A MULTI-SITE ETHNOGRAPHY EXPLORING
CULTURE AND POWER IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2006

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Abstract

Partnership is perceived to be a means for democratizing educational institutions, and a panacea for organizational difficulties. This multi-site ethnography examines how partnership development influences power and social relations. It traces political, social, and cultural dimensions of a partnership project to explore the complexities of developing partnerships within and between post-secondary organizations.

My study focuses on a distance education project involving two B.C. colleges and a First Nations education organization. I collected data through participant observation and in-depth interviews at all three organizations during two years of partnership negotiations. The data is analyzed with a multifaceted framework constructed from critical planning, cultural production, and practice theories. I examine how participants understood the partnership, and how their understandings and activities affected partnering relationships. My interdisciplinary framework links the particulars of this partnership project with broad cultural and political processes.

I learned that partnership involves crossing boundaries through complicated, dynamic, and fluid interactions. Relationships, assumptions, and activities within each partnering organization affected boundary encounters that took place within organizations as well as between them. Partnership development reproduced social relations at the same time as it produced new possibilities for cultural, political, and social change. My study concludes that a plurality of loosely linked interests, structures, discourses and practices provided options for the participants to strategically transform relationships by mobilizing cultural elements, and by negotiating power relations. Even practices that maintained boundaries, or appeared
to be tightly integrated with hegemonic discourses, held the potential to transform unequal relations through a creative and productive form of agency.

My study has practical implications for planners and those involved in partnership work, because it illuminates critical political and cultural dynamics that inform decision-making. It illustrates that the boundary zone of partnership is fertile ground for developing theory, and for revealing new possibilities in political, cultural, and social relations.
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## Glossary of acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COD</td>
<td>Conservation Officer Diploma, a Science program at South College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full Time Equivalent, a measure of student enrollment used to determine provincial educational funding allocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITS</td>
<td>Instructional Technologies Section, a Canadian government agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNES</td>
<td>Northern Nations Education Society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

A study like this is only possible with the support, guidance and caring of many people. I thank Shauna Butterwick, my research supervisor, for her ongoing enthusiasm and thoughtful attention to the details which make research work meaningful. I benefited from the insights and expertise of my research committee members, Paule McNicoll and Elizabeth Whitmore, and my original supervisor Allison Tom.

I thank the many staff, faculty, and students in the Educational Studies department of the University of British Columbia for making the experience of learning a pleasurable one. I feel special gratitude towards my study group and other students who supported me throughout the research process: Marina Niks, Colleen Reid, Janice Johnson, Jerry Hinbest, and Steve Noble.

I am very grateful to the many participants in the partnership project, who must remain anonymous. Staff, faculty, administrators and students at three organizations were most generous with their time and patience. Many northerners went out of their way to assist me during my visits to their communities. And I am particularly grateful to the seventeen individuals who shared their thoughts and experiences with me during interview sessions.

I can never thank my family enough, for supporting me throughout my doctoral journey. Lily Harper, my mom, the finest teacher I will ever know. My terrific sister Janis Harper and her family. My extraordinary aunt and role model Helen K. Mussallem. And my own partner through thick and thin, Bruce, whose cooking, caring, and endless patience made this thesis possible.
1 INTRODUCTION

Partnership, participation, and collaboration are buzzwords of our time. In the fields of education, health, and development, the popular rhetoric represents partnership as a panacea for organizational and social difficulties, and a means for democratizing institutions. Most partnership studies emphasize practical and constructive findings that will aid practitioners in building more successful and enduring partnerships. But a recent wave of critical scholarship (Barnsley, 1995; Lieberman, 1992; Lister, 2000) has exposed the hollow promises of educational partnership, redefining it as an instrument of neoliberal policy, and suggesting that it most often reproduces relations of inequality.

It is not surprising that partnership work has been represented in such contradictory ways. Partnerships are ultimately defined by the involvement of at least two distinct organizational entities, engaged in a more or less formal agreement. Constructing a partnership is difficult work. It is a tangled and messy process of multiple intersecting interests, expectations, accountabilities, identities, and resources. These often overlap with social intersections of race, ethnicity, class and gender. Empirical studies of partnership have focused on pieces of the process, or adopted a single analytical lens that simplifies and reduces the complexities of a partnering process (Cordeiro & Kolek, 1996; Cottrell, Lord, Martin, & Prentice, 1996; Jenkins, 2001; Lister, 2000; Lynch, 2002; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994).

Rather than contribute to the fractured nature of partnership studies, I have taken a different objective as my point of departure: To enhance understanding of partnership development by exploring, integrating, and assessing alternative perspectives that may be useful for theory building as well as practice. This ethnographic study provides a thick description of a single partnership project operating in multiple sites. I have juxtaposed
personal experiences and interpretations of partnership development with a critical form of analysis, and compared both of them with a more hopeful analysis founded in cultural production theory. These perspectives expose and explore the connections and interrelationships between people and power, thoughts and behaviours, discourses and structures.

**Changing research intentions**

*A lifelong commitment*

When I began my doctoral studies, I intended to focus on the evaluation of distance learning. But as I explored the evaluation field, I quickly became attracted to collaborative forms of evaluation. From the very beginning of my working life in educational institutions, I intuitively embraced a collaborative approach to teaching and to developing programs. In my first paying job, in a public museum, I constructed collaborations and partnerships with many different organizations. What began as an article of faith was supported by the practical considerations of limited resources and the mutual benefits of enduring relationships. In the decades since that first experience, I have developed an explicit value commitment to collaboration as a means of sharing power and decision-making. It has become essential to my way of working, and influences my decisions of where, as well as how, to work.

My research activities have been directed towards increasing general knowledge and understanding of collaboration since I conducted a museum practitioner survey in 1983. My master’s project was a collaborative life history project, which I followed with a survey and ethnographic study of collaborations between B.C. museums and their communities (Harper, 1994, 1996). I have since taken part in many collaborative projects involving non-profit
organizations, educational institutions, and sometimes government agencies. My continuing personal goal is to legitimize and promote collaboration as a way of working in and among educational organizations, by deepening understanding and credibility of collaboration and collaborative practices.

A shifting research focus and questions

I shifted my attention to participatory approaches to evaluation early in my graduate program of study. Participatory and collaborative approaches are concerned with enabling individual, organizational or social change. They are based on developmental goals such as strengthening participants' engagement and sense of ownership in their programs, organizations or communities. Participatory and collaborative evaluators reframe the process as a learning experience for everyone involved, and some go further to consider their evaluation work to be an intervention supporting individual and community self-determination, empowerment, and the democratization of society (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Greene, Lincoln, & Mathison, 1998; House & Howe, 1999; Mertens, 1999).

I strongly identify with evaluators who advocate these emancipatory and transformative goals, and my original research proposal addressed these goals. I planned to study how participatory forms of evaluation influenced relations of power in community development. When I began the search for a research site in fall 2001, my promising contacts with experienced participatory and collaborative evaluators in the U.S. were compromised when tragic events in New York made it difficult to complete arrangements for my study. As I was resuming my search within Canada, I was approached by a college in southern British Columbia. The college required a contract evaluation of a new on-line learning project, to be developed in partnership with a First Nations organization. When I read the project outline
and spoke with some of the proposal writers, I was immediately intrigued by the participatory and democratic nature of their partnership language. I hoped that the involvement of a First Nation would spotlight issues of power, inequality, and social justice. When the college hired a contract evaluator who supported participatory evaluation, I decided to conduct an ethnographic study of the project for my thesis.

But as the project unfolded, it took on different shapes than I had expected. The on-line courses were developed but never offered, and the participatory nature of the evaluation was limited to a sporadic dialogue between the evaluator and the college participants. Instead of maintaining a narrowing focus on the shrinking evaluation process, I broadened the scope of my study. The most time-consuming, complicated, and difficult activity of the project was the series of partnership negotiations that took place between post-secondary education organizations. I responded with a new research goal, to enhance understanding of partnership development through a detailed and holistic ethnographic description and analysis of an education partnership. My broad research questions were:

• What are the political, social and cultural dimensions of this post-secondary partnership project?
• How did participants understand the partnership, and how did their understandings and activities affect partnering relationships?
• How does partnership development influence power and social relations?

As I began an inductive analysis of the enormous volume of data collected through participant observations, interviews, and document analysis, I explicitly focused my research upon shared understandings about power, community, engagement, and partnership among the active participants developing the partnerships.
Studying partnership as boundary work

Partnership development is a complicated and ambiguous process, which challenges conventional ways of analyzing and representing partnerships. I argue that partnership development is situated in a boundary zone, where the formal boundaries of organizations and sometimes nations overlap with informal and invisible intersections including those of social structures, cultural understandings, and communities of practice.

For a better understanding of this boundary work, I adopt multiple analytical perspectives: participants' lived experiences and analyses, a critical planning framework, and a cultural analysis. Considered together, these perspectives provide a more holistic view of the boundary zone. I pay particular attention to cultural analysis, which has received so little attention in the partnership and planning literatures.

The use of multiple perspectives produces a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the partnership development process. Mutual goals and shared interests, visible from a political planning perspective, are not enough to construct an enduring partnership. Development is significantly affected by the interplay of discourses and practices of education, difference, and engagement. The holistic nature of the cultural perspective disrupts the dichotomy of agency and structure to reveal dynamic interactive processes through which participants take on and make meaningful cultural constraints and possibilities.

This study also documents the strategic use of partnership by a First Nations community to actively transform the oppressive nature of the ongoing historical relationship between non-aboriginal and First Nations peoples in British Columbia.
Overview

There are altogether 8 chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 2 reviews the literatures of partnership, planning theory, and cultural analysis. I argue that overlaps in these theoretical discourses offer promising frameworks for analyzing partnership development. A critical program planning theory popular in public and adult education planning provides a useful perspective for tracing power relationships in negotiations, and cultural analysis suggests an alternative interpretation of the dynamics of power, structure, and agency.

My research methods are discussed in Chapter 3, which provides detailed descriptions of my research practices, my roles and relationships as a researcher, and ethical challenges that were encountered. I employ multiple sets of criteria to consider the quality of this study.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 interpret the partnership development story from multiple perspectives. In Chapter 4, I construct a chronological narrative that emphasizes participant experiences and understandings. It presents the active participants’ own words and interpretations with a storyline based on my own observations and project documents. Chapter 5 reinterprets the narrative using a political lens based on the critical program planning framework. Chapters 6 and 7 re-examine the partnership process with a detailed cultural analysis of practices and discourses. Chapter 6 compares and contrasts the longstanding practices that characterized each organization before the partnership began. Chapter 7 integrates an analysis of discourse with practices observed during the partnership process. It challenges the critical view that agency is constrained by culture, and illuminates partnership development with a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of individual agency, culture and power relations.
The implications of this research for theory building, practice, and further study are summarized in Chapter 8.
2 MAKING SENSE OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The partnership literature largely depends on either a Rhetoric of Hope or a Discourse of Crisis that belies the fact that relatively few healthy models exist. (Lynch, 2002, p. ii)

This chapter examines the pervasive assumptions that have informed partnership research and practice, and considers related theoretical literatures in planning and cultural studies that suggest new ways of thinking about post-secondary educational organizations. I have not focused on distance education research, which has been described as “barely scratching the surface of practicalities” (Anglin & Morrison, 2002). Most distance educators draw upon theory developed or used in other fields of education, and the few descriptive studies and evaluations that I located were concerned with practice rather than theory development.

Instead, I briefly review historical shifts in the discourses of planning theory, and closely examine the critical planning frameworks that now dominate the field. A cultural production analysis developed in cultural studies and anthropology provides the basis for another analytical perspective. I construct an appropriate cultural framework for analyzing dynamic social and cultural processes, by integrating cultural discourse analysis with practice theories that link action with meaning through local and ruling practices, communities, and boundary relations. These conceptual frameworks form a multifaceted crystal with the potential to illuminate partnership development, by focusing on issues in the study and practice of partnership. Table 1 presents an outline of the literatures reviewed in this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study</th>
<th>Focus of analysis</th>
<th>Relevant findings</th>
<th>Authors cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership</strong></td>
<td>Mutual relations &amp; organizational identity</td>
<td>Enabling factors and barriers</td>
<td>(Beder, 1984b; J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Campoy, 2002; Cordeiro &amp; Kolek, 1996; Cottrell et al., 1996; Darlingon-Hope, 1999; Jenkins, 2001; Lister, 2000; Lynch, 2002; Mitchell, 2005; Williams, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic approaches</td>
<td>Practical management issues</td>
<td>Enabling factors and barriers</td>
<td>(Baba, 1988; Babiak, 2003; Baum, 2000; Berg, 2002; J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Brown &amp; Ashman, 1996; Cordeiro &amp; Kolek, 1996; Gray, 1989; Kanter, 1994; Mara, 2000; Ring &amp; Van de Ven, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process studies</td>
<td>Stages in partnership development</td>
<td>Enabling factors and barriers</td>
<td>(Beder, 1984b; J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Campoy, 2002; Cordeiro &amp; Kolek, 1996; Cottrell et al., 1996; Darlingon-Hope, 1999; Jenkins, 2001; Lister, 2000; Lynch, 2002; Mitchell, 2005; Williams, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical approaches</td>
<td>Structural relations underlying partnership</td>
<td>Partnership masks the reproduction of social inequalities</td>
<td>(Barnsley, 1995; Lieberman, 1992; Lister, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-modern approaches</td>
<td>Various foci: discourse analysis, meanings and metaphors</td>
<td>Partnership is complex &amp; unpredictable, with potential for positive social change</td>
<td>(Cobb, 2003; Goldberg &amp; Comins, 2001; Johnson Jr. &amp; Galvin, 1996; Lynch, 2002; Mara, 2000; Slater, 1996; J. K. Smith &amp; Deemer, 2000; Taket &amp; White, 2000; Whitmore, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public &amp; program planning</strong></td>
<td>Guides future action towards productive purposes</td>
<td>Technical improvements</td>
<td>(Tyler, 1949)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical approach</td>
<td>Specialized planning skills and knowledge</td>
<td>Contingency of terms, frameworks</td>
<td>(Houle, 1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic approach</td>
<td>Goal-directed action based on experience</td>
<td>Power relations and frame factors constrain action</td>
<td>(Allmendinger, 2002; Cervero &amp; Wilton, 1994; 1998; Elgstrom &amp; Rii, 1992; Hendricks, 1996; Umble, Cervero, &amp; Langone, 2001; Yang, 1999a; Yang &amp; Cervero, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical frameworks</td>
<td>Micro political analysis Negotiating interests and relationships in a social and political context</td>
<td>Meta-negotiations can address and alter frames and power relationships</td>
<td>(Allmendinger, 2002; Cervero &amp; Wilton, 1994; 1998; Elgstrom &amp; Rii, 1992; Hendricks, 1996; Umble, Cervero, &amp; Langone, 2001; Yang, 1999a; Yang &amp; Cervero, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural analysis</strong></td>
<td>Culture and society</td>
<td>Reconceptualized relationship between meaning-systems &amp; structural relations</td>
<td>(Carlson &amp; Dimitriadis, 2003; Franklin, 2002; Levinson &amp; Holland, 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural studies</td>
<td>Culture, power, and inequality</td>
<td>Culture provides possibilities for resistance &amp; social change, reproduction</td>
<td>(Eisenhart, 2001; Levinson &amp; Holland, 1996; Willis, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural production analysis</td>
<td>Culture as a resource; changing &amp; changeable</td>
<td>Multiple discourses offer potential for change and transformation</td>
<td>(Bauman &amp; Briggs, 1990; Lindstrom, 2002; Sondersaard, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural discourse analysis</td>
<td>Shared systems of meaning</td>
<td>Practices dynamically produce and reproduce social relations</td>
<td>(Bourdieu, 1977; Orner, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice analysis</td>
<td>Political implications of patterned action</td>
<td>Practices dynamically produce and reproduce social relations</td>
<td>(Bourdieu, 1977; Orner, 1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of practice</td>
<td>Continuities &amp; discontinuities among groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Wenger, 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional ethnography</td>
<td>Social relations and ruling practices</td>
<td>Texts mediate social relations</td>
<td>(Campbell &amp; Gregor, 2002; D. E. Smith, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The literatures of partnership

The partnership concept has been prominent in North American and European social policy since the 80's, becoming a popular practice in a range of fields including business, civic planning, international development, education, health, and sports (Barnsley, 1995; Billis, 1993; Cottrell et al., 1996; Kanter, 1994; Lister, 2000; Martin, 1997; Thompson, Smith, Hallom, & Durrenberger, 1999). In Arnstein’s (1969) seminal work on levels of citizen participation, she defined partnership as the redistribution of power through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Several decades later, use of the concept has expanded to represent a broad range of formal and informal arrangements. Some consider partnership to be interchangeable with other forms of collaboration, while others define it as a specific variant of inter-organizational relationships (Martin, 1997).

There is no coherent literature of partnership. Studies are dispersed among a range of disciplines, each one offering various typologies of partnership (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Gray, 1989; Griffiths, 2000). Amidst the proliferation of terminology, two dimensions that define partnership can be recognized across disciplines and fields of practice: mutual relations and organization identity (D. W. Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004; J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002). Partnerships involve mutuality through some form of horizontal coordination and accountability, and sometimes through shared decision-making. Mutual relations may include jointly agreed purposes and values, and varying degrees of mutual trust and respect, reciprocity, interdependence, integration, and commitment. The second essential dimension is the presence of distinctive and enduring organization identities, represented by an organization’s consistent commitment to mission, values and
constituencies; its immediate access to resources and opportunities; or its representation of a particular social sector or organizational type (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002).

**Partnership is a good thing: The dominant discourse**

Despite the scattered nature of partnership literature, it is consistently constructed on the assumption that partnership is a desirable form of relationship: “an axiomatic social good” (Beder, 1984a) “a desirable, values-laden type of relationship” (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002); “a glowingly-positive discourse of hope” (Lynch, 2002), and “a feel good panacea” (D. W. Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004). This discourse dominates popular media and academic disciplines, and even critics of partnership affirm its potential for good (Mara, 2000; Thompson et al., 1999). Most studies of partnership support its potential to ameliorate social conditions and generally make things better. Ethical and political rationales value equity, democracy and solidarity in the process of the partnership as well as in its products, which may include a rapid improvement in the well being of marginalized groups. The multitude of pragmatic reasons justifying partnership include managing environmental turbulence and ambiguity, obtaining secure resources for growth and survival, addressing rapid economic and technological change, maximizing efficiency, resolving complex multi-dimensional problems, and meeting funder requirements (Baba, 1988; Beder, 1984a; Brown & Ashman, 1996; Campoy, 2002; Gray, 1989; Griffiths, 2000; Shaw, 2003).

In the field of education, partnership activities have become a common element in post-secondary research, policy and practice (Dotolo & Nofisinger Jr., 2002; Griffiths, 2000). Education partnerships have been formed between educational institutions, and with business and community organizations. In the constantly changing and uncertain economic climate of recent decades, partnership is represented as a constructive response to pressures to become
more efficient with fewer resources, while meeting rising public expectations for accountability and relevance to stakeholder and community concerns (Darlington-Hope, 1999; Larrance, 2002; Noftsinger Jr., 2002). Partnership is also represented as a moral responsibility in higher education, where institutions have the opportunity to be the focal point of establishing alliances and partnerships that affect entire communities (Dotolo & Noftsinger Jr., 2002).

**Partnership is fragile: A pragmatic model**

The cross-disciplinary discourse is dominated by a pragmatic orientation. Partnership is represented as a viable but fragile solution, one that is deceptively difficult to implement and manage (Dotolo & Noftsinger Jr., 2002; Lynch, 2002). Most empirical studies focus upon practical management issues, developing models specific to particular fields. Pragmatic research has identified social, political, and technological factors essential for partnership success, such as maintaining regular communications, trust, commitment, flexibility, distributed decision-making, formal agreements, and practical results. Partnership structures, conditions and contingent factors have been examined to explain how successful and enduring partnerships are formed, maintained, and assessed (Beder, 1984b; J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Cordeiro & Kolek, 1996; Cottrell et al., 1996; Darlington-Hope, 1999; Jenkins, 2001; Lister, 2000; Mitchell, 2005; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Wright & Nelson, 1995). Some studies have identified barriers to sustaining partnership (Campoy, 2002; Cordeiro & Kolek, 1996; Cottrell et al., 1996; Lynch, 2002). Barriers identified in higher education partnerships include “turf issues” about academic and non-academic domains, “academic snobbery” among different types of institutions, and “institutional self-
centredness” that ignores other partners’ expertise (Williams, 2002). But the literature provides little concrete assistance for addressing and overcoming barriers (Lynch, 2002).

The role of power in partnering relationships is seldom mentioned in these pragmatic studies, which emphasize individual agency. In pragmatic studies, power is most often bad, while partnership has the potential to do good. Power is equated with authority and domination, an unavoidable dimension possessed more by some players than by others. In her comprehensive synthesis of management-oriented partnership research and practice, Brinkerhoff (2002) incorporates power in factors such as “environmental hostility” and “tolerance for sharing power” and argues that partnership is an important vehicle for weaker players to enter into relationships for improvement and accountability. Like other pragmatic scholars, Brinkerhoff’s analysis is based on a consensus model of society, in which social relations are harmonious, and successful management of partnership is an unquestioned goal.

**Studying partnership process**

Recent interest in the process of partnership is reshaping research priorities and refining understandings of successful partnership. Process theorists have challenged the pragmatic studies that treat preconditions and environmental factors as static features, and that assume organizations armed with knowledge about relevant factors will be able to construct more effective and stable partnerships (Bradshaw, 2002).

Most process studies identify stages in partnership development (Baba, 1988; Babiak, 2003; Berg, 2002; Gray, 1989; Kanter, 1994; Mitchell, 2005; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Only a few studies have closely examined what is called the partnership formation process, or the development or planning stage. Some of their findings are contradictory. Most pragmatic studies recommend formal agreements as a framework for structuring a successful
partnership, through their clarification of roles, responsibilities and definitions (Cordeiro & Kolek, 1996; Mara, 2000). But some scholars challenge the rigidity imposed by formal agreements, arguing that they work against the flexibility required in a partnership environment (Baum, 2000; J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002). A growing body of empirical evidence challenges the emphasis on formal systems, finding that a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures is more critical for success (Brown & Ashman, 1996; Kanter, 1994).

**Alternatives to the pragmatic approach**

A few critical analyses have attended to structural relations underlying partnership. Lister’s (2000) influential critical study argued that the partnership discourse hides power asymmetries and masks relations in a positive glow. She concluded that what she calls “true” partnership, a relationship between equals, is impossible in the field of international development due to the differential power inherent in cultural development. Other studies have supported this conclusion, redefining partnership as a tool of neoliberalism or documenting its reproduction of social inequality. Lieberman (1992), for example, questioned whether collaborative partnerships are possible between educational institutions that “jealously guard their turf” (p. 152). Barnsley (1995) has documented examples of resistance to research partnerships involving academics and non-profit organizations, suggesting that partnership formation is more like a “shotgun wedding”, a token effort that supports domination by more powerful academic partners. Her work challenges the dominant pragmatic discourse, which perceives signs of resistance as barriers to be avoided or overcome in the interest of a mutually beneficial partnership.
A few empirical studies have critically analyzed partnership formation in terms of the negotiation of interests (Johnson Jr. & Galvin, 1996). Cobb (2003) documented entrenched inequalities and contradictory interests in a university-community partnership, finding that organizational structure and practices consistently privilege university participants. Slater’s (1996) sensitive study of organizational cultures in an educational partnership traced power, control and face-saving in the negotiation process, finding that interests and intentions were quashed by the inertia of conventional bureaucratic practice. Slater observed that participants scrutinized all formal and informal texts for evidence of potential domination, and concluded that texts are critical to partnership politics and control issues.

Other analytical perspectives are rarely found in partnership literatures. A few scholars have undertaken post-modern or poststructuralist studies, drawing upon forms of discourse analysis, symbolic interpretations, or gender analysis (Mara, 2000; Slater, 1996; Taket & White, 2000; Whitmore, 2001). Lynch (2002) concluded that power imbalances between the university and community form the greatest barrier to partnership. She notes that links between power, gender, race, and collaboration are sometimes acknowledged but insufficiently addressed in theory and practice. Goldberg and Comins (2001) found that ambiguity in personal meanings could enhance a partnership by creating the potential for changing coercive relationships into mutually respectful ones. By strategically employing metaphors of informal kin relationships as well as formal business ones, participants were able to reshape their partnering relationships. These approaches suggest that partnership is a coherent, complex and unpredictable reality that embodies creative possibilities for positive social change. Lynch argues against fixing clarity in what is by its nature a messy process:

Desires for coherence, intelligibility, instrumental control, and an 'easily-explained research story' obstruct the construction of successful and sustainable partnerships.
Partnership and planning

The pragmatic discourse that dominates partnership studies seldom recognizes or questions relationships of power, though some critical theorists have argued that partnership may reproduce inequality. To examine their findings more closely I turned to the field of planning, which has much in common with partnership development. Planning is the guidance of future action, and involves working on problems with people. Like the literature of partnership, planning is oriented towards productive social purposes, and until recently the field was dominated by a pragmatic discourse. But there is little overlap in their literatures. Partnership studies rarely cite the planning literature, and planning theory has not specifically addressed the process of partnership.

The planning field was dominated by the certainties and clarity of logical positivism and modernism for most of the last century. Classical planning practices were based upon a top-down rational approach that emphasized specialized professional skills and competencies based on a specialized body of knowledge (Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Tyler, 1949). Several decades ago, the literature of planning shifted towards pragmatism, emphasizing goal-directed action based on experience rather than relying upon the abstract theories of positivism. Pragmatic planning rejected the idea of universal conceptual and ethical norms, and recognized the contingency of vocabulary, concepts, and frameworks (Harrison, 2002; Houle, 1972; Stein & Harper, 2003).

But pragmatic planning has been eclipsed by a critical theory approach that aims to expose power relations and avoid the dominant methodologies characteristic of modernity. Like pragmatic planning theory, it recognizes social context and relativism. But it also stresses the importance of communication and collaboration between as many actors as
possible, and values the democratization of daily communications. The critical approach, sometimes known as communicative action planning, collaborative, or deliberative planning, now dominates the field as “the main paradigm of the 21st century” (Allmendinger, 2002, p. 3).

Critical planning theory in post-secondary education

Critical planning analysis looks beyond the narrow organizational focus of the pragmatic management literature, which often disregards existing power relations, social structures, or cultural systems outside the organization. In the fields of adult and continuing education, theorists have adapted critical planning frameworks to analyze education programs. During the 1990’s, Cervero and Wilson (1994; 1998; 1996) argued that planning is a social, political and ethical activity during which people construct educational programs by negotiating personal, social, and organizational interests in contexts marked by socially structured power relations. Their conceptualization of negotiation, power, interests, and tactics provides the basis for a growing body of research and theoretical development, as well as for prescriptive work (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Hendricks, 1996; Umble et al., 2001; Yang, 1999b; Yang & Cervero, 2001).

This critical approach assumes that power relationships structure the terrain on which people act, and that peoples’ interests provide the motivation for actions (Wilson & Cervero, 1996). Power is defined as a socially structured capacity to act while relationships of power are asymmetrical and relatively enduring due to the legitimate power of authority or the illegitimate power of domination (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, 1998; Giddens, 1984). Programs themselves arise not from the technical application of planning principles, but from intersecting interests, the motivations and purposes that operate within the exercise of power,
leading people to make judgments and to act in certain ways in certain situations (Wilson & Cervero, 1996). Interests are complex combinations of predispositions, goals, values, desires, expectations, and other orientations, which may be expressed (explicitly held preferences), ideal (what one should ascribe to, a function of ethical beliefs whether or not they are acted upon), or real interests (implicit norms, values and purposes).

Refinements to critical program planning theory have largely focused on negotiation and context. Empirical studies have enhanced understanding of social and political dimensions of the planning process through an integration of frame factor theory with negotiation theory. Frame factors constrain the space for thinking and action within a process, but the actors involved cannot influence them or perceive they cannot influence them in the near future. There are two kinds of frame factors: material and conceptual (Elgstrom & Riis, 1992). Material frames are as concrete as funding resources and physical equipment, and conceptual frames are ideational structures, sets of norms, standards, values and views of life and realities shared and taken for granted by interacting actors. Only one ideational structure dominates at a given point in time, but it may change in the short or long term. When frame factors become the subject of negotiation, the process is called meta-negotiation, which is distinguished from substantive negotiations that address factors perceived as alterable within the existing frames.

Substantive and meta-negotiations take place concurrently, to address and alter the frames of individual power relationships. Umble, Cervero, and Langone (2001) found that power relations and frames deeply shape and constrain programs as they are created and re-created over time. Flexibility could be found in substantive negotiations about specific course details, and in meta-negotiations about power relationships among individual
planners. Participants who tried to bring new interests to the process found that their power relative to other participants influenced the degree of change that they could bring about. Umble et al. found that historical processes and relationships within an organization created a strong and rigid conceptual frame into which a course had to fit, which they described as “sedimented within cultural beliefs” (2001, p. 135). Their findings mirror Slater’s (1996) study of partnership, in which interests and intentions were quashed by the inertia of conventional practice.

Some theorists have argued that a critical power analysis is inadequate for understanding the social world. Sork (1996) has raised questions about the unexplored implications of dynamics among participant identities, interests and power. Stein and Harper (2003) argue that trust is equally important for understanding human and organizational relationships, and essential for cooperation in all communications, understanding, knowledge and learning.

In his cogent critique of critical planning analysis, Degeling (1996) explores the limitations of its project focus. He suggests planning should be studied as

episodes in multi-person dramas which have been in play for extended periods of time . . . individual planning episodes are scripted, as players . . . mobilize aspects of the discourses which evoke the societal purposes, functions and outcomes that conventionally are attributed to planning. (p. 114)

Degeling calls for more thick case study descriptions that provide detailed interpretations of the structured and contested nature of the processes through which specific planning episodes are constituted and played out.

Critical planning scholars have developed robust frameworks for analyzing power, but maintain a narrow political focus that emphasizes the micro politics of who is taking part in negotiations, and how and what is being negotiated (Cervero & Wilson, 1998; Umble et al., 2001). They conceptualize power as an alterable reality, assuming agency on the part of
more powerful actors and rarely exploring forms of resistance (Burbules, 1986; Forester, 1989; Sork, 1996). When broad social relations and historical processes emerge as factors in their empirical research, critical planning theorists argue that some ideological structures are unchangeable and monolithic, like the culture they are embedded within (Elgstrom & Riis, 1992; Umble et al., 2001). Embracing the historical Marxist concept of culture as a fixed constraint, most critical theorists disregard alternative perspectives of culture.

**From critical constraints to cultural possibilities**

Other disciplines study culture as a core concept, and offer different cultural lenses for viewing and understanding partnership. The classical idea that culture exists only as a static and rigid system, perpetuated among a single bounded social group, no longer dominates discourse in anthropology or cultural studies. Rather than adopt a single theory of culture, such as the symbolic approach adopted by many management and partnership theorists (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Mara, 2000), contemporary anthropologists most often combine several analytical perspectives in order to develop sensitive and nuanced interpretations. Their lenses are more refined and useful for understanding our increasingly fragmented, dispersed and changing social world (Barnard, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ortner, 1994). Anthropology is increasingly influenced by cultural studies, which represents critical, theoretically based and interdisciplinary research concerned with the analysis of dominant, popular and mainstream culture (Franklin, 2002, p. 134-136). Cultural studies focuses on issues of power and inequality, and strives to make visible traditions which are muted, marginal, or under-represented in the social world of the researcher. The analysis undertaken in the intersection of anthropology and cultural studies offers new ways to conceptualize the
relationship between the actively constructed meaning systems that constitute culture, and
the externally imposed conditions of structural relations (Eisenhart, 2001).

**Cultural analysis in educational settings**

Educational anthropology has long defined and studied distinct cultural groups,
developing theories such as “cultural difference” to understand conflicts between home and
school culture (Bryce-Heath, 1982; Eisenhart, 2001). Until recently, it separated the study of
culture from arrangements and structures of power. Critical power analysis maintained a
similar separation by studying power without questioning how power structures form, or
their relation to agency, struggle, and diversity. Critical theory has added culture only in
terms of a constraint that enables the reproduction of material and power relations (Burbules,

But cultural analysis offers another lens for analyzing the development of partnerships. A
cultural production framework challenges reproduction theories that reduce human agents to
bearers of structural relationships. Cultural production theorists argue that culture is a
resource for ordering and valuing our world. Discourses, shared meanings, materials,
practices and group processes are collective cultural forms, which may be used to understand
and creatively occupy particular positions among general social and material possibilities
(Eisenhart, 2001; Willis, 1981). Cultural and social reproduction are subsets of this concept.
Cultural reproduction operates when these complex processes regenerate and reinforce
shared ideological and social beliefs. Social reproduction is an effect when a pattern of
social attitudes and cultural meanings forms the basis for decisions and actions which
support social relations and hegemonic structures.
Cultural production theorists in education challenge functionalist ideas of harmony and consensus among social and cultural elements. They support arguments that schools are not innocent sites for transmitting culture or for inculcating consensual values, but are perpetuating and exacerbating social inequalities. Cultural production theorists have further problematized the findings of critical studies, to demonstrate that students do not necessarily passively absorb messages, but interact with them in creative ways, sometimes creating cultural forms that resist dominant ideologies (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Willis (1981), in his seminal cultural analysis of working class boys, was one of the first to demonstrate that dominated groups are not passive recipients of social roles and requirements defined by power relations. His work recognizes and analyses characteristics of culture including rational collective responses to dilemmas and possibilities, shared conscious and unconscious subjective meanings that help to direct action, and contradictory discourses, inherited forms, and practices.

**Defining a framework**

Carlson and Dimitriadis (2003) defines cultural studies as a commitment to critique how education is represented and enacted in particular cultural sites – and to imagine otherwise, a more democratic society. Just as Forester (1989) argues that power is an alterable reality, cultural production theorists argue that culture is changing and changeable. By adopting a cultural production perspective, I have chosen to portray and interpret the way people actively confront ideological and material conditions presented when planning a partnership.

The cultural production perspective used in educational anthropology integrates elements of interpretive, symbolic, postmodern, post-structural and cultural studies theories. This study analyzes culture as a continual dynamic process of creating meaning.
material contexts, a process which is continually produced even as it may be reproduced. Culture is a relatively coherent system of interlocking symbolic systems and material practices, with regional practices and objectives that constitute everyday social life. Culture contributes to individuals’ collective, mediated, lived awareness of their own situations and relationships to others. My analysis focuses on some of the meaningful cultural elements that materially and symbolically organize people in and across times and spaces: discourses, texts, and actions that various groups take up in relation to each other (Eisenhart, 2001; Levinson & Holland, 1996). These shared understandings and systematic actions are linked with the foundations of deeply entrenched social structures.

**Discourse**

Discourse involves the communication of meaning. The term itself has multiple layers of meaning, and its ambiguity has given rise to divergent uses in different disciplines and analytical approaches. Inspired by Foucault’s genealogical work, many cultural analysts describe the ways in which patterned cultural discourses maintain both particular ways of knowing the world, and a network of power relations among those who know (Lindstrom, 2002). They have traced how dominant and authoritative discourses reflect ideological agendas that are historically specific and socially situated (Reid, 2002).

Instead of assuming that power inevitably operates in and through particular discourses, my analysis begins with a more supple definition of discourse as a means for social groups to actively shape and order their relationship to the social world through language. Cultural discourses are shared systems of meaning, which integrate a language act with a body of knowledge and a set of conditions and procedures that regulate how people may appropriately communicate and use that knowledge. In this conceptualization, multiple and
often contradictory discourses are available on the same topic, as demonstrated by the
various discourses of planning theory. They vary over contexts and time, and a culturally
knowledgeable individual will not just be aware of the discourses available, but will also
know the different ways in which they may be employed (Søndergaard, 2002). The
coexistence of multiple discourses allows for potential change or transformation, through
active and creative expressions of groups in communication with each other.

A difficulty with this form of discourse analysis is the problem of how to relate the
situated use of language to social structures and relations of power. As recommended by
Bauman and Briggs (1990), my analysis will identify discursive practices that mediate
between the situated use of language in particular cases, and those larger structures and
relations.

**Practice theory**

I will complement the study of discourse in partnership with a study of practice: the texts,
technologies, and routine or patterned activities that enact culture and power dynamics. The
practice perspective in anthropology is a distinct theoretical tradition which recognizes
creative human agency as well as powerful social systems (Bourdieu, 1977; Ortner, 1994). It
studies the political implications of human action, analyzing what people do as opposed to
what they say. Practice theorists assume that the most analytically important forms of action
take place in unequal and asymmetrical relations among actors. In these situations, individual
actions are rarely an automatic response to rules and norms. Pragmatic choice and active
strategizing regularly play a role, alongside patterned routine behaviour undertaken with little
reflection.
Practice emphasizes daily practices, the little routines that people enact again and again in social interaction. These historical routines embody fundamental ideas of social order. By following these routines, actors enact underlying structures and relations. An influential study by Wenger (1998) demonstrates that practices are not static, but result from collective learning that reflects the nature of an activity and social relations over time. Practices produce and reproduce meanings, renegotiating meaning every time a practice is extended, redirected, reinterpreted, dismissed or confirmed. It is an active, dynamic and historical process involving a fundamental duality between complementary processes of participation, actively taking part, and reification, which gives form to experience by producing objects that focus and organize meaning. Participation and reification are complementary, but too much reliance on one or the other is problematic. Reified objects such as texts, for example, may become disconnected from their original purpose, and may as a result ossify practice, hide meanings, or take on a life of their own.

Community and boundary practices

A community of practice is a form of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise (Wenger, 1998). These communities are integral parts of peoples’ daily lives. They form in workplaces, neighbourhoods, and wherever people share a history of mutual engagement in enterprise, and a collective repertoire of practices. Individuals participate in multiple communities of practice, each of which connects with the rest of the social world at the same time as it forms a boundary of discontinuities. Boundaries for a community of practice may be reified through markers of membership, such as required academic degrees for faculty, or a paid position in a workplace. Wenger identifies three forms of boundary relations: boundary practices when prolonged encounters
leads to the production of new practices; overlaps of direct and sustained contact; and peripheries, in which outsiders are permitted casual but legitimate access to the community of practice but not full membership.

Using this analytical framework, partnerships represent continuities between distinct communities of practice, which may connect through boundary practices, overlaps, or peripheries. Partnership agreements are a form of boundary practice that organizes and reifies relations between communities of practice in distinct organizations. Another boundary practice is brokering. Individuals act as brokers to make new connections between communities, and facilitate coordination through the complex work of translation, coordination, and alignment between communities.

Discourses are resources used in the context of various practices. They may be reinterpreted and readapted when meanings are negotiated to form identities and discourses within communities of practice. Discourses can also be separate from specific communities of practice, moving across boundaries to support broader social discourses.

Ruling practices

Smith (1999) links discourse with local practices in the concept of social relations. She argues peoples’ lives are socially organized, our actions coordinated by relations beyond individual motivations and intentions. Complex practices coordinate people’s actions across separations of time and space, often without their conscious knowledge, and through those practices people actively constitute social relations. Institutional ethnography studies those linkages in order to explicate the social relations of a particular setting (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). It is directed towards learning about ruling practices, the socially organized exercise of power that shapes actions and lives, predetermining how people relate to each other.
Smith claims that ruling practices coordinate our activities with the interests of capital. In our society, texts are almost always implicated in relations of ruling, ensuring that the interests of those who rule dominate actions in a local setting. When activated by people who handle and use them, texts mediate social relationships in important ways that are often taken for granted. They can lead to contradictions as they introduce outside priorities and interests, which come to systematically permeate activities and subordinate local interests.

The conceptual tools developed by institutional ethnographers are valuable for exploring social relations and ruling practices in routine administrative and text-based practices. But instead of focusing my study primarily on elucidating the social relations that extend beyond local activities, my analysis will attend to the dynamics of practices within local communities, which are taking part in a particular partnership process.

**Multiple facets of analysis**

Despite its burgeoning literatures, the positive face of partnership for the betterment of a harmonious society has rarely been challenged. The pragmatic discourse that dominates theory, empirical research, and practice accommodates the situations imposed by power, and works within them. Only a few studies have looked inside the end product of partnership to examine its development process, and the complex dynamics within each organization where interdependent individuals and groups represent divergent understandings, interests and power relations.

To enhance understanding of partnership development, this study explores and assesses alternative perspectives useful for theory building as well as practice. My use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data has a long and respectable history in qualitative research (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Multiple analytical lenses can aid
understanding, just as Galileo used multiple lenses in his telescope to develop a more accurate image. But the conventional form of theory triangulation assumes a fixed and concrete point of reference in social reality. The complex, ambiguous, and ‘messy’ realities of organizations and partnership development require a different approach, which is offered by a “crystallization” process proposed by Richardson (1994).

A crystal provides an imaginary with more than three sides, which recognizes the many facets of any given approach to the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Richardson, 1994). Crystals may form prisms that reflect external realities and refract within themselves, creating ever-changing images of social life. Crystals may grow and change, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are arranged in regular patterns, which tend to develop forms that are harmonious with their internal structure (Webster's New World Dictionary of American English, 1988, p. 335). Each facet shapes what we see, providing a partial perspective influenced by where and how we view it, the angle and scope of our gaze. Crystallization offers a means for a deeper, more complex, thoroughly partial understanding of a topic (Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 1994).

My cultural facet is constructed from cultural discourse and practice theories, which recognize that individuals do not simply mirror the cultural meaning-systems through which they take up their lives. Empirical research linked with these theories reveals the potential tension between the discourses and practices available, and how they are interpreted and explored by each individual (Eisenhart, 2001; Sondergaard, 2002). This tension allows for the possibility of change and transformation. In the field of education, Pratt and Nesbit (2000) have supported this perspective with their argument that educators benefit from critically reflecting upon the discourses and practices that shape their teaching. They assume
that teachers are agents and creators of those forms, as well as the objects and recipients of them.

But this ethnography is not solely concerned with a cultural perspective. To explore the complexities of how political, cultural, and social processes are engaged in partnership development among post-secondary education organizations, I have adopted multiple perspectives based in discourses of partnership studies, critical planning theory, cultural analysis and practice theories. As I study the development of a particular partnership, I am also studying approaches to partnership research:

- How does each analytical perspective make sense of partnership development?
- How do multiple perspectives interact to provide new theoretical and practical insights about the partnership process?

These multiple frameworks suggest new ways of thinking, and generate new questions that explore the overlap of cultural and social dimensions active in partnership processes:

- How does partnership development function as a means of social and cultural reproduction?
- How does partnership operate as a site of cultural production, where people actively confront ideology and inequalities in their material conditions?
- How does individual agency operate in relation to institutional power relationships and social constraints?

Although these questions did not guide my original research design, they emerged during the research process. Thanks to the flexibility of the ethnographic approach described in the next chapter, I was able to shift the focus of this study to address these critical questions.
3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Over many years of studying and conducting qualitative research, I have developed strong philosophical commitments. I believe that each one of us creates our social world, and that an essential purpose of research is to explain and understand multiple constructed realities through holistic studies. For this study, I have adopted a multi-site ethnographic approach that is sensitive to the social, political, and cultural dimensions that extend beyond any single organization or specific case. This work conceptualizes culture as shared meaning systems, which are sometimes visible in cultural forms, that are fluid rather than static, and are both individually constructed and contextual.

The chapter begins with an introduction to multi-site ethnography, before describing the stages of my research process. I examine my multiple roles in the ethnography and the partnership project by drawing upon the reflexivity concept. The social responsibilities of an ethnographer extend beyond the formal requirements of an ethical review, so my reflections on ethical concerns and reciprocity overlap with arguments supporting the quality of this research.

Multi-site ethnography

Ethnography is a process and a product that places specific phenomena into full, meaningful context through narratives that are historically, politically, and personally situated. It is useful for exploring complex problems embedded in multiple systems, for identifying and understanding associated factors, and for describing unanticipated outcomes. For these reasons, ethnography has often been used to identify cultural, political and structural factors in local communities, and for understanding interactions between
communities and service agencies, educational institutions, and other structures (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). It is an appropriate response to Degeling’s plea for more descriptive empirical research addressing planning between organizations:

At the level of action, analysis should be focused to map the discursive and political strategies which were used to promote, challenge and ultimately consolidate specific constructions of the problem and its solution, and on how coalitions were built... [to] provide much more detailed accounts of how relations, with respect to the performance of planning, develop and evolve, and of what people designated as planners can do to both establish their position and standing within these and, thereby, affect outcomes. (1996, p.114)

A key assumption of the ethnographic approach is that close and prolonged interaction can lead to a better understanding of beliefs, motivations and behaviours. I spent considerable time with participants at their workplaces, located in all three organizations involved in the partnership process. The multiple locales of this study, which were separated in terms of geography, organizational structures, and purposes, enriched the quality of the data and complicated its analysis with the sheer volume of data from three sites over a two and a half year period. I was a participant observer during site visits and meetings, conducted formal and informal interviews, and collected copies of every associated document that was available, including email messages. These ethnographic methods facilitated the analysis and representation of the cross-cultural dynamics of the process, which involved a First Nations organization and academic institutions closely identified with a dominant society in Canada.

Multi-site ethnography has recently emerged as a new focus for ethnographic study, in response to postmodern critiques. Multi-sited ethnography examines the circulation of cultural meanings, forms and identities across time and space (Marcus, 1995). Instead of maintaining the classical anthropological research focus on distinct, bounded and coherent cultures, many ethnographers have chosen to trace the threads of cultural process, following
connections, associations and relationships as they cut across boundaries of social and cultural groups (Rosaldo, 1993). This requires considerably more attention to nuances and shades in language and behaviour, as cultural forms may be translated in ways that have very different meanings in different social locations.

I have adopted a multi-site ethnographic approach that attends to the dynamics of widespread and systemic cultural formations present in the everyday experiences and relationships of individuals and groups during a particular partnership development.

Data gathering

Chronology and overview

I first heard about this partnership project in fall 2001, when South College staff approached me. I have changed the names of all the organizations and individuals in this study, except my own, to support confidentiality. (Appendix A provides a chronology of the project, and Appendix B provides a list of the participating organizations and individuals, all of whose names have been changed to protect confidentiality.) My intensive data collection began in February 2002, when I became a volunteer participant assisting with the project evaluation. Until the project was officially completed in February 2004, I regularly attended formal and informal meetings between members of the South College Steering Committee as a participant observer. I also met with the contract evaluator on a regular basis. The project activities took place sporadically. The monthly committee meetings were the major focus of activity in the first few months. Throughout the project, there would be short intense periods of meetings and evaluation work followed by pauses lasting many weeks. I interviewed all seven Committee members at South College during the first year of the project, starting in December 2002. A few months later in spring 2003 I visited the northern
organizations in Hopetown, where I introduced myself and explained my dual roles of doctoral researcher and assistant evaluator for the project.

I returned to Hopetown in fall 2003 to interview participants at North College and the Northern Nations Education Society for this study. By that time, the partnership project was concluding without accomplishing its explicit goals, and the evaluation had become less participatory in format. My original research focus was no longer relevant, so I broadened my research focus and interview guide to address relationships in the planning of the partnership.

I explained my dual roles before interviewing each staff and instructor at the two northern organizations. I also explained that my case study research would address the entire project, not just the evaluation. In most cases, participants agreed to be interviewed separately for both the evaluation and my doctoral research interviews, which I conducted in sequence and recorded on separate discs. Of the two administrators with limited time, one chose to contribute to my doctoral research while the other spoke to the evaluation. While in Hopetown, I also interviewed aboriginal students and interested resource managers for the evaluation. I asked for and received permission to use their interview data for my own research, using my informed consent letters and verbal explanations to explain the nature of this study.

On my return from Hopetown, I continued to meet with the contract evaluator Peter and project manager Dina about the final evaluation report. I did a second set of interviews with the same seven South College participants, and with some new participants such as the original proposal writer. My interviews with Peter and Dina were the longest, and required several sessions to cover the many topics associated with my broadened research focus. I
apologized to them for taking up so much of their time, but both of them assured me that they found the interviews an opportunity to reflect upon the project and their own roles.

*Leaving the field*

My departure from the northern sites was far simpler than I had expected. Saying goodbye to researchers was a familiar practice for participants at the northern sites, particularly for the First Nations organization whose funding agreements sometimes required external evaluator visits. Though I volunteered to send interview transcripts and a copy of my dissertation, every participant told me not to bother with the transcript. They each explained that they were too busy to read the transcript, and only a few expressed an interest in reading the final dissertation. My only contact with northern participants since my fall visit has been to request a document from the program planner at Northern Nations Educational Society. We exchanged friendly electronic mail messages, she sent me the document, and that was our last communication. On the completion of this dissertation, I will send a copy to each organization.

Though I worked with South College participants over a longer period of time, my disengagement was also simple, though for different reasons. Once the data collection period ended, I continued to visit the campus for various reasons, and regularly encountered participants. We usually held a friendly conversation about personal topics, and sometimes one of them addressed my study by offering sympathy for what they perceived as an arduous task of analyzing and writing the thesis. Once the project evaluation was complete, none of the participants wanted further involvement in my study through review of transcripts or my analysis. They attributed this position to their busy schedules, or to a desire to put the memories of a difficult partnership project behind them. Only three College participants and
the evaluator took me up on my offer to send an outline of my analytical framework. When sending the analytical overview, I asked all of the South College participants if they wanted to be involved in reading or analyzing my drafts. But they were unanimous in refusing the offer, citing their busy schedules or stack of required reading materials. I have regular and frequent contact with the evaluator, for Peter and I expect to be involved in joint evaluation projects in the future. I plan to invite discussions of my findings with all the research participants when I distribute my completed thesis to each organization.

*Ethnographic methods and sources of data*

*Observation and field notes*

Over the course of the project I attended and observed meetings of the Project Steering Committee, its sub-committees, and informal working groups at South College and in the Hopetown region. I met often with Peter to discuss the evaluation, and met every few months with Peter and Dina to discuss the project and its evaluation. Peter and I conducted evaluation interviews with staff at South College, and conducted an evaluation survey and several focus group interviews with South College students who pilot tested on-line courses. I kept rough scratch notes during all of these activities, and made full descriptive field notes with interpretive comments soon afterwards.

*Documents*

Documents were an important source of evidence for formal policies, guidelines and partnership agreements. I encountered few difficulties in obtaining access to formal texts associated with the original grant, including the guidelines, proposal, grant contract, quarterly reports, and the final evaluation and other reports. South College offered me free access to internal documents, so I collected documents related to the project when they
appeared and asked for items when they were not readily available. The project manager Dina regularly sent me agendas and minutes of meetings, and during the last months of the project she forwarded electronic copies of her email correspondence. I obtained copies of agreements and formal letters between the organizations from Dina, and negotiated access, use, and confidentiality for other organizations’ documents.

Documents can yield precise and detailed information with historical depth, but their value is limited by their selectivity. To supplement the formal documents, I sought and obtained a variety of publicly available promotional materials describing the organizations involved, and used Internet websites to access additional information including the organizations’ mission statements and policies. My documentation of informal on-line interactions is limited to the electronic messages received by the project manager or copied to me.

**Open-ended interviews**

*Our objects of analysis are also analyzing subjects whose best perceptions, not unlike the ethnographers' own, are shaped by distinctive cultures, histories, and relations of inequality. (Rosaldo, 1993, p. xviii)*

I conducted interviews to discover the participants’ perceptions of their own experiences, and their interpretations of the partnership process. My open-ended interviews were active interactions between two research participants, which resulted in a negotiated and contextually based dialogue. Interview results are a product of this social dynamic, which shaped the accounts and replies, and the nature of the knowledge generated. Interview participants were actively constructing knowledge around questions and responses (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

All of my one-to-one interviews were open-ended. I used an interview guide to loosely structure our dialogue, and returned to similar themes and questions during the first and
second set of interviews. I followed up on themes that the interview participants felt were important, in addition to my own research focus. I did not expect to hear the individual’s full understanding or perceptions of the topics we addressed, but I did hear what they were willing to share about the project. I listened intently for tentative or uncertain comments, and encouraged participants to explore muted, critical, or conflicting perspectives that they might not feel comfortable to express in their workplace or public environments.

The quality of the data obtained from these interviews was affected by other factors, such as the participants' level of recall and their comfort in talking with me about their activities. Though I listened for resistances and reluctance to share certain kinds of information, I could not identify any with certainty. Some of the interview participants addressed this concern. They told me that they were able to be more honest, forthcoming and critical during our doctoral research interviews, where they were confident of confidentiality, than during our evaluation interviews.

I had to battle with the illusion of familiarity when visiting each one of the educational organizations involved. When I spoke with staff, I usually found that we shared a common vocabulary, values, and some unexpected connections. Though the First Nations organization seemed strange at first glance, it didn’t take very long before the environment, atmosphere, and people began to feel more familiar. During every interview, I had to self-consciously challenge and offset my assumptions of commonality by asking for clarifications, and precise explanations of meanings and motivations.

I conducted 25 semi-structured research interviews with 17 participants, mostly in their own workplaces or at a convenient location near to their work. Most interviews were an hour in length, though some of the later interviews with Peter and Dina were 90 minutes or
two hours long. Every interview was digitally recorded by my mini-disk recorder, and I typed a complete transcript soon afterwards. I made a transcript of every interview for my own analysis, and offered to share them with each participant. Only two participants requested a copy of their interview transcripts, both of them because they wanted a record of their own analysis and unexpected insights developed during the interview.

When I transcribed the interviews, I tried to distinguish instances where the nature or phrasing of my question may have unduly influenced the participant. For example, when exploring one participant's ideas about partnership, I included the metaphor of a bridge in my question. He immediately adopted that metaphor to describe his own ideas. During my analysis, I noted that he did not refer to a bridge in later interviews, so I set the metaphor aside and instead focused on his other words.

Reflective journals and reports

I documented my fieldwork in a series of journals that provided me with a place to reflect upon my motivations and my changing understandings of the project. At the suggestion of my supervisory committee, I maintained three separate journals. I kept an “evaluation journal” that focused on my activities and findings as an assistant evaluator. My “dissertation journal” was similar to the usual journal maintained during ethnographic research. In it, I wrote about the difficulties I encountered during my data collection, recorded my initial interpretations and free associations during the research, and made analytic memos that explored possible patterns and themes emerging from the data. My third journal was a “relationships journal”, which documented the overlaps, interactions, and general messiness of my shifting roles and relationships within the study. These separate journals aided me in separating the findings associated with my assistant evaluator role from the work of this
study. During the long data collection phase, I wrote short analytical reports based on those journals for my supervisory committee. The writing of the reports, and the responses that I received, provided me with another opportunity to temporarily disentangle my multiple roles and intentions, and to clarify potential ethical challenges.

Data analysis and writing

*Only in the writing of ethnography, as an effect of a particular mode of publication itself, is the privilege and authority of the anthropologist unambiguously reasserted, even when the publication gives an account of the changing identities of the fieldworker in the multi-sited field. (Marcus, 1995, p. 112)*

Data analysis is a process of making sense, deciding what will be written about, what will be included, and how it will be represented (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I began my analysis while collecting data, using my dissertation journal to interpret data and sometimes to connect my analysis with broad theoretical perspectives from the power analysis and partnership literature. I looked for patterns, themes, and sub-themes in the data, in an iterative process that intensified after the data collection phase was completed.

Coding is essential to the inductive analysis used in this form of ethnographic research. I typed or retyped all of my field notes and the interview transcripts into computer files. I used Atlas.ti 4.2 to organize, sort, and code my data. The software helped to manage the volume of my data, and to ensure that my analysis was comprehensive. I could search my entire data set efficiently and often to discover connections and patterns, and to check and recheck my coding and analysis.

My coding activities included sampling, identifying themes, marking texts, constructing concepts and hypotheses, and testing those hypotheses through comparison with empirical data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Reid, 2002). I went through the data many times, separately analyzing the texts and quotations sorted into each code, then revising and constructing new
codes, and returning to the code texts to refine or confirm my analyses. I accompanied the coding process with analytical memos and journal entries, which traced relationships among themes and concepts in the data, and with theoretical frameworks in the literature.

During this process, I struggled with theoretical perspectives that reduced the complexities of partnership into a neat and tidy analysis. In one of my dissertation reports, I wrote:

> When I began, I felt lost among the trees no matter how hard I tried to see a whole forest. Seeing the big picture is particularly hard to do because I'm in the midst of data collection, completing interviews with northern and southern participants in the project. I have done some preliminary analysis and continued reviewing literature in order to focus my interviews. But all of this activity means that I am constantly discovering new saplings – other ideas of interest. So the forest has become denser, and the undergrowth is distracting.

> I am somewhat comfortable with this situation, as it can be expected in any ethnographic research process. But I worry about all those trees crowding my vision, particularly when my original research question lost its meaning as the project crumbled. When I started to write this report, I was actively struggling to recognize which part of the forest required the most critical attention. Which grove would provide the most significant contribution to knowledge?

As my analysis progressed, I realized that an important element of my contribution was to represent the messiness and ambiguities of the process as it was experienced and perceived by those involved. A holistic ethnographic analysis revealed connections and interrelationships between the many pieces. Instead of settling on a single framework, I drew upon multiple approaches drawn from different fields. A critical planning theory provided a framework for a deductive analysis, while cultural analysis and practice theory framed a more inductive analysis of participant stories. In the discourse of qualitative research, crystallization recognizes the subjectivity and partiality of social analysis (Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 1994). Crystals offer many facets for seeing the world, and what is seen varies depending on how it is viewed. My multidisciplinary analysis is a form of crystallization,
which provides “a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522) of partnership development.

My analysis continued through the writing of this thesis, and even as I write these words I expect that I will reconsider and reanalyze these findings in future. Ethnography presents knowledge that is partial, local, and historical in nature, but it is still a form of knowing (Richardson, 1994). I have completed the analysis and writing process independently, without consulting or collaborating with other research participants. When I designed this research, I kept in mind the academic requirement of sole authorship for doctoral work. Although I made some effort to involve participants, I was unsuccessful in involving anyone in the review of transcripts, analysis, or early written drafts, which would have enhanced the credibility of my analysis and interpretations.

I have juxtaposed the participants’ words with my own throughout this thesis. My own words were written for this medium, but the participants’ quotes, transcribed from their original verbal expressions and unaccompanied by gestures, were awkward and sometimes misleading. I have “smoothed” their sentences by removing excess punctuation and some repetitive filler words, such as “right” and “you know”. I indicate these removals with conventional punctuation marks (such as “...”), and have added references to particular organizations and individuals in brackets.

**Reflexivity**

*Multi-site ethnography requires* a constantly mobile, recalibrating practice of positioning in terms of the ethnographers’ shifting affinities for, affiliations with, as well as alienations from, those with whom he or she interacts at different sites constitutes a distinctly different sense of “doing research”. (Marcus, 1995, p. 113)

I was not a detached and objective observer in this project. As an ethnographer working in multiple sites, I was confronted by many intersecting and sometimes contradictory
personal commitments. I found myself constantly rethinking and renegotiating my roles and relationships. My interactions were affected by factors including gender, race, class, and age. What I was able to observe and recognize in this study was directly related to where I stand in the world, and how others perceived me. I have deliberately placed myself within the critical plane of this study by acknowledging and scrutinizing my positioning in the research process.

Reflexivity involves reflecting on power relations within a study, and is essential to good ethnography (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). The extensive methodological literature of qualitative research emphasizes the profound effect of the researcher's social location on the research process and results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). My relationship to research participants shifted often during the course of the partnership process, alongside my changing roles and developing relationships.

Multiple roles of a participant and observer

Following a conventional practice in ethnographic research, I was a participant as well as an observer in this project. Instead of sitting on the sidelines, watching and taking notes, I took part in the partnership development.

I held multiple, distinct, and overlapping roles in the project. I began as a graduate student at UBC, and a voluntary assistant evaluator for an on-line learning project. I assisted the contract evaluator in completing his contractual obligations to South College. Both the contract evaluator and the project manager regularly described my participation as a “bonus” for the project. Though I had no contractual responsibilities to any of the parties in the project, I felt a moral and ethical responsibility to contribute as fully as possible. The voluntary nature of my position meant that I was not formally beholden to South College or
to the contractor. But it added complications because some of the key participants, including the evaluator, might have felt beholden to me for volunteering my time.

This arrangement left me considerable flexibility in my role as a doctoral candidate pursuing my own research agenda and purpose. I had obligations to both the University of B.C., where I was a registered student, and to South College, the partnership project sponsor. These dual obligations required concurrent applications for ethical review at both institutions. My applications were approved, though each institution requested different minor adjustments.

At first, my status at UBC appeared to affect my relationships in the project. Some South College participants regularly deferred to the contract evaluator and me as “experts”. Although I was prepared to encounter suspicion or resistance from community-based participants because of my university affiliation, I did not detect those reactions at any point in the project. At the second South College committee meeting that I attended, I distributed and explained the observation consent letters. To my surprise everyone at the meeting carefully read and signed it immediately. Their only concern was how much time my study would require of them. The conversation quickly returned to the project, and I was left feeling that they were well aware of my research, and that it was not a source of particular concern.

For most of the project, my interactions with South College participants were primarily framed by my evaluator role. I attended meetings as an evaluator, alone or with the contractor, taking notes and sometimes contributing to the discussions from an evaluator's perspective. I made an effort to be explicit about my multiple roles and level of responsibility at every project meeting. My relationship with the contract evaluator Peter
was the most complicated one for me. Peter consistently interacted with me as a colleague and equal, involving me in planning and decision-making for the project, and regularly asking for my advice. Throughout the project, he was concerned about the disparity between my voluntary status and his income from the project. Peter wanted me to take the role and title of "associate evaluator", but I insisted upon taking an "assistant" role. We negotiated an informal agreement that I would fully participate in data collection and analysis, providing support and recommendations when requested, and making suggestions when I felt it was appropriate. As the contracting evaluator, he maintained responsibility for the project, making all significant decisions and writing the final report. This arrangement helped me to maintain some distance from decision-making, to balance my close involvement with the evaluation process.

I was both an outsider and an insider in the social groups and organizations involved in the project. While my dual location complicated relationships, it did help me to maintain some distance from events and participants, which is essential for a critical analysis (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). I felt the pulls and pushes of different positions and histories. With the contract evaluator, I was both an insider working as his assistant, and an outsider conducting a separate research project while volunteering assistance with the evaluation.

I was an insider at South College, where I had worked some years before in a number of roles. I was a familiar face to most participants, and my positive reputation facilitated my access and entry to the research site in my outsider role as a doctoral researcher. But the implications of my position in the periphery, somewhere between insider and outsider, became more ambiguous during the rest of the study. My relationship with the project manager, for example, was marked by her explicit and considerable respect for me based on
my experience as a program planner, my status as a doctoral student, and my expertise in what she perceived as the arcane science of evaluation. In the first year of the project, I found myself conscientiously struggling to avoid affirming her expectations with sage advice and big sisterly support, particularly because I had great sympathy for the challenges of her large workload and crowded schedule. But as time passed, I felt that she, like other Continuing Education staff, came to accept my presence as part of the usual flow of activity in the department.

My history and interpersonal relations with other South College participants were friendly and professional. Most of us shared a similar middle class white liberal Euro-Canadian background, an understanding of the college’s educational and bureaucratic practices, and heterosexual orientation. One of the Committee members welcomed me with warm familiarity at the first Committee meeting, and continued to work in a consistently honest and collegial manner with both the contract evaluator and me. Another member has been a long-time friend, coworker, and sometimes my supervisor. She provided me with inside information when I first investigated the project as a potential research site, but we agreed not to discuss the evaluation project outside the parameters of the evaluation or my study.

When I visited the northern organizations, I assumed that I would remain an outsider. I was there only to collect data for two projects: for the partnership project evaluation, and for my own doctoral thesis. I remained conscious of my distinct status as a non-aboriginal southerner, attached to a major academic institution and a dominant society that continues to oppress aboriginal peoples. But there was some overlap in our social locations, as research participants in the First Nations organization were also middle class women with post-secondary education. Although I was not an insider and made only brief visits, participants
at both the northern college and the First Nations society identified similarities in our positions. At least one person in each northern organization had graduated from the same School of Education at the University of B.C., and was familiar with my advisor and department. Though I was an outsider, these peripheral connections eased my access to the sites and created a friendly environment for my research activities.

Avoiding role confusions

At each site, I was concerned that research participants might become confused about my roles. Over time, the South College participants demonstrated their awareness and acceptance of my different roles, particularly after I conducted the first round of individual interviews for this doctoral study. My brief encounters with northern participants provided more opportunities for misinterpretation and confusion, but my use of specific consent forms for this project helped to maintain clarity while fulfilling my ethical commitments.

My multiple roles and statuses in the project often made me feel like I was walking on eggshells. I was a student, a former employee, an evaluation assistant, a volunteer, a doctoral researcher, and a visiting evaluator. I was not an objective observer, because I wanted the project to succeed. As the project unfolded, I sometimes felt frustrated by the lack of progress in the distance education project, and the absence of participatory and collaborative activities. As an assistant to the evaluator, I actively drew attention to ethical issues and participatory strategies that I felt were appropriate for the project. But while I had some authority based on my expertise, the college committee and the contract evaluator always made the final decisions.

My focus throughout the project was not on objectivity, but on reflexivity and transparency. I tried to be particularly vigilant, deliberate, and reflexive in developing and
maintaining relationships. I wrote extensively in my research journal, to heighten self-awareness and to reconsider and revise my research practices. I was constantly aware of seeking an appropriate balance between distance and proximity, objectivity and intimacy. I had to repeatedly establish and clarify my role as researcher not only for other research participants, but also for myself. I was simultaneously supporting two distinct and contradictory approaches to research: the collaborative principles of a participatory evaluator, and an ethnographer's more distanced analytical stance.

I felt frustration when I wore my "participatory evaluator" hat, knowing that I would have made different decisions if I were responsible for the contract evaluation. But whenever I put on my ethnographer's participant-observer hat, that frustration dissolved. I felt separate from the decisions, and was able to interpret and analyze their explicit and implicit meanings. Participatory and collaborative action-oriented research cannot readily be integrated with a conventional researcher-controlled ethnography (Wright & Nelson, 1995). But I did not attempt to synthesize these distinct approaches research approaches. Instead I layered two projects with distinct purposes and strategies.

**Ethical concerns**

Before data collection began, two ethical review committees scrutinized my research design for any potential harm to the research subjects, and to ensure that every participant would give their informed consent before taking part in research that provided them anonymity and confidentiality. I have upheld these requirements throughout this study. Partway through the data collection period, when I realized that I could no longer focus my case study upon the participatory evaluation component of the project, I verbally explained my broader focus to every research participant, and received their permission to continue my
interviews and observations for a more holistic study of the partnership project. I was careful not to share confidential findings from my research interviews with other participants during the project. I have used pseudonyms for every participant and participating organization in this text, and changed identifying characteristics and features when required.

But ethical review boards do not consider all of a researcher’s social and ethical responsibilities. During this project, I strived to recognize ethical, moral, and political issues as they arose. I was particularly concerned about the personal and professional impact of my ethnography on some of the research participants. The project manager and the contract evaluator were particularly vulnerable, and while we worked together I sometimes reminded them of my own research interests so that they would not inadvertently share information that might put them or their jobs at risk. I kept this in mind during the writing process, and hope that I have provided both the necessary confidentiality, and the context for understanding individual decisions and actions.

Fine, Weiss, Weseen and Wong have advocated the deepening of an ethnographer’s ethical responsibilities to “talk about our identities, why we interrogate what we do, what we choose not to report, how we frame our data, on whom we shed our scholarly gaze, who is protected and not protected as we work” (2000: 195). This study supports those ethical commitments by connecting the voices and stories of individuals back to the historical, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated; by using multiple methods so that different kinds of analyses can be constructed; by describing the mundane as well as the exotic; by working towards understanding my contributions to the narrations provided and those silenced; and by avoiding as much as possible the passive voice that might decouple my responsibility for my interpretations.
Reciprocity

I undertook this study to advance my learning process, to contribute to scientific knowledge, and to acquire a graduate degree. My research has been framed by academic requirements, including my sole authorship of this study. But in the spirit of reciprocity, I have looked for opportunities to return something useful to the research participants. Some of the college participants have already told me that they hope to learn from my theoretical work, and I hope that the practical recommendations in this thesis will be helpful in their future partnership work.

During the partnership project, I was able to make a considerable contribution to the project evaluation. I assisted by conducting both individual and focus group interviews, typed all the interview transcripts, and collected all of the evaluation data including documents, focus groups and individual interviews from the northern participants. Both the evaluator Peter and the project manager Dina treated me as a resource, consulting with me when making evaluation decisions, and borrowing my reference materials about aboriginal and distance education, and participatory evaluation. The administrators at Northern Nations Educational Society told me that they appreciated my field visit, because our interviews were an efficient and pleasant substitute for the evaluation narratives they would otherwise have to write themselves.

Every participant at South and North College told me that they found our interviews a rare and appreciated opportunity for reflection on the project.

Dina: It helps me take the time out to reflect. And, without a doubt, you made this project something it wouldn't have been. I say that without a doubt. There's no concrete back-up for that, but I feel it. That a different energy, there's a different perspective, a different dynamic, that only enhanced it? And you, being here, talking about it, if nothing else, it has helped me through my learning. Because we often don't take time out in the day, we say, "Oh, we'll do it later."
Samuel: In a normal (chuckle) course of events around a project, not as much time as we might benefit from, is taken to really reflect and think about what just transpired, and what we might have learned from it. So in a sense your being part of this, has at least for me, forced me to stop and think about what happened, and why, and what that means in relation to things that might happen, going forward. Some of that may have happened anyways. But probably not to the degree that it did, as a result of your participation. I'm sure lots of folks think, "I'll see an article, Oh, wow, it would be great to read that", right, so it starts to pile up on a table somewhere. When you become involved in whatever kind of learning activity requires you to read it, then you're more inclined to read it, because it's part of the activity. Otherwise, it tends to get put aside by other more immediate and urgent things that come along. So, for me this has been a little bit like that because it's created some impetus to thinking about some of the things that might not have got the same kind of consideration otherwise.

**Crystallizing research quality**

*How do we know when a specific social inquiry is faithful enough to some human construction that we may feel safe in acting on them, or more important, that members of the community in which the research is conducted may act on them?* (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 180)

Criteria for judging the quality or goodness of any qualitative research have been the focus of an extended debate. Supporters of a foundational epistemology apply the same criteria used in quantitative inquiry to qualitative research: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These may have a place in positivist and post-positivist research, but are not relevant in the relativism of multi-site ethnographic studies that view the social world as a product of individual consciousness, and study how individuals and collectivities construct and interpret that world.

*We must learn to live with uncertainty, with the absence of final vindications, without the hope of solutions in the form of epistemological guarantees.* (Schwandt, 1994, p. 59)

Many schemes of non-foundational forms of criteria have been generated, but no single formulation has come to dominate the discourse. Richardson (1994) has problematized reliability, validity and truth and proposed instead that a postmodern text is validated through crystallization.

*What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallization . . .*
provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (p. 92)

The form and the content of this study are based on the idea that different angles of perspective provide different views of partnership development. In methodological terms, I have crystallized this study by using multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives to develop my interpretations and ensure some form of integrity.

To provide crystalline facets for addressing the credibility of this study, I have addressed the influential formulations of Sanjek (1990), Guba and Lincoln (2000), and Schwandt (1994). Sanjek argues that ethnography is a “potentially validity-rich method” (1990, p. 395), and argues for assessing ethnographic validity according to three canons: theoretical candor, which addresses what was done and why; the ethnographer’s path, addressing who was talked to and learned from; and field note evidence, which accounts for the relationship between field data and the ethnography. I have followed these canons by explicitly presenting my theoretical frameworks and decisions, by describing the nature of my fieldwork activities and research participants, and by explaining my data collection and analysis procedures. My transparency contrasts with most of the partnership and planning studies cited in the previous chapter, which do not address researcher roles, or explore how researcher presence influenced research questions and interpretations. This omission leads me to question their findings, particularly the many partnership studies in which the authors actively advocated and participated in the process.

A more elaborate set of criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2000) were among the first non-foundational criteria to be developed for qualitative research. They proposed that valid constructivism required authenticity, trustworthiness and rigor that could be judged through fairness and various forms of authenticity: ontological, educative, catalytic, and
tactical. This study meets most but not all of these criteria. I have strived for fairness, using qualitative data analysis software to consistently apply coding and comprehensively interpret multiple data sources. To ensure that all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims, concerns and voices are apparent in the text I have included multiple voices and a fair balanced presentation of participants' stories through the liberal use of quotes from our interviews. Ontological and educative authenticity, which is concerned with raising the level of awareness among individual research participants and others, has been addressed to some extent through reciprocity. I have not yet addressed catalytic and tactical authenticities, which are respectively concerned with an inquiry’s ability to prompt action among research participants, and with the researcher’s involvement in social and political action. The research participants in this study were unanimous in their request that I wait until I have completed my analysis and writing before I share my findings with them. I intend to welcome and encourage active engagement when I share my thesis with the research participants.

Schwandt (1994) argues that social inquiry should be judged on moral considerations as well as conventional scientific philosophy. Although I was unaware of his criteria when developing my initial research design, the current form of this study meets two of his three criteria. His first criteria encapsulates my own research objective: that social inquiry should generate knowledge that complements or supplements the ongoing probing of social problems, by producing frameworks which seek to understand the aims of practice from a variety of perspectives. Schwandt proposes that an aim of social inquiry is practical philosophy, and so should enhance or cultivate critical intelligence among those involved in the research encounter. Critical intelligence, “the capacity to engage in moral critique”, was
present and encouraged during my research interviews, when we discussed power and participants reflected upon their practice. Schwandt’s third consideration is not unlike Guba and Lincoln’s (1985) ontological authenticity. It proposes that social inquiry should be “evaluated on the success to which his or her reports of the inquiry enable the training or calibration of human judgment . . . or the capacity for practical wisdom” (p. 69). This study cannot be fully assessed until it has been shared with the participants and other readers. It is incumbent upon me, upon completion and approval of this thesis, to meet these criteria by ensuring its dissemination through promotion and publication.

My research design was shaped by my desire to make a valid and credible contribution to knowledge, while fulfilling my ethical and moral responsibilities to research participants and others involved in the partnership and my research initiative. Throughout this research process, I have struggled to accurately represent the stories of the many participants involved, and to further participants’ and readers’ understandings through thick descriptions and interpretations of a complex and difficult partnership development process.
4 PARTNERSHIP STORIES

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the partnership project in a mostly chronological narrative. The story begins in the year 2000, when South College applied to a federal funding agency with a partnership project proposal intended to create and evaluate a virtual campus supporting aboriginal learners facing significant barriers to learning. At that time, South College and a First Nations organization in northern B.C. intended to form a partnership to offer the College’s Conservation Officer Diploma program (COD) in their home region.

This multivocal narrative introduces the actors and major events by juxtaposing participants’ words and descriptions with my own. It begins with the guidelines for a project proposal, which became the terms of the grant contract between the federal Instructional Technologies Section and the sponsoring organization, South College. The primary First Nations partner withdrew for financial reasons, but the project was approved and officially began in summer 2001 when the College received funding. South College preparations for partnership, including the development of a management structure, were followed by the search for a new partner. Several other aboriginal and educational organizations were approached and expressed interest, and eventually South College planned partnership arrangements with two northern organizations: North College and Northern Nations’ Education Society (NNES). A series of negotiations with North College did not lead to any successful course offerings. South College instead undertook negotiations and a formal arrangement with the Northern Nations’ Education Society.
The project proposal

The Instructional Technologies Section (ITS) was established by the federal government in the 1990's, to develop Canadian expertise and innovation in technology-based learning and to reduce barriers to the use of learning technologies. All ITS programs required applicants to work in partnership with other organizations. One of its programs funded new and innovative technologies for adult learners within the educational sector, including universities, colleges, educational associations and other organizations. It gave priority to projects that addressed the learning needs of low-income Canadians, seniors, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, and Canadians with low literacy levels. The program had two themes:

Theme 1: Reduce inequities or barriers to learning so that Canadians from all socio-economic, demographic and cultural groups can have access to learning opportunities from all regions of the country.

Theme 2: Assist workers in upgrading their skills and abilities throughout their working lives.

Two of the six priorities required by the initiative were specifically concerned with partnership and aboriginal communities:

Forge solid partnerships to increase the potential for success and sustainability of the project

Evaluate the impact of learning technologies within rural, remote or aboriginal communities

The program guidelines offered considerable latitude for partners in setting goals and objectives, suggesting potential benefits, selecting their target audiences, and describing the major activities and products of the project. Successful applicants, called “sponsors”, were directly accountable to the ITS, which required that they meet stringent reporting requirements including comprehensive quarterly reports, a final report, and a summative evaluation. Each partner was required to complete and sign a Partnership Form, an
abbreviated version of the funding application, and was expected to contribute in kind or in cash to the project while the ITS would provide a maximum of 50% of total costs. The ITS office was located in Hull, Quebec. Its regular communications with project participants were mediated by text in the form of guidelines, forms, and written correspondence. The only personal contact available was with Project Officers based in Hull, who handled several ITS-funded programs.

The sponsor: South College

South College is a comprehensive publicly funded institution located in southern British Columbia. It has a main campus, and several smaller campuses located in nearby towns. Together they serve over 6,000 full and part time students in credit programs, and over 15,000 other students in Adult Basic Education, contract training, and non-credit courses.

When data collection for this study began, the College mission was based on a commitment to individual growth and a concern with regional needs. In 2003, the last year of the project, South College revised its mission statement to broaden its geographical reach. Its website claimed, “We foster student success, strong community connections and international collaboration by providing access to a wide range of South College programs designed for regional, national and international students.”

Continuing Education at South College

The Continuing Education Centre, based at the main campus of South College, administered the ITS project. It was located at ground level in one of the many buildings on the sprawling campus. Every time I visited, there was always a receptionist sitting at the desk facing the entrance, busily answering a switchboard and directing calls. I would wait near the desk while she notified whomever I was visiting of my arrival. Continuing
Education staff often crossed the small reception area as they made their way from the hallway of offices to the glass-walled meeting-room or the photocopy room. The meeting area was usually occupied by a small group of 4 or 5 seated at one end of the large table. Once I saw the end of a Centre staff meeting, when at least 15 people were squeezed around the table.

The structure and activities of Continuing Education changed dramatically during the three years of the project. The small department responsible for short-term community courses, non-credit certificate programs, and customized training, became a Continuing Education Centre in 2002, with ever broadening campus responsibilities and a working relationship with academic faculties. Its new Director, Samuel, gained higher status as Dean of the new Centre.

*Samuel:* The things I knew coming in, were that there was a change in government, so there was going to be changes in terms of the funding situation. And there was an expectation in certain parts of the institution to grow the activity. Within the mainstream of the institution, there will probably exist a perspective that the work that goes on through Continuing Education is different, and maybe not as rigorous, as in some of the academic areas. I think some of the things that have signaled an increase in status, two years ago a decision was made to have a Dean, of Continuing Education. So, I think all of that has helped to elevate the profile and status of the activity, institutionally.

Since the Centre was established, its mission emphasized the Centre’s role in generating resources to support College initiatives. Just before the project began, the organizational structure of the department had changed from a relatively flat structure in which departmental decisions were made by consensus, to a more hierarchical structure with a Dean at the top, and stratified roles including executive secretary, manager, coordinators, and others. There was differential access to information, and decision-making processes were in flux.
Continuing Education operated on a cost-recovery basis. Obtaining contract work and outside funding are essential to support its own staff and operating costs. But during the project, the responsibilities of the Centre’s program planners expanded. Dina, who became project manager of the ITS project, was responsible for planning a full slate of non-credit courses and certificate programs for community education and training contracts. She worked cooperatively with other planners to develop and support new cost-recovery initiatives including summer programs, on-line courses, and training contacts. With the founding of the Centre, she was also assigned to develop close working relationships with particular academic faculties.

Samuel: And in a sense, it's like being a small business, except your customers are both outside and within the institution. So you're always trying to, in a sense, cultivate relationships with people and departments at a faculty level, etc. . . . So, it's still an evolving process.

Conservation Officer Diploma program

The South College Science department developed a two-year Conservation Officer Diploma program (COD) almost 2 decades ago. It prepares students for careers in the protection and management of fisheries, wildlife, and parks resources in British Columbia. The diploma has earned industry credibility over the years, and is supported by an Advisory Committee that includes government and private employers and resource user groups. Students wishing to enter the program are required to submit letters of reference, and to provide evidence that they had satisfactorily completed Grade 11 or 12 math, biology and English. The program includes three semesters of coursework, and a field practicum.

COD programs were taught and administered by a small stable group of faculty who report to Moore, Dean of Science. Their offices were located in a short corridor in one of the Science buildings, a seven-minute walk from the Continuing Education office. Keith was a
faculty member, founder, and sometimes department head of the COD program. He had longstanding connections with First Nations in northern B.C., developed while marketing the COD program and from having taught many aboriginal northerners in government-sponsored resource management workshops over the years.

Writing the proposal

The first person to notice the ITS Call for Proposals at South College was Anne, a coordinator of educational technology services. She approached the head of Continuing Education, Samuel, with the idea of developing online capabilities at the College.

Anne: And, at the time, it was a bit of a risk. At the time, the COD program was about to sign on to deliver a Conservation Officer Diploma in [the north]. So this project would complement it. [This project] wasn't meant to offer the distance education courses, the distributed learning courses. But if the distributed learning courses were going ahead anyway, how can you supplement it with support services, using technology for those students and those communities.

Samuel invited Deans at the college to discuss the ITS Call for Proposals, resulting in a finished proposal intended to pilot and evaluate on-line learner supports for courses adapted and delivered to First Nations communities.

Samuel: . . . We were definitely thinking of the needs of First Nations students, now whether we were thinking of that sufficiently, or to the degree it needed to be considered, I'm not sure . . . We might have leaned a bit more towards issues for online, because that was a technical drive that was behind the thing. But I don't think it was disproportionate.

From the very beginning, the project had multiple goals and purposes. For Continuing Education and Educational Technology Services, a primary intention was to gain experience with on-line education, and to develop and evaluate learner supports. That complemented the Science department goal to deliver the Conservation Officer Diploma (COD) program to First Nations learners.
The Conservation Officer Diploma (COD) program appeared to be a good choice for the ITS funding proposal. There was a strong interest in the program among several First Nations groups around B.C., and the Science department had committed to delivering the entire program to one northern Nation.

Keith: Well, it goes way back. In 1995 . . . the [First Nation] asked for government to come to a meeting, to discuss the possibility of training and developing conservation officers for their region. And the government contacts that I had, knew that COD was a good source of that teaching . . . I think because of treaty negotiations, and lengthy issues around budget and funding, it just stayed on the back burner for several years . . . We just sort of sputtered for a long time, over a couple of years . . . It's about that time that Continuing Education established the ITS project.

The proposal was developed by a small group of South College administrators who worked with Connie, a continuing education contractor. Even as they wrote, they were aware of flaws in the process. They were generating a project that someone else would implement, were uncertain about exactly what activities and resources would be required and didn't review it with a First Nations partner.

Connie: A challenge with funding, is that you can't hire the people 'til you get the funding? So you don't know, often, who it is who is actually going to be delivering that . . . we'd send that around, within the institution. Ideally, you'd be sending it to your partners . . . it often doesn't happen. Because you often are so pressed for time, that you don't have your partners in place, for sure, and you can't even turn it around to get the drafts to them in time. Which is a big flaw . . . But we can't afford to do that, and we don't have the time to do that, and we aren't advanced enough in the partnership process, at the time.

The resulting South College proposal addressed the first ITS theme of reducing inequities to learning. These excerpts from the Executive Summary describe key elements of the proposal:

[South College] will collaborate with several remote First Nations communities to create a virtual campus, providing an opportunity to investigate the use and effectiveness of learning technologies with First Nations people facing significant barriers to learning . . .

Key activities: Design and pilot a range of learner supports to ensure success for learners in First Nations communities. Adaptation and delivery of relevant courses
that meet learners' needs. Evaluation and sharing of results.

Deliverables: A report including the evaluation, recommendations and conclusions, evaluation instruments, six credit courses adapted for distance delivery, a transferable program logic, and a permanent, successful virtual campus.

Ideas of democracy, partnership, and serving a remote population were woven throughout the detailed project description. The project benefits section emphasized the “imperative for First Nations people to have equal access to programs and services” from educational organizations in Canada, and conservation management training in particular. It proposed to explore components of a technology-based learning experience that would make a difference for First Nations learners; to have them learn as part of a dynamic, rewarding learning community; and to enable their successful completion of training in order to move on to further education or employment.

ITS was the largest single contributor to the project budget, which totalled over $500,000. Four First Nations partners were named in the original proposal, and the proposal’s detailed budget listed their total contribution as $300,000, half in kind and half in cash. The total South College contribution added up to less than $100,000.

South College prepares for partnership

The original First Nations partner had withdrawn from the project altogether by the time the ITS approved the project funding. My data collection began long after their withdrawal, and I was unable to contact any participants from the potential partner organization. South College participants told me the withdrawal was primarily for financial reasons, though financing might not have been the only reason for the withdrawal.

Once the project was approved, its management and funding became the responsibility of the Continuing Education department. Dina, a staff program planner, was appointed project manager.
Samuel: Dina took the lead on that project... started to make connection directly with Keith... she wasn't part of the proposal development... It ended up with her intentionally, because she had good knowledge and experience in working with First Nations, and she was an [instructional technology] program planner, and in terms of project management, it just worked. I mean in terms of the skill set, it matched what the project seemed to need. Well, and good with people, in terms of working with people, and supporting people.

Dina: And I think honestly the only reason he came to me was because I had worked up north, I knew some of the players... And I was excited because it provided an opportunity to still touch base with people that I knew.

The ITS Steering Committee

Anne: Really, in retrospect, if we had a committee in the first place, to write the proposal and submit it, then I think we would have all been much more synchronized in what we thought the project was... But then the proposal did get approved, and so then the committee came into being, so people came in from the cold, so to speak.

A steering committee was formed, made up of the original proposal-writing group plus Moore, Keith, and project manager Dina, who became chair of the group. The contract evaluator Peter and I joined as observers once the evaluation contract was signed. The group met about once a month during the first year.

Samuel: The Committee had a couple of roles, I think. One was the linkage between Continuing Education, and Science, and COD. So it was the coming together of what was two or three entities, which hadn't worked together before... Second was the advisory committee I think was going to keep the project faithful to the proposal.

Searching for a partner

The first Committee meetings, held in fall 2001, focussed upon whether or not the project should proceed. The College had lost its original partner, but First Nations involvement was essential to fulfill the project objectives.

Lynette: Do you think it would have been possible to stop the project at that point? When the first partner dropped out?

Samuel: Would it have been possible? Yes. Easy, no. Because... we were well into the project then. I mean, elapsed time? We'd approved, and we were into the project in terms of starting to do some of the preliminary work... And correctly or incorrectly, there was a sentiment around the table, and this may have meshed with some other departmental or faculty priorities, that even if the first partner wasn't in, there was a good prospect of being able to develop some sort of a relationship with
North College, or NNES. The Committee unanimously chose to go ahead with the project. Several other First Nation groups had expressed interest, and Dina had assisted the Northern Nations Education Society (NNES) to submit a funding application to the federal government for student support. Reflecting on the decision at the end of the project, Anne said, “It was a bit of a gamble – but we thought, let’s try it.”

Dina had misgivings about the creating a new partnership, but she was very aware that ITS funds had already been spent to maintain her salary at Continuing Education.

Developing the on-line courses

The original proposal estimated that course modification, which was called ‘re-purposing’, would take three months. But it took far longer than anyone on the Committee expected. Keith had some paid time in which to prepare materials, but there was no funding for instructional design. At first Dina attempted to do the work herself, but eventually she found a South College instructional designer willing to volunteer work on the courses.

The Committee was generally positive and supportive when they received updates about the slow but steady progress in course modification. But during interviews Samuel, Anne and Dina expressed disappointment that the courses had diverted attention from other aspects of the project, such as the design, testing, and evaluation of learner supports.

Anne: Dina's having to manage the project and the COD curriculum development as a separate project, right? Because they're tied together. And so I don't think there's a lot of energy, or time, left, in order to manage the research component.

North College

Early in 2002, one of Dina’s contacts at North College approached her about brokering the COD program for North College students. The Committee held heated discussions about
whether to work with North College, or NNES, or both. Dina was concerned about meeting the ITS deadline for the courses, and was pressuring her North College contact to make a decision. Keith was more in favour of NNES since it would clearly meet the commitment to reach First Nations students.

A month later, Dina announced that delivery dates for the first COD course had been confirmed at North College for April and May. North College is a small publicly funded institution based in northern British Columbia. Its multiple campuses serve a large region with a small dispersed population, and it is one of the major employers in the region. Approximately 2,000 students attend credit courses at North College campuses, of which almost half have been identified as First Nations. Almost 7,000 students attend continuing education and general interest courses. Its mission and promotional materials emphasize community service: “We are committed to respecting and meeting the educational needs of the communities we serve . . . to provide and enable equitable access”.

The Hopetown campus of North College was situated on a main highway near town. The inside of its single building felt new, clean, and bright. Artworks, most of them by local aboriginal artists, were beautifully mounted and displayed throughout the building. Though I made several visits to campus at different times of the day, I encountered only a handful of people in the hallways and library. The campus primarily offers “upgrading” from Grades 8 through 12, and the majority of students at the Hopetown campus were members of local First Nations.
College negotiations begin

Dina’s original North College staff contact had left Hopetown, so Dina negotiated with Barb, the new principal of the Hopetown campus. Barb was a long-time Hopetown resident, who was newly hired by the College.

*Barb: It was when I first came on as manager. And nobody was really in the loop. So it was very difficult . . . I know Dina and I was looking forward to working with her. And we thought that we were going to be able to run a joint offering here. Not the whole program maybe, but maybe partner with NNES and do the whole thing.*

Both Dina and Barb believed there was strong local interest in the COD program. They arranged by e-mail to offer one on-line course in April and May. Dina was to draft a budget, produce a promotional flyer, and arrange for an instructor to fly up for the required week of classroom instruction. She sent a Service Contract to North College to cover their provision of a classroom and computer lab, for which South College would pay a fee covering rent and administrative support. A few weeks before the course was to start, only a couple of students had registered. Dina suggested to Barb that they postpone the course until September.

Barb’s e-mail reply was ambiguous about future commitments.

*Subject: Re: COD course*

*Hi, Dina. We think that postponement is a very good idea. We have some plans for September, which we haven’t finalized yet, but are thinking that the COD stuff could possibly fit in. We might have some strange hours, but we will make every effort to fit you in . . .*

Though Barb didn’t tell Dina, the COD proposal had encountered considerable resistance at North College.

*Barb: We were ready to do the pilot project, but not enough people signed up, or got funding, or something. . . None of that came off the ground, and I think the feeling was, that if we were going to do all this, that we should maybe try to run a program ourselves. . . . When I was first here, and saw this COD program coming through South College, I thought what a great idea, why can’t we do this? [laughs] Because I wasn’t steeped yet in the political feeling of how a college has its own territory. And I was a bit taken by surprise, and thought, "Don’t let me do anything because I’m going to do the wrong thing here."*
At the next South College Committee meeting, Dina announced that there were not sufficient people registered for the course to break even, and that feedback from the community indicated participants needed more time to coordinate their funding. She was concerned about delaying the course because of the obligations to the ITS, and because the community might come to question South College's credibility.

Renegotiations

Some Steering Committee members suggested a northern visit for marketing and to check the facilities, but disagreed about timing and purpose. Keith felt that enough marketing had already been done, and Dina was concerned about the expense of the visit. But Anne successfully argued that someone should visit to make connections with the community, to create an advisory or steering Committee and to build South College's relationship with the region. Though the Committee agreed to pay for Dina's travel from project funding, she did not travel north. Since Keith already had an airline ticket to instruct the postponed course, Dina suggested that Keith make a marketing trip instead. Keith agreed, and while he was there he reconnected with his earlier contacts and met with aboriginal and non-aboriginals at eight or ten agencies. He encountered some difficulties when he first visited North College's Hopetown campus.

Barb: And I think they just said to him plainly, "What are you doing up here, in our territory?" . . . And I don't think there was ever closure, I think that feeling is still there.

Don was responsible for resource management programs at all North College campuses at the time. Keith met him at North College's main campus in Ketterville, and after several working sessions Don became enthusiastic about meeting local training needs with the COD.
They developed a transfer agreement so that students graduating from North College courses would receive credit towards the South College program.

Don: Keith, [the first time he visited], just dumped off posters – which I didn't do anything with, of course. So I thought, "OK, well that's the end of that." . . . they seemed to be saying, "Forget you guys, hang some posters up for us." I thought, "Well, we haven't signed a partnership agreement yet. So, forget it." . . . [later, I and several other staff members] were involved, and Keith had gone through the courses for COD, worked out that NC had some courses that would fit in, we thought, "Yes this is great, let's make sure our courses articulate."

Changing partners

Through the summer, Dina worked with both North College and with NNES, although neither group knew all the details of the other's involvement. The North College involvement in the ITS project came to an abrupt end in August. Dina was caught by surprise when Barb "hands me to a new Dean", Elizabeth, located at another campus. Their first conversation went well.

Dina: [The Dean] called me. It was absolutely bizarre. "This looks interesting. You know I'm new in my job. But I'll look at this." . . . That made sense, I expected her to look into details, see how the partnership was going to benefit North College, increase student interest, create more work for faculty . . . And two days later, she didn't answer my phone calls or my emails.

Elizabeth wrote a formal letter to Keith about the COD program shortly afterwards, which she copied to Dina, NNES and others including the North College President

Keith: The Dean at the other campus, a new person to us anyways, came into the picture, and sent a letter down . . . that indicated rather than pursuing an agreement with us, they were now offering their own First Nations resource training program. Not the COD program, but a training program, I think more in the technical style, for fisheries and wildlife and so forth. And offered further communication to develop a transfer agreement, and that was about it. It was a rather curt letter. And Dina and I both looked at it, and decided, let's just put this on the back burner for now, and that's where it stayed. For this fall, anyway.

When Peter and I next met with Dina, she was visibly upset and angry about the contents of the letter she had received from the Dean. Dina felt that the letter was, "a brush-off . . . She sees me as a peon". She speculated that the Dean might just be exerting her authority in a
new position. The South College Deans wondered if North College had withdrawn because it appeared that South College was moving into their territory.

Moore: I think that there's a certain amount of territoriality that was involved; especially at a time when institutions like North College are under the gun from a budgetary point of view.

Keith was less concerned about North College involvement in the ITS project, because he felt they had begun a long-term relationship that would support the COD in future years.

One year later, the North College decision-makers that I interviewed were uncertain about how and why their cooperation had ended. Don and the Dean had moved into other administrative positions.

Don: For reasons unknown to me, it never got signed. I think it became a continuing education project, Dina somebody, who used to work in this area. And then I never heard more . . . Nobody would sign the agreement, I can't remember what the problems were. I got the sense that South College just wanted to do their own thing.

Long after the letter incident, Dina described her ambivalence about North College involvement.

Dina: Politically, it would be nice to work with North College . . . But working directly with NNES actually had its blessings. So this is being a bit self-centered, but South College building further on their relationship with NNES was of value . . . Because they would be dealing directly with us versus dealing with North College. And you do lose a lot when there's a middleman, you do.

Northern Nations Education Society

Keith: I guess the next stage, would be Dina striking up the relationship with NNES, the Northern Nations Education Society. And, she actually knows the program manager there, in Hopetown, and that's where the bulk of the people who indicated strong interest in taking the COD diploma were located . . . It represents the future and hope for a lot of native students that want opportunities to further their education and do it close to home.

The Northern Nations Education Society was formed over 20 years ago, and operates a high school and adult education program. In its region, it is usually referred to by its acronym NNES (pronounced “ness”). Its purpose is to provide training and education for several
affiliated First Nations in preparation for self-government, and the non-profit society is registered with the Private Post Secondary Education Commission of British Columbia. NNES offers many two-year certificate, diploma, and college preparations programs that are useful not only for individuals, but for their First Nations' self-determination and survival. Its programs are open to any interested student, whether aboriginal or non-aboriginal.

The first time I visited NNES, the receptionist told me to look for the “old high school” by the side of the road. And I found it, a large single-story institution. Every time I visited I saw cars parked all around the building, many of them recent model sport utility vehicles. Though clearly an old institution, it had recently been painted in colours of deep blue and dark red, which gave the outside an attractive and contemporary finish. Inside the glass double doors of the front entrance, it looked like many other Canadian high schools of a certain age. The wide, somewhat dilapidated hallways echoed sound, and were lined with lockers and a series of doors leading to classrooms. Almost everyone in the building, in the classrooms and in the offices, appeared to be of aboriginal descent.

The sound of students filled the corridors during my fall visit. But in late spring, when no students were in attendance, the offices were busy. With no ongoing funding for its core operations, NNES staff spent a great deal of time writing proposals, reports and evaluations for grants large and small. The executive director Nan and program manager Ethel were responsible for post-secondary program planning for their bands.

_Ethel: Nan has been working for NNES, I think 16 years. And she started it, she started this school. Her reason is for the community, that's why she's here. She can go off and be offered jobs everywhere, higher paid jobs, but she's here for these kids . . . And NNES runs, it's a well-oiled machine . . . On top of being the executive director of NNES, she's the education advisor for the government commission. And we, Nan and I, take care of all the post-secondary for the five bands._
Ethel had been working at NNES for just a few years. Though born in the area, she had attended university in southern BC, where she worked as a high school teacher with aboriginal students. She learned to plan programs on the job while working for Nan.

*Ethel: [Nan] hires competent people, she hires people that she knows, when she delegates it's going to get done. I've run so many programs now, for her, I know how it goes. I know the administration responsibilities I have, the affiliation responsibilities I have. I don't do anything without getting final approval from her first. Nan signs all of our main affiliation agreements, I don't do that. I do the paperwork, and she's the final decision-maker. . . I can sign things as program manager, not anything to do with budgets.*

NNES regularly partners with other post-secondary institutions to offer local programs in home care, practical nursing, and entrepreneurship. It had a computer lab for on-line courses, but most courses were presented by local or visiting instructors.

Ethel was proud of what had been accomplished at NNES: “We have been in the education business for a long time, and we know what we’re doing.” Gary, an instructor who works for NNES and North College, differentiated NNES from other post-secondary organizations:

*Gary: I think the best attribute of NNES, is they're very responsive, and can respond quickly to community needs in the short-term. And often are able to acquire funding to do that. And on top of that, they have the post-secondary training certification. So for any program, COD or whatever, NNES is an appropriate place for it to happen. . . . I mean, they're not bound to FTE's, like the college system. So really, they don't have any base funding, per se. That's maybe not true, but the base funding isn't as rigidly tied to filling seats, as it is in the college system. So they can be responsive. And creative.*

NNES selected their educational partners for program quality as well as relevance.

*Ethel: We don't run anything that isn't high calibre. It's the reputation of NNES, it's always run things that are high calibre courses, we expect the very best from our students. We always have prerequisites for everything that we do, we don't overlook prerequisites because it sets students up for failure.*

**A partnership at work**

*Nan: I approached them, because there was a real interest in the community here, for forest management. And like I said, we had 19 students. So there was a definite*
demand for it. And I know that there is a continued demand for it, because you look at treaty, a lot of the people currently working are non-native. I know they would like to have our own people working.

Both Dina and Nan felt that they had initiated the partnership process. They had discussed the COD program and the on-line project late in 2001, when Dina encouraged her to apply for funding.

Dina: NNES was submitting. And I think it was under a federal capacity-building initiative. And that's so long ago, and I literally completed sections for them . . . They said, “We are submitting. This is what we would like to do”. And it, of course, tied into this [on-line project].

From the beginning, NNES wanted to offer the full COD program.

Ethel: Because of the need locally, for [our Nation's] people to be responsible for their own lands, their own areas, their own watersheds, that kind of thing . . . And they're not able to get jobs when they're not accredited with anything. I mean, they have so much knowledge. We have a couple of gentlemen in here, they've worked forever with our watershed authority and that. They don't have a certificate that says that they did. There's definitely a need for it.

Ethel told me that they chose the COD instead of a North College program because it had credibility, and because Debbie, a local resident, had a particular interest in the South College program.

Ethel: We didn't want anything watered-down. There have been other programs that have been brought into this area, that are about stewardship, things like that. But very watered-down. And, that's fine for some people, but it's not the type of programs NNES runs? . . . I mean, we're not offering programs where students leave here with nothing. And I believe that [North College] program, that was our question about it. What do you get at the end of this? What are they able to do, where with the COD, they can go into fisheries, they can go into Park Rangers, there are so many things they are able to get into . . . . Debbie was the main reason this program was brought here, she had a real interest in it . . . and she didn't want to leave [this area for school]. She's got children at home, her family's here, her husband is here.

After receiving the necessary funding from the federal government capacity-building grant, NNES sent a letter to South College confirming their interest in the COD program, and requesting that Dina be the liaison. NNES wanted to offer the entire program face to face, so Dina had to negotiate the inclusion of the on-line course components.
Dina: It's a little backwards. They want the whole program. So I saw it as an opportunity to achieve our project objectives. They didn't hear about [the ITS project] before hearing about the whole COD. So in their eyes, I can say that with confidence, it was always the whole program or nothing.

Dina encountered new difficulties when arranging for the entire program to be presented in the north.

Dina: I'm going to make this work. And I go back to the committee and ask them, “Is this what we want to do? It means the whole program”. "Yeah that's what we want to do. So look after it." So I set up a program budget for the whole versus just [the on-line courses] . . . I have to meet with Science department, it was about four times. Meet with Samuel twice. Talk about budget, talk about who's doing what. Making sure, that the faculty in Science are OK with the concept of taking existing course outlines, existing supplementary material, and sending that up north. Because that's very sensitive. And being told that some instructors won't do it and some will. So for every course I'm just tippy toeing.

Nan and her program assistant Ethel knew that local students did not have the necessary prerequisites for the program, so they offered the prerequisite courses in the fall, and planned to start the program in January. To her relief, Dina received a signed Memorandum of Agreement from NNES at that time. She sent the ITS funding agency’s partnership form to NNES for signature as well, but it was never returned. Despite her concern about ITS requirements, Dina decided not to press Nan for it.

Attempts at implementation

Ethel hired local instructors to teach the prerequisites using curriculum provided by B.C.'s Open Learning Agency.

Ethel: Nan did the main negotiations, in regards to tuition payment, and that stuff. Dina and I dealt with all administration. Anything to do with student files, program materials, instructors, getting approval for the instructors that I've hired, or before I hire them, that they're OK'd, that Dina says that they're OK . . . Instructors are a huge thing. There's a shortage of anything in the professions, here. We have a shortage of teachers, we really struggle to get instructors in.

The prerequisite courses began in late fall and continued in the first four months of 2003, with almost 20 students. Gary, one of the instructors, described the students for me:
Gary: It was a pretty wide spectrum. There were students who had been out of high school for a couple of years, others had just graduated. And then, up into their forties, fifties, people who hadn't been in school for a while, a long while. And a pretty good mix of males and females in there... I believe they were all from one of the five Nations [in this area].

The students hadn’t completed all the prerequisites by the following March. Dina rescheduled the COD courses with on-line components to be presented in April and May, but they were cancelled.

Dina: And it crumbled. ... And it reached the point, where there was no way to make this work. And at that time I actually think we had about four people [registered]. So it wasn't really enough to cover the costs.

Dina intended to accompany me on my field trip to Hopetown during the April-May courses, to promote the program to students and meet with the planners at NNES. But she cancelled her trip, explaining that she was “unable to invest my office time in [COD] alone”.

In September, NNES confirmed that there were not enough students to take a fall course, as too few students had the necessary prerequisites.

Ethel: We were really disappointed. And we had a really great group of students, this is the area that they wanted to go in, and the main problem was the academics. It was too high, for some of the people... So, they [South College] really did everything they could do help us, but it was too high calibre for most of them.

The Committee dissolves

During the extended implementation phase, the Steering Committee at South College rarely met. Dina made most decisions independently, working closely with Keith and sometimes meeting directly with a Dean. This was the usual Continuing Education practice, where each program manager was individually responsible for planning and overseeing the implementation of education and training programs.

Lynette: Do you think it would have made a difference, to have the Committee more involved?
Keith: No, I think it was pretty much panic battle stations.
Dina: At the very beginning, they [Committee members] were intimately involved in
all of the decision-making . . . and I guess it was a decision that I made, that they're so busy they don't need to know all those little details . . . What was happening was things were, in a matter of days, changing. Keith and I just got to a point of problem solving, as we needed to problem-solve . . . literally, there were periods where there was nothing more to say. And then there were crisis moments. That all happened in like a two hour period.

As time passed, Dina used e-mail to keep the Deans informed. Other members of the Committee were not concerned about the lack of meetings, either confident that Dina and Keith were representing their departments, or distracted from the project by other responsibilities.

**Samuel:** My direct involvement in the project has become progressively less, over the ensuing two or so years . . . when this started, I was two months in the position, now I'm two years and a bit and I think, in that respect, I probably have more capacity to influence it, but maybe less opportunity because I'm disassociated with it.

Dina did not ask anyone from NNES to join the Steering Committee. At the end of the project, she reflected that the Committee might have played a more critical role if they had been involved.

**Dina:** It would have been different . . . if we had moved to the point where the committee consisted of community members, etc., whereas this was in-house . . . It truly wasn't a project steering committee because we never knew who our partner might be. So you have to know who your partner is, before you identify your committee. And assign authority or roles, etc. . . . it was continuously shifting.

**Ongoing relations with ITS**

Dina’s communicated with the Instructional Technologies Section mostly in text format.

She submitted a formal report four times a year, but did not initiate phone contact.

**Dina:** It [ITS] should have more of a role. But honestly? I just do what I absolutely have to because I don't want them to know about all the bumps. So we just report what we have to report and that's it. And the new project manager probably would like more information but I don't provide it. There's lots of bumps and I just don't want any alarms to go off.
During the course of the project, Dina submitted ten reports. The reports forms were repetitive, so she cut and pasted most sections from one report to the other. As activities were postponed, their dates changed or were noted as ‘ongoing’.

In the summer of 2002, when the North College course had been postponed and NNES had not yet heard about its project funding, Peter and I suggested that Dina contact the ITS about project changes, and to clarify its schedule and objectives. She agreed that Peter should phone the funder because, "He'd talk to you, you're a professor and an expert". Although the Project Officer told Peter that ITS was flexible about the deadline and requirements, that information did not influence the South College position. Both Samuel and Dina felt that this project would affect future funding applications.

*Dina: And it actually scares me. Because any potential for future initiative or project funding through ITS is based on this project, because it is one of the biggest projects that South College has had with ITS... I do know I get hung up on, "My goodness, we have to repurpose those courses". And that takes so much time. But in fact ITS doesn't care, that is not the intent. The intent is around the delivery, and is this effective as far as how we reach out to the remote First Nations learners. And that's what keeps flashing literally in front of my eyes. Remote First Nations learners, what do they need?*

In the final months of the project, Dina requested an extension on the project deadline. It was approved, and the quarterly report included this rationale:

*Northern communities of British Columbia are experiencing one of their most serious financial depressions and thus student enrolment for training is minimal. Thus an extension is required to complete the evaluation objectives.*

**The project ends, but not the partnership**

NNES administrators were committed to continuing in partnership with South College, and hoped to offer COD in the future.

*Ethel: We'll run this again. We'll definitely run this again, I just don't know when.*

*Nan: And I really really want to do more programs here with South College, if we can work some type of an arrangement out, because a lot of these guys are displaced now. The fishing industry went down, the forest industry went down, and they're sitting at*
home, on welfare! They don't need to be doing that.

Dina did not maintain contact with NNES after the September cancellation, and was relieved to learn, from the evaluation data, that both Ethel and Nan praised South College's role in the partnership. A few months later, Dina was delighted that NNES was attempting to restart the COD program by seeking additional government funding.

**Dina:** The relationship with NNES is ongoing, and I do think there are other things around the corner. That are going to happen, I just feel that. NNES will find out, in March, if they have been successful in securing some funds that would support delivery of COD... I know what they're going through, as a small community, with nothing. And I think, if we could tie them into anything, that would be exciting... So I'm thinking, how do we involve them, and how do we show that we're being proactive and considerate to them?

I spoke to Ethel early the following year. She told me that NNES had received funding to offer the program locally again, and she planned to talk with Dina and Keith about it soon. Nan wanted it tailored for their region, with more flexible requirements that would recognize students' prior learning.

**Concluding the project: Evaluation and reporting**

During the project evaluation activities were sporadic. Peter and I met with Dina every few months to document her work and discuss the status of the project. I conducted evaluation interviews with students and staff and NNES, and assisted Peter in interviewing South College participants. Based on this data, Peter produced a draft evaluation report. During revisions of the final report, Dina was concerned that the project primarily served South College, rather than First Nations learners.

**Dina:** This [first report draft] is about South College. It's South College being very focused on themselves. Because we did, we focused on ourselves.

To address Dina's concern that the report overemphasized the COD course 're-purposing', Peter reframed the report to place the COD courses in the context of a larger initiative
addressing First Nations learners. After Samuel approved the report, it was submitted to the
ITS along with Dina’s standardized financial and overview reports.

*Samuel:* I think that the report is fine; I think it’s well written, I think it captures the
experience of the two years, in terms of the trials and tribulations, and successes,
such as they were, some of them serendipitous. It brought up something melancholy... . I mean, given our kind of hope and optimism, of where we might be able to go with
the project, we didn't get there. And so that's disappointing. And then, residing with
that disappointment, is a concern that when the report arrives on the desk of the
Project Officer at ITS, and they look at it, and they see what happened and didn't
happen, - what impact that might have on future opportunities for us, as far as
working with that department.

**Differing conclusions**

For Dina, this project had ended with the final report. But other participants took a very
different perspective. For NNES, constructing a partnership with South College was an
important and successful outcome with the potential for future activities. North College and
the Science faculty at South College were positive about laying the groundwork for future
collaboration through transfer credits. From these longer-term perspectives, the ITS project
was an episode that influenced ongoing processes and goals at each organization.

The project lasted for three years. During that time partnership development activities
were sporadic, with intensive bursts of activity during the proposal writing, partner search,
and various negotiations. Appendix A provides a chronology of the partnership project.
Appendix B lists the names of the individuals and organizations involved with the project,
which have been changed to safeguard confidentiality. The appendices, like this brief
narrative, provide an outline of the work that took place, and a glimpse of the participants’
working interpretations of the project. To examine the politics of intersecting individual and
organizational interests and partnership negotiations more closely, the next chapter uses a
critical planning perspective to provide a focus and framework for analysis.
5 A POLITICAL PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I have adapted a critical planning framework to analyze power in partnership development. Social inequalities provide the historical context for a critical analysis of the partnership development. My deductive political analysis revisits the partnership narrative to identify and analyze the taken-for-granted material and conceptual frame factors, including power relationships and the negotiation of personal, social and organizational interests, as they were represented during the process. This political planning perspective reveals that partnership development took place through meta-negotiations that addressed power relationships between distinct organizational identities, and the frame factors that conceptually and materially shaped and constrained organizations and negotiations. After considering the political implications of this analysis, I trouble its critical perspective with a critique of interests analysis, and by identifying embedded assumptions and unanswered questions.

Historical conditions of inequality

All kinds of inequalities of wealth, power, and status exist in every modern society. This project was first constructed to address the unequal access to educational opportunities for First Nations’ communities in remote rural areas. It began in an academic environment with a hierarchical structure, a system in which distinct groupings of status or authority are ranked one above the other.

First Nations in British Columbia

Constraint and frustration lie in trying to realize the goals of Aboriginal education in an environment in which state authority and popular culture challenge Aboriginal efforts politically, ideologically, and economically. Aboriginal education has always been practised on a terrain of intense political negotiation. (Castellano, Davis, &
The oppression of aboriginal peoples is deeply embedded in social institutions throughout North America. A system of residential schools supported the colonial project of assimilating and absorbing indigenous peoples, and only in the last four decades have changing federal policies encouraged integration and more recently decentralization and community control of education (Calliou, 2001; Haig-Brown, 1995; Ryan, 1996).

In response to demands for aboriginal control of aboriginal education, an alternative education system has been developing throughout Canada (Castellano et al., 2000; Hampton, 2000). NNES was a First Nations operated post-secondary institution that coexists alongside the college system. The provincial college system maintains its dominant position through government funding practices, operating with fixed base funding while First Nations' organizations such as NNES are dependent upon short-term grants. In the Hopetown area, this meant that North College could be distinguished from NNES by its new buildings and ability to attract high quality instructors with higher pay levels. The two institutions were rivals for obtaining students and funding, as well as instructors.

*Ethel:* North College has some of the greatest instructors, but they also pay them union wage, they do all that. We don't do that down here. So we lose out a lot of the time. Because we can't financially afford to pay at the level they get paid for school district, or for North College, so that's a problem.

Though NNES resented their dependence on project funding, they recognized that it was also a source of strength and flexibility. NNES had access to a variety of funding sources, from private, government, and non-profit sources. The potential income linked with the settlement of treaty rights is likely to further alter their status and resources in B.C.

*Samuel:* First Nations, they are becoming increasingly large economic players that our institutions ignore at their peril. They now have some influence, in terms of institutions responding to their needs, and viewing them as potentially a customer that they want to attract and retain . . . Flipping that all around, the First Nation can't get what they need without getting access to education, so we're a supplier.
NNES presented high quality programs developed by institutions across Canada, so that their First Nations members could become highly skilled with widely recognized qualifications. But many of those programs required academic prerequisites, which their adult students had not acquired through the public school system.

Barb: And I don't know if you have ever looked at the kind of education that First Nations people get when they go through the general run of education. They get quickly dropped... we have kids here [in Hopetown] who have come in... and write an assessment... They're still back in grade eight English and grade nine math or vice versa. But they think they graduated from high school. And they go to a job with their high school diploma, and they're lost because they can't do it. Or they go to another college or to some other school with their high school diploma and they're out of it. They're just totally lost.

To meet prerequisites required by a professional program in the health field, NNES had developed an approach they called “scaffolding”. Students moved through different levels of programs over several years, acquiring certification in related programs, until they had sufficient academic experience to enter the professional program.

First Nations throughout British Columbia are negotiating treaty rights with federal, provincial and local governments. Aboriginal land use and management is a major issue in those negotiations, as First Nations intend to gain control of considerable land resources. With that control will come responsibility for management and enforcement, topics that are the focus of the COD curriculum. An impending treaty settlement was the catalyst for the original First Nations request for the COD program, and led to the South College funding proposal to ITS.

Until they obtain control of their lands and resources, First Nations members are subject to laws and regulations enforced by federal and provincial officers. Members of northern bands work in First Nations-run resource management teams, and have received training similar to the government officers. But as team members William and George explained to
me, they do not have authority to administer regulations, and they are not respected nor treated as equals by those officials.

William: I've taken phase one, two and three of the Fishery Guardian program. And it's basically everything that they train all the [federal] fishery officers, and we're not on the same level. But we're not considered to be actual fisheries officers, you know, we are considered just guardians.

George: True, but it's a First Nations program. Other officers in the field, like from the [federal department] and the [provincial officers], all have the "you came in through the backdoor" attitude.

I met over a dozen First Nations team members, and all of them were concerned about racism entrenched in the conservation system. Over and over again, they explained that it was essential to gain the standard accreditation accepted in the field, because any program identified as 'First Nations' or 'aboriginal' would be considered lesser.

William: Most First Nations programs, they say they have the credibility, they're accredited, but at the same time... there's rednecks in the service. Well I wouldn't single out just certain people. It's just everybody's attitudes towards each other, you know. We can go get educated and if they lower the standards, the federal government or the provincial government will just enjoy that... They say you can compete with the number of students that come out, whatever course they're training in. But when it all comes down to it, we're pushed off to the side. We are known as "those guys". So I'd like to keep the standards exactly the same as everybody else that goes through it.

Despite the processes of oppression that subordinate northern First Nations communities, all of the aboriginal individuals that I interviewed in the north expressed pride in the strength of their social relations, and demonstrated resilience in the face of domination by mainstream Canadian society.

Ethel: And in our feast system, it's a total powerful thing. That whole concept of the feast system, and our clans, and our houses, that's what keeps us going. That's what keeps a dying - you know, we're losing our language, everything. But that keeps us going still. So, you know, community-wise, [power] is definitely a positive word to me... Here, it's our feast system. That's where business is dealt with, that's our government. That takes priority over everything else. Where everything is dealt with. And that's alive, and that's powerful, for sure.
Rural and urban differences

"Rural communities face problems that seem at times overwhelming and firmly entrenched." (Killacky & Valadez, 1995, p. 1)

The unequal relations between northern First Nations and mainstream Canadian society overlap with inequalities arising from differences in social geography, between the urban south and the rural north. The southern part of the province, where South College is located, is a region with a growing population and economic base. The provincial government and most organizations that service the entire province are based nearby. Even though it operates in small communities, South College has ready access to a pool of qualified instructors and specialists, a variety of potential private donors and public decision-makers, and a wide range of employment opportunities for its students.

Ethel: If you don't live in a rural community, if you don't live in a First Nations community, you have no idea the obstacles we go through.

North College and NNES are located in a rural region with a largely aboriginal population, in which the local economy is declining as longstanding industries shut down or move elsewhere. Many social and material resources available in urban areas are difficult to obtain. Like rural regions throughout North America, "a legacy of substandard schools has persisted, and the related social problems of high rates of illiteracy and under-employment continue to plague rural life" (Killacky & Valadez, 1995, p. 6). There are frequent breakdowns in transportation and communication systems, few qualified instructors living in the area, and dwindling job opportunities for students.

Inside the academy: The college hierarchy

In the two colleges, the differential status of academic and non-academic departments intersected with a hierarchy of positions within each one, creating a complicated and ambiguous status for anyone working across departments. Unlike the colleges, NNES was a
much smaller organization with a more horizontal structure. It had few full-time staff members, and instructors were hired on a short-term or contract basis.

**A hierarchy of departments**

South College and North College both follow an academic model, in which the academic departments and faculty have long held higher status than the non-academic continuing and community education departments. Though the status of continuing education improved slightly in response to a changing provincial policy environment during this project, its lesser and subordinate status is deeply entrenched in the academic environment.

The higher status of traditional academic departments is linked with their disciplinary knowledge base, and materially supported with base funding and considerable control over program and curriculum decisions. Academic faculties maintain full control over program content, although the curriculum for two-year certificate programs like the Conservation Officer Diploma are often developed in response to employment opportunities in a particular field. Keith worked with a COD Advisory Committee made up of government and private industry representatives as well as academics, to maintain credibility of the program and its graduates.

Keith: *In terms of policies, [the Advisory Committee members] support program policies like prerequisites. If you don't understand the potential complications down the road, for instance, that lowers credibility and standards. And some of that connected not only to institution and to our own literature but also to our advisory committee. And credibility for hiring students, graduates.*

Though the Continuing Education Centre had considerable experience in working with community groups, it held less status within the College largely because it offered courses outside the academic credit stream. When the project began, the Continuing Education department had recently amalgamated community programming with a contract training
division. Its budget was less stable due to its dependence on recovering costs from program fees, and its staff specialized in process rather than disciplinary knowledge.

*Dina: Before, faculties didn't have respect for us... We were just seen as a little cost-recovery operation... this would have been the only office doing cost-recovery activity. And that was only five years ago. And, I think, yes, we've moved some ground, we've had to as an institution, because the only way we can move forward is on a cost recovery basis, because of the way the funding is now allocated to institutions.*

Improvements in the status of the department coincided with significant changes in provincial policies and funding formulas for colleges. At the time of this project, B.C. colleges faced increasing pressure to identify and realize additional sources of income. The South College executive turned to “cost-recovery” programs that expand their academic activities by generating revenue. Continuing Education’s ability to generate revenue likely contributed to its transformation into a Centre, with expanded responsibilities including credit as well as non-credit and certificate programs.

At North College a similar hierarchy was in place, with further inequalities between North College campuses. Hopetown was a satellite campus without its own continuing education department. As Hopetown principal, Barb’s goals were subordinate to the main campus in the neighbouring town of Ketterville, where the executive and academic departments were headquartered.

*A hierarchy of positions*

Every person employed in the colleges held a particular position in the organizational hierarchy, which gave them legitimate authority and access to certain kinds of resources. Each College executive was led by a president answerable to an elected Education Council. Both colleges were spread over multiple campuses, and principals who held no authority over academic programs headed the satellite campuses. Academic affairs were managed by
Deans usually based at the main campus, who reported directly to their executives. The Deans held formal authority linked with structural sources of power within the organization: relative control over resources, and ties to others considered powerful. Deans were responsible for the budget and activities of their entire departments, and were active in cross-departmental affairs. Internally the departments were organized in a relatively 'flat' structure, with a shifting group of department heads drawn from the faculty members, who often worked directly with the Dean and had considerable autonomy in their professional work.

At South College, the hierarchy in Continuing Education closely mirrored academic structures. Its Dean was similar to academic Deans in terms of credibility, decision-making authority and interdepartmental responsibilities. But instead of departmental chairs and academic faculty, the next level of authority in Continuing Education consisted of program managers and planners such as Dina, who reported directly to the Dean. They were not members of the faculty association, and received less pay than faculty.

As a member of Continuing Education, Dina found it challenging to plan with the higher status academic departments, in which she had project responsibilities but no direct authority.

_Dina: And with the Dean of Science, this is his program. It belongs to that faculty area. I'm just a little in-betweeny person. So I know I've taken on things, and Moore [the Dean of Science] doesn't necessarily have all the information. But if anything happens, I'll have to report to Moore as to why it happened, and why I didn't provide any information, or why I didn't do it in a different manner._

At North College, campus principals held a similar relationship with the academic departments. They participated in program planning, but had very little authority in decision-making about programs and curriculum.
Revisiting the partnership narrative

The intersection of these social relations provides a context for my deductive political analysis of the ITS project, based on critical program planning theory. It focuses on participant negotiations of interests, power relationships, and other frame factors.

Initial interests

The Instructional Technologies Section (ITS) funding initiative explicitly recognized material inequalities experienced by First Nations and rural communities, and offered considerable resources to sponsors willing to address social barriers through the use of learning technologies. South College responded by weaving together explicit interests of several groups into a proposal. A northern First Nations organization wanted some band members to complete the COD program. The College Science department supported their interest in challenging the frame factor of systemic racism in the land use and conservation field. They both believed that COD certification could further First Nations interests in changing their social and political status, supporting self-determination and social justice.

Keith: Native people have got a vested interest there, but they don't have the qualifications to do it. And that's, that goes way back, to my motivation for getting involved with this in the beginning.

The Science department also had short-term goals to increase aboriginal students’ participation and success in their COD program, and to gain experience in converting its face-to-face curriculum into an on-line format. For Continuing Education, the success of the proposal provided an opportunity to achieve their interests in providing leadership and generating revenue, as well as to gain experience in managing on-line education programs. Managing the project and handling the ITS funds helped to cover the Centre’s operating costs.
Text as frame factor

The ITS interests dominated the project in its early stages through the South College participants, who were legally responsible for meeting the grant objectives. The ITS provided significant resources and regulated the project through a grant contract and reporting procedures. These bound the College to its original plan of activities. The release of ITS funding installments was dependent upon receipt of quarterly and final reports, which described progress made towards the grant objectives. Every member of the Committee had their own copy of the ITS grant document, and it was regularly consulted and scrutinized at meetings. My own copy quickly became dog-eared, as I often found myself loaning it out to other Committee members when they forgot their own. It was also used to assess the project’s accomplishments for the evaluation and final reports.

Continuing Education participants had a strong interest in maintaining a good reputation with ITS. Dina avoided contact with staff at the ITS, and perceived every detail of the grant requirements as fixed and immoveable. Peter and I unsuccessfully attempted to convince Dina that aspects of the grant could be renegotiated with the ITS, but Dina postponed meta-negotiation until it was unavoidable at the end of the project.

Negotiations within South College

As the project and partnership developed, the multiple interests of different departments at South College were not always compatible. Several factors constrained whose interests were brought to the planning table: funding resources, faculty control of curriculum, and positional power within the college hierarchy.

Most funding for the project was provided by grants from the ITS and from a First Nations capacity-building fund. This was accepted as a limiting frame factor by Continuing
Education, which was dependent upon outside sources for its operating budget. The Centre controlled the budget, and fulfilling the terms of the ITS contract dominated planning activities. Continuing Education supported the goal of increasing access for First Nations communities, but meeting the terms of the ITS project was of greater immediate importance than supporting social change.

During the search for another partner, the Deans’ interests dominated the project. For example, Samuel and Moore negotiated and decided upon guidelines for course fees and sharing revenue during meetings of the ITS Steering Committee, while others listened quietly. Though the Science department was excluded from decisions about ITS funds, the Science Dean was sometimes able to supplement project funding with his departmental resources to advance Science interests, such as assisting with Keith’s visit to North College. Outside the meetings, Dina and Keith undertook the substantive negotiations between their departments to cooperatively develop the on-line versions of the courses.

The COD academic curriculum and prerequisites were never questioned during these negotiations, and was an unchallenged frame factor for all South College participants. Faculty members were in full control of the program and its content.

Peter: The COD program, and the people in the program who are re-purposing things, have power over the integrity of their program. And that, not even the administration of the college is going to tamper with. And part of that is because of the nature of the program, and they recognize that they have to respect the integrity of university-level, college-level programs. And they are beholden to their students, and to powers in Victoria, rather than in the university.

Though positional power associated with the hierarchy contributed significantly to individuals’ capacity to act within organizations, it was more flexible than other frame factors. Dina’s formal power in the academic hierarchy was limited, but she could draw from other sources to further her own and her department’s interests. Informal sources of power in
organizations may include information and expertise, alliances and networks, access and control of agendas, and personal charisma (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Pfeffer, 1992). When the original funding partner pulled out, Dina drew upon her own information sources and networks in the north, and was able to persuade the Committee that she could still fulfill the terms of the ITS grant.

*Peter:* Dina has a fair bit of power, because she's in there day to day, and knows what's being done, and is the one who is connecting all these different people. So she's the front line. But, she reports to the Committee, she reports to Samuel, and she also is dependent on other people, in terms of power . . .

Once the South College partnership with NNES was underway, Committee members had accepted Dina's control of the project agenda along with its budget, and were unconcerned about the lack of meetings. This enabled Dina to dominate the South College role in partnership negotiations.

**North College negotiations**

When Dina approached her northern contacts to find an alternative partner, two organizations expressed interest. Barb, principal of North College, wanted to expand the educational opportunities for students in the region with a minimal investment of North College resources. Nan, as director of NNES, wanted local First Nations members to get COD certification. Dina thought both of these interests were compatible, and continued to negotiate with both of them.

Barb and Dina undertook substantive negotiations to present an on-line COD course at North College. They worked together within constraints posed by existing material and conceptual frame factors such as ITS requirements, financial arrangements, and academic curriculum. But their trust-based arrangement was short-lived. Academic departments at North College questioned the informal partnering arrangements. They believed that the
partnership was neither cooperative nor mutually beneficial, but was designed to support South College’s interests alone. Well aware of the inequities between the rural north and the urban south, many North College staff flagged this project as another instance of marginalizing northern interests for those of larger urban institutions.

Members of North College faculty were able to override the campus principal Barb’s actions, and developed a dual strategy. They initiated their own negotiations with South College, working directly with their academic colleague Keith instead of Dina. They shared a mutual interest in building long-term relationships for jointly offering various science and technology programs such as the COD, to enable more First Nations students to gain tools and skills for local resource management. At the same time, they developed their own distinct resource management program with curriculum and prerequisites tailored to what they perceived were the ideal interests of northerners.

Changing partners

Negotiations between the academic faculties continued, until the North College Dean sent Keith a formal letter to express interest in continuing to negotiate transfer credit, instead of conducting a facility rental. Dina interpreted the letter as a power move by someone with authority in the hierarchy. Though Dina thought it may be possible to challenge the letter by involving South College administrators with equal or greater authority, she chose to accept the rejection she read in the letter as a new frame factor for the project.

Dina decided instead to work with NNES, which had just received funding for the COD program and did not want to involve North College. Partnering with NNES supported her interest in meeting ITS deadlines and completing the project. Though the halt in North College negotiations did not meet Keith’s primary interests, he accepted Dina’s decision in
the interests of cooperation, because Dina was responsible for the ITS budget, and because he knew negotiations for transfer credit with North College could resume at a later date.

**NNES partners with South College**

NNES entered the partnership with considerable resources: funding to pay for instructors and student registrations, classrooms, professional planners, and close ties with the local First Nations community and potential students. These resources placed Nan in a position of strength, and she was able to place NNES’ interest in self-determination at the centre of the partnership negotiations. NNES used partnerships as a strategy for social change, supporting self-government by providing high quality and credible educational and training programs and opportunities in their region. NNES’ director Nan wanted to offer the full COD program because of its high quality and credibility at the provincial and national level. She originally accepted the academic program and curriculum as a frame factor, but eventually undertook meta-negotiations when she realized that students were unable to meet academic prerequisites due to a legacy of substandard education for aboriginal students.

The NNES partnership enabled Dina to meet Continuing Education and ITS interests of implementing on-line courses, but first she had to persuade Science faculty to offer the entire program in the north. They agreed because it met some of their original interests, but refused requests to change the program prerequisites until the last time the course was to be offered, Keith waived the prerequisites for a single course in order to meet the ITS grant objectives.

*Peter:* [The COD program] was getting superceded by the intense focus on just the online course, as opposed to, looking at the longer term, and bigger goal, that Hopetown had, and that the project had, really, which was to increase the level of access for people in the north to the whole program, not just individual courses. The emphasis on the larger program, and on COD and the access to it, ended up being secondary to the whole issue of getting something done . . . for the sake of having something to present to ITS.
Analyzing partnership development as meta-negotiation

Reviewing the partnership story through this political perspective reveals that substantive negotiations about content, format, and students were interwoven with ongoing meta-negotiations between individuals and organizations. The meta-negotiations assumed different forms within each organization, and shaped the partnering process. College hierarchies imposed formal patterns of authority, and those positioned lower in the hierarchy sometimes resisted, and sometimes complied with their supervisors' interests instead of negotiating their own. Hierarchy did not always pose an immoveable constraint, as staff members could tap into informal sources of power and existing relationships.

Most negotiations between departments and organizations were substantive, focused on material factors like grant funding. Fixed levels of funding, staff and facility resources, and academic curriculum sometimes enabled partnership negotiations, and sometimes constrained them.

Peter: One aspect of it is leverage. Who can force somebody else to do something, or has something to offer in terms of trade, in terms of negotiation. Who has a vested interest in what's happening. And what is the level of their vested interest. And sometimes their vested interest is very explicit, and other times it's not at all explicit. ITS is very explicit in what they're looking for. [Samuel in] Continuing Education is quite inexplicit about their expanded role within the university. It certainly makes sense when you look at it, it's fairly clear, that they're sort of staking out a territory.

Participants with positional power and control of resources, like the South College Deans and the North College academics, regularly undertook meta-negotiations to advance the interests of their own department or organization. When an outsider like Peter undertook meta-negotiations, as he did with the ITS project deadline, his contributions were disregarded. The Deans' successes, and Peter's ineffectiveness, confirm a central argument in critical planning theory that institutional frames are most often altered by those with positions of
power within the institution (Cervero & Wilson, 1998; Mills, Cervero, Langone, & Wilson, 1995; Umble et al., 2001)

Between independent organizations, power relationships were not firmly fixed. They shifted and flowed in a complicated series of meta-negotiations, which enabled some participants to have more influence than others at different points in the narrative. For example, when Dina’s first interpretation of the letter from the North College Dean converged with her own interests and those of NNES, her informal power within the college enabled her to drop negotiations with North College in favour of a NNES partnership. Though First Nations’ longstanding oppression by mainstream Canadian society was assumed by the ITS project goals, First Nations interests were not a high priority for South College until NNES received funding and became active in partnership negotiations.

Frame factor visibility and social standpoint

Material frame factors were visible to all participants, but less tangible frames were perceived differently. Some factors were not perceived at all, and never reached the planning table for meta-negotiation. Deans and faculty, who worked from positions of privilege, were less aware of the difficulties of working within and between departments than those positioned lower in the hierarchy. Other college staff members were more aware of the limitations imposed by hierarchy and departmental restrictions, and had to cope with constraints imposed by others while taking a strategic approach to planning. Barb learned to fit in with North College’s academic policies. The professional planners, Dina and Ethel, explained their reasons for supporting the established hierarchy of decision-making as something that was in their own interests, a means for doing their jobs well and for maintaining a harmonious workplace. Dina worked within limitations posed by most of the
material frame factors, taking pride in her ability to complete a project within the limitations imposed. She coped with the ITS grant guidelines, and the shifting requirements imposed first by North College and then by NNES. She felt her planning work was mostly confined to substantive negotiations, and that she was “like a buzzy bee” going back and forth between more powerful decision-makers.

Standpoint theory argues that a social and political disadvantage can become an epistemological advantage, because an oppressed group has access to different sources of evidence from those available to dominant groups, and share an understanding of the dynamics of their subordination (Haraway, 2004; Harding, 2004). The constraints imposed by historical social inequalities were not consistently visible to all participants. The subordination of rural interests to urban ones, a familiar concern for northerners, was less visible to southerners.

Northern and First Nations participants saw things differently from the South College group, and their social situations enabled the production of different kinds of knowledge and understandings. Though their interpretations varied, I heard critical power analyses from educators, administrators, and community members more frequently during my northern interviews. Northern participants regularly described political frame factors and were aware of structural asymmetries. They were willing to challenge or resist constraints that were invisible or of lower priority to South College participants. Both northern organizations used their knowledge strategically in negotiations and decision-making. The North College resistance to South’s partnership proposal and curriculum came as a surprise to South College organizers, who were unprepared for the resentment engendered by their status as a privileged southern institution.
**Political implications of partnership development**

Viewed through the critical political framework, this partnership sometimes reproduced and sometimes challenged relationships of inequality. When participants worked within the limits imposed by frame factors, they appeared to reproduce and strengthen inequalities. For example, when Barb and Dina constructed the initial North and South College partnership, their short-lived arrangements supported the asymmetrical relations between the ITS and South College, and between South College and North College.

Frame factors did more than simply constrain action in this project. They enabled at the same time as they limited the planning process. The ITS funding requirements and contract catalyzed the partnership process; academic policies and curriculum provided substance and meaning; and the capacity-building grant set the NNES partnership in motion. Even historical inequalities served to catalyze action. First Nations historical oppression provided impetus for government funding; rural-urban inequalities provided a rationale for North College resistance; and academic structures shaped decision-making within and among participant organizations.

When participants questioned the factors framing the project, the effects were more ambiguous. When North College faculty renegotiated with South College, they resisted urban control of the rural agenda. But their actions also reproduced hierarchical academic relations between faculty and continuing educators. When NNES accepted the prepackaged COD curriculum and academic requirements from South college, their actions could be interpreted as reproducing both rural-urban inequalities and aboriginal social dependency on dominant society by accepting its academic credentials. But by insisting upon delivery of the entire COD program instead of a few on-line courses, and by rejecting North College
involvement, NNES resisted non-native dominance of educational opportunities in their community.

The results of this political analysis differ from those of critical partnership analysts, who have argued that partnership inevitably reproduces social inequalities (Lister, 2000). It suggests that meta-negotiations in partnership development have the potential to challenge broad social inequalities by providing a means for resistance, or a catalyst for social activism.

**Troubling the framework: Tangled and overlapping interests**

With the benefit of hindsight, this political perspective constructs a meaningful understanding of what happened during the development of the partnership. It identifies frame factors and levels of negotiations, whose interests were on the table, and which interests shaped the outcome. But during the project, while events were unfolding, it was far more difficult to identify salient interests. At any given moment, each participant brought multiple and sometimes changing interests to the table. Interests that appeared compatible early in the life of the project came to diverge or conflict as negotiations continued.

A close scrutiny of the explicit interests of a single organization, North College, reveals complex dynamics that are not readily visible or understood within the tidy picture frame of a critical planning perspective.

*Don [North College academic chair]: Yeah, we're definitely open to anything we can do, to help our communities. That's what we're interested in.*

Both North College and NNES staff shared a primary interest in addressing social inequalities by strengthening First Nations and the rural northern region. But individual and organizational interests among northern participants diverged in important ways. In the first North College negotiation, Barb pursued a short-term interest of serving immediate community interest though a course offering with South College. She quickly learned that
the College had longer-term interests for serving community by strengthening their own position, and by developing programs with northern content.

*Gary [contract instructor]:* I still think it's important to have a college in this town. There's that provincial network, and affiliations are extremely important. We've got to make sure that we maintain the college here too.

North College staff was concerned about the survival of the college itself, which they felt was an important community asset, and provided staff with paid work in an area marked by high unemployment levels. Barb came to accept the need to protect the college as a community resource, and to enable the college to thrive.

*Barb: So if we ever lost the ability to educate people in this community - what a huge loss that would be to the community. That would leave us without hope. . . This college is a community college and it's here to serve the community. And that's how it survives. Its survival depends on how well it does that. And I think that they are necessarily really protective of the area that they serve . . . now I understand that I should be more protective of the area that this college covers in order for us to survive, I guess. And that it's like a farmer growing carrots on my potato patch, or something like that.*

Despite their resistance to the initial partnership arrangements, most North College participants believed that some kind of partnership with South College could meet their interests in serving the local community. Their individual interests were neither singular nor fixed, but presented a range of shifting priorities and possibilities.

*Individuals and departments at South College held more divergent and changing interests. For example, Keith wanted to promote the course in the north, and follow through on expectations he had raised among aboriginal northerners. This meshed with his department’s interests in generating revenue through cost recovery programs.*

*Keith: I think every department at every institution is experiencing the dynamic of change out there, budget management, growth. How do you move ahead and grow the budget? Which is happening now [with projects like this].*

Keith wanted to construct viable partnerships to support the COD, particularly the articulation with North College for greater student accessibility. His lesser interests included
encouraging more sophisticated computer use by COD students, and improving the
curriculum with on-line resource materials.

But Keith’s primary personal and professional interest as head of the COD program was
to maintain the long-term viability and credibility of the program by maintaining consistent
standards, curriculum and prerequisite requirements, and by attracting students to take and
complete the program.

Keith: [The goal] is to deliver quality education to the students you have. And frankly,
we’re strapped for time, to do that... You never have a shortage of students wanting
to get into the program as it is... but quality of students can always be better.
The ITS project, with its assumptions that on-line delivery was a viable means for improving
student access, conflicted with this long-standing interest. By offering the program in
different regions through distance education, student enrollment in the regular campus
program could decline, resulting in program cancellations. Despite the threat it posed to his
campus program, and his positional power as academic faculty, Keith chose to collaborate
with Dina to resolve problems with the project, even loosening the academic prerequisites for
NNES students. His decisions do not make sense in relation to many of his personal
interests. But Keith supported the interests of NNES and its local aboriginal community,
even when they conflicted with the COD program that he was responsible for. He was
committed to social justice for aboriginal northerners, and supported aboriginal self-
determination through better training in resource management.

Keith: They deserved the opportunity to get the education, and to get into co-
management, fisheries and wildlife management. The only way that they're going to
make that leap of faith, in my mind, is to get qualified to the same level as the
government people that are doing the work in their area... I don't believe in
conflict, and that's what we have going right now, is conflict between native groups,
it's happening everywhere, and the federal and provincial government agencies that
are managing fish and wildlife.
Keith’s decisions, and those made at North College, were informed by a complex web of overlapping interests that varied and shifted depending on the context. Only a retrospective analysis is able to identify which interests predominated at different moments of the project.

**Unanswered questions**

This political analysis provides an understanding of frame factors and power relations, which influenced whose interests dominated the partnership negotiations. It demonstrates that partnership development has the potential to catalyze resistance and social activism, even as it may reproduce social inequalities. But it also raises questions about elements of the deductive theoretical framework, and ruffles the smooth surface constructed by critical planning theory. Frame factors and interests in this process were not static but fluid, overlapping and interacting to provide options within the partnership process. Frame factors were enabling as well as constraining, shaping the negotiations and actions within the process. Their visibility, and the likelihood that they would be addressed through negotiations, was influenced by the participants’ social locations.

The critical program planning framework is intended to assist planners in their work, by offering conceptual tools that may be used to analyze and anticipate situations before they arise during the planning process. But negotiations involved a tangled and constantly shifting web of ambiguous and sometimes contradictory interests. Those interests did not operate as fixed, dissociated or neutral elements that could be sorted into dominant and subordinate categories according to a participant’s status within the project. They existed as options for participants to pursue or disregard in their negotiations. Without the benefit of hindsight, this analysis could not have been constructed with any certainty.
The emphasis on individual agency within a social and political context limits the critical planning analysis, which does not explore the dynamic relationships possible among them. Though it illuminates significant dimensions of the partnership development process, this political analysis provides only a partial perspective. It raises new questions about how frame factors are perceived and selected for acceptance or resistance or meta-negotiation, and how particular interests are mobilized. To better understand the complicated intersections of individual self-interest, organizational loyalties, political commitments, and trust relations in a turbulent social environment, I will turn the crystal to reconsider the partnership through another facet that inductively examines how peoples’ thoughts and actions are organized through cultural forms.
6 POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PRACTICES

Studying culture is challenging, because culture is rarely identified or articulated in daily life. A popular anthropological analogy suggests that trying to describe our own culture is like asking a fish to describe water. In the non-anthropological literatures informing this dissertation, culture has been conceptualized as “deep politics” by planning theorists (Frost & Egri, 1991; Umble et al., 2001), and as a “glue that holds an organization together” in partnership studies (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2000). During this project the word ‘culture’ was rarely used, and then only to represent cultural differences. Most participants believed that culture played some role in differentiating aboriginal students and administrators from non-aboriginal college participants. No one used the word culture in relation to their daily work, though every participant found it easy to tell me about patterns in their work routines, and the differences between departmental and organizational practices.

In this chapter, my analysis draws upon practice theory to examine cultural elements present in the organizations before their partnership development began. I will explore participants’ perspectives about their usual working activities, what the pragmatic partnership literature might call preconditions or the partnership environment (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002). I begin by describing my analytical framework, which is based on the concept of culture as integrated meaning systems that organize peoples’ thinking and behaviour. My descriptive analysis contrasts academic practices with those of continuing educators, and the community-based practices at NNES with the community-oriented practices of both colleges. Other practices were common to all three organizations, and I describe each one before considering the implications and limitations of studying intersecting practices.
Analyzing practice

In his role as project evaluator, Peter noticed many tacit assumptions about resources and relationships. He regularly drew attention to their presence as part of our evaluation process.

Peter: We'd meet with the Steering Committee, and they would be talking about things, and things would be zipping by, all these assumptions, because they all had a history... they developed their own terminology, their own assumptions about what was going on, why they were doing it, more so than normally they would have.

In my role as cultural analyst, I holistically examine activities to identify deeply held assumptions embedded in habitual forms of speaking, writing, and behaviour, which were built into routine social relationships and actions.

Practice analysis is based on the anthropological idea that cultural systems are continually created and reproduced in a dynamic interactive process. Culture is tacitly assumed and enacted every day, a shared resource that every one of us draws upon to understand and evaluate our social realities.

Practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life. But this practice analysis focuses on longstanding patterns in participants’ work activities, identifying repeated actions and routines that planners and faculty undertake to get their jobs done in particular historical and social contexts. Engaging in practice involves both doing and knowing, and includes the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle and untold cues and rules of thumb, sensitivities and intuitions that are taken for granted and usually left unsaid. Practice also includes the explicit: regularly used language, documents, well-defined roles, procedures, regulations and contracts. The practices identified in this chapter were visible in behaviour and in language, emerging during participant observations and in my conversations and research interviews.

Practices seldom stand alone, but exist in more or less integrated sets that form a shared repertoire. They are often developed and maintained by mutually engaged participants, who
form a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The range of practices in these organizations included formal procedures, informal routines, and regular habits. These practices were familiar and meaningful to those who maintained them, and were often described during interviews or in conversations among participants. They were shared by individuals within communities of practice, which overlapped within and between organizations. Practices were not limited by community boundaries, but were produced or reproduced by participants located in historical moments and situations. These practices were not unique, but reflect cultural systems in other North American post-secondary organizations.

**Distinctive practices**

Each organization involved in the partnership process was the setting for intersecting communities of practice, such as the departments of Continuing Education and Science at South College, the campus administrators and academic faculty at North College, and the administrators at NNES. I have not provided a comprehensive analysis of educational practices in each community of practice and organization, but begin with distinctions that participants perceived between their working groups of academics or continuing educators, and between community-based organizations and colleges supported and regulated by the provincial government.

**Academic and continuing education practices**

*Dina: [South College academic faculties’] reality is very different from ours. And, when you try to mesh the two, you do hit a number of challenges.*

College academic and continuing education departments formed two distinct communities of practice. Along with their differential status in the college hierarchy, they had distinct histories and structures, and supported different key activities, roles, and procedures. Everyone who worked in the colleges could describe significant differences between the
structures and practices of academic faculties and continuing education departments. Academic departments focused on education and research closely related to their academic disciplines, while the continuing education departments responded to individuals, communities, and businesses interested in gaining skills and knowledge. While academic departments were able to rely upon reasonably stable base funding from government sources, continuing education at both institutions was funded from a mix of grants, fee for service contracts, and programs which recovered their own costs, along with some government support when assigned by the college executives.

Both departmental communities were concerned about attracting and serving students, but they differed in their specific objectives, motivations, and measures of success.

Keith: COD for instance would almost certainly be looking long-term. Our long-term goal would be to attract students, to get them into the program, and to be very careful about the credibility of the whole process, etc. The motivation of Continuing Studies, I suspect, might be more short-term goal, in making courses happen, or making the project, fulfilling the terms of the project, with very short-term timelines.

Academic departments maintained the viability and credibility of their long-standing programs through practices including stable faculty members, community involvement through advisory councils, and filtering policies such as student prerequisites. In the COD program, the number of students successfully obtaining the diploma was an indicator of program success.

In contrast, continuing education activities were judged by student satisfaction, contract completions, and financial success. Continuing educators were concerned about maintaining credibility by meeting funders’ requirements by successfully completing project outcomes known as “deliverables”, and by expanding participation through inclusive practices. At South College, continuing education programs and instructors changed regularly, and they would often “start from scratch”: hiring new instructors, developing and marketing
curriculum, and working with different funding or contracting organizations. Samuel and Dina worked with few fixed policies and procedures, and saw each project as an opportunity to learn and revise their practices.

Both academic and continuing education departments worked informally with other colleges on a range of projects. Both made use of a “Memorandum of Agreement” signed by college executives for inter-college relations, but other negotiation processes and outcomes differed. Academic departments regularly worked with provincially regulated procedures to establish equivalence between courses and programs at different institutions of higher education. They used a formal articulation process involving transfer agreements and credits.

Keith: *I spent quite a bit of time, over about three months, actually doing articulation courses between our two-year diploma, South College courses, and North College equivalent courses. And those documents were posted.*

Continuing Education could not negotiate articulation agreements, but used other documents signed by a project manager to formalize arrangements with business, non-profit groups, and other colleges. They used service agreements when providing educational services for a fee, and rental agreements for facility use.

Participants held very different roles in each community of practice, and were materially affected by their communities’ positions in the academic hierarchy. Academic faculty members were hired as ‘content experts’ for their disciplinary expertise, and sometimes assumed coordination or management duties. At both colleges, they were members of a strong faculty union. Continuing education members were hired for their expertise in process, and their major roles were management and coordination of projects and programs. They were non-union administrators who were not required to hold a post-secondary degree. During this project, while some of the faculty member's contribution to the project was
recognized and rewarded with additional pay, the Continuing Education project manager was expected to include this project as part of her regular workload despite the long hours and extraordinary effort required.

Differences between the departments were sometimes seen as complementary, and sometimes as a potential source of friction.

Samuel: [The ITS project] was probably a good experience. Because it was about the CE or adult ed folks from the process side, and it was . . . about a content person [from Science faculty], who had the knowledge, being able to bring that forward, and working together, to achieve that. We've still got some distance to go though, in terms of being able to create that kind of, whatever you want to call it, linkage between the two.

Connie [contract proposal-writer]: I mean, the amount that they [faculty] get paid for things like this, and the days off that they want, and the fact that they want to exclude people, and that they look down their nose at me, because I don't have a degree, or whatever. I mean, I have a degree but I don't have a master's or whatever. I strongly react to that kind of attitude. And I definitely see it at the college.

Similar differences were recognized at North College, where faculty were uncomfortable with what Don called “an aggressive continuing education model”. Though Barb began partnership negotiations using a continuing education approach, other North College participants dismissed those arrangements in favour of their own practices.

Community-based and community-oriented practices

During this project, each organization maintained a different relationship with the northern aboriginal communities that were the intended beneficiaries of the process. All of the participants recognized that NNES was regularly engaged in community-based practices, sharing power and decision-making with community members located inside and outside the organization. NNES was deeply embedded in the Hopetown First Nations communities, with a mandate to serve their Nations’ goal of self-governance. The regular staff members at NNES were members of a First Nations community, and shared similar beliefs, values, and
aspirations. Even though Ethel attended school and worked in the urban south of the province, once she returned to the Hopetown area she became an active member of a strong cultural community.

*Ethel:* I lived in Vancouver, I had no obligations there, to attend feasts, to be a part of the feast hall. That’s a huge part of not wanting to leave here, your community and your family is so huge. And you have so much obligation to your house, your clans, that people don’t leave here. That’s a part of your life, is the feast hall, and being a part of that.

Both Nan and Ethel developed programs by integrating their own understandings of needs and interests, with those perceived by other community members such as Debbie.

*Ethel:* We had a request for people wanting to do something in the fisheries; we run an LPN program right now, so we go by what community [wants]. I get a lot of calls for things, so that’s what we do . . . Debbie [a NNES student] was the main reason this program was brought here, she had a real interest in it.

NNES’ work was immediately accountable to its community through direct and unmediated relationships. Nan and Ethel talked with members of the community every day, at work and at home. They were constantly reminded of what programs were wanted, and whether or not programs were effective. Their negotiations with other organizations were based on community feedback.

*Nan:* There were five of the guys that we had in that program that historically worked for the treaty office. And they’d done a phenomenal amount of work with the fisheries, they’d done a phenomenal amount of work with the rangers, you name it, they’d done it. And I felt so bad for them. Because they came into the program, and they couldn’t proceed into COD because they didn’t make it through the second part of the bridging . . . So I said to Ethel, can you get a hold of Dina, and find out if there’s any way possible, that we can get these men in on a mature status, or use their work experience as a prerequisite.

NNES had no trouble in finding sufficient students for the program, who learned about the COD through personal relationships and trusted NNES staff to bring in appropriate programs. Their success in attracting registrations raises questions about the North College critique of NNES’ needs orientation.
NNES was an integral part of its community, but both colleges were crossing geographical and cultural boundaries to reach their goals of serving a northern First Nations community. Although each college was distinct in many respects, they were shaped by similar provincial mandates and policies that influenced their community relations. Both colleges used community-oriented practices, based on their own interpretations of community needs, to assess and respond to what they believed were community needs and interests. Participants at each college supported differing ideas about their community beneficiaries, and how to work with them. At South College, geographical distance as well as budget and deadline restrictions posed barriers to the original plans for participation. But even those original plans were ambiguous.

Anne: In my mind it's the whole community, they aren't necessarily taking a course but they could be potential students, they could be a parent of a student, it could be a band councilor, it could be someone who's providing some support to the student. So, I'm looking at the whole physical, village type of community; and other people were looking at the word community as a cohort of students, taking the class.

Keith had longstanding relationships with many First Nations individuals involved with resource management. He maintained those informal networks of contacts through visits to the region, which began years before the ITS proposal.

Keith: [Some years ago], we met a series of people who all had vested interests in native training. Including government people, the [original First Nations involved in ITS proposal] themselves. And fisheries officers, conservation officers, and so forth . . . We looked at their needs, and included their chief in that first meeting, he opened it. And, so we identified their needs, we went through learning objectives, and set out a whole outline.

Continuing educators Dina and Connie, the proposal-writer, favoured using organizations to represent communities. Dina wanted to have a firm program before involving First Nations community organizations. Rather than being involved in the early stages of program and partnership development, she visualized them taking a role in the implementation phase, giving feedback and problem solving. This may be associated with education business
understandings: She wanted to have a finished product available, before marketing it to a partnering organization that would in turn market the courses to individual learners.

*Dina: I see them [NNES] as a facilitator. We can work through them. I don't know how well this will go over, but I do hope that we can get their input as well. Because they are members of communities. But they're also experienced educators... And someone like Ethel, who is the assistant, would be able to provide feedback: "Guys, you know it was so confusing because the students didn't have this, this, this, and this."

Differing ideas about community at South College were never negotiated, but were an ongoing source of ambiguity and tension.

North College did not have to address the geographical barrier of distance, but they had other boundaries to cross. Their non-native staff members were not part of the local First Nations communities, and most were raised outside the region. When Patricia became President, she met with First Nations leaders to build working relationships, and hired long-time northerners such as Barb.

*Barb: And I have to say that when Patricia came on as president, that was her drive, to see what the communities wanted. And to try to work with the communities. She spent a lot of time, trying to get to know the communities. And I particularly think that in Hopetown area, the region actually, it's totally important to look to the communities for what their needs are.

North College relied on a community-oriented practice of needs assessment when planning their local educational programs.

**Focusing the program: Needs assessment**

Needs assessment assists those in control of decision-making to tailor programs for others. Needs assessments may be oriented towards either individual or community needs, or both. In her influential analysis of needs, Fraser (1989) suggests that needs talk is a site of struggle where groups with unequal resources compete to establish the dominance of their respective interpretations of social needs. The colleges' needs assessments enacted what
Fraser calls an “expert needs discourse”, which translates politicized needs into administrable needs that do not challenge hegemony. The learner-centred discourse supported at South College served a similar role, repositioning First Nations individuals as depoliticized individual learners. But South College originally based their initiative on the needs and expressed interests voiced directly by a group of northern First Nations members. Once NNES was involved, Dina felt that local learners’ needs were actively represented.

The non-native staff at North College relied upon a different needs assessment method. They responded to what they determined were “ideal” needs, actual needs that may or may not have been perceived by community members.

*Patricia:* People latch onto something, because they think that that's what's needed, and then when you really sit down and do an educational needs assessment with them, you find out that it's not, or they're just taking it because, “We think it might work.” And that's a responsibility, that's another piece of it for me, there's a responsibility on behalf of the institution, to inform the community, right? So, somebody might come to me and say, "Oh, you know, I need 'X' certificate". And my response is, “Well, what are your educational needs?”

During the negotiations with South College, Patricia undertook a needs assessment in the region.

*Patricia:* What we realized in our discussions with First Nations communities, is what they were needing. They were going to this [COD] program, because it was a program on the books that some people had taken. And when we really started delving into what was needed, we found that there were three different needs . . . So, we have now three different certificates that we've developed, as a result of these discussions.

North College’s needs assessment practice did not depoliticize learners. But it screened out local agency in favour of the College’s expert political analysis of social needs. North College staff prioritized their perception of real community needs over expressed needs. Instead of accepting community needs at face value, North College staff conducted systematic research to determine their own interpretation of the needs and ideal interests underlying community discussion, and developed three different resource management
programs in response. Staff felt their approach was more appropriate than the NNES process, which was based on community members’ perceived needs and expressed interests.

Gary: *I think they're [prospective First Nations students] somewhat disconnected from reality... I think those students are seeing, and same with Nan and others here, they're seeing the guy who's got the government truck and gun and uniform, going around, and it's great. Because it's a brown face, in a usually white man's job... But there's not a whole bunch more of those jobs.*

Patricia: *What were the issues? The issues were, some daughter of somebody went and got it at VCC, and so it was determined to be a good program. So these decisions to go outside are not necessarily based on price, or quality, just relationship.*

Fraser suggests that rival needs interpretations should be assessed by considering whether they are exclusive or inclusive, and by the hierarchical or egalitarian relations between rival groups. She argues that the best interpretations are those reached through democratic communicative processes. Gary, a contract instructor, held a similar position. But he felt that North College was justified in its expert analysis at this historical moment.

Gary: *If you're talking about true power-sharing, what would happen is that we would get a group of people together who are interested in furthering their education, asking them how they would like to see then the course structured, and what the results would be, and then go shopping, or get them to develop some courses themselves... But, we don't have a healthy enough population to do that right now. So, you know, unless we have people, it's almost a luxury to say that power-sharing thing, to me. Because while we wait for the young people, 18 to 29, to realize that they have control over their future, and they can actually dream of their future, while we're waiting for them to realize that they can have personal power and they can transfer that power into the future of the community, we've got to get something done in the meantime.*

North College appears to have assumed that local First Nations, like members of other subordinated groups, had internalized needs-interpretations and practices that worked to their disadvantage. During this project, their expert needs practice mediated their local community relationships, and excluded the explicit interests held by many local community residents.
Common practices

All three organizations, and the distinct academic and continuing education communities operating within them, drew upon practices common to the education field. Personal contacts and trust relationships intersected with each organization’s community-based or community-oriented practices. Hierarchical practices of bureaucracy and “heroic individualism” were familiar to all participants, and coexisted with planning in “survival mode”, marketing, and flexibility. In this section I have described each practice separately, although during the project they were employed in different ways by different participants and practice communities, in a dynamic process of overlaps and intersections.

Personal contacts and trust

To begin partnership negotiations in the north, both Keith and Dina drew upon longstanding relationships with northerners. Keith’s relationships created the initial interest in the COD program, and Dina’s trust-based relationship with Barb at North College led to concrete results before others at the College intervened.

Dina: Partnership is a long, ongoing process . . . for this level of project, you need to have some working experience with the partnering organization. I could not have picked up the phone, we wouldn't have even got to where we are.

When NNES was ready to negotiate a partnership, they requested that Dina be their contact. They preferred a one-to-one relationship with someone that was familiar.

Nan: Dina was my primary contact, and she was awesome. She was awesome, and I just wanted to stress in respects to the working relationship, it was totally awesome.

Every participant spoke about the importance of building relationships of trust. This supports research findings that webs of personal relationships, trust and respect are essential to successful partnership.

Samuel: I guess the other thing, and again it's not any great revelation, but it was certainly reinforced in this project, it's not even what you call partnerships, it's
relationships. Particularly organization to organization, but it's even person to person, they're developed over time. They evolve, and they need a certain kind of life cycle to mature, and you can't force that, and you can't rush it, as much as you might want to.

Patricia: In all of these things, relationship is key.

There were many personal connections between NNES and South College despite the geographical distance. Dina had worked in the region, and knew staff at both organizations. Keith was conscientious about making contact with community leaders who were members of important First Nations families, and was well known to resource managers and officers in the Hopetown region.

**Bureaucracy**

Everyone in the project was familiar with the bureaucracy of post-secondary education, a set of rules that governs structure, operations and performance in organizations. Bureaucracy reifies practice through a wide range of processes including procedures, terms, and concepts. These practices are assumed to create stability within differentiated and hierarchical organizations by coordinating and integrating activities (Bolman & Deal, 2003). But Wenger’s analysis suggests that the power of reified practice is double-edged (1998). While reification provides stability and focuses attention with succinct, collectively understood meanings and portable forms, it also gives processes a concreteness and rigidity that may be inappropriate. Bureaucratic practices can restrict flexibility, and because of their fixed nature they may become detached from the original meaning and intent of practice, with the potential to support relations of ruling instead of the active participants’ interests (Campbell & Gregor, 2002).

Some degree of bureaucracy was present in every organization involved in the project. For example, receptionists served as gatekeepers to screen visitors from employees. They
imposed a firm boundary between insiders and outsiders, even those on contract to the
department. I encountered the most elaborate gatekeeping when setting up a meeting with
Samuel, which required a discussion with his secretary and follow-up emails to confirm or
adjust our appointments. These elaborate procedures served to remind me of his higher
status as Dean responsible for many demanding activities.

Bureaucratic forms and documents were critical to partnership development. Not all
partnerships work within a legal framework, but formal agreements are a common feature of
educational partnerships (Grobe, 1993; Jenkins, 2001). The ITS guidelines established a
framework for the project, shaping the ensuing proposal and grant contract. Once they were
signed, documents such as the ITS-South College grant contract, the North College-South
College rental agreement, and the South College-NNES service agreement fixed
requirements and responsibilities between the organizations, both enabling and regulating the
ongoing relationships. Most participants accepted texts at face value, activating the ruling
relations represented in contract terms and requirements. The only participant to question the
rigidity imposed by texts was Moore, who felt that texts should be regularly revised because
“I don’t trust things that are fixed from the beginning”.

Bureaucratic language was regularly used to mask meanings and activities in the project.
Barb disguised her North College colleagues’ rejection of the ITS project by referring to the
unavailability of classroom space. Dina, Peter and I constructed a final evaluation report
using bureaucratic forms and terms that effectively represented the partnership process in a
positive light.

Peter: There’s always spin. And that doesn’t mean I’m trying to focus only on what’s
going to please my clients . . . But it’s the format of the bad news, that’s the key. How
you go about presenting it.
But the participants’ familiarity with bureaucracy also meant that they distrusted formal texts, and did not necessarily accept words at face value. When Dina constructed her interpretation of the North College Dean’s letter, she dismissed its intended meaning along with the bureaucratic language.

Dina: [reading from the letter] "Please be advised, that due to increased program activity enrollment" No, that’s a fib – "At the Hopetown campus, the Hopetown campus does not have any room." . . . But by saying there’s no room on the campus, she made it very clear, it can't happen at the campus. And their enrollments have never been an issue. It's a ghost town.

In this project, organizations were separated by considerable distances, and sometimes individuals at the same organization were separated at multiple campuses. Text documents assumed greater importance as one of the limited means of distance communication, along with telephone and rare face-to-face visits.

**Heroic individualism in the institution: Partnership champions**

The partnership literature recognizes the need for a broker or ‘convener’ who identifies potential partners and brings them together, actively guiding the formation of a partnership (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Gray, 1989). Complex partnerships require strong champions to continuously promote the relationship among the partners, and to run interference by overcoming institutional barriers (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002; Harper, 1996). In their gender analysis of the deep structure of organizations, Rao, Stuart and Kelleher (1999) have identified what they call “heroic individualism” as a structural element that perpetuates gender inequalities in organizations founded and maintained by men. Organizations value the hero who solves a crisis, struggling against enormous odds day and night. Dina performed that role at South College, advocating and constructing the project in a ponderous institution lacking the necessary resources and processes, and adding it to her regular workload despite
the long hours and extraordinary effort required. Everyone at South College acknowledged that Dina had overcome enormous barriers and challenges.

_Samuel:_ For all that [the project] didn't achieve, in terms of what we had hoped for, anything it did achieve was essentially on Dina's back. I mean, if it didn't have her kind of drive and impetus, and involvement, it doesn't happen.

The role was a familiar one at North College as well. Elizabeth, the Science Dean, suggested that the partnership with South College didn’t happen because the project “needed a champion to make it work. Someone to push it through, like a dog with a bone.” At North College, no one assumed responsibility for the partnership. Individuals came and went from their positions on staff, and the COD program had no consistent advocate.

Within the college, individuals acted as brokers between communities of practice, performing a complex job of coordination and alignment of differing practices (Wenger, 1998). Although Dina was the most visible broker in this project, Keith served a similar role in the Science department, and had the necessary credibility to advocate the sometimes difficult adjustments required to academic priorities and practices.

Dina was comfortable working independently within and between different organizations and college departments. She never referred to herself as a champion, but was aware of her ability to successfully complete projects.

_Dina:_ So that's a sense of control. As in making sure I have everything. So that the decisions are made . . . And it's typically that scenario of, “Okay just get it done.” But had I not pulled that together and given a scenario, we could have just spun [and stayed in one place]. Right? So my power is in putting everything in place so it can continue.

The role of champion makes sense in an academic environment that values and rewards individual accomplishment. But reliance on a champion to overcome internal as well as external obstacles raises questions about the sustainability of partnership activities.
Pragmatic planning in survival mode

Dina’s usual planning activities correspond to pragmatic approaches as they are described by Cervero and Wilson (1994; 1999). She made strategic judgments in response to specific situations and working within parameters defined by her College. She did not adhere to a formal planning model, but loosely followed procedures set by her department for course, program, and project planning. Dina was aware of complexities in her social environment but thought of herself as a free agent, getting things done by tippy-toeing within existing relationships of power.

These partnership negotiations involved a range of negotiation and planning strategies, including networking in the early negotiations, and bargaining towards short-term compromises between NNES and South College. But pragmatic practices dominated the South College development process for participants who characterized their actions as muddling through in response to urgent and changing circumstances, rather than planning strategic actions.

Dina: I’m not a step ahead, we are always two steps behind. None of us are feeling ahead, we all feel behind the ball . . . I was in survival mode the whole time.

During the project, South College participants found themselves in a turbulent environment outside their control. They sought new partners and adjusted to new players, objectives and procedures while working with limited resources and time. Dina’s work environment was constantly changing when duties were reassigned within Continuing Education. Planning in this rapidly changing situation was different from Dina’s usual planning practice. Dina and Keith constantly adjusted their decisions and actions among a limited range of options.

Keith: I think it was pretty much panic battle stations. And Dina looking for ways to
make it work.

Dina: And it was like, OK what opportunity exists? How am I going to pull this together? And it was actually to a degree, a challenge to have a comprehensive plan, because I didn't know what was around the corner? What we did, was we just covered it and scrambled.

In the planning literature, this approach has been named *satisficing*, in which planners make do in constrained contexts with courses of action that are satisfactory rather than optimal (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Forester, 1989). Planning in this project became a form of crisis management, requiring frequent small steps and changes to address problems as they arose. In their struggle to find a partner in a complex and contested terrain, South College participants drew upon personal creativity and longstanding personal networks to accomplish their objectives.

Most South College Committee members found it difficult to attend meetings due to their busy schedules. The two key participants, Dina and Keith, handled the partnership development off the side of the desk in addition to their usual duties, sometimes working during evenings and weekends. Keith was released from some of his teaching duties during the first year of the project, when he did most of his work towards the on-line components. After that he volunteered his time to complete the on-line curriculum content and to visit northern communities. At North College, no-one assumed responsibility for this project after Barb's short-lived negotiations, and all the negotiations were handled as an additional duty by staff who already had a full workload.

Dina had the most ongoing responsibility for partnership and program planning, but very little work time dedicated to the project.

*Dina: The understanding when I started was that I was going to continue with the CE computer programming. And then have this as 50% of my job. And that's a very very reasonable, very manageable load. But since then, like about three months after the fact, it started shifting and it shifted considerably. And part of it is because [another planner] left. So we had to shift portfolios and then the Centre came into play. So we*
Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that a process of “decision-less decisions”, a sequence of small steps that acquires a life of its own, may result in a major qualitative change with social implications. In this manner, satisficing may have contributed to North College’s short-term withdrawal from the partnership process and the project’s uncontested shifts, from community service to business discourses and from long-term academic objectives to short-term continuing education practices.

**Marketing practices**

Marketing and course promotion activities are closely linked to community-oriented practices, and were used by community-based NNES to promote the COD courses in their region. The one-way direction of course promotion, from educator to community, enables an educational institution to maintain centralized control of all aspects of course development but provides only a minimal connection with learners in the community. Individual learners may or may not notice the availability of the program, or its relevance to their lives.

The Continuing Education department at South College relied upon marketing for the majority of their programs. Both northern organizations used it to supplement their own community-oriented or community-based relationships.

When the COD program was first offered through North College, it was marketed through an advertisement in Hopetown papers, phone messages to Keith’s contacts in the area, and faxes to Hopetown organizations. This approach required a minimum of time and financial investment. But it also resulted in insufficient registration, which Dina attributed to poor marketing methods including a short lead time for promotion, and the absence of more effective face-to-face contacts.
Once NNES became a partner, they undertook marketing in the region, promoting the course through advertisements and faxes to local resource management organizations. But marketing activities were superfluous, as almost every student who registered in the course was already in regular contact with NNES, and the wider promotion resulted in few additional registrations.

**Flexibility**

NNES emphasized that a successful partnership required flexibility on the part of the program provider. They felt that South College had been appropriately flexible, unlike some of their other partners.

*Ethel:* [South College was] very very accommodating. It wasn't a dictatorship to us, Dina was very flexible with a lot of things. With courses, with everything. Oh, it was excellent. When we're working with anybody, it has to be that way.

*Nan:* I really really liked the partnership [with South College]. I found them to be very accommodating, very helpful. And there was no problem at all when it came to the working relationship.

Both Dina and Keith were committed to flexibility, and their approach fit well with both NNES and Continuing Education’s practices.

*Keith:* I'm a negotiator. And because I negotiate with people, and try to be flexible, as far as I can, and maintain these certain principles in the program, that I have mentioned. I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the power.

**Practical implications: Compatibilities and contradictions**

The coexistence of these practices among distinct organizations and communities of practice suggests a pattern that may contribute towards success in developing a partnership. When many longstanding practices were shared between partners, as they were between Barb and Dina, and between South College Continuing Education and NNES, partnerships may have a greater likelihood of success. All the partnership negotiations began with
personal relationships and trust. A longtime friendship between Barb and Dina became the basis for a partnership supported by pragmatic continuing education practices.

_Dina: OK, call Barb. Because I know her, get her insight, find out who’s in charge... So I started on familiar ground. I just thought that, because I’m at a distance, how am I going to do this? Deal with Barb... It’s excellent, the role that she holds, it’s very appropriate etc. And I literally had to go with the roll._

Both South College and NNES employed continuing education practices and marketing, and emphasized personal relationships. NNES’ community-based practice complemented South College’s community-oriented practice, and Dina muted her bureaucratic activities in deference to Nan’s disinterest in those practices.

When practices were contradictory, they posed barriers to partnership. Despite the two colleges’ shared interests in presenting the COD program in the Hopetown region, their partnership process foundered through contradictory practices. Barb and Dina’s shared personal relationship and pragmatic practices were in conflict with the academic practices and formalities that dominated North College activities. The second round of inter-college negotiations came to an end when South College participants blurred North College’s rejection of continuing education practices with their acceptance of academic practices.

Throughout these negotiations, bureaucratic practices complicated the interpretation of text and verbal communications. When a North College Dean’s letter rejected the continuing education facility rental approach and supported academic negotiations towards a transfer credit agreement, South College participants translated the letter’s bureaucratic language as a rejection of the partnership initiative, not as a conflict between two sets of practices. South College satisficing practices favoured a partnership with NNES, which had just received a substantial grant and would advance the ITS project goals more quickly and cheaply.
Faculty members Don and Keith were used to long-term academic practices, and felt no urgency to complete the articulation agreement between their colleges.

The presence of champions may assist in overcoming barriers constructed by contradictory practices, whether within or between organizations. Within South College, a partnership between Science and the Continuing Education department was maintained through the activities of Dina and Keith, despite the barriers imposed by contradictory practices. Both of them learned to work across the boundaries of academic and continuing education communities, and their sustained active contact led to shifts and growing overlaps in their understandings and practices. Dina championed the development of South College’s partnership first with North College and then with NNES. Flexibility was another critical practice that facilitated both the partnership between Science and Continuing Education, and between South College and NNES.

These patterns suggest that longstanding practices shared among participants may facilitate partnership negotiations. An accumulation of contradictions complicates, constrains, and may even terminate partnership formation. But the interactions between these long-standing organizational practices do not make sense of all the difficulties arising between North and South College, and between North College and NNES. In those relationships, neither flexibility nor the emergence of a champion could facilitate a partnership process complicated by relations of power. To better understand the dynamics of culture and power in partnership development, the next chapter focuses the cultural facet of the crystal beyond pre-existing working practices, to examine the interplay of discourse and practice during the partnership process.
AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL ANALYSIS

My study of cultural elements continues in this chapter with a focus on discourses and practices mobilized during the partnership process. I examine each one of these intimately interconnected elements separately, before considering their interactions and implications in the partnership narrative. This analytical process is deceptive, for neither practices nor discourses exist as isolated elements. In the crystalline structure of my analysis, the other elements are always present even when not in sharp focus. In my search for new insights, I have scrutinized each element separately before taking a broader view, which situates them in an integrated framework. This process leads to a more complex and satisfying view of the multiple, shifting, and contested meanings possible in partnership planning. The intersections and dynamic interactions of cultural elements provide new insights for understanding this partnership process, and for theorizing about partnership development and its broad social and cultural implications.

The chapter begins by considering discourses about education, and about the nature of society. I examine the partnership discourses and practices represented in the project, before revisiting the partnership narrative to explore how cultural and political dynamics operated in each organization during negotiations. This cultural facet of the analytical crystal illuminates new patterns in the story, and concludes by recognizing the productive possibilities of pluralistic discourses and practices.

Analyzing discourse

"Discourse" has become, in recent years, one of the most popular and least defined terms in the vocabulary of Anglo-American academics. (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990, p. 7)
Discourse is an ambiguous term with many layers of meaning, used in a variety of ways even within a single discipline. My approach to discourse analysis differs significantly from other methodologies presently in use in the education field. For this cultural analysis, I will draw upon anthropological understandings of the term. I have restricted my focus to cultural dynamics and their political implications in a specific historically and socially situated case. Anthropological linguists have long studied language as it is spoken and used, rather than separating it from social activities. Cultural production analysis has been influenced by linguistic studies, as well as the work of French poststructuralists like Michel Foucault (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990; Lindstrom, 2002), who study the ways in which patterned discourses maintain both particular ways of knowing the world, and a network of power relations among those who know.

To understand how this particular partnership development was informed by cultural beliefs and values, I have identified cultural discourses operating in the process. These discourses are patterns of speaking or writing, each of which represents a set of knowledge shaped by a broader system of meanings. Discourses actively shape our relationship to the social world through language, and often operate to maintain power relations among social groups. Discourse is not static or fixed in nature, but is a fluid set of shared linguistic structures, beliefs, or social models. Unlike Foucauldian discourse analysis or Smith’s (1999) analysis of social relations, I will not assume that histories of power or ruling relations are embedded in discourses (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Instead, I begin by tracing patterns of cultural discourse that were active in this project, maintaining particular ways of thinking about the world by regulating how knowledge could be properly communicated and used.
The patterns of understandings, assumptions and behaviours that emerge in this analysis of the field data are not unique to this project. They are neither new nor idiosyncratic, but historically situated sets of knowledge and regulating conditions that have been produced or reproduced by participants in this partnership process. They reflect cultural discourses and practices currently operating throughout the field of post-secondary education in British Columbia, and correspond with broader discourses described in the literatures of education, partnership, and program planning.

**Discourses about education**

The idea of the college as a community service, characterized by its democratic commitments, has long coexisted in dynamic tension with an alternative vision of the college as a business that purveys human capital in an educational marketplace (Agre, 2000; Kennedy, 1998). A neoliberal agenda operating throughout North America, and supported in the popular media, has supported the formation of what I will call the “education business” discourse. It is closely linked with a profound social paradigm shift sometimes called “marketization”, in which business values and interests have come to increasingly dominate society (Martin, 1997; Taket & White, 2000). While the discourse of community service is constructed on democratic ideals and is sometimes associated with social change, the discourse of education business is most often engaged to reproduce the hegemony of social inequality. During the course of this project, the B.C. government was actively promoting a neoliberal agenda, with policies and regulations supporting a hegemonic vision for education.

Both the discourses of democratic community service and of education business were active within this partnership project, along with a learner-centred discourse. In the field of
post-secondary education, partnerships have been supported by both community and
business oriented discourses: as a means to construct alliances across communities and social
divisions, as a response to public and community concerns for relevance and accountability,
and as a business opportunity. This section focuses on distinctions among discourses of
community service, education business and learner-centredness before considering how they
overlap in this project.

Democratic discourse of community service

Community service figured prominently in the texts associated with this project. The
mission of each participating organization emphasized service and community connections,
and the proposal itself emphasized democratic ideals of collaboration, improved access, and
learner success. In daily speech, this discourse was visible when participants spoke about
serving communities, decisions reached through consultation, overcoming social barriers,
and providing educational opportunities. All of the northern participants that I interviewed
consistently engaged in this discourse.

Barb: This college is a community college and it's here to serve the community. And
that's how it survives. Its survival depends on how well it does that.

Don: Yeah, we're definitely open to anything we can do, to help our communities.

Ethel: Nan has been working for NNES, I think 16 years. And she started it, she
started this school. Her reason is for the community. I mean, that's why she's here.

Though this discourse was present at South College, it did not appear as frequently nor as
consistently as in the northern organizations. The language of community service was most
often taken up by the initial writers of the proposal: Samuel, Anne, Moore and Keith.

Samuel: Not to be too kind of, apple pie about it, the strength that comes from
education, or access to education, doesn't answer all questions. But still, access to
that is a means to be able to strengthen the communities, wherever they are. Those
northern communities are more remote, and have more challenges than southern
First Nations . . . . To strengthen those communities strengthens the province, and by
strengthening the province we all benefit.
The education business discourse

The education business discourse permeates the field data, representing the local experience of marketization. College participants in this project were the most likely to take up the language and frameworks of business, in which cost-effectiveness is an important measure of success. At South College, committee discussions about the ITS project seldom referred to community collaboration, although that was an explicit goal of the project. Instead, their language use suggested that a business approach was shaping project strategies, as students were referred to as consumers, courses as products, and the northern communities as markets.

Samuel: The [First Nation] can't get what they need without getting access to education, so we're a supplier, we have something that they're in need of at this point in time.

Both Dina and Samuel were comfortable with the education business discourse. It was compatible with their department’s cost-recovery activities, endorsed by a South College executive concerned with generating income for the college, and supported by B.C. government policies. During the project, the Continuing Education mission statement was altered to emphasize a business discourse: “The Centre . . . is committed to meeting and exceeding the expectations of our customers.” Dina had many years of experience in contract training, in which educational programs and courses were sold to other organizations as a commodity. She described presentations to the Committee as sales pitches, and discussed the COD program as a product. Dina felt that academic departments had yet to learn the education business approach.

Dina: But when you go within other faculty areas, the whole approach to business in the twentieth century, they've taken a different, grasp you might say, than we have had to? . . . And, when you try to mesh the two, you do hit a number of challenges, in the last year, because executive have really made a point of emphasizing the need to be entrepreneurial, there is more awareness.
Dina thought that the Science faculty was one of the few that was familiar with these understandings. Keith and Moore sometimes employed the language of business, referring to northern students as customers, and engaging in negotiations over profit sharing. But they remained uncomfortable with the discourse, and suspicious of its implications.

Keith: *I think there may be an underlying agenda for Continuing Education to find business, you know, really to look for new customers and sources of business and with that revenue to simply function because that's the way they function.*

Faculty members at North College expressed a similar distrust of the education business discourse:

Don: *I take real exception to this. It's almost like education is becoming a commodity—you package it up, and take it away. South College seemed to be going to an aggressive, continuing education model, where they need to do those things. They need to step back. I've seen it happen before. We do it ourselves at times.*

But the planners at NNES were comfortable with the business discourse, and employed it when talking about the partnership. They considered the COD program to be a good product, offering credible certification at a reasonable cost.

*Learner-centred education discourse*

The learner-centred education discourse emphasizes individuals as program beneficiaries, assuming that the college's role is to serve individuals with diverse interests and goals. The learner-centred discourse is often associated with community service in education theory and practice, and most participants in this partnership assumed that learner-centred practice was an appropriate means of serving communities.

Samuel: *At the core it's about the learner, and assisting the learner to acquire a depth of knowledge in an area to be able to one, move forward into whatever kind of field or profession, and two, to be equipped to not only deal with changes in that field or profession, but more generally in terms of the whole experience of learning... Continuing Education is about providing opportunities for adult learners to have access to the education that they want and need.*
But during this project, the focus on individual learners also supported a business interpretation that reframed learners as consumers or clients in the education marketplace.

_Dina_: What I have seen is that the intent was to seriously assess what the learners need because we as an institution may consider putting portions on-line . . . for reaching a specific target market, our audience.

At South College, the learner-centred discourse was used to support both community service goals and the business discourse. Cervero and Wilson (1999) have described the learner-centred discourse in adult education as “blind” to structural power relationships. In this project, it effectively reproduced power relations by maintaining the privilege of the institution to control how courses and programs were produced and presented. It was used to justify limiting local northern involvement to providing funds and learners, in return for obtaining a curriculum pre-determined by South College.

While writing the final report, Dina was distressed that the project’s original community service goals had not been addressed. But she continued to interpret those goals in the individualistic terms of the learner-centred discourse.

_Dina_: And then for the Ministry, - I don’t know, well, I feel that their main priority is the learner. And those that we worked with, well, how can we best document what value it was to them?

**Overlapping discourses**

The three discourses coexisted at all of the organizations involved in partnership negotiations. At North College, participants sometimes constructed a binary opposition between business and community service discourses.

_Patricia_: So, somebody [from the community] might come to me and say, "Oh, you know, I need ... X certificate". And my response is, well, what are your educational needs? Not, "OK, we’ll put it on and we’ll charge you $40,000 to do that".... I’m not here to make money; I’m here to address educational needs.

Yet the same administrator adopted the business concepts of cost effectiveness and market analysis when discussing her college’s activities in the region.
At South College, where participants moved comfortably between the two discourses, each department involved in the negotiations advocated a different discourse. Participants from both departments employed the learner-centred discourse, but while Science participants spoke in terms of community service, Continuing Education arguments were more often framed in business terms.

Anne: I think Keith saw it [the ITS project] as a way to get the courses offered . . . and he was looking at it much more from a student perspective. Cause he's dealing with students all the time. And Samuel and Continuing Education were looking at it from a more contract perspective: “So, these are the deliverables”.

During our interviews, Samuel expressed ambivalence about the business discourse that his department was promoting, and relied upon the learner-centred discourse.

Samuel: I do go back and forth a bit, because one of the struggles that I have, sometimes, is in relation to, is it the role of the institution only to prepare people to go and work for companies or organizations? Because, that's that idea of institutions as feeding the labour market. Versus institutions that are preparing people for, a kind of a life of learning, and inquiry, and dialogue, and analysis, and reflection, and all that kind of stuff . . . So, I don't think that the two, in a sense, schools of thought, need to be separate, but I don't know that we've been overly successful in building the bridge between the two of them?

At the time of this project, both academic and continuing education departments were undergoing change as a result of provincial policy changes. At both colleges, the academic departments were being pressed to think about expanding their programs by developing revenue-generating activities.

Keith: And I think every department at every institution is experiencing the dynamic of change out there, budget management, growth. How do you move ahead and grow the budget? Which is what is happening now.

The Continuing Education department was also experiencing rapid change due to increasing pressure to generate revenue, and its improving status within the College.
At NNES, everyone I spoke with was comfortable with both the community service and the business discourse. Their learner-centred discourse was intimately linked with community service, and their community-based practices.

**Discourses about society**

While analyzing my field data, I realized that another set of discourses was operating among participants. These discourses addressed social relationships and discontinuities between social groups. Social boundaries maintain stable groups with shared practices and patterns of association, at the same time as they may represent unequal access to or distribution of resources and social opportunities. Discourses can be thought of as symbolic boundaries that are instrumental in constructing difference when they are used to maintain, enforce, normalize or rationalize social boundaries (Lamont & Molnar, 2002; McLoughlin, 1993). But the symbolic boundaries of discourses are often permeable, and operate as a cultural interface producing new ideas, overlaps and boundary practices (Wenger, 1998).

Educational anthropologists have suggested that differing conceptions of culture operate to shape thinking and action in educational institutions (Banks, 2002; Erickson, 1991). During this partnership project a pervasive human relations discourse focused on individuals, while boundary discourses were concerned with social and cultural discontinuities. Two boundary discourses about the role of culture emerged in this project, which have been called "cultural difference" and "cultural politics". These interfaced with discourses that addressed power relations in terms of "core and periphery" and territoriality.

**A human relations perspective**

*Patricia: It wasn't about power, so much, as just relationship building.*
The human relations discourse focuses on individual agency and relationships, rather than focusing upon social and political dynamics between groups. Within organizations, a human relations perspective is often used to understand working relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Dina, for example, regularly analyzed her planning activities using a human relations frame, and relied upon her sensitivity and sophisticated communications skills to effect change. She believed that negotiation strategies were idiosyncratic, and often explained individual choices with “it’s her personality”, or “that’s my personality”. When things went wrong, she could explain the problem as a misalignment of person and organization, or as flawed interpersonal communications or group dynamics.

Within the College, both Samuel and Dina recognized that working relationships with faculties were as much dependent on individuals as on policy. Looking through a human relations lens, an organization is like an extended family made up of individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills and limitations.

*Dina: The deans have relationships. But [Continuing Education] didn't have a relationship [before we had a Dean], because that wasn't the role of our department in the past... I believe that any successes that come are a result of those relationships. It has nothing to do with Continuing Education and what we say our mandate is.

This lens is useful for making sense of the dense webs of personal relationships that are essential for sustainable partnership processes (Brown & Ashman, 1996). It was not surprising to find that most participants used it frequently and prominently for their analyses.

*Keith: I think that a big part of power relationships are perceptions of the players and that's why I think Dina does so well with people. It's that she's a good people negotiator, she's got good skills in dealing with people, you know, and coming to a conclusion that's what she wanted but is also maybe a bit flexible. And you know, you feel well about the decision at the end. That kind of negotiator. She's got some skills there. And also she's a friendly person.

From the human relations perspective, the project was successful because it developed relationships between South College and NNES, and the COD program and North College,
as well as strengthening relationships between Continuing Education and Science at South College. When I asked participants how they thought power influenced the project, many analyzed the project in terms of individual interests. Their first thoughts about power were of individual capacity, something wielded in order to attain particular outcomes.

*Samuel:* I'd say the ability, or the capacity, to influence results, relationships, concrete construction, in a sense. Towards an end that you want to see occur.

*Keith:* It certainly can be being in a position of authority, I mean it can also be less subtle than that and it can be simply, using skill and tools that you have to effect your own means. To getting to where you want to go as an individual. Whether it be negotiating an agreement or just trying to resolve issues to get work done.

But this human relations discourse of power as individual agency was not the only perspective expressed. It often coexisted with other perspectives that acknowledged and addressed cultural and social differences.

**Cultural difference**

Culture may be thought of as organized sets of knowledge that are shared widely through a bounded social group. This concept of tightly organized patterns of practice, and a coherent meaning system, views social processes as ultimately orderly and harmonious. In this popular and longstanding discourse, culture operates as a marker for different social norms.

Having previously worked with aboriginal people in the north, both Dina and Keith knew that differences in intercultural communication would influence their negotiations. Dina adjusted her negotiation style with NNES to accommodate her understandings of cultural difference.

*Dina:* Nan, her approach is different. And I know there's cultural, what do we call it, plays of culture that come into it. It's like silence, not a lot of communication. It's her personality type but it's also cultural.
The intention of the ITS project assumed that remote First Nations learners were different, and may require distinctive supports for on-line learning.

*Samuel:* We were also conscious, and probably Keith infused this perspective, I think he was very sensitive to it, which was he would have a group of First Nations students, coming from a different background, in terms of culture and in terms of educational experience, etc., and therefore needed to be looking at ways and means of supporting them.

But much of the program planning did not take these ideas of difference into account. The online version of the course developed for northern use did not address cultural differences in terms of content, design, or web interface. Dina and Ethel knew that aboriginal students had to tangle with a slow-moving bureaucracy to access educational funding, but felt unable to postpone the course offerings due to the ITS deadline. At the end of the project, both planners thought that the partnership and program planning processes had suffered by ignoring these practical cultural differences.

*Dina:* Within any type of project like this, we need to incorporate that relationship building, that respect of First Nations, their processing. This [project] didn't allow for that.

Like the discourse of human relations, the cultural difference discourse has been criticized for ignoring political dimensions of relations between social and cultural groups, reducing differences to superficial traits such as differing customs or social rules (Eisenhart, 2001). Dina confronted the limitations of this discourse when she questioned whether it was appropriate to focus any education program on a particular social group such as First Nations, as it implies that every other ethnic group would be able to request similar attention.

**Cultural politics**

Non-aboriginal and aboriginal northerners often told me that personal relationships were critical for aboriginal individuals, an observation supported by ethnographic research in the region (Helm, 1981).
Gary: The whole essence of the [First Nation] system is relationship. And whether that's in your house group, your family, your clan, it's all based on relationship, and how the person you're talking to fits into the extended picture.

But the aboriginal participants in the project did not frame their understandings about society with a human relations perspective alone. They employed a cultural politics discourse, which integrates an awareness of cultural difference with the recognition of social power relations. Cultural difference was accepted as a part of daily life. NNES programs often attempted to address differing social rules.

Ethel: First Nations people are hands-on learners. To sit in a classroom, and to go, hour after hour, with books and instructors, it's not how we learn. We do everything hands-on. I mean, our tradition is an oral tradition.

Debbie: I might like it [a First Nations COD class] better, because the people will be more laid back. It's hard to explain this in words, it's more the way it feels. We slip into a groove – and get along better. That's the way it is with any First Nations class.

But at NNES, staff and students knew that differences between cultural groups went beyond norms, rules and values. They lived with the political implications of cultural difference in everyday encounters, including tensions between distinct First Nations as well as deeply entrenched inequalities between aboriginal and non-aboriginal societies. The discourse of cultural politics was lived by aboriginal community members and NNES administrators.

Ethel: If you don't live in a rural community, if you don't live in a First Nations community, you have no ideas the obstacles we go through.

William: They say you can compete with the number of students that come out, whatever course they're training in. But when it all comes down to it, we're pushed off to the side. We are known as "those guys".

A NNES student spurned the new North College resource program because it had been created by a non-native from outside the region, and it represented different cultural values and ideas.

Debbie: Yes I know [the North College program]. It's controversial; there are different views about it. People [who offer the program] are coming in from the outside with a particular view that is different from the people who live here.
Some non-aboriginals in the project, including most North College staff, Keith, Peter, and myself, also took up a cultural politics discourse. A major finding in Peter’s final evaluation report engaged this discourse by recognizing the substandard education provided to aboriginal students throughout the north. This finding came as a surprise to many South College participants, who were unaware of the social implications of aboriginal cultural history.

**Core and periphery**

The core and periphery discourse is intimately associated with relations of power. It describes unequal, unjust, and exploitive political and economic relationships, including classical forms of colonialism (Collins, 2000). Marginalized groups sometimes develop an oppositional view from the periphery, a sense of solidarity that becomes a site of radical possibility and resistance (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000).

The central role of the educational institution and the peripheral role of its community partners and students were assumed in the proposal’s key phrase, “remote First Nations communities”. No one at South College explicitly questioned this assumption. South College controlled all development work on the course and virtual campus in the initial stages of the project. There were no community partners to take issue with South College's centralized control, as interested community groups were either awaiting funding approval or are negotiating their roles with South College's project manager.

*Samuel: North wasn't ever a necessary condition. When we were developing the proposal there were First Nations locally, that were interested. So it wasn't so much if they were south or north, it was more the “remoteness”.*

In this project, the discourse reinforced unequal relations between the urban south and a peripheral rural northern hinterland; a publicly funded academic institution and a lower status
non-profit education society; and dominant Canadian society and a subordinate aboriginal
group. The ITS funding was addressing a technology deficit in rural aboriginal groups, with
a veneer of partnership disguising a donor-receiver relationship.

South College participants seemed unaware of the power implications of this discourse,
which framed Committee members’ thinking right to the end of the project. But every
participant at North College spoke of the limitations of their peripheral northern rural
location, and their vulnerability to domination by a powerful centre, represented by South
College, with whom they must compete for students and associated funding.

Barb: I think that South College is a well-known and popular college. And North
College has been a small and struggling entity, and hasn't even met with a lot of
friendliness in its own territory, in many cases. And I'm thinking that, there was a lot
of that there. Don't let those buggers in. I really felt that. It really took me aback. I
have to tell you that. And I was really embarrassed and almost dreaded going back
to Dina with that picture. I don't think I ever said it to her.

North College staff and administrators perceived the potential for conflict with outside
institutions, and were determined to resist outsider domination. They responded to the core-
periphery discourse with a decentring strategy, by claiming their marginality as an important
site of resistance, and a source of strength.

Patricia: Community colleges, in rural parts of British Columbia, are struggling to
survive, basically, with the limited resources we receive. And so any kind of
employment, or opportunity that can come along, the colleges should have the right of
first refusal.

NNES participants took up this discourse in a different way. They did not claim their
strength came from a marginal position. Their discourse of cultural politics represented a
different world-view, which constructed a landscape of many cultural cores. The Hopetown
region is their Nation’s centre, the homeland for their people and their aspirations for self-
government. By locating NNES close to the core of their own nation, NNES staff perceived
themselves in a position of equality with planners in an institution central to another social
domain. Despite South College’s integral role in an education system that has long
dominated and oppressed northern First Nations, it offered programs and certification that
would serve NNES’ own goals. The First Nations students, most of whom held extensive
traditional knowledge and experience on the land, could gain access to alternative forms of
knowledge, and the credentials necessary to challenge provincial and federal government
hiring and policy. NNES did not resist South College activities, but welcomed its
involvement in their own project.

Territoriality

Don: All of a sudden, people get territorial.

Most North College administrators that I spoke with assumed that the South College
project was an incursion onto their own territory, an act of domination that they described as
“poaching”. Both Patricia and Don felt that South College had demonstrated a lack of
respect by disregarding the usual protocols of early communication and signed agreements.

Patricia: And from my perspective, the onus of responsibility is on South College, to
identify what resources are in the community, before jumping into something at the
invitation of a First Nations community. I could be Old School on that, but I have a
protocol agreement in my head, that you will respect geographical boundaries, and
we will respect each other’s work. We’re all public servants, we’re all public
institutions, and so I take offence to colleges just walking into each other’s territory.
Patricia distinguished respect for another’s territory from the core-periphery asymmetry of
power between the two colleges, by citing examples of territorial trespassing among northern
education organizations as a similar phenomenon.

“Turf” has been described as a significant issue in post-secondary environments, both
inside and outside organizations (Dotolo & Noftsinger Jr., 2002; Williams, 2002). It is
represented in language references to boundaries, trespassing, poaching, and territory. In
B.C., the college system was originally constructed on a regional basis, with different
colleges responsible for different areas (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986; Owen, 1996). With the growing ascendancy of a neoliberal education business discourse in the province, funding formulas have resulted in intensifying competition for full and part time students. The long tradition of competition between academic researchers now overlaps with economic competition between departments and organizations for core and development funding.

_Samuel: I think it can be unfortunate if publicly funded post-secondary institutions in BC tried to cannibalize each other’s territories. I think we have to work together, not against each other. We have enough challenges, without being competitors, the twenty-one or two of us that are colleges._

Barb did not originally take up the territorial discourse. When first contacted by Dina, she was a new employee unfamiliar with the discourses shared at North College. She welcomed the opportunity to work directly with Dina, but later came to understand and support the North College territorial perspective.

_Barb: Now I understand that I should be more protective of the area that this college covers in order for us to survive, I guess. And that it’s like a farmer growing carrots on my potato patch, or something like that . . . It's hard because this college is a community college and it's here to serve the community. And that's how it survives. Its survival depends on how well it does that. And I think that they are necessarily really protective of the area that they serve._

Barb told me that she had been come to accept her colleagues’ point of view, reframing her understanding of South College’s plans as a threat rather than as an ally working towards community empowerment.

_Barb: And that's been the biggest challenge in this college in the last three or four years, is to get us all to think we're working for one machine and working out of one machine._

But she accepted the discourse on her own terms, justifying the territorial discourse by linking it with core-periphery power differentials. She drew parallels between the college situation and the struggle of the northern community and local First Nations for self-determination.
Barb: I think that, maybe that's what those people who decided we shouldn't let South College in here were thinking. That we need to keep this power here, to do this ourselves. And I think that's the same thing that I see happening with the treaty office, empowerment, it can't be given . . . and I think that's what this college is looking for. Not power to overtake South College or power to overtake any other college.

Among First Nations participants, the territorial discourse was a geographical manifestation of cultural politics. They were not concerned about other organizations' poaching, but with the integrity of their rights to make decisions in their own land. Other First Nations were outsiders, and the powerful convergence of territory and cultural politics may have contributed to the withdrawal of the original First Nations partner before the project began.

Moore: My memory and my understanding is that the cooperation [as originally planned in the proposal document] didn't go particularly well, for a number of reasons. One was that, I think that there's a certain amount of territoriality that was involved, especially at a time when institutions like North College are under the gun from a budgetary point of view. There was also, I believe, a certain amount of distrust, both between First Nations, and between the First Nations and North College . . . Other nearby aboriginal groups, particularly, were not interested in any program that was being run on another Nation's land. That was the impression I got.

The territorial discourse operated between similar organizations, which claimed rights within a particular geographical area. It arose between North and South College, and may have influenced relations between First Nations at the beginning of the project.

**Partnership discourse and practices**

The positive discourse of partnership was shared among all of the partnering organizations, but was enacted differently in each relationship. Partnership practices of collaboration, cooperation, business arrangements, and boundary maintenance operated in the dynamic intersections of partnership, human relations, and boundary discourses.
Collaboration: Sharing power & inclusion

Collaborative practices are based on sharing power among participants. They are often associated with politicized boundary discourses, and may challenge social inequality through inclusion, developing trust relationships, and shared decision-making. Studies of participatory development document ways in which organizations from outside a community encourage collaboration through highly inclusive group processes, in which extensive discussions are undertaken with a widely representative range of community participants to identify problems, develop creative solutions, and decide upon actions (Chambers, 1997; Harper, 1996; Moseley, 1999).

In this project, participants who supported collaboration felt that actively sharing power was essential to partnership, within or between organizations. At North College, the new President Patricia was a strong advocate of inclusive decision-making among her staff, which Barb learned about soon after beginning her negotiations with Dina. Patricia extended the idea of inclusion beyond the college's borders, in her relationships among post-secondary education providers.

Patricia: I would never, in a million years, start offering a program in another town, without first discussing that with [the local college]. It's just a respectful thing I do.

All of the North College participants' ideas of partnership were dominated by collaboration, which they sometimes linked with concerns about local self-determination and power sharing.

Gary: I understand the importance, though, of the power sharing needed to create a successful program. So, ideally, well, it shouldn't be ideally, community members should be the driving force behind anything that gets delivered through education.

Patricia: [After the initial facility rental contract with South College], then we got into discussions of what we might help deliver, how might we participate, but it's backwards, right? And unfortunately, then, what you have, is you're starting the relationship from a place of distrust . . . You know, if you want to start working with
someone, you think you'd start the relationship off in a better way than that.

The original South College project proposal outlined collaborative practices that would support equality and democracy in relationships among organizations and with communities. Despite its strong presence in the grant contract, collaborative practices were rarely discussed in Committee meetings at South College. Inclusion was commonly practiced within the South College Science department, but Continuing Education practices varied from project to project. Original proposal writers Anne and Science participants Moore and Keith were committed to collaboration, but recognized that other approaches had come to dominate the project.

Anne: I had sort of expected, and maybe it still will happen, but that there would be a bit more power in the community, right? Because they would be these connections, and linkages, and there would be a bit more of a say.

Moore: A partnership is where you've got two peoples who sit down and agree to provide a portion of a project, and to support it, and to be involved. I don't think we ever got to that stage . . . The ideal would be collaboration. I think the waters get very muddied by a necessity for all institutions these days, A), to bring in revenue to cover their costs, and B), to meet FTE targets.

As the partnership negotiations developed, collaborative practices were effectively superceded by cooperation and business arrangements. Peter felt the absence of an inclusive approach had a negative impact on the northern negotiations.

Peter: The decision that was based on just a few dollars here, to not go up there in person, by Dina, not to go up there in person to talk to people, cause she could have brought a few people together, to the table, at one time, negotiate it as a group, and then had a much more open conversation. But, at a distance, you're connecting with individuals, you know? . . . I mean it's a small community, it's a small community here too, but it's magnified up there. It's not that it causes rifts, but it magnifies any rifts that are already there. And misperceptions, and misconceptions of what's going on.

Cooperation: Working relationships

Continuing Education participants at South College articulated an idea of partnership as working towards a common goal, not as sharing power. This form of partnership could only
develop as partners work together over time to implement a common project, and gradually built a trust relationship. Continuing educators worked cooperatively within South College, and sometimes to joint program planning with other organizations.

*Dina:* Working with my colleagues, I feel, is like a partnership, because we contribute, we support each other, we cover for each other

Dina questioned the existence of partnership in the ITS project, because there had been no opportunity to cooperate together on program delivery.

*Dina:* I place a lot of weight on follow through and delivery. Because, quite honestly - this is nailing it - a lot of the partnership is crystallized during the delivery. And yes, they say you start off and you have your partnership agreement etc. But it's one thing to have an agreement and actually feel that you're working in partnership. That delivery phase is the most critical phase, because it's about the learner, it's about the sequencing, it's about the overall coordination etc. And that's where you become tight.

Like other planners in her department, Dina’s usual practice was to maintain full control in contract training activities, though she sometimes shared decision-making with instructors or cooperating organizations. When working under pressure to meet short-term obligations and external funding deadlines like those of the ITS, she opted to work in dyads in which decisions could be made swiftly, rather than taking part in unwieldy group processes.

Cooperative practices framed the relationship between the two northern organizations.

NNES considered cooperation to be a form of partnership.

*Ethel:* And I know North College is great, I know they offer great programs, they've got great instructors . . . And we've been in partnership with them, for a lot of things also. We kind of scratch each others' back a lot of time, we let them use our facility, then they let us use their facility, and so, it's not been negative, that's for sure.

But the North College participants, who expected partnership to be collaborative, interpreted the relationship otherwise.

*Barb:* So we don't really do much with her [Nan] . . . I like Nan a lot and we personally work together quite well. And she allowed us to run an outdoor power equipment technology program in a shop down there. We've done a few trade-offs. I feel like we still owe her stuff for letting us do that . . . So we have a working
relationship. It's not exactly the kind that we'd like to see but it works, to a degree.

Business arrangements

All of the participants were familiar with business arrangements for partnership. Science faculty had experience with various contract-based partnerships with the government and profit-making sectors. Continuing Education staff regularly constructed partnerships within a business framework, which they felt was an appropriate and positive form of relationship.

Dina: With NNES, it's problem-solve together. You're going through the pains, the challenges, the good times, you're both contributing towards it. And the contributions are, if you had to measure it out, probably are close to fifty-fifty.

In a business framework, where partners bargain to achieve their own interests using terms like contracts, trade-offs, exchange, cost-benefit, and providing services. Each partner's contributions can be measured, with a mutual sharing of costs and benefits represented as fifty-fifty.

Anne: I've noticed in another project we're involved in, we've got a partner, an industry partner, and some people tend to perceive that the definition of partner is different. Like, fifty-fifty partners, right? As opposed to, we're doing this together for the good of both of us.

Dina usually used service contracts for arrangement between organizations. Service agreements could be signed by the head of a department or by the head of an organization. They represented more of a business transaction, in which the signers agree to provide specific services or materials. The business arrangements approach contrasted with the Memorandum of Understanding and articulation agreements preferred by college faculty members. For North College staff, a Memorandum was an essential first step in partnership because it represented cooperative or collaborative relations between institutions as a whole, negotiated between equal partners.
Dina and NNES staff were very familiar with service agreements, which supported their business arrangements for partnership. Dina was ambivalent about whether the relationship with NNES would be considered a partnership in the eyes of the South College executive.

*Dina: It's actually more of a contract. And it says, NNES will do this, and South College will do this . . . If we were to ask the executive, well because we have that contract, they would see it more as a service agreement. So, they wouldn't see it necessarily as a partnership.*

But NNES planners felt differently, and had no doubts about the status of the relationship.

*Ethel: We’re definitely a partnership. And, we can say collaboration also. I mean I also deal with [another college], there’s no bending with them? It’s their way, which has been an interesting thing for us, because NNES has always had control [in partnerships]. We purchase curriculum, but we have control of everything.*

NNES created their partnerships through contracts with education providers, or through exchanges for mutual gain.

*Dina: [NNES] saw us, as the body or the organization, it’s our program, we are coming forward. I believe they envisioned it was our role? To do the planning. And they, as far as overall planning, are very much like us, driven by finances. And the reality is that we plan around where the funding is! It’s not always where the paramount need or concern is. It’s around where the funding is . . . So it felt like I was more a training provider for X and Y. So it didn’t feel like I was partner for the whole.*

NNES planners felt they had control during the development and writing of a partnership contract, and expected some degree of involvement in decision-making afterwards in specific domains, particularly in program delivery. The only differences that Nan and Ethel recognized among their partnering relationships were matters of degree, such as the degree of provider flexibility in response to NNES requests. All of their negotiations took place within the business arrangements discourse. Some critical analysts in the literature of higher education have questioned the political implications of partnerships constructed in the business discourse (Barnsley, 1995). They argue that these relationships reproduce social
inequalities, offering aboriginal and other minority organizations few benefits to justify the high material and political costs.

But the coexistence of multiple partnership discourses and practices in this project suggests an alternative interpretation. By strategically positioning itself as a partner with the colleges, NNES is claiming a stronger bargaining position than it would have as a client, consumer, or mere purchaser of educational services. All partnerships benefit from association with the broad ideological assumption that partnership is a good thing. Even though NNES partnerships were constructed through business arrangements, simply being a partner had symbolic value, and implied that the relationship exists beyond that of a simple business transaction. This symbolic value endured after the ITS project ended, when NNES felt that the partnering relationship could continue for other programs.

**Boundary maintenance practices**

The partnership literature argues that much of the competition and defensiveness between organizations derives from resource dependence, and that a careful approach to financing may avoid these issues (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002). Competition for resources was an issue in the north, where funding sources were limited and students were recruited from a small local population. But in this project, material concerns were inextricably linked with political relations and boundary keeping.

*Lynette: What was your understanding of why South College wanted to do this project up here in the first place?*

*Barb: I just thought that they were expanding their borders and saw an opportunity.
Or what they thought would be an opportunity, and it could have been, except we don't fit the picture.*

After Dina’s first attempt to organize a COD course with Barb at North College, the North College faculty and administration intervened to stop further arrangements. They perceived
South College as an unexpected intruder, and actively resisted their incursion onto North College territory. North College explicitly maintained boundaries with South College as a political act, to resist domination by a similar institution perceived as more powerful through a decentring strategy.

Friction was also present between North College and NNES, the only two post-secondary organizations in the Hopetown region. North College regularly made attempts to collaborate in planning programs with NNES, but they were consistently rebuffed despite their friendly personal relationships.

*Barb*: And I go down and visit Nan [at NNES] and she sometimes comes up here . . . [Nan] doesn’t trust the college much . . . And Nan is at this point considering that she doesn’t want to work with this college in particular but I know this college is no different from any other college.

*Ethel*: Coming from a small town, we’re friends with people up there [at North College]. I don’t know competition, but there’s a competitiveness . . . It’s not been negative, that’s for sure. But we are the only two post-secondary facilities in this community.

North College was interested in collaborating with NNES, but their community oriented relations were mediated through an expert needs discourse and marketing practices. NNES supported its independence and survival in its home region by maintaining a clear and visible separation from the nearby campus of North College.

During partnership activities, community-based organizations risk becoming distanced from their own communities, by shifting their priorities and activities to align with their larger institutional partners or to construct a shared set of beliefs and practices (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002). Like the cautious defensive patrolling of a national boundary zone, NNES maintained its boundaries to guard its independence, as well as to support its explicit political purpose of self-determination in relation to the dominant Canadian society. NNES participants did not view themselves as subordinate to other educational organizations, and
were willing to work with mainstream organizations towards their own ends. They did occasional trade-offs with the local campus while regularly entering into partnership agreements with more distant colleges.

NNES engaged with distant colleges on a regular basis, obtaining knowledge and credentials required by the Canadian system. They actively maintained a distinct organizational identity by using the business formalities of partnership agreements to avoid potential cooptation by a dominant system, on a symbolic as well as a practical level. Boundary relations with outside organizations were peripheral in nature. Nan maintained a symbolic distance from South College during the partnership negotiations, permitting access but not full participation through collaborative working relations. She rarely made contact with Dina, and only did so when it was absolutely necessary.

_Dina: Nan would see that it's my role to make sure everything was in place. And everything is going to be working hunky-doo. I couldn't push her and call her and say, "Got problems with North College, just need your feedback". What I had to do was casually ask, "OK, what are your plans?" And it took probably a month to get an answer back on, "What are your plans."

Nan expected Dina to organize the details of the agreement, particularly any involvement with North College. NNES only became involved in program planning during the implementation phase.

NNES had developed strategies for operating in a permeable boundary zone between conflicting interests. These practices maintained their autonomy while gaining from a businesslike exchange with Canadian organizations.
Culture and power dynamics in the partnership narrative

The overlaps, intersections, conflicts and complementarities among the diverse cultural elements presented in this and the previous chapter provide another reading of critical dynamics in the partnership narrative.

**ITS and South College: Ruling relations**

The Instructional Technologies Section’s Guideline text determined the initial shape of the South College project, and their reporting requirements regulated much of the project’s development. But the Guidelines were characterized by contradictions. ITS funding goals were based on core-periphery assumptions about power relations, providing funding for interventions based in a community service discourse emphasizing democratic goals of reducing inequities, assisting workers, and forging partnerships. The ITS encouraged the considerable flexibility necessary for successful partnerships in the project design, which could adopt any form of partnership including collaborative, cooperative, or business practices. But particular ITS Guidelines worked against collaboration by separating and constructing differences between the core applicant, their partners, and the learners. Learners were categorized as target audiences, which the applicant was asked to identify and quantify. Thinking of learners as targets assumes that they are excluded from participation in the development process. This contradiction was maintained by the Guidelines’ focus on organizations, which eliminated the possibility of collaboration with a loose community network, a coalition of learners, or others. The requirement for a partner’s signature recognized the importance of partner buy-in, but there were no requirements for inclusive decision-making.
The South College proposal incorporated the core-periphery assumptions of the ITS guidelines, and employed the discourses of community service and collaboration to set democratic goals that would be supported by community-oriented and inclusive practices. But those goals were undermined by bureaucratic practices built into the ITS funding policies and procedures. The quarterly reports required in the terms of the contract sent a clear message that the ITS was concerned with accountability and fiscal control. They operated as a constraint, restricting the broad creativity and responsiveness that are essential to successful partnership development (J. M. Brinkerhoff, 2002). Detailed rationales were required for every alteration, implying that any change was a deviation from the approved course. The report forms focused on tangible products of the project known as ‘deliverables’, which did not include partnership development. Dina and the evaluator Peter honestly complied with the funders’ requirements for the quarterly and final reports. But they skilfully used bureaucratic language to strategically focus on certain information to present the project in a positive light.

Bureaucratic practices enabled the ITS to dominate the program through the discursive formation of texts. Though the expressed funding goals supported democratization and community service, the reporting procedures supported unequal relations between the funder ITS, the sponsor South College, and any other participants. They supported a shift in emphasis from partnership development to the accomplishment of more concrete project objectives.

South College dynamics

Most of the cultural discourses and practices described in this chapter were present in discussions at South College, despite their apparent contradictions. Some participants took
up the discourses more consistently than others. The Continuing Education department strongly supported business discourses of education and partnership, cultural difference and centre-periphery assumptions. Other Committee members, including academic faculty and the evaluators, more often articulated a commitment to community service, collaboration in partnership, and an awareness of cultural politics and territoriality. As the project unfolded, the ambiguity of the learner-centred discourse enabled a shift in discourse and practice away from community service and collaboration, and supported business discourses while restricting conversations about collaboration to internal college relationships.

The distinct communities of practice formed by academic faculty or continuing educators pursued different goals, were organized with different roles and affiliations, and were regulated by different policies and procedures. Some of these differences were beginning to blur, as the Science faculty became more concerned with business discourses and generating revenue, and Continuing Education became more like an academic department in its hierarchical structure. Despite these shifts, their everyday practices had not changed substantially. The academic emphasis on long-term planning contrasted with continuing education’s pragmatic and short-term approach, and each group supported different partnership formalities. The subtle exclusion of Science participants from certain decisions may have been a tacit form of boundary maintenance by Continuing Education, in the face of a higher status academic department.

As the project encountered one difficulty after another, creative satisficing kept the project going. But it also transformed the project, through a sequence of small decision-less decisions. Although the Committee had imagined a serious collaborative relationship with its partners, institutional arrangements either did not support or actively worked against
collaborative practices both inside and outside the College. Dina and Keith were expected to develop the partnership off the side of their desks, with minimal resources. Dina was unable to justify the time required to visit Hopetown to develop a closer partnership relationship, or to share operational decisions.

With Continuing Education in charge of the project, their pragmatic practices, bureaucratic skills, and business arrangements approach held sway. Simpler business contracts were used instead of partnership agreements, and the academic faculty was pressed to become more flexible, and to adapt some of their fixed academic standards in service of the short-term project goal of meeting the ITS funding requirements. The discourse of cultural difference supported by Continuing Education dominated planning activities up to the close of the project, when the evaluator’s report introduced cultural politics in its analysis of aboriginal education.

At North College

A different dynamic emerged at North College, where the academic community of practice dominated partnership negotiations. All the staff members shared a strong commitment to community service, collaboration, and territoriality, and they collectively challenged and resisted centre-periphery assumptions. Though the principal, Barb, was a long-time resident of Hopetown, she was a newcomer to North College and was at first peripheral to the academic community. She was not only learning new practices, Barb also had to learn new meaning systems represented in shared discourses, which profoundly reshaped her understanding of inter-college relationships.
North College developed their own ideas about community needs and interests, based upon a form of needs assessment that distanced them from the local First Nations community that continued to distrust their programs.

At NNES

NNES was a community-based organization, which responded to what their own community members said they wanted. Their planning and partnership practices were in large part identical to standard continuing education practices, emphasizing short-term goals and contractual formalities. Their strategic use of business practices, including marketing and contractual agreements, were used to support community service and cultural politics. They insisted upon flexibility and evaded bureaucratic regulation whenever possible. NNES regularly applied for and received government and foundation grants, with considerable paperwork and reporting requirements. But the government funding which enabled their participation in the partnership placed few restrictions on spending, unlike the ITS grant to South College.

NNES relationships with colleges and service providers were regulated by formal agreements and procedures. But Nan, the NNES director, seemed less concerned with supporting bureaucratic practices in this project than with avoiding them.

_Dina_: There is one document that Nan never signed. And it’s a document that ITS needs and I’m praying that they never ask for it... I asked for it four times, my sense is that Nan is just too busy. So, it wasn’t a priority.

NNES was organized to support its extensive partnership activities. Ethel handled partnership and program planning as part of her regular job, rather than off the side of her desk. Herculean efforts were not required to negotiate and implement partnerships, which were handled within the organization’s routine planning processes. Though Nan’s
longstanding personal relationships with Dina formed the basis of their cooperative engagement, she minimized contact except when required.

At NNES, participants reframed core-periphery relations through their dominant discourse of cultural politics. They conceptualized society not as a single centre but as multiple and distinct cores, which could benefit from collaboration with others. NNES participants integrated apparently contradictory discourses. They strategically articulated a discourse of collaborative engagement while actively embracing the business arrangements perspective of partnership. In a similar fashion, NNES strategically integrated both educational discourses of community service and education business, but unlike South College they did not privilege a learner-centred discourse over their active commitment to community self-determination.

NNES administrators were willing to construct business partnerships with non-aboriginal institutions from outside their region, in order to obtain the skills and credentials of the mainstream Canadian society. To further their cultural political goals of self-determination, they strategically chose to engage with distant organizations using formal business arrangements. NNES selected programs offering widely recognized credentials that would not be vulnerable to the discrimination against customized and inferior aboriginal programs.

**Troubled negotiations**

The business arrangements that characterized the original partnership negotiations between South and North College were seen as exploitive and exclusive by North College faculty, who were thinking in the unequal terms of a core-periphery relationship. Barb soon joined her colleagues in defending the college boundary by using newly learned bureaucratic practices, which masked their resistance in the language of facility rentals. Catalyzed by
South College’s incursion into their territory, North College undertook a needs assessment to construct its own community-oriented interpretation of local needs.

NNES wanted to cooperate with North College, not to collaborate. Its director Nan preferred to maintain a distinct boundary between their organizations, regularly resisting North College’s efforts to construct collaborative power-sharing relationships. Despite its geographical proximity, North College represented an outsider institution in the cultural political discourse that Nan shared with most members of her First Nation. NNES actively resisted domination or cooptation by its local college by maintaining a friendly but arm’s length relationship, limiting their cooperation to ad hoc exchanges.

Culture and agency

Discourses did not operate as stable assumptions in the partnership, like a frame factor that constrains actions in critical planning theory. Instead, multiple and contradictory discourses operated simultaneously, and were taken up in different ways by different organizations and individuals. Discourses framed what people thought and believed could be done, but they also provided alternatives that could be selected, accepted, or rejected.

Each event in the partnership story had multiple meanings when interpreted from different collective and individual perspectives. The significance of those meanings to participants was clearly revealed when individual understandings changed. For example, Barb began by enthusiastically cooperating with Dina in the project. But Barb came to support her new community’s practice of boundary maintenance, as she developed an understanding of dominant discourses at North College.

The coexistence of multiple discourses provided many options for participants to create their own meanings within and among discourses, as individuals and as members of
communities within organizational boundaries. Conflict between discourses within one organization, such as between community service and education business at South College, could be reframed and reconciled in another organizational context, as they were at NNES.

Practices were not simply problem-solving activities, but were shaped by ideas of what was right and proper, ideas which were informed by cultural discourses. Although the likelihood of forming a partnership was influenced by the presence of champions, flexibility, and pre-existing compatible or contradictory practices, it was complicated by intersecting discourses and partnership practices including boundary maintenance. In some communities and organizations the dominant discourses informed practices, while in other groups participants were aware of pluralistic discourses, and took up different discourses in different situations.

This cultural analysis of partnership development offers a holistic frame that integrates individual understandings with broad social structures and relations. Discourses and practices shaped individual ways of thinking and acting, even as those forms were being constructed by individuals' thoughts and actions. Cultural elements were not apolitical, but were intimately associated with relations of power.
8 UNDERSTANDING PARTNERSHIP

This multi-site ethnography explores a complicated and dynamic process of education partnership development. I have examined the motivations and understandings of people involved in a three-year process, who strategically engaged in partnering activities within and between multiple organizations and communities. Their work took place in a boundary zone of distinct but often overlapping interests, practices, social structures, and cultural discourses. My multi-faceted analytical perspective has traced political, cultural, and social dimensions in partnership development, linking participants' experiences and understandings with deductive and inductive analyses, and with empirical and theoretical literatures.

In this chapter, I return to my original research questions:

- What are the political, social and cultural dimensions of this post-secondary partnership project?
- How did participants understand the partnership, and how did their understandings and activities affect partnering relationships?
- How does partnership development influence power and social relations?

I begin by considering the value of my analytical frameworks for illuminating political, social, and cultural dimensions of the partnership. I assess them separately before considering how they worked together like facets of a crystal to illuminate participant understandings, to construct more comprehensive understandings of the partnership process. I then “crystallize” their interpretations in a summary that addresses culture, power and social relations, and the role of individual agency in social reproduction and cultural production.

My analysis and interpretations suggest practical ideas and insights for improving future partnership development processes, and argues for a critical awareness of interests,
boundaries, and the implications of cultural assumptions and practices. It makes unique contributions to practice and theory in the fields of planning and partnership, though these are limited by the study's scope and nature. I have concluded with suggestions about future research possibilities, and reflections on my personal practice.

Valuing multiple facets of analysis

This partnership process involved a series of developing relationships that extended across and inside organizational boundaries. To capture the many partial perspectives and levels of meaning involved in partnership, and to examine their permutations and effects, I undertook a multi-faceted analytical approach that interpreted and reinterpreted the partnership narrative. My reflections on the analysis are shaped by two specific research questions:

- How does each analytical perspective make sense of partnership development?
- How do multiple perspectives interact to provide new theoretical and practical insights about the partnership process?

Participants analyzed the project through personal perspectives that operated like lenses to focus or refract their attention. Participant perspectives emphasized action and agency, and the critical role of personal relationships and trust for beginning and sustaining the partnership negotiations. They rarely acknowledged how their partnering activities may have been informed by assumptions about education and society, and by their social locations.

I have turned the analytical crystal to examine the partnership through other frameworks, a critical planning analysis concerned with social and political context, and an integrated cultural analysis that focuses on cultural dynamics that have received little attention in the partnership and planning literatures. Though each facet of the crystal sharpens the view on a particular angle of the partnership development, the presence of multiple facets provides a deeper and more complex, comprehensive, and nuanced understanding of the process.
The political planning perspective

The deductive analysis of critical planning theory is useful for identifying interests, frame factors, and patterns of negotiations during partnership development. Other critical studies of partnership have emphasized social reproduction as an outcome of partnership. But this critical planning analysis reveals the role of meta-negotiations as a source of resistance.

A goal of critical planning theory is to make planners more skilled at anticipating how power in an organization will affect negotiations between interests (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). When I began my analysis, I was enthusiastic about how a critical planning framework could improve partnership practice. But I found that it was more useful for analyzing a completed project, when the dominant interests and patterns of negotiation were already documented, than for anticipating which of the multiple and often contradictory interests would eventually prevail. The critical program planning framework claims to offer a form of certainty for planners, with its rational assumptions that an individual planner with critical and ethical awareness and well-honed negotiation skills will succeed in her or his efforts. But this partnership story is a reminder of the complexities of planning work in a social world of shifting interests and frames. The shared goals and interests visible from a political planning perspective may not be sufficient for developing a partnership, which is shaped and constrained by intersecting discourses, communities of practice, and boundary activities.

This study extends the planning framework, by suggesting that frame factors operate as catalysts and enablers as well as constraints, and that their visibility is influenced by participants' social location. Social location influenced each participant's social and political understandings, enhancing or obscuring awareness of structural inequalities. In this
partnership process, both frame factors and interests were more fluid and shifting in nature than they have been portrayed in critical planning studies. The pluralistic interests held by individuals and communities within each partnering organization offered strategic opportunities during negotiations.

The critical framework makes sense of the narrative by emphasizing individual agency in the context of a social and political structure. But its simplicity comes with a cost: It disregards other dimensions of power active in negotiations, and the shifting and cluttered intersections of individual and organizational interests that characterize partnership work.

The cultural perspective

While the political planning view is useful for tracking negotiations and relationships of power, the cultural facet of the crystal provides additional insights. It illuminates power dimensions hidden in shared cultural understandings and social practices, such as the ruling relations mediated by texts. Seen through this facet, power is not fixed and destructive but flows through relationships and across boundaries to produce different effects. Power was productive for those maintaining organizational and community boundaries, and was sometimes productive for those developing partnership plans.

A cultural analysis looks at human relationships, agency and interests from a different angle, to probe the underlying power relations as they are represented in discourse and enacted in practice. It is not concerned with causality, but with the dynamics and effects of interactions between patterns and practices as they are lived and experienced in a particular time and place. The practices identified in this study were meaningful to those involved, as they closely correspond with participant explanations and understandings. Cultural discourses were rarely visible to participants, but did correspond with other social and
cultural analyses of Canadian and aboriginal societies. Discourses about education and society informed everyone's partnering activities and influenced their perception of frame factors and common interests. Identifying cultural elements through inductive analysis requires considerable time and effort to identify deeply held and often unconscious cultural beliefs and assumptions. Cultural analysis describes complexities and possibilities, and does not offer a practical framework to assist planners or potential partners in their work. But it contributes to practice through the findings of studies like this one.

The nuanced findings of the cultural perspective acknowledge complexity, recognizing cultural production and possibilities for social transformation as well as the reproduction of structure and cultural elements. Its analysis of structure and culture in this partnership links human understanding with choice, and recognizes the dynamics of agency and structure, which are each constituted by the other.

Towards a deeper understanding of partnership

Each facet of my analytical crystal has strengths and weaknesses, and makes sense of the partnership narrative in a different way. The political planning and cultural facets complement each other, and together provide a more comprehensive and integrated framework for understanding political dynamics. The critical planning framework is more practical, but cultural analysis helps to make sense of how frames and interests are mobilized, and attends to the intricacies of text mediation and partnership processes. A cultural perspective acknowledges diverse social locations and perceives alternatives to dominant assumptions.

My crystalline analysis leads to new insights about intersections and overlaps among social and cultural processes. Instead of accepting a reified structural analysis from a critical
perspective, it directs attention towards the dynamic influences of cultural, social, and political elements. Partnering relationships within and between post-secondary institutions are seen to operate both as a means of social and cultural reproduction, and as a site of cultural production for challenging ideologies and inequalities. Instead of perceiving resistance and defensiveness as barriers to partnership, they may be interpreted as boundary maintenance practices that require respect and understanding. In this project, boundary practices were associated with contrasting discourses, which produced different effects linked with the participants' social locations. The core-and-periphery discourse that informed resistance at North College significantly impeded South College business partnership efforts, while NNES' cultural politics discourse and its core-and-core interpretation promoted South College partnership even as it blocked North College collaborations. Within South College, a learner-centred discourse facilitated partnership activities between Science and Continuing Education by accommodating differing dynamics between community service and education business discourses.

Just as power relationships may be altered through meta-negotiation, cultural elements provide a means for transformation through agency. The coexistence of many loosely associated discourses leads to intersections of meaning systems and practices, which provide paths for resistance and creative shifts in power and practice. Individuals and collectivities involved in this partnership strategically mobilized discourses and practices, to shift and potentially transform relations of power.

Culture and power in post-secondary partnership

*Culture and power are intertwined in the social world, and are visible in an institutional setting where diverse groups interact and seek full enfranchisement and social justice under conditions of equality (Rosaldo, 1993, p. xix).*
This project took place in a neoliberal provincial environment, where reduced public funding pressured colleges to generate more revenues (Owen, 1996). Business discourses and market concerns dominated discourse and practice. It is not surprising that this partnership process reproduced hegemony through business discourses of education and partnership, and core-periphery assumptions. Though the democratic community discourse was present, it was muted by business discourses that were supported by post-secondary practices of bureaucracy and needs assessment. South College’s satisficing response to the overwhelming bureaucratic pressure to meet ITS deadlines incrementally shifted South College’s focus from democratic collaborative goals towards the time-efficiency represented in business discourses and practices. The shift was bolstered by the requirement that the partnership be handled as an extra duty off the side of the desk of the major participants. Ruling relations, mediated through the ITS grant proposal and contract, eventually dominated conflicting local interests when participants holding lower positions in the college hierarchy activated textual constraints as a frame factor.

Northern participants actively took up counter-hegemonic discourses and practices, their awareness and willingness to challenge social inequities heightened by their social location. Both northern organizations actively maintained boundaries in the face of the organizations they perceived to be in a more dominant position, or even a potential threat to their continued existence.

At first glance, many of these findings appear to support a Foucault-inspired discourse analysis, which assumes power relations are embedded in discourses that inevitably serve to regulate action. Texts such as the ITS guidelines and grant contract operated as discursive formations to support relations of ruling. But this form of analysis is troubled by other
findings, such as NNES' strategic use of business arrangements as a form of resistance to domination. Instead of supporting hegemony, business discourses and practices were deployed by NNES to maintain their boundaries and autonomy, effectively supporting their cultural political awareness and community-based social activism. At North College, a boundary-crossing collaborative discourse informed inclusive efforts in their region. But that discourse conflicted with college needs assessment practices that marginalized explicit local needs, and complicated college relations with local aboriginal communities.

A plurality of interests, discourses, and practices coexisted in all three organizations. Loose linkages between them provided options for their strategic mobilization, while power relations among independent organizations could be shifted through complicated meta-negotiations. Champions could work against organizational norms, and both continuing education and academic practices had the potential to support either or both democratization and marketization. Even practices that appear to be tightly integrated with hegemonic discourses, and regularly operate to sustain or reproduce power relations, held the potential to transform relations through a creative and productive form of agency. For NNES, multiple discourses provided options for producing more socially just relations with other organizations, to meet their political goals of transforming individual lives through education, and supporting their Nations' self-determination.

I ideas for enhancing partnership practice

Many practical suggestions to enhance partnership practice flow from this study, which confirms, refines, and extends findings in the pragmatic partnership literature. Before undertaking partnership negotiations based on mutual interests, an assessment of potential partners' practices may identify contradictions that may constrain or prevent partnership
development. Such an assessment should recognize distinct and overlapping practices within each organization or community of practice, as well as between organizations and communities. But compatible practices are not enough to ensure success. During the partnership negotiations, flexible practices will support development, and a champion may be required to facilitate the process. Critical scrutiny and broad discussion of the mediating role of formal texts will facilitate decisions about whether, how, or which texts are activated.

Partnerships are developed through a complicated process involving multiple participants, organizations, and interests. Even when time and resources are limited it is valuable to look beyond a pragmatic analysis and the familiar human relations perspective. Meta-negotiations that address power relationships and constraints are as significant and necessary as substantive discussions. An awareness of the pluralistic and sometimes contradictory interests of potential partners will provide options for strategic action.

Pragmatic planning practices can be effective for developing partnerships, and the critical planning framework on its own can enhance planning and partnership work. But the cultural framework used in this study offers another valuable enhancement to partnership and to planning work. When working between or within organizations, participants may encounter invisible intersections among the social and cultural processes that shape perspectives, relationships, and actions. A critical awareness of the pluralistic discourses and practices that inform decision-making will enhance understanding and practice. As this study reveals, standard post-secondary practices such as needs assessment and satisficing may have diverse and profound effects in relation to participants’ understandings and locations in the social and academic hierarchy. Greater vigilance may be necessary for participants and
organizations with greater status, authority, and resources, in order to recognize others’
standpoints and discourses.

Boundary maintaining practices have not been recognized in the literatures of partnership
and planning. Yet they critically affected every boundary encounter in this partnership
process. Instead of focusing exclusively on mutual goals and interests, I recommend that
potential partners be aware and respectful of differences and boundary issues, and work with
difference instead of against it. This recommendation holds for boundary relations between
communities of practice within organizations, and between distinct organizations. It is
particularly meaningful in relations between the provincial education system and aboriginal
organizations, where a legacy of disrespect closely associated with European ethnocentrism
has long been used to justify intervention in the lives of aboriginal peoples. Post-secondary
aboriginal education must address historical inequities in its processes as well as its goals.

Multiple facets of analysis can assist in guiding planning and partnership development, by
making sense of these cultural and political dynamics. Just as artists re-imagine the world so
others can see new possibilities, the use of multiple approaches to assess the situation may
suggest creative strategies for moving forward. Although it may be difficult to undertake a
thorough cultural analysis given the limited time and resources often available to partnership
initiatives, cultural elements identified in this study may be recognizable in other post-
secondary environments, although their interactions will differ. Participants in this study felt
that they had little time available for critical reflection, but they often made decisions based
on collective analysis rather than unspoken assumptions. The presence of an outside
evaluator and my own research activities supported their critically reflective practice. This
suggests that organizations should provide support, in terms of time and expertise, for a multifaceted analysis to accompany any significant partnership development.

Unique contributions of this study

As partnerships continue to gain popularity and bask in the glow of a positive rhetoric, empirical research can play an important role in assessing the implications of partnership practices. My study contributes to this empirical project with five significant findings:

- Multiple analytical perspectives, including critical planning and cultural frameworks, can make sense of local partnership development activities and their relationship to broader cultural, political, and social processes.
- Individuals and organizations can strategically transform relationships through meta-negotiation and strategic mobilization of interests, discourses, and practices, even when potential partners have access to more resources or authority.
- Relationships, assumptions, and activities within partnering organizations are as important to partnership development as those between organizations.
- Partnership is a form of boundary work involving complicated, dynamic, and fluid interactions across differences, which may reproduce relations at the same time as they produce new possibilities for political, cultural and social change.
- Maintaining boundaries can be as critical to partnership work as crossing boundaries.

My unique contribution to partnership studies is embedded in my methodology, which provides a radical departure from other partnership studies. I have not set out to study partnership success or failure, but to document the trials, tribulations, and successes of partnership work. I have reflexively scrutinized my own roles and relationships so that the reader may better assess the credibility of my observations and analysis. And I have not been limited by the parameters of previous partnership studies that emphasize conditions, interests, behaviours, and structures. Instead, my use of multi-site ethnography and construction of a multidisciplinary analytical framework focuses attention on dynamic
interactions in a complex web of shared beliefs and meanings, motivations, interests, patterned behaviours and social relations.

My findings deepen and expand understandings of partnership and planning by identifying cultural elements and political dynamics that are critical to a development process. I have discovered that the boundary zone of partnership is fertile ground for developing theory and practice, and for revealing new possibilities in political, cultural, and social relations.

... borderlands should be regarded not as analytically empty transitional zones but as sites of creative cultural production that should be investigated. (Rosaldo, 1993)

Limitations of the study

This study has many limitations. It is bounded by a particular partnership project in a particular time and province, and involves three specific organizations. The data for the ethnography were limited by my access to the research sites. I spent considerably less time visiting northern participants than those at South College, where I was both an insider and an outsider. At South College I was able to spend more time with Dina and Peter, and developed closer working and research relationships with them than with other participants. My brief visits to NNES and North College limited my data collection and its analysis. Because of the short time I spent with northern participants, my research relationships differed and I remained an outsider and an academic observer. With less data, I was unable to portray the complex dynamics within each of the northern organizations.

All of the participants were very generous in sharing their time and thoughts with me during the data collection phase, but chose not to participate in analysis by responding to their interview transcripts or to my preliminary analyses. I have not yet discussed the
meaningfulness of my findings to their future partnership or planning work, but I will meet with them after the thesis is completed.

I do not presume that my findings from this project are transferable to all other partnerships. But by presenting detailed descriptions of activities and their context, I hope the reader will be able to compare this case with other partnership development processes. By linking this study with other analytical frameworks and partnership studies, I am contributing toward building theory in partnership and program planning.

I have developed my findings and recommendations by examining social, political, and cultural dimensions through a pluralistic analytical crystal. But the surfaces of that crystal are neither entirely transparent nor all encompassing. Though my findings expand knowledge about partnership and planning, they still represent a partial view shaped by an academic approach and my own disciplinary understandings and practices. This analysis has been shaped by my familiarity with anthropological theory, and the fields of adult and higher education. If I had undertaken this research for a non-academic purpose, or was situated in a different academic department, I would likely have focused on different questions, collected different data, and analyzed partnership in a different way. My contributions have been both constrained and catalyzed by my theoretical gaze, and by the dominant discourses and practices of my academic orientations.

**Ideas for future research**

The partial view provided by my analytical crystal suggests other directions for future research. To demonstrate the usefulness of cultural analysis for partnership and planning, I have drawn from cultural production and practice frameworks to focus upon discourses and practices. But anthropology and cultural studies offer other promising perspectives on
culture and power, such as the symbolic interpretations that reconceptualize organizational practices as theatre (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Turner, 1988). Boundary research suggests new approaches to the study of social and symbolic boundaries, group membership and identity, difference, and hybrid practices (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). The boundary maintenance practices recognized by this study open a new avenue for empirical research, raising new questions: What forms of boundary maintenance are practiced in different organizations? How critical are boundary maintenance activities to maintaining organizational identity? How does geographical proximity, or different organizational structures, influence boundary maintenance activities?

Other theoretical studies could explore specific cultural dynamics. For example, the partnership in this study was profoundly shaped by business discourse practices. How might collaborative and inclusive practices influence partnership development, and how do they intersect with other practices and discourses? The considerable geographical and cultural distances involved may have affected the visibility and influence of cultural elements in this partnership process. How do intersecting interests, discourses and practices influence negotiations in other situations? How do cumulative contradictions complicate, constrain, or perhaps even terminate partnership development?

To address these complexities in partnership work, I recommend research that involves thick case study descriptions, and multi-site ethnographies in particular. Such studies could focus more closely on the dynamic processes and implications of other phases in partnership. Longitudinal studies could examine how partnership development influences later phases of the partnership process, and affects broader political relations. How do other stages and
partnership processes produce social relations, and how do they affect social, political and cultural change?

Empirical investigations could explore the relevance of this study's findings for improving partnership and planning practice in education. How might this integration of political and cultural frameworks inform practice in post-secondary planning? I have described discourses and practices common to three post-secondary organizations. Are similar discourses and practices critical to partnership within and between other post-secondary organizations?

This study has focused on a post-secondary education project between aboriginal and non-aboriginal organizations. Other multi-site ethnographies could focus on other partners and settings in education, and on partnership and planning processes located in other domains of activity such as health promotion and international development.

**Broadening my own vision and practice**

In the coming years, I expect to continue my involvement in the field of education through research, program planning, and teaching. While I have not changed my personal commitment to collaboration, I have broadened my vision of the strategic possibilities for social change. The boundary practices employed by the northern organizations disrupt the dominant discourses of educational partnership and participatory development, and my own assumptions. I have long supported the claim that discourses of democracy through community service, collaboration, and community-based practices are the primary means to confront hegemony, and the best hope for supporting transformative goals through inclusive practices. Yet in this study, some effective transformative practices were linked with maintaining boundaries and distinct organizational identities.
This study has affirmed my belief in the value of cultural analysis for understanding the social world. I plan to develop and refine analytical frameworks drawing on cultural production and practice theories in future research. As I continue to conduct research and work in other collaborative situations, I will make use of what I have learned from this study. I look forward to discussing the findings from this study with people who participated in the partnership, and hope to involve them in conference presentations and publications based on this research.
References


Reid, C. J. (2002). "We don't count, we're just not there": Using feminist action research to explore the relationship between exclusion, poverty, and women's health. University of British Columbia, Vancouver.


Willis, P. (1981). Cultural production is different from cultural reproduction is different from social reproduction is different from reproduction. *Interchange, 12*(2-3), 48-67.


APPENDICES

Appendix A  *Chronology of Partnership Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>ITS proposal written and submitted by South College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001, Winter</td>
<td>Original First Nations partner withdraws&lt;br&gt;ITS proposal approved, becoming basis for grant contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Dina becomes South College ITS Project Manager&lt;br&gt;ITS Steering Committee forms, monthly meetings begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>South College searches for a partner&lt;br&gt;COD on-line course development and re-purposing begins&lt;br&gt;Dina assists NNES to submit proposal for COD program&lt;br&gt;Lynette negotiates research access, submits ethical reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002, Winter</td>
<td>South &amp; North College negotiations between Dina and Barb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>First North College on-line course delivery scheduled&lt;br&gt;Delivery postponed due to insufficient registration&lt;br&gt;Keith visits North College; Renegotiations and articulation agreements begun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Last monthly ITS Steering Committee meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>NNES receives funding for COD, request full program from South College&lt;br&gt;North College Dean sends letter about negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003, Winter</td>
<td>ITS Steering Committee meets (for the last time)&lt;br&gt;South College changes partners to work with NNES&lt;br&gt;NNES students begin course prerequisites for COD program&lt;br&gt;One on-line course re-purposed, two others in preparation stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>NNES students continue prerequisite courses&lt;br&gt;Dina and Ethel plan April-May delivery of first set of COD courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Few students complete prerequisites; COD course offerings cancelled&lt;br&gt;Lynette’s first field visit to Hopetown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Ethel markets COD courses for fall program delivery&lt;br&gt;South College lowers prerequisites for single on-line course delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004, Winter</td>
<td>Insufficient student registrations leads to cancellation of COD courses&lt;br&gt;Lynette’s second field visit to Hopetown region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final report and evaluation completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B  List of Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation or location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hopetown residents</td>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>Contract instructor and grant writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George</td>
<td>First Nations Lands Management Team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North College, Hopetown</td>
<td>Barb</td>
<td>Principal, Hopetown campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North College, Ketterville</td>
<td>Don</td>
<td>Faculty, Chair of Resource Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Main campus)</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Dean of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>President, North College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Nations Education</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Student interested in COD program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Ethel</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South College</td>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Director, Educational Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Continuing Education</td>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>ITS Project Manager; Program Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>Dean of Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Science</td>
<td>Keith</td>
<td>COD faculty and sometime Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>Dean of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South College contractors</td>
<td>Connie</td>
<td>Continuing Education grant writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Evaluation consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Lynette</td>
<td>Volunteer evaluator, Graduate student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I understand that my participation in the study entitled "Power and practice in evaluation: Case study of a participatory evaluation process" is entirely voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing my employment, participation or standing in ____ programs. I have received a copy of the letter of initial contact and of this consent form for my own records and I understand what is asked of participants in this study.

I CONSENT to participate in this study and I have a copy of this letter for my files.

Signature ___________________________________________ Date: ______________

I wish to be contacted for further consent if observation data will be used for purposes other than those directly related to this study.

Signature ___________________________________________ Date: ______________
I understand that my participation in the study entitled "Power and practice in evaluation: Case study of a participatory evaluation process" is entirely voluntary, and that revealing personal or sensitive information is optional. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing my employment, participation or standing in programs. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records and I understand what is asked of participants in this study.

I CONSENT to being interviewed for this study and I have a copy of this letter for my files.

Signature ___________________________ Date: ________________

I CONSENT to having the interviews tape-recorded.

Signature ___________________________ Date: ________________

I wish to be contacted for further consent if interview data will be used for purposes other than those directly related to this study.

Signature ___________________________ Date: ________________