience and that it varies in intensity. The various capitals were visualized as matrices to portray the various degrees of poverty and wellbeing. To do this effectively, two axes (variables) are necessary—an x-axis and a y-axis. Following from the overwhelming view from the *Together We Raise Tomorrow* consultations[19] that the family is the primary vehicle for providing a child's standard of living, as well as Article 27 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which presents a similar stance, s*tandard of living capital* was deemed to be the constant and x-axis. It will be the common denominator in the derivation of various poverty matrices. The matrices of child poverty capture a single but important aspect of failure or endowment that determines whether a child is living in poverty relative to standard of living, and the y-axis variables—where a child can be high or low in various capitals, predisposing them to, or protecting them from, poverty and its effects. The matrices, depending on the combinations of capital endowment have embedded *zones of heightened risk* and *bastions of resiliency* as shown in Figures 3-5.

By way of explanation, if a child's circumstances are graphed in the top left quadrant of any of the matrices, their "bastion of resiliency" would be embedded in the positive (high) values on the y-axis. If a child's circumstances are graphed in the bottom right quadrant of the matrices, the child's zone of heightened risk would occur on the negative (low) values on the y-axis. In the top right quadrant, a child would have positive (high) values (resiliency) on both x-axis and y-axis variables, and would be considered to be non-poor. If a child is graphed in the bottom left quadrant, it means that on those two variables, the child is resiliency compromised (because of low values) and would also be living in deep poverty. Because, the y-axis variables change (see Figures 3-5), it is possible for a child to graph in different quadrants of each matrix. On the other hand, one can expect to find alignment or similarities in the "graphing" of a child in the quadrants because lived experiences are interrelated.

[19] *Government of Alberta (2013): http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/spf-common-themes-report.pdf*

Figure 3: Child self-perception capital matrix

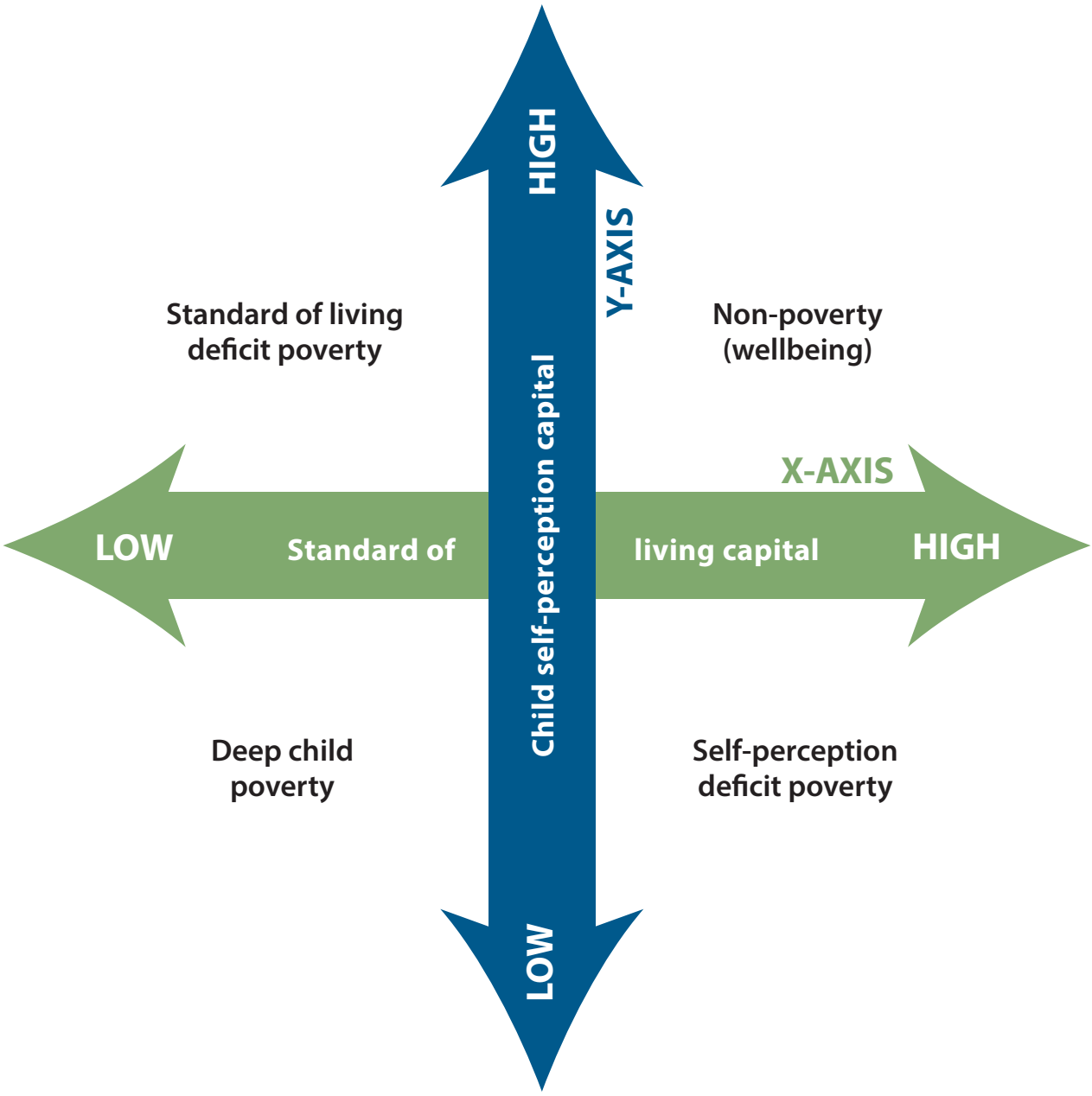


Figure 4: Child stuctural capital matrix

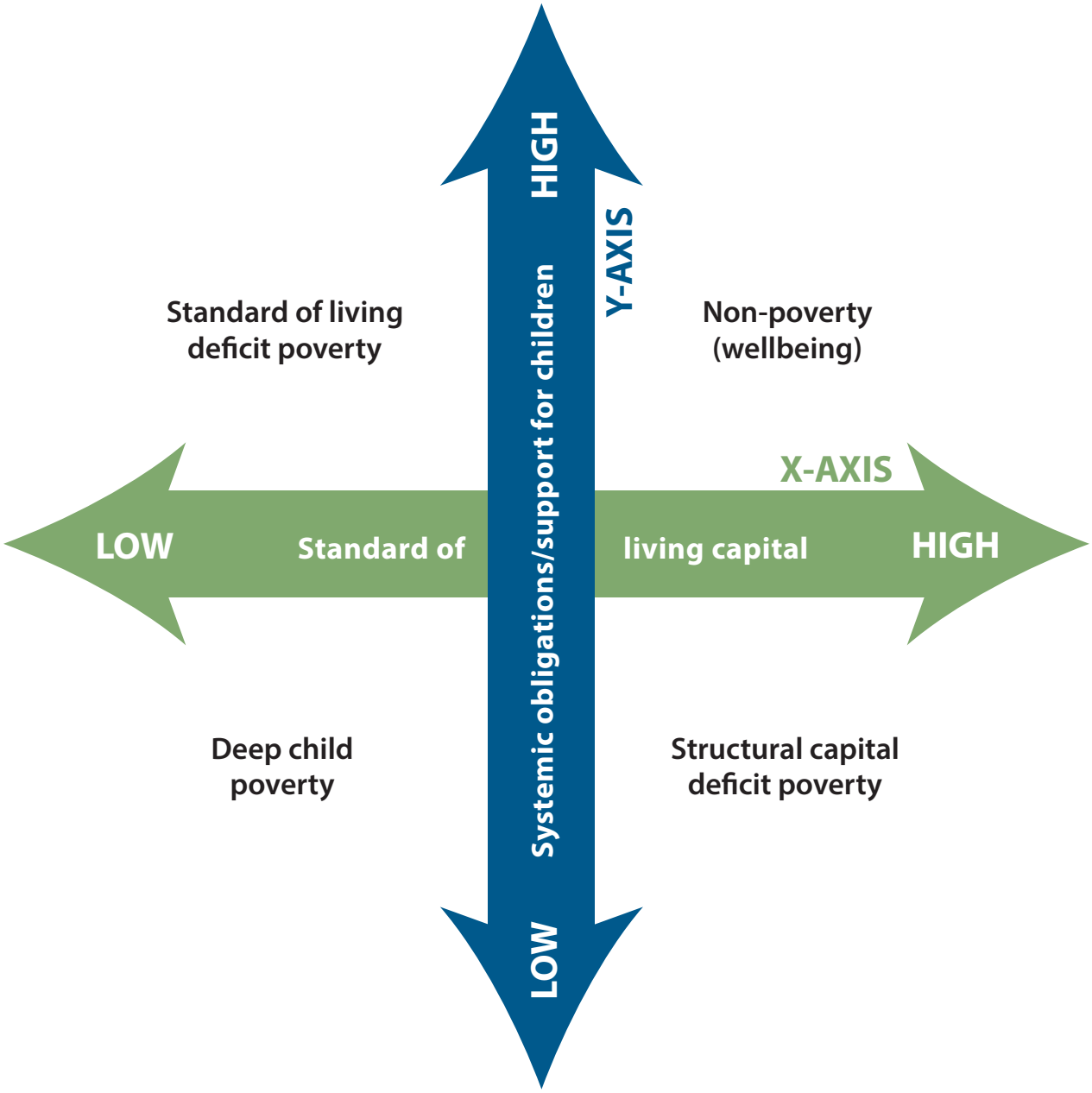
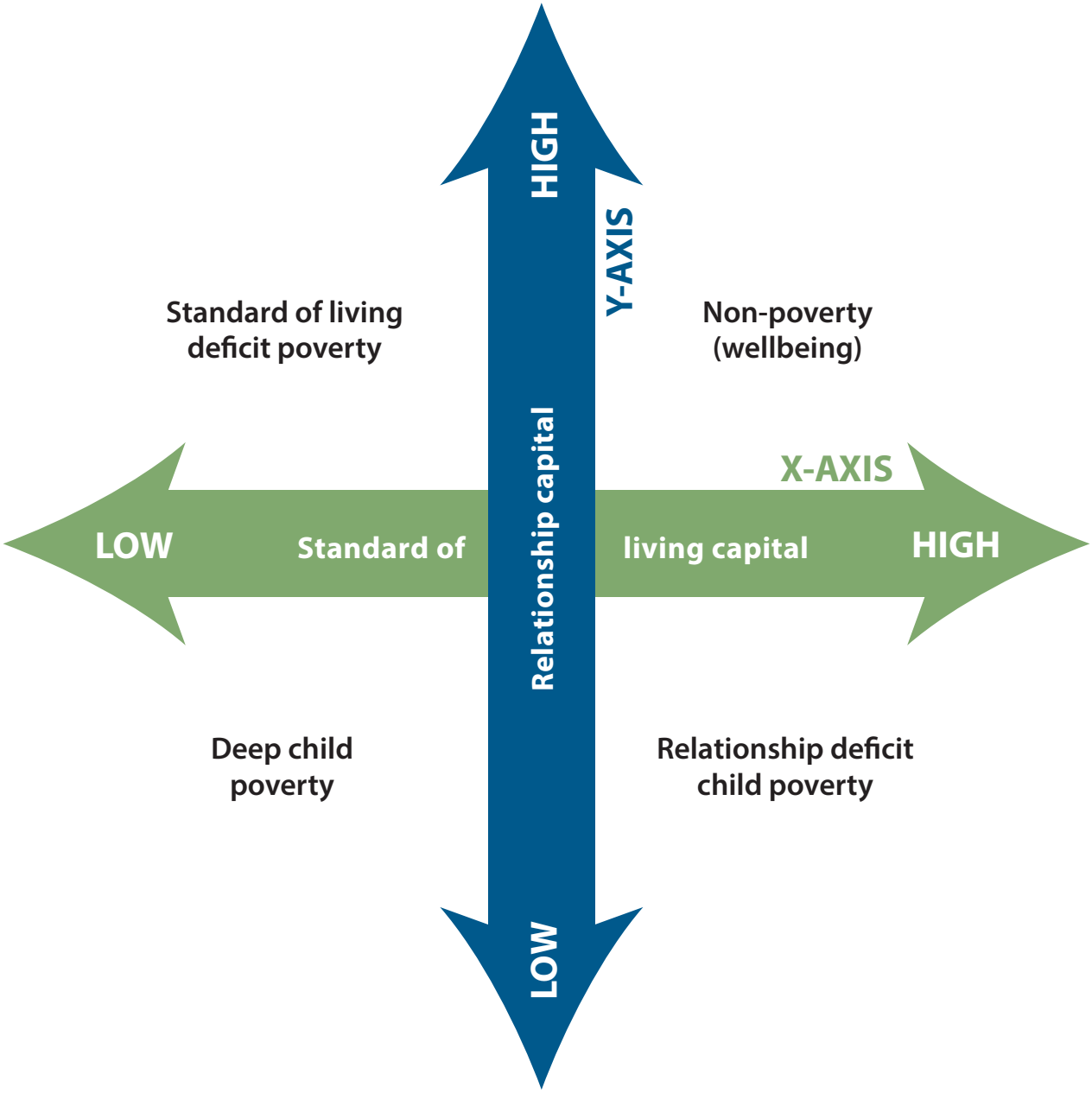


Figure 3: Child relationship capital matrix



Further to the matrices, the following types of child poverty have been isolated.

a. Child Self-Perception Poverty
b. Structural Capital Child Poverty
c. Relationship Capital Child Poverty
d. Standard of Living Capital Child Poverty
e. Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty

These types of child poverty are explained in detail as follows:

Type A: Child Self-Perception Poverty

Based on the *child self-perception capital matrix*, child poverty is defined as standard of living combined with a precarious sense of self that has the tendency to produce a dim outlook for a child's life. It is dependent on the quality of standard of living and how the child feels about themselves, describes themselves, is able to relate their self-narrative and sees their future prospects.

Type B: Structural Capital Child Poverty

Based on the *structural capital poverty matrix*, structural capital child poverty is defined as a child's need for institutions and social supports in order to attain functionings, where such institutions and social supports fail in their obligation to make available the necessaries with which a child can attain functionings. A child must have a need that his or her family is unable to meet through private funding, or even if the family unit has the funding, cannot deliver themselves because those services are not within the expertise of the family to provide. Included here is the inability for a child to develop capabilities and attain functionings because the public environment for these developments and attainments are not conducive to their needs.

Type C: Relationship Capital Child Poverty

Relationship capital child poverty is characterized by the intersection of standard of living and relationships of trust, nurturing, positive experiences and influences, where the state of the child's near to far relationships are in a state of disrepair. A child's poverty is determined by their standard of living vis-a-vis their social relationships, networks and adult supports. These relationships span a variety of areas in a child's life including relationships with peers, immediate family, teachers and receiving help with schoolwork, adult responsiveness to the child's needs, role models, family cohesion, or conversely, the lack of these healthy relationships.

Type D: Standard of Living Capital Child Poverty

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear on standard of living in relation to the child—Article 27 states that "children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing".[20] Studying the quadrants of each matrix, one notices that each top left quadrant is labelled as *standard of living deficit poverty*, because the child's standard of living in that quadrant is low compared to the positive range on the other variables (self-perception capital, relationship capital and structural capital). Our research showed that when children had a low standard of living but "scored high" on relationship, self-perception or structural capital, their poverty scenario was less dire in outlook. This hints at child resiliency, a capability concept that can make a difference in a child's experience of their life. Thus, we identify a *standard of living poverty-resiliency continuum*, probably an oxymoron, nonetheless a valid one.

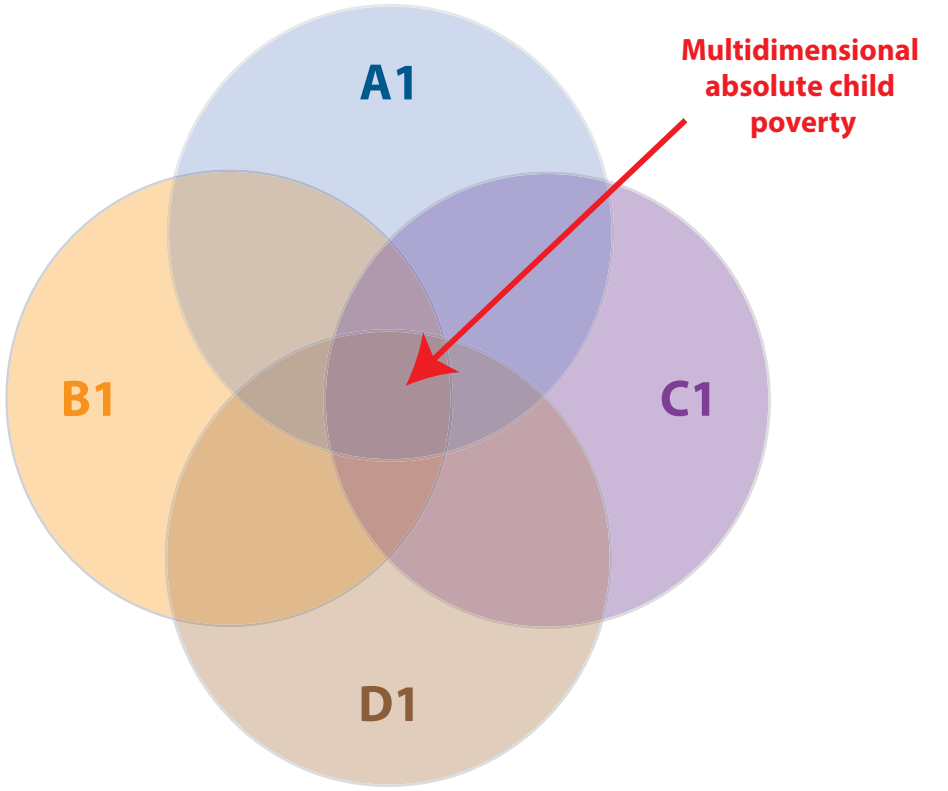
Type E: Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty

As mandated for this project, a multidimensional definition of child poverty is presented. Continuing with the intersectional methodology, the multidimensional view of poverty is identified as *Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty*. Unlike in the previous matrix-dependent notions of child poverty that are two-dimensional, Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty represents the convergence of disadvantage, where each capital deprivation represents an aspect of disadvantage for a child. These are the set of disadvantages that qualify a child as poor irrespective of the how their situation is examined.

[20] *UNICEF (2014). Fact Sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf*

The multidimensional view of child poverty is represented in the center of the Venn diagram in Figure 6. The further a child's situation is from the centre of the Venn diagram, the less intensely that child experiences poverty. As well, the further a child's situation is from the centre of the Venn diagram, the greater the chance of resiliency or the potential for resiliency building. At various intersections of deprivation, a child would be in partial poverty (see the diagram legend). At points in the Venn diagram where there are no intersections (outer rims of each circle) a child would be attaining highly, and if this occurs in all four capitals, that child would be multi-dimensionally non-poor.

Figure 6: A multidimensional view of absolute child poverty and child wellbring



Legend

Blue circle - Self-Perception Capital
Orange circle - Structural Capital
Purple circle - Relationship Capital
Brown circle - Standard of Living Capital

Red arrow: Multidimensional Absolute Child Poverty.

A1, B1, C1, D1 combined (Zone of Endowment): Multidimensional child wellbeing. Any zone of endowment is a source of resiliency for the child.

All other intersections: Different scenarios of child poverty, always partially poor.

NB: Each zone of endowment represents resiliency, overt or covert.

Policy Implications and Conclusion

Practical implications

This research project was convened to derive a multidimensional definition of child poverty. This mandate has been fulfilled with the identification of the four main areas of a child's life that influences whether or not they are poor, impoverished or have wellbeing along a continuum of poverty to wellbeing. These four aspects have been combined to produce 3 matrices for re-defining child poverty. These four areas have also been combined in a Venn diagram to depict the multidimensionality of child poverty and child wellbeing. Subsequent to the research and definition development process, the new definition was vetted by service providers in the city, in line with the second mandate of the project—to inform the practice around child poverty in the city. The menu of ideas have been collated to furnish readers with the immediate practical applications of the new definition and provide the basis for developing other practical applications for the new definition(s) of child poverty.

1. Practitioners, foremost, recognised a "new language" with which to talk about child poverty. Service providers thought that three of the four high level capitals—self-perception, relationship, structural—have been components of their practice, but because of the lack of a consensus about language to capture these aspects of working with children, reports and similar documents have had to fit into the standard of living (monetary) framework. In practical terms, service providers expressed how the new language would help them to make firm arguments for programs that have a more non-monetary focus, but which contribute to the enrichment of childhood and resiliency building. Linked to the idea of the new language was the opportunity to make stronger cases to funders regarding different aspects of childhood deprivation that could use more assistance, especially because of the current narrow monetary definitions which are tethered to the LICO, and more recently, to the LIM-AT (Low Income Measure –After Tax).

2. The ability to think about poverty as more than a singular experience in terms of lack of survival needs was not lost on some service providers. A few, particularly from a frontline perspective, suggested that their thinking around the children they observe in schools and agencies had already shifted based on the pre-reading on the new definition of child poverty given to them before the formal interviews were held. One service provider was writing a new program for an agency and disclosed that, even though the language was not actively used, the philosophy guided the brainstorming process and the provider was convinced the resulting program would look different because of the fresh take on the constituents of child poverty.

3. Some service providers thought that the new definition will make it possible for the City and agencies to discover a wider diversity of needs, which may not be confined to just the experience of children from low income backgrounds. This new focus, they thought, could lead to an expansion of programs and activities to areas of the city that have been deemed as non-poor in the monetary sense, but that could harbour children with other needs. This, they argued, would be a way to ensure some children do not fall through the cracks because of the impression they are financially provided for.

4. The idea of using the definitions, both the matrices and the Venn diagram, as an introspective tool for families and children was an interesting one. From the perspective of the service providers that envisioned this kind of application for the new definition, depending on the age of the children, each family member could indicate where they think the children 'score' in terms of endowments and deprivations. Alignment or misalignment would provide data on how to chart a response in relation to augmenting the wellbeing of the child.

5. Families that access a lot of services from agencies go to multiple places for various services. It was suggested that the new definition(s) and diagrams would provide a pictorial image of what their child's deficits are and why they are being directed to specific programs, services or agencies. This could prevent access becoming a maze where families with children utilize some services but miss the larger picture and essence of why certain programs and services are recommended to them. To this end, some service providers envisaged that they could use this new way of thinking about child poverty to provide better context. For instance, if a child is assisted to play a sport, the family and the child would be able to see visually that the ability to sign up for

a sport builds their structural capital and could give the child increased confidence. If the child develops healthy relationships of trust with peers and coaches then that child's stock of relationship capital increases. Thus, the larger rationale of why they are being directed to particular resources can be better explained, appreciated, and tracked.

6. From a uniquely funding perspective as it relates to funders of programs that involve children in Calgary, there was a positive view of the new way of thinking about child poverty. The strength of the definition, they surmised, was in its versatility and dimensions. They perceived how proposals naming specific aspects of child poverty, whilst aiming for child wellbeing, could bolster the programs they fund. In particular, funders were of the view that if this language become commonly used, they would hear it, understand it and respond.

These are a few highlights of the practical uses of the new definition(s) of child poverty. They presumably can be adopted or adapted almost immediately depending on what use a particular category of stakeholders envision.

Policy implications

i. First of all, this project provides the framework to expand the scope of what will be considered as child poverty. The city of Calgary, already grappling with the imperfections of the LICO systems for identifying who qualifies for support from the municipality, has switched to the LIM-AT in the hope of more fairly determining who falls below the poverty line. Policy wise, an explicit acknowledgement that there are aspects to poverty other than a low standard of living could be the momentum needed to revamp strategy and actions around child poverty.

ii. The reimagined and expanded system of thinking about child poverty affords Calgary the opportunity to overtly acknowledge that lack of money is a symptom of poverty and not the underlying cause of poverty, much like a headache would be a symptom of the flu but is not the flu. This implies that, at a systemic level, poverty will be viewed as a composite of living circumstances that cannot be solved by taking care of one symptom alone.

iii. Currently, The City of Calgary is developing a poverty reduction strategy. This strategic development is an opportunity to incorporate this new take on the concerning issue of child poverty into the municipal policyscape. From the standpoint that all four aspects of child poverty can be vigourously harnessed and turned into poverty prevention tools, the city can be on the frontend of preventing poverty by holistically engaging with the four spaces of risk related to child poverty instead of trying to reduce poverty once it has occurred. The interrelationships observed from the research suggests that when children have compensating strengths in self-perception, relationship and structural capital, they have a better repertoire of resiliency tools that can be harnessed to move out of monetary poverty as they grow and develop.

Areas for further research

During the research, some conversations took a trajectory that clearly could be a spinoff of this project. These are here recorded so that, in the future, the Canadian Poverty Institute or other organizations can continue this direction of research. Areas for further research are noted as follows:

a. Service providers who had indigenous backgrounds made two observations. Firstly, that the experience of poverty between indigenous and non-indigenous children cannot be lumped together. There is a uniqueness to the indigenous experience, they pointed out, that may result in different results in terms of defining child poverty from an indigenous Canadian perspective. Secondly, regarding the structural capital aspect of child poverty, indigenous service providers shared that in order to define indigenous child poverty multidimensionally, a new study necessarily has to view the structural aspects as the framework and driver of the research.

b. A similar idea that could be explored in a multicultural country such as Canada, is to examine child poverty from the perspective of different categories of Canadians and Canadian residents, such as new immigrants, refugees or economic migrants, to establish whether there are differences in the experience of child poverty for different categories of Canadian children. From here, a determination could be made as to whether particularised definitions of child poverty can be identified in order to influence practice.

c. Is it possible to numerically operationalise the matrices from the current multidimensional definition of child poverty to transform them into tools for identifying and categorising child poverty? What would the axes look like? How will the axes capture the spectrum of intensity that reflects the generalised thresholds that are the reality of people's lives, and not the cliff thresholds that have been the subject of critique and frustration? Can a tool be developed from these matrices to chart a child's progress in way that is similar to how infant-toddler growth charts are used?

d. Connected to the immediately preceding idea would also be to develop these matrices for large population studies, where clusters and scatters will show the patterns of connectivity between spatiality, demographics and a variety of dependent variables (the x-axis and y-axis). In this case, it is conceivable that overlays of various matrices would show patterns of connection across populations.

e. Another angle of possible research would be to adopt or adapt the premise of this study to derive definitions of child poverty for different jurisdictions. Is it possible that the definition of child poverty would differ based on geography? Would the 4 aspects of poverty identified remain constant but display different internal dynamics?

f. Is it possible for the spirit of this study—multidimensionality—to be successfully studied and applied in an adult context? Would the aspects of poverty be the same? Would they look the same?

Conclusion

This research was funded to decipher a multifaceted definition of child poverty for the jurisdiction of Calgary with the aim that this definition would inform the policy framework and practice around responses to child poverty. As established in the Canadian literature, the monetary definition and measurement of poverty have attained hegemonic status. Even though globally, and in Canada, conceptualizations of poverty such as the Social Exclusion, Capability Deprivation and Participatory poverty exist, they have not been able to attain the status of the Monetary view of poverty. This study has been an attempt to close this research gap in the Canadian, and certainly in the Calgarian context. In relation to children, it has been about reaching for, and delivering, a definition of child poverty that is composite. The four identified aspects of child poverty—self-perception, standard of living, relationship and structural—not only broaden the understanding of child poverty, but also provide the avenue for thinking about child poverty as an intersection of disadvantages. The matrices and Venn diagram have demonstrated that scenarios of child poverty differ in intensity and the amount of embedded resiliency. The definitions also highlight that child wellbeing is an inevitable part of the conversation about child poverty and that, when service providers and affected families talk about addressing child poverty, the conversation proceeds in an integrated way and is not specifically concerned with the lack of sufficient funds to meet survival needs. The advantage in this type of thinking is that it provides families, service providers and policy makers the language to expand the practice around child poverty in this city. It provides an avenue to justify funding and programming that do not have an overt poverty reduction outcome in the monetary sense, but still go a long way to enrich the life of the individual child and their family. It also provides the bedrock for thinking about tools to improve responses to specific types of childhood deprivation. Should this philosophy of child poverty take hold, it will be interesting to see how measurements of the prevalence of child poverty would be impacted. It would also be interesting to see the results of pilot studies based on this new, multidimensional take on child poverty.

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