HOW PARTICIPANTS VALUED AND USED RESOURCES IN THE START-UP PHASE OF A FEMINIST COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

by

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Abstract

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Feminist community organizing involves members of a geographic locale or social network coming together to address a shared issue or problem affecting the lives of women in order to find a collective solution (Dominelli, 1995; Israel, Checkoway, Schulz & Zimmerman, 1994; Selsky, 1991). While the organizational theory literature has traditionally focused on the exchange of financial and material resources as the main reason for forming partnerships (Gulati, 1998; Kanter, 1989; Oliver, 1991), a growing body of feminist literature (Acker, 1995; Brown, 1992; Eisenstein, 1995; Feree and Martin, 1995; Reinelt, 1994) and community development literature (Dominelli, 1995, Israel et al., 1994; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Minkler & Wallerstein, 1997; Selsky, 1991) emphasizes the importance of other types of resources such as skills, lived experience, knowledge, information and social networks. In addition, feminist collectivity offers a promising alternative to hierarchy in terms of valuing and mobilizing the diverse pool of resources brought to a feminist community-based initiative by participants from varied social locations (Callahan, 1997; Dominelli, 1995; Reinelt, 1994).

The purpose of my study was to investigate participant understandings of the resources they brought to a feminist community organizing initiative designed to increase the access of women on low-incomes to community recreation, and how emergent organizational practices affected resource utilization. A case study analysis of ‘Women Organizing Activities for Women’ (WOAW) that is comprised of a diverse group of women on low incomes, community partners, and university-based researchers was conducted.

The research methods for this project included the analysis data obtained in Interactive Research Meetings (n=3) with each of the WOAW participant groups to determine individual and collective resources. Observations of Phase I WOAW meetings (n=9) were recorded using fieldnotes and verbatim transcripts and served as the data source for examining patterns of resource utilization given emergent feminist collective organizing practices. Fieldnotes and transcripts were analyzed using Atlas.ti data computer software.

Participants from the three groups identified over 200 examples of resources they were bringing to WOAW and described a number of connections between resources, as well as multiple meanings of single resource types, which differed based on their roles and locations in the organization. These findings contribute to the literature by linking resource identification in new ways to the process of resource utilization. The results also contribute to practice by challenging assumptions about the types of resources brought by different collaborators and by identifying organizational practices that enhance or inhibit resource utilization. My analysis revealed that there was ambiguity between participant groups about who was bringing what resources, which led to assumptions being made about who would take on certain tasks in the group. I also found that while feminist collective organizing practices enabled participants to name and share resources in an empowering and respectful environment, that time constraints, ambiguity about roles and participants’ lack of familiarity with the process were challenges to mobilizing available resources.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study examines participants' understandings of the resources brought to a feminist community organizing initiative that was designed to address a community-based social issue. The main assumption underlying this study is that in grassroots community organizations diverse participants' understandings of resources vary based on their social, economic and political locations and roles in the project, but when named and pooled these resources contribute significantly to organizational capacity. However, little is known about how resources are actually utilized in feminist community organizing, whether some members’ resources are under-utilized, and how organizational practices affect resource utilization.

I am critical of much of the literature about resources because of the over-emphasis placed on finances and materials, as I have seen many other types of resources being used in WOAW (Women Organizing Activities for Women), the organization that serves as a case study in this research. Instead, I argue for a more broad understanding of resources from the perspectives of the people who are actually working to address a community-based social issue. In addition, I argue that multiple meanings of participant resources and the interrelationships between resources need to be examined in a more comprehensive way in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative. In addition, it is also important to investigate whether feminist collective organizational practices are a promising strategy for enabling participants in a community-based initiative to have control over their resources, to mobilize them in a way that honours diverse participants’ contributions and to facilitate the sustainability of the project.
The terms feminist and feminism are used throughout this thesis to reflect my views about the practices and goals of the organization I studied. Dominelli (1995, p. 136) stated “Feminism is well placed to profoundly alter our social order because it places the inegalitarian gender relations characterizing patriarchy in the crucible of change.” While not all participants in the organization I studied identify with feminism or feminist goals (as described in more depth later in this paper), I have used the term deliberately to politicize my project and the organization I studied as catalysts for social action and change with respect to women’s rights. I acknowledge at the outset that problems and power imbalances are likely present in feminist organizing, but that addressing these issues will be informative to those engaged in this type of work.

As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, I conducted my case study research during the first six months (start-up phase) of a feminist community organizing initiative called ‘Women Organizing Activities for Women’ (WOAW), that operates in the Greater Vancouver Area of British Columbia. WOAW is made up of diverse participants who have come together in an effort to affect policy and improve access to community recreation programs for women living on low incomes\(^1\) as a way of improving quality of life for themselves and their families (Frisby, 1999). WOAW participants include: (i) women on low incomes (n=60), (ii) community partners who work in recreation departments and community outreach organizations (n=15), and (iii) a group of researchers from a near-by university (n=4). While they share a similar concern, WOAW participants vary considerably in their social, economic and political locations. Maguire (1987) sees this type of diversity as a strength, even though it can increase difficulties in understanding and working with one another. The benefits of this type of

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\(^1\) The term ‘women on low incomes’ is contentious in WOAW, as some participants identify with it and think it is important to use in order to clarify what and who WOAW is for; some have not stated how they feel about the term, while others are vehemently opposed to using what they feel is a negative label to describe themselves. To this point, ‘the women’ involved in WOAW still have not come to an agreement about the language they want to use to be identified. Thus, while problematic, the term ‘women on low incomes’ is used throughout this paper, partly due to lack of ‘better’ language, but also to politicize the women’s involvement in this community organizing initiative with respect to resources.
collaboration are that a social problem, in this case inaccessibility to publicly funded recreation, is examined from the multiple perspectives of those encountering barriers to participation, those responsible for programs and policy, and from those with an academic research orientation.

Throughout this thesis I discuss WOAW’s work as a ‘feminist community organizing initiative.’ In order to provide context for this language, I will attempt to establish what community and feminist community organizing mean, even though these concepts are very difficult to define and may be interpreted in a variety of ways by different participants (Dominelli, 1995; Wallerstein, 1999). Minkler and Wallerstein (1997) contended that there are different assumptions about the nature and meaning of community that influence how community organizing is carried out. For example, Hudspith (2000) explained that diverse individuals may have conflicting feelings about being associated with a specific community, such as ‘women on low incomes.’ Israel, Checkoway, Schulz and Zimmerman (1994) described a community as a locale or domain characterized by: (1) membership, where one feels a sense of identity and belonging, (2) common traditions, language or practices, (3) shared values and norms, (4) mutual influence among community members, (5) shared needs and a commitment to meeting them, and (6) shared emotional connection developed through common history, experience and mutual support. I think that WOAW can be considered a community based on Israel et al.’s (1994) definition, as the diverse participants have come together to address a shared problem, and are devoting considerable time and energy to the project. Indeed, Dominelli (1995, p. 134) stated that community “encompasses those social relationships and networks constructed around the needs of others.”

Minkler and Wallerstein (1997, p. 30) defined community organizing as
the process by which community groups are helped to identify common problems or goals, mobilize resources, and in other ways develop and implement strategies for reaching the goals they collectively have set.

Feminist community organizing is informed by an analysis of the gendered nature of community work and characterized by a commitment to social change by connecting the local with other levels of influence (Callahan, 1997; Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Principles of feminist community organizing discussed in the literature include the empowerment of individuals through increasing their competency, valuing the diverse types of work women do in the community, as well as organizing change through creating critical consciousness (Dominelli, 1995; Minkler & Wallerstein, 1997). As mentioned earlier, not all WOAW participants identify with the feminist label, but they are using organizing practices that could be considered feminist; they are working to empower participants and aiming to generate social change by improving access to policy and recreation programming for women on low incomes. For these reasons, I feel that ‘feminist community organizing initiative’ is the best language to use to describe WOAW’s work.

One of the main reasons I was interested in learning more about how resources are used in feminist community organizing initiatives is because Selsky (1991, p. 97) argued that mobilizing resources is an integral step in building systemic capacity when he builds on Honadle’s (1986) comment that:

Systemic capacity building means an increased ability to identify shared problems, develop policies and programs to address them, and mobilize appropriate resources effectively to fulfill these policies and programs (Honadle, 1986). Mobilizing resources means attracting and deploying the full range of goods, services, information, and support needed to satisfy objectives.

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2 Many WOAW participants have indicated different understandings of what the organization is, what its goals are and the kind of contribution they would like to make to the group’s work. I acknowledge that in choosing the language ‘feminist community organizing initiative’ to describe WOAW, I am imposing my own interpretation on the nature and structure of the organization. However, as there has not yet been a consensus decision made by WOAW participants about the terminology to use to describe WOAW, and because I am also a WOAW participant, I have chosen to use the language that I feel is most appropriate at this point.
Before resources can be mobilized, however, participants in a feminist community organization must take stock of the resources that are available to be used toward their goals. Ife (1995, p. 185) argued that:

Simply making an inventory of the interests and expertise available within the community, and then making this widely accessible, can be a useful development activity. Many people and organizations do not know what expertise is locally available, and such an inventory is a common first step. The very act of compiling an inventory can itself stimulate community interest and involvement, and help to get people talking together.

I agree that cataloguing resources in the start-up phase of a feminist community organizing initiative seems an important step toward systemic capacity building of a group. However, I think this step is often overlooked and assumptions are made about what resources are brought to the table by various organizational participants. A good starting place, then, is to review how resources are conceptualized in the literature, particularly within the context of community organizing.

With a few exceptions, I concentrated my reading in the areas that I thought were relevant to initiatives like WOAW including organizational theory (Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Kanter, 1989; Oliver 1990) community development (Bradshaw, 2000; Ife, 1995; Selsky, 1991) and feminist organizing (Callahan, 1997; Dominelli, 1995; Feree & Martin, 1995). I soon discovered that the organizational theory literature emphasized financial and material resources, probably because profit-oriented firms are commonly the focus. Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996, p. 137) exemplified this orientation when they defined resources as “strengths or assets of the firm that may be tangible (e.g., financial assets, technology) or intangible (e.g., reputation, managerial skills).”

While financial and material resources are important, prioritizing them above others potentially jeopardizes a feminist community organization’s original values or intentions by creating power imbalances between those whose financial or material resources are smaller than others (for example, the women on low incomes) (Fredericksen & London, 2000; Thibault, Frisby & Kikulis, 1999). In addition, putting precedence on
finances and materials fails to reveal other kinds of resources that diverse participants in an organization like WOAW may be bringing to the initiative (Ife, 1995; Reinelt, 1994). Thus, I went in search of other perspectives on resources that offered alternatives to an emphasis on financial and material resources.

During my search for alternate definitions of resources in the organizational theory, as well as community development and feminist organizing literature, I found that researchers often talked about resources without defining them, but instead used examples of discrete types of resources to generate meanings about the term. Sometimes researchers made connections between resource types, while in other cases they chose to focus on only one type. I have chosen to present five examples of resource types discussed in the literature that I think relate to WOAW in order to broaden the dialogue about alternate resources that may be relevant to feminist community organizing initiatives. The examples introduced here and presented in more depth in Chapter 2 are lived experience, skills, information, knowledge and social networks. I decided to focus on these five types based on my initial observations and understandings of WOAW, although I acknowledge that other WOAW participants or researchers may have had different interpretations, which I hoped to uncover as the study progressed.

Lived experience was defined as individual life experience contributing to an in-depth understanding of a particular situation, such as having carried a baby or healed from an emotionally difficult incident (Feree & Martin, 1995). Lived experience can become a resource in a feminist community organization as participants come to consider it a tool for empowerment through helping people make connections between their lived experience and the social, political and economic structures that affect their everyday lives (Maguire, 1987; Rappaport, 1995).

Skills were described as specific abilities people have learned in a variety of environments, which are valuable to various initiatives (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). While a number of examples of skills are provided in the literature that relate to feminist
community organizing initiatives like WOAW, including facilitation, public speaking or expertise in media relations (Gray & Wood, 1991), I was surprised to find that interpersonal skills (e.g., being a good listener), life skills (e.g., child care) or hobbies (e.g., gardening) were not focused on as often.

Information was defined as facts people have learned at home, in the workplace or in the community, such as what one’s welfare rights are (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Information seemed an important resource in the case of WOAW as participants were collaborating in order to bring together and share different perspectives on the issue of limited access to public recreation for women on low incomes. Knowledge is explained in the literature as a conceptual competency, such as a theory or idea from which innovation and creativity can develop (Brown, 1992; Kanter, 1989). Knowledge can also be connected to daily living or the workplace, such as how to use the public transportation system or how to write an article for publication in an academic journal (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000).

Finally, social and inter-organizational networks were the complex and dynamic social interactions that lead to and occur within a collaborative initiative to create action, which could be both personal (with family and friends) and professional (with colleagues or members of other organizations) (Selsky, 1991). Social networks are important resources because they potentially lead to legitimacy for an organization or access to facilities (Basu, 1995; Selsky, 1991). While researchers connected networks with other resource types in the literature, I think that the discussion of these connections could be further developed in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative.

Based on reading literature from organizational theory, community development and feminist organizing, I found that researchers tended to discuss resources by type, sometimes making reference to other resource types that were related. While I suspect that these researchers were aware of the connections between resource types, the development of interrelationships between resource types in an integrated and
comprehensive way in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative was not overt in the literature. Drawing from the feminist community organizing literature that talked about empowering and valuing participants for themselves and for their contributions, I thought that an understanding of the connections between resource types needed to be further developed in order to continue the work of previous researchers in revealing the complexities of naming and utilizing resources (cf. Callahan, 1997; Dominelli, 1995; Ife, 1995). Finally, the possibility of multiple meanings or manifestations of a singular type of resource based on an individual’s or group’s social, economic or political situation was not often cultivated in the literature I read, but seemed important in the context of an organization like WOAW with such diverse participants. For example, it was highly unlikely that the women on low incomes, the community partners and the researchers were all bringing the same types of lived experience, skills, information, knowledge and networks to the process.

Thus, I decided to read further to see if there were any other interpretations of resources presented that would be helpful in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative. I found three interesting alternatives. First, Foa, Converse, Thornblum and Foa (1993, p. 3), whose work is associated with social behaviour, defined resources as “any item, concrete or symbolic, which can become the object of exchange among people.” Foa et al. (1993) argued that one’s conception of resources was value-based, indicating that an understanding of resources involves an understanding of how individuals assign value to them. A second researcher Goldsmith (1996), whose work is in the area of resource management, also indicated that resources must be conceptualized in relation to how people assign value to them. She defined resources (p. 74) as “what is available to be used” and “assets—anything with real or perceived value that is used to attain or satisfy something.”

Hobfoll (1989, p. 516), a social psychologist, indicated that resources are “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions and energies that are valued by the individual
or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics or energies.” He adds to Foa et al.’s (1993) and Goldsmith’s (1996) arguments by explaining that people learn to value certain resources based on their experience. This had important implications for WOAW, as the participants were coming from very diverse social, economic and political locations, and likely valued resources very differently as a result. It also raised further questions about how individuals’ varying assessments of value affected how resources would be used in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative.

Community development researchers Ife (1995) and Reinelt (1994) argued that if participants in a community organizing initiative were open to conceptualizing and valuing resources in addition to finances and materials during the initial stages of their project, they may be able to look within themselves and their group to find the resources they needed to mobilize their initiative, rather than soliciting external sponsors who might compromise their goals. Reinelt (1994, p. 693) explained this point further when she wrote that:

> Financial autonomy is necessary for building a strong movement organization but it is not sufficient. Organizations also need discursive autonomy. They need to have a degree of control over the means of interpretation and communication that enable them to engage in moral and political deliberation.

In addition, thinking of resources in ‘alternative’ ways potentially validates contributions made by diverse participants in feminist community organizing initiatives like WOAW, which have many members who may never have thought of themselves or their capabilities as ‘resources’ (Dominelli, 1995). As Ife (1995, p. 198) argued:
Different people have different skills, interests and capacities. Good community work will provide the broadest possible range of participatory activity, and will legitimize equally all people who are actively involved. Often participation is seen in terms of mainstream community processes, such as public meetings, boards of management, or in traditional volunteer service roles. These are obviously important, but participation can take many other forms: cooking, organizing, making music, involvement in sport, visiting others, gardening, etc. All can contribute to the life of the community and all forms of participation need to be encouraged and seen as valuable.

In the case of WOAW, the women on low incomes lack financial resources, which stereotypically equates with powerlessness, but I have observed them bringing a host of non-financial resources that greatly enrich the capacity of the initiative (Dominelli, 1995; Wallerstein, 1999). I believe it is important for participants in a feminist community organizing initiative to have unrestricted space to name what they think they bring to the initiative in order to validate themselves and their capabilities, as well as to contribute to the potential capacity of the group.

The next logical question is how are diverse and alternative resources uncovered and valued, translated into organizational capacity and mobilized to create action. Selsky (1991, p. 92) indicated that:

Social problems such as homelessness and polluted physical environments tend to fall through the cracks of established institutional “fiefdoms.” This weak structuring results partly from a lack of understanding of how to properly formulate collective strategies, build a collective capacity for action, identify appropriate institutional arrangements, and deploy collective resources effectively to address shared problems or goals.

In my opinion, the organizational framework and values used by a group determines the extent to which local resources can be identified and mobilized toward addressing a social issue. Based on the reading I have done, I believe that feminist collectivity is potentially more effective than traditional hierarchical structures in including equitably the contributions of diverse participants from various social, economic and political locations in an organizing initiative, as well as in mobilizing the group’s shared resources in a way that best satisfies the needs of all those involved.
Hierarchies create and perpetuate power differentials between participants, encourage the separation of the public and private spheres, and reproduce cultures of dominance and oppression (Acker, 1990). In contrast, Brown (1992) indicated that feminist collectivity calls for a ‘flat’ organizational structure in which all participants are valued for their participation, where no group or individual has power over another and all those involved feel a sense of ownership of the organization’s work. She stated (p. 12) “In general the importance of control over work and organizational processes is widely considered to be a central reason for engaging in collective activity.” Collectivity is theoretically enacted through using an informal, decentralized structure or shared leadership that is thought to facilitate the balancing of power among collaborators (Staggenborg, 1995), in which all members, ideally, take turns acting in power roles and sharing responsibilities. While this ‘flat’ organizational structure is an ideal type that can rarely be fully achieved (Martin, 1990), it seems to be an excellent potential alternative to hierarchy in terms of empowering participants and maximizing the utilization of resources available.

Some feminist collectives strive to make decisions by consensus, which “basically means working through an issue, however long it takes, until everyone is comfortable with the outcome” (Ife, 1995, p. 196), rather than using a majority rule or compromising decision making approach where some members are left dissatisfied with the outcome. Ife (1995, p. 196) noted the advantages and disadvantages of consensus decision-making when he wrote that:

> Consensus cannot usually be achieved quickly, and needs to be built. This will often take much longer than more conventional forms of decision-making, and can be very frustrating for those used to voting and ‘getting the numbers’. However, in the long term, it achieves much more satisfactory results, and provides a much stronger base for community development. It also implies a willingness and commitment on the part of community members to achieve a consensus, and a commitment not to block the consensus being achieved.
The philosophy that underpins consensus decision-making is that participants should have control over the direction and work of the organization, without drop-in 'experts', powerful leaders or self-interested sponsors exerting too much influence on the group (Reinelt, 1994). Through consensus, participants have a greater potential to develop autonomy for their initiative by deciding for themselves what resources are available to them, which ones are important to their initiative and how those should be used to address the social issue of the group. Consensus decision-making is thought to value all members’ contributions to a group more effectively than an autocratic approach where the designated leader makes decisions for others, as ideally each participant’s ideas are taken into account, thereby creating better space for participants to bring forward any resources they feel they can contribute (Callahan, 1997).

However, Martin (1990) acknowledged that the lofty goals of feminist collectivity are rarely fully achieved. Difficulties encountered by groups include members’ differential experience or willingness to work in a collective rather than a more familiar hierarchical environment (Eisenstein, 1995). In addition, conflict around discrepancies in values and work contributions by members (Brown, 1992), and essentialist assumptions of commonality amongst women can contribute to a failure to recognize and honour diversity in a group (Basu, 1995). While there are potential problems with feminist collectivity, I thought it was important to consider the role it played in WOAW with respect to what resources were used or not used in order to contribute to thinking about alternative organizational structures and how these contribute to capacity building in feminist community organizing initiatives.
Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of my study was to investigate participant understandings of the resources they brought to a feminist community organizing initiative designed to address a community-based social issue and how emergent organizational practices affected resource utilization. Three research questions guided the study:

(1) What resources did WOAW participants, including women on low incomes, community partners and researchers say they brought to the project?

(2) What evidence was there of participants’ resources being used and not used in the start-up phase (first six months) of WOAW organizing?

(3) What role did the use of feminist collective organizing practices play in valuing and utilizing participant resources?

Contextualizing WOAW (Women Organizing Activities for Women)

"Women Organizing Activities for Women (WOAW) is diverse women working together to enhance quality of life and create positive sustainable change. Women are empowered, respected and connected to their communities. All thoughts and feelings are valued and important, and women are treated with dignity" (WOAW vision statement, written collectively on May 10, 2000).

In June 1999, a researcher (who is my thesis advisor) was invited to facilitate a workshop with 85 women on low incomes and 15 community group representatives (e.g., from Municipal Recreation, a Women’s Centre, Family Services, Community Schools) to initiate discussions about access to leisure facilities and programs as a strategy for improving health, and addressing poverty as a social problem.

Following the initial workshop, the researcher pulled together an interdisciplinary research team who worked collaboratively with workshop attendees to write a grant proposal that was subsequently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The aims of the research project are (i) to examine lay meanings of health of the women on low incomes, (ii) to examine models of feminist action research that emerge as the organization strives to address the women’s self-
determined health problems, and (iii) to develop a framework that will inform the evaluation of these types of feminist organizing initiatives. Not all of the original workshop attendees continued their involvement in WOAW. For example, after a few weeks, a group of Farsi-speaking Iranian women decided not to continue their involvement. At the time I conducted my study (and presently) WOAW was not racially diverse (see Tables 1-3 in Chapter 4). Some WOAW participants are aware that in order to really represent the issues of women on low incomes and generate action that will address a wider range of needs, all WOAW members need to work harder to include women of varied racial heritage.

Figure 1: WOAW Participant Groups

Figure 1 shows how the participant groups have come together to form WOAW. Not only is diversity reflected in the three participant groups, there is also diversity within groups. For example, while all of the women on low incomes share economic disadvantages, some of them are single mothers, others are over the age of 60, some are middle aged with no children, a few are recent immigrants, and several have disabilities and health problems. The community partners are also diverse, as some are representatives from local Leisure and Parks departments, while others are from a Women's Center, a Family Service agency and a local School Board. They range in age,
the amount of time they are able and willing to devote to WOAW organizing, as well as their experience with feminist community organizing and their orientation to social action. At the time I conducted this study, the university researchers included the principal investigator for the WOAW project, a PhD student, another Master’s student and myself. All the members of the research group were involved in contributing to the SSHRC-funded research, as well as collecting data for our own projects.

The university researchers were striving to conduct their investigations according to feminist action research principles, which aim to challenge androcentric and positivistic research methods (Stanley & Wise, 1990). We chose certain principles by which to conduct our own research and to interact and work with one another, including mutual learning, striving for egalitarian power relations, collaboration in research and resource sharing (Frisby, Crawford & Dorer, 1997; Maguire, 1987; Reid, 2000; Ristock & Penell, 1996). As a result, I received support and encouragement to use and analyze data collected by other members of the research group to inform my own study. In turn, my study will hopefully inform the WOAW initiative, the other researchers’ projects and the SSHRC-funded research.

Women Organizing Activities for Women has received government funding support through the SSHRC grant since January 2000 and the funding lasts until December of 2002 (three years). The researchers have divided up their work into chronological phases, each lasting six months. The start-up phase, or Phase I, was from January 1 to June 30, 2000. Phase II began July 1 and continued through December 30, 2000 (and so on). During Phase I, WOAW generated a considerable amount of action towards its organizational goals, including (i) gaining access to local facilities for meetings and childcare, (ii) organizing activities for the women on low incomes such as tai chi, a stress reduction workshop, a computer skills workshop, child first aid, moms & tots swimming and gymnastics, a safety day for seniors, yoga, weight training and belly dancing, as well as (iii) fundraisers and family picnics. WOAW members also organized
a ‘Community Connections’ day in Phase I, a one-day workshop attended by approximately 50 newcomers designed to generate awareness about WOAW among other women in the tri-city area who might benefit from participation. Two six-month budgets (one for Phase I and one for Phase II) and the WOAW vision were also collectively drawn-up during Phase I of the project. The budget and vision meetings involved WOAW members presenting and discussing several options and opinions, and then deliberating the proposed actions or ‘policy’ statements and coming to agreement through consensus. All WOAW participants were notified and invited to attend the budget and vision meetings, but the entire membership was not present at any of them.

Women Organizing Activities for Women participants have been attempting to use collective organizing practices, including empowerment of members (specifically the women on low incomes) and consensus decision-making since the very early stages of the project. In particular, one of the community partners, who had skill and experience working in a collective environment through her job at a local Women’s Center, has played an influential role in helping the group develop its use of collective process through explaining and reminding the group about the principles of collectivity. During Phase II and Phase III some WOAW participants organized and attended two half-day seminars on collective organizing and continue to develop their understandings of how this organizational structure works and can be applied to their group. However, WOAW members have encountered difficulties in using collective principles such as time constraints and lack of familiarity or willingness on the part of some members to use collectivity, which have affected which resources have been used and not used toward the group’s goals. My research takes a closer look at the benefits and challenges of using feminist collectivity in relation to the naming and use of diverse participant resources in Phase I of WOAW.
My Role in WOAW

I have two roles in the WOAW initiative. I began my involvement in the project as a Research Assistant early in Phase I, doing data collection and entry, such as transcribing interviews with WOAW participants, attending and observing WOAW meetings and being a contributing member of the university research group, who met bi-weekly to discuss the project. At the same time that I was working as a Research Assistant, I was taking courses and reading literature about resources and feminist collective organizing, found many parallels and developed questions about the work of WOAW participants. I became interested in researching resource use in WOAW for my Master’s thesis.

Thus, mid way through Phase I, I took on my second role in WOAW as an active researcher. I facilitated an Interactive Research Meeting (IRM), akin to focus group, with each of the WOAW participant groups, the women on low incomes, the community partners and the university research team (in which I participated in answering the research questions). During the IRMs, I asked individual participants what resources they felt they were bringing to WOAW, as well as what resources they thought the other two groups of participants were bringing, thus making a list of the resources available to WOAW stated in the words of participants (as suggested by Ife, 1995).

In addition to the information collected at the IRMs, I kept and analyzed my own fieldnotes from Phase I WOAW meetings to find evidence of what resources were being used and not used in the group’s organizing and what role a feminist collective organizing structure was playing in this process. I also analyzed fieldnotes taken by the other researchers at WOAW meetings both to supplement my own notes and to provide data for WOAW meetings that I was unable to attend. There were only two verbatim transcripts from Phase I WOAW meetings (the issue of tape recording meetings was not broached until part way through Phase I), which I included in my analysis, as well.
Further details about my research methods are provided in Chapter 3. In the next Chapter, I review literature related to my topic in more depth.
The Literature on Resources

The emphasis on finances and materials in organizational theory underpins resource dependence theory, which indicates that organizations or groups collaborate in order to reduce fiscal uncertainty in an increasingly competitive market and to maximize scarce economic resources (Oliver, 1990). For example, in the context of recreation, Thibault et al. (1999) reported that many local government leisure services, other social service agencies and individuals or groups from the nonprofit sector are choosing to work in partnership with commercial organizations to deal with increased demands for public services in an era of economic restraint. They indicated, however, that while financial and material resources are necessary for leisure service provision to meet more diverse citizens' needs, partnerships between the public and private sectors are problematic due to differences in values, interests, professional norms and power. While community development and feminist organizing researchers acknowledge that finances and materials are important, they warn that participants in grassroots initiatives like WOAW should be careful not to prioritize them over other potential resources in order to avoid having their autonomy, ethics and goals compromised (Dominelli, 1995; Ife, 1995; Reinelt, 1994).

In my role as a Research Assistant in the early stages of WOAW I observed that financial and material resources, especially the research grant and space in recreational facilities provided by the community partners, were contributing a great deal to the action participants were creating together, but that they did not seem to be the only or necessarily the most important resources being used by the group. In light of these initial observations, I became critical of conceptions of resources presented in the organizational theory literature because human aspects such as talent, skill and interpersonal
relationships were undervalued. I also felt that a focus on finances and materials was conceptually disempowering for members who did not bring such resources to the initiative, such as the women on low incomes in WOAW, and failed to capture the diversity of participant contribution. Thus, I went in search of other perspectives on resources from organizational theory, community development and feminist organizing literature that offered alternatives to the focus on finances and materials.

I found five other types of resources presented in the organizational theory, community development and feminist organizing literature that I thought related to WOAW based on my initial understandings of the resources participants were using: lived experience, skills, information, knowledge and social networks. I have chosen to discuss these examples in order to provide further theoretical context for my study and to subsequently show how my work contributes to contemporary thinking about resources in feminist community organizing.

According to Gatenby and Humphries (2000) lived experience encompasses all aspects of a woman’s life, including her career, health, childbearing, sexuality and community. Lived experience becomes a resource in a feminist community organizing initiative as participants grow to consider it a tool for empowerment of individuals, particularly as a group makes space for members to tell their experiences as part of working toward addressing the goals of the initiative (Rappaport, 1995). Rappaport (1995, p. 802) explained, “the ability to tell one’s own story and to have access to and influence over collective stories, is a powerful resource.” He stated (p. 796):

For many people, particularly those who lack social, political, or economic power, the community, neighbourhood, or cultural narratives that are available are either negative, narrow, “written” by others for them, or all of the above. People who seek either personal or community change often find that it is very difficult to sustain change without the support of a collectivity that provides a new communal narrative around which they can sustain changes in their own personal story.
Scott (1998, p. 4) pointed out that women's lived experience is quite diverse, interwoven and complex when she writes that:

Women's experiences [are] situated, particularly located at intersections of multiple categories of identity like race, class, nation, religion, immigration status and sexuality. These identities become increasingly salient in the quest to construct diverse organizations addressing the needs of a range of women.

Thus, in a feminist community organizing initiative like WOAW, especially one aimed at addressing policy and improving access to programs for a marginalized group, the lived experience of that group is a critical resource because it reveals how social and living conditions create barriers to participation (Dominelli, 1995). However, it seems that a challenge to using lived experience as a resource in an organization like WOAW would be recognizing and valuing the many diverse types participants bring (Callahan, 1997).

Maguire (1987) suggested that when people's lived experience is valued, it is possible that their perceptions of reality will be validated, which may in turn help them to make the connection between their individual experiences and social policy and enable them to question, critique and lobby for change. Some feminists also claim that lived experience is a legitimate form of knowledge, indicating that there is a connection between these two types of resources (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1990). For example, many of the women on low incomes in WOAW have experienced barriers to accessing recreation such as difficulty using public transportation or inability to pay program fees, which is important knowledge in the context of the goals of the organization.

Being a feminist researcher, I understood the importance of the argument that a participant’s lived experience be considered a legitimate form of knowledge; however, in the context of WOAW, I was observing that the community partners and researchers were also sharing some of their lived experience, sometimes to make connections with other members or to show identification with the project. It seemed to me that through their emphasis on marginalized groups, like the women on low incomes, feminist researchers
were leaving out the lived experience of other potential contributors to organizations like WOA W. I began to wonder if the lived experience of the researchers and community partners was valued in WOA W, and what implications this had for the way this resource was used in the group.

Skills were another resource identified in the organizational theory, community development and feminist organizing literature. Examples of skills included competence in a specific field (Kanter, 1989) or specific expertise (Thibault et al., 1999), such as group facilitation, research and development, or media relations (Gray & Wood, 1991) that may contribute both to creating direction and generating action for the group. In addition, the ability to work or learn to work in a collaborative organizational environment (Brown, 1992; Kanter, 1989) engaging in organizational processes such as communicating openly (Eisenstein, 1996), exercising respect for all group members (Acker, 1995) and embracing diversity of participant contribution (Scott, 1998) were considered to be skills that facilitate diverse participants coming together to address a shared issue.

Maguire (1987) indicated that the sharing of skills between participants in a feminist community organizing initiative has the potential to empower individuals through validating their own abilities while simultaneously expanding the skills and efficacy of others through mutual learning. It seemed to me, however, that the examples of skills presented in the literature were focused on an individual’s ability to work in a collaborative organizational environment. While these skills were relevant to WOA W, I wondered why interpersonal skills like being a good listener, life skills such as budgeting with limited finances, or hobbies like baking and knitting, which seem to be important in an initiative focused on community recreation, were not developed as often in the literature.

Through my experience as a Research Assistant for the WOA W project, I was beginning to observe participants sharing a spectrum of skills, some highlighted in the
literature and some that were not. The women on low incomes seemed to be sharing
group facilitation and organization skills, as well as other talents including co-operative
childcare and teaching of activities like fitness walking and baking. The community
partners appeared to be sharing skills focused around group facilitation, as well as
organizational skills. The researchers were contributing skills including facilitation,
communication, minute taking, and fund raising through applying for and securing the
government grant. I wondered how participants in WOAW decided to share certain skills
and not others, why members of the three participant groups seemed to be taking on
specific roles with respect to skill sharing, and whether or not there was communication
between WOAW members about what skills were being brought to the organization.

Information was a third resource ‘type’ that I thought had relevance to WOAW
based on the way it was described in the literature. In organizational theory, information
was most often associated with technology and the use of computers (Storck & Hill,
2000). However, the types of information that were more likely to be exchanged in a
feminist community organizing initiative for women on low incomes included
information about welfare rights, community services, the location of low-cost housing,
contact names and phone numbers of certain service providers and co-operative child care
(Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). While some researchers implied connections between
information and other resource types (cf: Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Scott, 1998), I
felt that a more extensive description of the relationships between information and other
resource types in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative was needed.

A fourth type of resource discussed in the literature was knowledge, which was
distinguished as an understanding of something, a conceptual competency, a theory or an
idea (Brown, 1992; Kanter, 1989). While investigating knowledge, I wondered if and
how participants in a feminist community organizing initiative were able to get past
traditional conceptions of knowledge stemming from formal academic or professional
training and recognize other sources of knowledge. For example, in terms of their
contribution of knowledge as a resource, the researchers in WOAW were carrying a potentially great deal of power because of their affiliation with a university, a well-established site of knowledge production and dissemination (Austin, Martin, Carnochan, Goldberg, Duerr Berrick, Weiss, & Kelley 1999; Wallerstein, 1999). However, as explained above, some feminist researchers have argued that lived experience is an important and valid source of knowledge, indicating that perhaps the women on low incomes involved in WOAW were also bringing a powerful type of knowledge to the group’s initiative based on their personal wisdom (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1990). I was interested to see what kinds of knowledge WOAW participants would value and use based on their social locations and relationships to one another in the project.

Social and inter-organizational networks were another important group of resources to feminist community organizing because they are thought to provide social and political legitimacy or influence (Basu, 1995), contacts or access to a specific population (Gulati, 1998; Kanter, 1989) and credibility in a community, (Gray & Wood, 1991), while helping to build commitment, accountability and trust within the group (Brown, 1992; Reinelt, 1994). Selsky (1991) pointed out the potential for interrelationships between networks and other resources by indicating that networks may contribute to organizational capacity through enabling access to facilities, to people of influence in communities and local governments, as well as to additional resources through association or referral.

In my role as a Research Assistant, I heard the women on low incomes speaking at meetings about connections with family, friends and professionals that could be beneficial to WOAW organizing. The community partners and researchers had professional networks through their jobs, as well as possible personal networks through friends, family and acquaintances. Again, I wondered if there were networks the literature did not touch on, whether personal or professional networks were valued or used more often in the specific context of feminist community organizing, and how networks related to the other
types' of resources listed above, such as information or lived experience. In addition, I was curious to see what kinds of networks (and from which participants) were being used in the crucial start-up phase of WOAW organizing.

During the time that I was compiling the examples of resources discussed above, I was noticing through my work as a Research Assistant in WOAW that the types of resources described in the literature seemed quite interrelated with one another in the work WOAW participants were doing. While I acknowledge that perhaps the researchers whose work I was reading were aware of certain interconnections between resource types, this area had not been analyzed sufficiently. In addition, while the examples of types of resources described in the literature were helpful in developing an understanding of possible resources that might be important to an organization like WOAW, I wondered what other resources were not highlighted or even discussed.

I decided to do some additional reading using sources from different disciplines to see if there were other conceptualizations of resources that would contribute further theoretical background to my study. Following are some descriptions that were helpful in further developing an understanding of resources in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative.

Foa et al., (1993, p. 2), working in the area of social psychology, defined resources as “anything transacted in an interpersonal situation.” They divided resources into six types including three economic resources: money, goods and services, which are self-explanatory, and three non-economic resources: love, status, information. Foa et al. (1993, p. 2) explained love as the expression of affectionate regard, warmth or comfort. Status was described as an expression of evaluative judgment, which conveys high or low prestige, regard or esteem. Finally, information was defined as advice, opinions, instruction, or enlightenment (excluding love or status). Foa et al. (1993) bring to light the possibility that emotions, interpersonal interactions and social status can also be considered resources, adding further examples to the types of resources presented in the
organizational theory, community development and feminist organizing literature. In addition, Foa et al. (1993, p. 15) argued that "the importance of resources depends on the value placed on them by those participating in the exchange." While they did not expand further on this statement, Foa et al. (1993) intimated that understanding of resources is related to an understanding of how and why participants assign value to them.

Interestingly, in much of the literature that I read, researchers' voices assigned value to resources (cf. Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Oliver, 1990), rather than the voices of those who were actually contributing, sharing and mobilizing them to create action in an organizational setting.

Community development researcher Ife (1995) indicated that if participants in a community organizing initiative are open to valuing diverse participant contributions in addition to finances and materials, they may be able to develop greater autonomy and strength as a catalyst for social change. Foa et al. (1993, p. 14) appeared to concur with this view when they stated, "in view of the interplay of economic and non-economic resources in the conduct of human affairs, it appears unrealistic to expect that social problems will be solved by material means alone."

A second researcher, Goldsmith (1996), whose work is associated with resource management, also argued that a definition of resources is related to how individuals assign value to them, but like Foa et al. (1993) did not fully explain how this happens. Goldsmith (1996, p. 74) defined resources in two ways, as "what is available to be used" and "assets – anything with real or perceived value that is used to attain or satisfy something." She, too, indicated that while finances and materials are important, conceptions of resources should include a wider range of human capability, as illustrated in the following quote (p. 75):

> In management, time, energy and money usually receive the most attention...but resources can take other forms. A sense of humour and a pleasant personality is a resource (sic). Knowledge is a resource. A high school diploma is a resource. Everyone has a unique set of resources and uses those resources differently.
Goldsmith (1996) divided resources into three types. Tangible resources were described as anything that is real or capable of being appraised (e.g., jewelry, land, homes). Human resources included skills talents or abilities people possess (e.g., knowledge, health, feelings, caring). Finally, material resources were explained as either naturally occurring (e.g., fertile soil, rivers) or human-made items (e.g., computers, buildings). She also provided a helpful definition of resourcefulness (p. 75) as:

- is the ability to recognize and use resources effectively.
- A resourceful person skillfully uses resources to cope with daily challenges. Resourcefulness is learned in families, schools, work situations and social organizations.

Similar to Foa et al. (1993), in her discussion of human resources Goldsmith (1996) developed the idea that intangible elements like feelings and caring can be considered resources. While reading Goldsmith (1996), I wondered how participants in a feminist community organization like WOAW assign value to non-traditionally recognized resources such as emotions, and how or would the group utilize them?

A third conception comes from Hobfoll (1989, p. 516), a behavioural psychologist, who described resources as “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions and energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics or energies.” Hobfoll (1989, p. 520) also indicated that an understanding of resources is based on participants’ values when he wrote: “people’s resource assessments are derived, in part from their basic values and developmental history, what they have learned through experience to be valuable to them.” So, in the case of a feminist community organizing initiative like WOAW with participants from diverse social, political and economic backgrounds, different individuals may have multiple understandings of resources based on their experience.

Foa et al. (1993), Goldsmith (1996) and Hobfoll (1989) each provide examples of potential of resources, which have relevance to WOAW, in addition to those developed in organizational theory, community development or feminist organizing literature.
addition, they all argue that resource utilization is based on how value is assigned to resources by participants from diverse locations. However, there are problems with all of their definitions. The potential for interrelationships between resources or for multiple meanings of a singular resource type are not fully developed. Callahan (1997) argues that members of a feminist community organizing initiative should strive to value all participants for themselves, rather than for a specific role they play. Therefore, an understanding of the interrelationships between resources is important in the context of an organization like WOAW in order to fully value the range of resources contributed by its diverse participants.

Finally, a more comprehensive description of how resources get used in practice is needed, especially intangible or non-traditionally valued ones such as emotional energy. Do people actually consider abstract emotions like caring or experience living in poverty to be resources that are meaningful for feminist community organizing? How do these alternative resources become recognized, appreciated or mobilized in a form participants actually use, and what does this look like in practice? Some of these questions were not addressed by the literature, and thus I think that part of my study’s contribution has been the act of compiling a list of resources that diverse members of a community organizing initiative felt they were bringing to the group and showing how participants saw those being interrelated in a comprehensive way. In addition, my study considered how the participants in WOAW were thinking about and valuing resources. Subsequently, a further contribution of my study is the documentation of evidence about which of the resources named by participants were actually used and not used in the start-up phase of WOAW, providing a snapshot of resource utilization in practice.

I believe that an examination of resources is extremely valuable in the start-up phase of a feminist community organizing initiative because it can possibly empower individuals by encouraging them to consider their individual contributions in addressing a shared social problem. Rather than recruiting expert leadership or cultivating corporate
sponsors for a project, looking internally at the resources of community members is an important starting point for deciding how to go about doing the work they want to do with the means available to them. Ife (1995, p 185) supports this view when he writes that:

The dominant 'welfare state' way of thinking means that people will often ignore such local resources, and seek support from elsewhere – normally from governments. This can weaken local community structures, and is in any case of doubtful long-term value given increasing doubts about the viability of the welfare state. The principle of self-reliance focuses attention on what can be done with local resources, and also forces one to ask the question: If it can’t be done with local resources, is it worth doing at all?

An organization recognizes and uses its pool of resources to create action through the organizing structure and practices espoused by the group (Kanter, 1989). Based on the reading I have done, I think that feminist collective organizing, rather than traditionally practiced hierarchy, holds promise for honouring all participants’ contributions and mobilizing diverse resources to address a social issue.

Feminist Collective Organizing

Passivity and powerlessness are actively produced through bureaucratic practices and discourse. The first step in resisting it is reclaiming the power one does have (Reinelt, 1994, p. 696).

Feminist collective organizing is “a conscious political act” (Brown, 1992, p. 9), a commitment to social change through connecting women’s lived experience with social, economic and political structures that influence their personal lives (Callahan, 1997). I see naming and mobilizing a wide range of participant resources, as well as developing a self-sufficient organization as part of this politicization, especially in the context of grassroots community-based initiatives working to address the needs of a marginalized group.

Callahan (1997, p. 183) pointed out “despite the long legacy of women’s organizing at the community level, this history is scarcely known or appreciated.” The traditional undervaluing of women’s work in the community reflects their subordinate
social status and typecast focus on private life, in contrast to that of men who have traditionally been more involved in the public sphere, and in control of highly valued financial and material resources (Dominelli, 1995; Kanter, 1989; Ife, 1995). In addition, marginalized populations, such as women living below the poverty line, are often stereotyped as having few valuable resources to share in community organizing (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Morton & Loos, 1995), which in turn leads to their exclusion from planning and implementation services by local governments, such as sport and recreation policy and programs (Thibault, Kikulis & Frisby, forthcoming).

Dominelli (1995, p. 3) countered that:

Since time immemorial, women have worked in the community, stitching the threads of everyday life together. Most of the time, this work goes on unnoticed, except when it is not done or is the subject of complaint. Without women’s work in the community, life as we know it would not exist.

The political nature of feminist collective organizing in a community-based initiative is partly about changing peoples’ attitudes about the contributions a diverse group of women can make toward changing their own lives and life in their community through sharing and mobilizing their resources. Callahan (1997, p. 189) wrote “many organizers would state that the major skill required is the ability to analyze the injustices of the patriarchal system and demonstrate how these play out on a daily basis in women’s lives.” Ife (1995, p. 183) indicated that in the context of community organizing:

A complete strategy of empowerment requires that barriers to people exercising power be understood, addressed and overcome. These include the structures of oppression (class, gender and race/ethnicity), language, education, personal mobility, and the domination of elites of the power structures of society. Understood in these terms, then, empowerment is a form of radical change, which would overturn existing structures of domination.

Therefore, through the act of naming and mobilizing a broad range of self-sufficient resources, and in doing so using a deliberately political form of organizing, such as feminist collectivity, a group and its participants have the potential to change their views
about what they are capable of achieving in their own lives and communities, as well as challenging institutions that have traditionally disempowered them.

**Principles of Feminist Collectivity**

In order to achieve...power and clarity of voice, organizations need to define what they value. This means going through the collective process of clarifying the mission and philosophy of the organization. This process of creating discursive autonomy enhances the moral and political authority of the organization, strengthens its cohesiveness, and makes it more difficult to derail and distort its mission (Reinelt, 1994, p. 693).

Conceptually, the feminist principle of collectivity strives to create equality among members of an organization and is designed to diffuse power imbalances, as an alternative to perpetuating these differentials in a hierarchical structure (Brown, 1992, Reinelt, 1994). Collective organizing is characterized by “a desire to relate to others in terms which respect the capacities of individuals, which seek to avoid placing one group of people above another, and to promote collective ownership of the aims of the endeavour” (Brown, 1992, p. 6). Collectivity is enacted through using an informal, decentralized structure or shared leadership that is supposed to facilitate the balancing of power among collaborators (Staggenborg, 1995), in which all members, ideally, take turns acting in power roles and share responsibilities.

Collectives strive to use consensus decision making, in which ideally all members’ input into a decision is carefully considered and discussed until the entire group comes to a decision together (Reinelt, 1994), rather than taking a vote where the majority rules. Ife (1995, p. 196) argued, “the problem with the conflict approach is that it produces losers as well as winners, and the losers will be marginalized and alienated as a result.” He went on to describe the consensus model in more detail (p. 196):

The consensus approach works towards agreement, and aims at reaching a solution which the whole group or community will ‘own’ as theirs. It implies that the group or community commits itself to a process, which seeks to find a solution or course of action everyone can accept and own, and where people agree that what has been decided is in the best interests of all.
While the consensus decision-making process described in the literature is an ideal, there are some examples of organizations currently working to use this method in their daily operations, including the Boston Women’s Health Collective (USA), Ms. Magazine (USA) and a Regional Women’s Center in the Greater Vancouver Area of British Columbia, Canada (Hara & Alexander, 2000).

This consensus decision-making approach to organizing is believed to value members’ individual contributions as equally important to the work of an organization, thus seeming more open to the myriad of possible ‘resources’ individuals bring to a project than a hierarchy where one or more of the leaders in the upper echelons assume they control resources. Callahan (1997, p. 194) indicated “feminist collective organizations are distinguished by their insistence that individuals do not have to leave their private selves at home when they enter public realms and work on collective issues.”

Valuing participants’ diverse input into the collective is thought to empower each person, and therefore aid in dispersing power more equally throughout the membership (Dominelli, 1995; Feree & Martin, 1995). Empowerment of participants, a core value of feminist collective organizing (Brown, 1992), is defined as “a process through which those who have been oppressed learn to know their strength and recognize themselves as experts in their own lives” (Reinelt, 1994, p. 689). Feminist researchers contend that empowerment in a collective involves the development of individuals’ self-esteem, self-efficacy and sense of control over their lives through attempting to create and maintain an environment where mutual learning, open communication, trust and respect are practiced among participants (Coombe, 1997; Frisby et al., 1997; Poland, 1993; Ristock & Penell, 1996). The empowerment philosophy contrasts sharply with hierarchical organizing which perpetuates power imbalances between members, marginalizes participants who lack power in the structure and excludes potential participants, such as women on low incomes, who are not part of the structure to begin with (Acker, 1990; Dominelli, 1995).
Part of the process of learning to value each member’s input equitably in a collective involves practicing self-reflexivity, both individually and in the group (Opie, 1992). Ristock and Penell (1996, p. 5) defined reflexivity as “an awareness of what one is doing and why.” Wallerstein (1999) indicated that participants in a collective need to know how to “unmask power” through self-evaluation, declaration and becoming better listeners to the voices of others. Members of the collective must try to “continually re-examine the extent to which ideology contributes to a failure to see beyond it, and to question particular truths which adhere to it and the stereotypes which develop from it” (Opie, 1992, p. 58). Self-reflexivity is potentially important then in the process of assigning value to resources, as this practice challenges participants and groups to question the origins of their own values, the stereotypes they espouse, and therefore, what they consider to be resources and how they can be utilized most effectively. Thus, if an individual practices self-reflexivity, she may come to see that she has ‘resources’ to contribute to a feminist community organizing project that she did not previously value or even deem to be a resource. In addition, a whole group may come to the same realization through questioning their own ideology, discovering that they have a pool of resources they had not previously regarded, which may be influential in their initiative.

However, Dominelli (1995) cautioned that the process of self-reflexivity is time-consuming and can be demoralizing for a group, as it demands that participants constantly critique themselves and each other. Reinelt (1994, p. 693) stated that the development of collective process “requires sensitivity, knowledge, a willingness to listen, and recognition that change is a slow process.” One of the most time consuming challenges for people working in a feminist collective can be valuing diversity in the group during the entire process of resource naming and resource mobilization. Callahan (1997, p. 200) explained:
the important challenge for feminist community organizers [is] revealing the range of experiences of women of colour, ableness, sexual orientation, class, and others; appreciating how, given present circumstances, women oppress other women, yet, at bottom, understand their common cause as women struggling within a patriarchal culture.

Dominelli (1995) posits, however, that a willingness to accept and work through self and group critique, and to use it constructively in further developing group processes and decision-making, has the potential to enable diverse group participants to improve their sensitivity to shared issues and to develop possible paths of action that respect all members’ contributions.

Though not a practice of feminist collective organizing, politicization of participant involvement is a philosophy that underpins this organizational structure and is, therefore, also important to discuss here. While some WOAW members identify openly with ‘challenging the status quo’ and think that the organization’s goals should be explicitly political, others have not stated how they feel about being a political organization and a few participants have indicated that they would not want to be involved in political work at all. I believe that the political nature of feminist collective organizing dovetails well with the argument that individuals have a broad range of resources to bring and mobilize in a community-based initiative. The use of feminist collectivity highlights the importance of forms of thinking and organizing that are different from the norm, which may better address the abilities and needs of individuals and groups in a community, especially those groups that have been traditionally marginalized, such as women on low incomes.

It is important, here, to temper a discussion of the possibilities brought to community organizing by adopting feminist collectivity with a discussion of some of the possible difficulties of using this organizational structure in practice. While the theoretical potentials of feminist collectivity seem exciting, the literature points out that exercising collectivity can be quite complex and ‘easier said than done.’
Challenges to Feminist Collective Organizing

Difficulties encountered by groups working with collectivity include individuals’ differential experience, willingness or ability to work in a collective rather than a hierarchical environment (Eisenstein, 1995), conflict around discrepancy of values and work contributions by members (Brown, 1992), and essentialist assumptions about the homogeneity of ‘sisterhood’, that may silence certain participants while giving power to others (Basu, 1995).

In the specific context of WOAW, a group with very diverse participants, it is important to acknowledge that there are potentially many layers of complexity underlying group interactions (Bradshaw, 2000), and that relationships between participants are likely fraught with power imbalances. Mayo (1997, p. 3) indicated that participating in community organizing “can be disempowering for communities and especially for the most disadvantaged and socially excluded groups within communities,” such as women on low incomes. Similarly, Ife (1995, p. 179) pointed out that:

Community development structures and processes can easily reinforce the dominant structures of oppression, for example, by unthinkingly following meeting procedures that favor articulate white middle class males, by ignoring the need for childcare provision, by scheduling meetings at times when it is difficult for some people to attend, by not providing translation or interpreter facilities and so on.

In addition, in a time when concepts such as empowerment, participant-centred development and action research are becoming more widely accepted and practiced, there is still much skepticism about how much marginalized groups or individuals gain or are empowered through working with professionals such as development workers or researchers (Austin et al., 1999; Reid, 2000; Wallerstein, 1999).

Mayo (1997) also pointed out that collaborative community organizing can be disempowering for professionals who attempt to engage in the process. Thibault et al. (forthcoming, p. 3) stated, for example, that “local governments’ interest in addressing
social issues while meeting the interests of their commercial partners in terms of profit-making are quite often incompatible," leaving well-meaning community development workers to negotiate the impossibly opposing needs of disadvantaged members of the community and the managers they report to. Community development workers may also have difficulty in knowing how often to insert themselves or how to use an organizing structure in order to help a specific group, such as women on low incomes, move toward its goals (Ife, 1995).

Researchers, too, may face challenges when trying simultaneously to work in collaboration with participants in a community-based project and conduct research using participant-centred methods, such as feminist action research that are not often valued or understood within or outside the academy (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). Butterwick (2000) highlighted the difficulties of knowing when, how and how often a feminist action-oriented researcher, theoretically bound by a constant awareness and self-critique about the power she brings to the participant-researcher relationship, should insert herself in the process of community organizing. She pointed out that the literature does not provide much insight in terms of knowing how to negotiate critical self-reflexivity in such a research project, stating that it contains “mostly recipes and not much humility.” Reid (2000) concurred that the literature on feminist action research is not very helpful in realistically negotiating the power imbalances inherent in the researcher-participant relationship, thus leaving the researcher with only an idealized understanding of how to conduct such work.

Despite these challenges, at the outset of this study I assumed that feminist collective organizing held promise as a strategy for fully exploring and mobilizing the resources diverse participants bring to a community-based initiative like WOAW. I wanted to investigate more deeply how this process worked and what some of the challenges were with specific reference to the issue of resource utilization.
Women Organizing Activities for Women has not officially adopted the title of a collective, however members have been using the principles of collective organizing, such as consensus decision making, shared leadership, respect and the principle of empowerment (especially empowerment of the women on low incomes) since the very early stages of the project. The term feminism has been discussed at meetings and informally among participants. Some WOAW participants identify openly with the term feminism (and socio-political activism) and feel that their role in the organization is connected to feminist identity. Many WOAW participants have not indicated how they feel about associating with feminism. Others have stated explicitly that they do not want to be considered feminist because of negative connotations associated with the word such as being 'trouble makers' or 'women's libbers.' In spite of this incongruity about feminism, I have chosen to consider WOAW a feminist collective based on the organizing practices and principles its participants have been using and continue to develop. In the next chapter, the research methods I used to explore my research questions are described in more detail.
Chapter 3
Research Methods

Introduction

As explained in chapter 1, the site for my research was a feminist community organizing initiative called Women Organizing Activities for Women (WOAW). The data collection methods for my research included: (i) three Interactive Research Meetings (IRMs), one each with the women on low incomes, the community partners and the university researchers, (ii) fieldnotes that I took at the IRMs (n=3), as well as from WOAW meetings during the Phase I of the project (n=5), (iii) transcripts from two key Phase I WOAW meetings, the vision and the second budget meetings, and (iv) shared use of fieldnotes taken by other members of the research group at Phase I WOAW meetings (n=7). This chapter begins with a description of my social location as a researcher, followed by an in-depth description of data gathering methods and ethical considerations.

My Social Location as a Researcher

Kreiger (1996, p. 190) indicated that the researcher's task is to "uncover what we can with the tool of ourselves". As I am the principal research instrument through which the conception, design, implementation and writing of this study have been distilled, it is important for me to acknowledge my social location. I am a 25 year old, Caucasian woman, raised and formally educated in Canada with a committed partner but no dependents. I come from an upper middle class family and social environment in which I have enjoyed very close, supportive relationships with my family members, educators, and peers. From a very young age, I was encouraged to participate actively in sport and physical activity, which has almost always been a positive experience for me in mental, physical and spiritual ways. I am aware that many of the participants in the WOAW
Project have had dissimilar experiences in family and peer relationships, socio-economic background, as well as participation in sport and recreation.

I saw the problematization of my own experience as one of the most important parts of the process of doing this research, as I was challenged by both theory and participation in the WOAW project to constantly evaluate and reevaluate my understandings of the world and community in which I live. Tom (1999a) indicated that the process of doing research is transformative. The process of doing the work for this study has contributed to my self-concept and an understanding of the institutions and social ideals that work to shape my self-identity. As a result of this learning process, I have and continue to become better equipped to question social structures and environments, including my own personal background, preconceptions and biases (Maguire, 1987). Enloe (1990) indicated that relocating the personal is about power and social action.

Sample Selection and Methods

In order to be inclusive in my approach to data collection, all participants in each of the three collaborators groups, the women on low incomes (n=60), the community partners (n=15) and the university researchers (n=4) were invited to participate in one of the three IRMs. As it turned out, there were 13 women on low incomes, 10 community partners and 4 researchers at the respective meetings. A demographic profile of participants who were involved in the IRMs is presented in Tables 1-3 in Chapter 4. The fieldnote observations were recorded at Phase I WOAW meetings to which all participants were invited and welcomed to attend, but typically there were about 10-15 members in attendance. A typical breakdown of participants at a Phase I WOAW meeting was: (i) women on low incomes: 3-7 of the women over 60, 2-5 of the single mothers and 2-3 of the middle-aged women with no dependents, (ii) community partners:
3-6 from Parks and Recreation departments, 1-3 from Social Service agencies, and sometimes 1 from the School Board, (iii) researchers: 1-4 of us would attend.

The reason for the difference in the percentage of women on low incomes who participated in the IRMs and WOAW meetings compared with the community partners and researchers is that many of the women on low incomes who were considered members of WOAW chose to participate in the organization in other ways, such as recreational and social activities. While the community partners and researchers often attended WOAW meetings and participated in research in Phase I, there were a smaller number of women on low incomes, relative to the entire membership, who chose to be involved in the research and full group organizing in Phase I. In Chapter 2, I cited Ife's (1995) comment that community development processes can reinforce dominant structures of oppression, which may have been the case in Phase I WOAW organizing. In contrast, Gatenby and Humphries (2000, p.95) argue:

Participation also varies a great deal between individual women, with some involved in all aspects of the research, while others limit their involvement. Our understanding of that is that the amount of participation must be left to each individual, that this is one way in which participants maintain their own power.

While I do not think it was anyone's intention to be exclusive, perhaps the way WOAW organizing was carried out in Phase I facilitated the participation of some of the women on low incomes based on their desire to be involved in planning and research, while marginalizing others. I do know that some of the women on low incomes indicated that they were not interested or able to commit the amount of time necessary to be involved in the organizing or research that went on in Phase I, as they were already spending several hours a week on WOAW activities.
1) Interactive Research Meetings

As most of the WOAW participants except for the university researchers participated in one or two individual interviews during Phase I of the SSHRC grant, the researchers (including myself) decided collectively that it would be best for me to investigate my first research question (What resources do WOAW participants, including women on low incomes, community partners and researchers say they are bringing to the project?) in a group forum. With other members of the university research group, I co-facilitated three IRMs, similar to focus groups, at the end of WOAW Phase I. We conducted one research meeting each with the women on low incomes (n=13), the community partners (n=10) and ourselves, the university researchers (n=4). The IRMs for the women on low incomes and the community partners were held at the end of Phase I in conjunction with a luncheon (provided by the researchers) and celebratory discussion of WOAW accomplishments to date. Both of these IRMs took place at a community centre where many previous WOAW meetings had been held, so most participants were familiar with the location and meeting room. The university researchers chose to have their IRM in our project office on the university campus, which was convenient for us.

As a research method, the IRMs bore similarity to focus groups. I draw here on literature describing focus groups to explain some of the benefits and challenges associated with using this approach to data collection. Jarret (1993, p. 186) stated, "as a method for gathering qualitative data through group interaction, the focus group interview is concerned with subjective perceptions, opinions, attitudes, values and feelings."

Wilkinson (1999) argued that focus groups are useful for feminist research because they do not separate the individual from her social context or interactions and because they shift the balance of power away from the researcher due to the simultaneous number of research participants. Focus groups have the potential to be a meaningful forum in which participants are able to listen to and be respectful of one another, even when sharing opposing views and ideas (Morgan & Krueger, 1993).
The term 'Interactive Research Meetings' has been used here because I would like to convey a sense of collaboration with the WOAW members in generating meanings about resources. Wilkinson (1999, p. 67) provided support for this view in the following statement:

The social context of the focus group provides an opportunity to examine how people engage in such meaning-generation, how opinions are formed, expressed and modified within the context of discussion and debate with others...meanings are constantly negotiated and renegotiated.

In the portion of the IRMs that I facilitated I did not define resources for WOAW members when I asked my questions. Instead, I began the discussion about resources by asking participants to engage in a ten minute discussion in pairs, preferably with someone they did not know as well as others, to talk about what personal resources they thought they were bringing to WOAW, as well as to generate more familiarity among participants. After the discussion, I asked each individual to introduce her or his (there was one male community partner) partner to the group and to describe the resources this partner had discussed. While each participant spoke, I compiled a list on flip chart paper of all the words and expressions people used to describe the resources they felt they were bringing to WOAW. I filled 14 sheets of flip chart paper with examples of resources named by the women on low incomes and 11 for the community partners. For the IRM with the researchers I kept the list of resources on regular sized paper, as we were such a small group.

In addition to asking participants what resources they felt they were bringing to WOAW, I concluded the IRMs by asking participant groups to list the resources they felt the other two collaborator groups were bringing to the initiative, for example, what the women on low incomes thought the community partners and researchers were bringing, etc. I recorded the responses to this second question on flip chart paper, as well. In addition to the lists compiled on flip chart paper, all three IRMs were tape-recorded and transcribed to provide an ongoing record of the discussion. All the participants who
attended the IRMs had signed consent forms, approved by UBC research services, giving their consent to having WOAW meetings tape-recorded. The discussion around my research questions usually lasted about 45 minutes to an hour.

I participated in answering my own research questions during the IRM with the university researchers, as I had been a contributing participant to that group, as well as to WOAW for most of Phase I. Ristock and Penell (1996, p.13) indicated that it is important for feminist researchers to practice reflexivity in the research process, which involves “including oneself in what is being studied.” During our IRM as the university research group, we did not work in pairs or introduce partners, as we were a small group and were already very familiar with one another. Instead, we each listed the resources we felt we were bringing personally and then collaboratively added to one another’s lists.

Albrecht, Johnson and Walther (1993) cautioned that participants in focus groups often have different communication styles, which can lead to some participants contributing more often or more willingly than others. Also, answering questions as a group can result in “groupthink” in which individuals conform to the emergent ideas and processes of the group, rather than expressing their individual thoughts and opinions (Albrecht et al., 1993). As I recorded what each person said in the IRMs, I tried to clarify with them that I was hearing them correctly and to probe whether they had more to add about their partner, or had any other ideas about their own or others’ resources. At the end of the partner descriptions, I asked the groups as a whole for any additions, questions or clarifications they would like to see on the resource list we had compiled. I also offered to talk privately with anyone who had questions, concerns or ideas and left the flip charts and writing utensils available during the luncheons for participants to change or add to the resource lists if they chose to.
2) Fieldnotes and Shared Fieldnotes with the Other Researchers

Mutual learning and collaborative investigation are tenets of feminist action research that the research group has been trying to use to guide our work in WOAW and interactions with one another (Ristock & Penell, 1996). As a result, we collectively shared our fieldnotes taken at WOAW meetings in order to deepen our understandings of WOAW and to keep up with the organization when not all of us were able to attend meetings. Sanjek (1996) described fieldnotes as data distilled from explanations, interpretations and evocations of the physical and emotional research setting. Fieldnotes are based on the researcher's observations in the field, which develop from curiosity toward creating understanding (Sanjek, 1996; Tom, 1999b).

I used fieldnotes that I took (n=5) and that the other researchers took (n=7) at WOAW meetings in Phase I (n=9). The reason for the discrepancy in numbers of fieldnotes is that I did not attend the first four Phase I WOAW meetings. When I did attend, usually Sydney (one of the other researchers) would also take notes, which is why most of my other fieldnote references are from her. In combination with the fieldnotes generated, I used verbatim transcriptions from Phase I WOAW meetings (n=2) in order to address my second and third research questions (What evidence is there of participants' resources being used and not used during the start-up phase (first six months) of WOAW organizing? and What role does the use of feminist collective organizing play in which resources are used and not used?).

WOAW meetings took place once or twice a month during Phase I. With the exception of the budget and vision meetings, a facilitator was asked to volunteer at the beginning of each meeting and the agendas were collectively drawn up. During Phase I WOAW meetings, a variety of issues were discussed, including subgroup activities and

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3 Only two Phase I WOAW meetings were tape-recorded because new members (who had not signed ethics forms) would often attend, thus necessitating issues of confidentiality to be negotiated between researchers and participants at each meeting. The researchers spent some time during Phase I deliberating about how to tape-record meetings without breaching ethical parameters or making participants apprehensive, thus the delay in the regular taping of WOAW meetings.
updates, upcoming events and resources, relevant community issues like transportation meetings and free municipal recreation services, as well as issues related to the research project (Reid, Frisby, Millar & Pinnington, 2000, p. 5).

I attended five of the nine total Phase I WOAW meetings in which I engaged in participant observation to guide my fieldnotes. Boostrom (1994, p. 64) argued that participant observation is a good method for a novice researcher to use because:

> The substance of the research is to be found in all the ways the environment and events register on the observer. No program or schedule can be predetermined for this kind of observing, except at the most general level: we begin in the ignorance of suspended assumptions, and we try to learn to pay attention.

While I took fieldnotes I paid attention to information and incidents that were relevant to my work, what was happening in the meetings in general, as well as occurrences or exchanges that may have been relevant to the work of the other members of the university research group. The other researchers kept fieldnotes in a similar way, thus making it possible for me to cross check and add to my own notes and ideas where there was more than one set of notes for a particular meeting. As explained in Chapter 1, I had an idea of how resources and feminist collective organizing practices were presented in the literature, so I used those theories as a base for my fieldnotes. I often asked questions in my fieldnotes about the differences between what I was reading in the literature and what I was observing in Phase I WOAW meetings, both in terms of types of resources and how feminist organizing practices were playing a role in resource utilization. Some resources (e.g., information) and collective practices (e.g., consensus decision making) were easier to identify because they are described in great detail in the literature. Other resources (e.g., emotional energy) and aspects of collectivity (e.g., diffusion of power) were more difficult to uncover and discuss because they are less straightforward in practice.
Data Management and Analysis

Transcriptions of the IRMs (n=3), as well as fieldnotes (n=12) and transcriptions from Phase I WOAW meetings (n=2) were entered into the qualitative data management software program ATLAS.ti. The program facilitated the management and interpretation of my data through thematic coding of text and analytic memo writing. For example, I created multiple resource codes for each of the three participant groups, based on the examples of the kinds of resources they indicated that they were bringing in the IRMs, and then used these codes as part of my analysis of the fieldnotes from Phase I WOAW meetings to help uncover which and whose resources were being used. I also used ATLAS.ti to keep track of important quotes or questions I had raised in my fieldnotes. ATLAS.ti was useful in that it helped me to sort through data and generate themes for discussion; however I also found it limiting because at times items would have multiple meanings that were difficult to capture with just one or two code headings.

In addition to using ATLAS.ti, I kept notes about my developing ideas and questions during the process of working through my analysis. I also discussed my analysis several times with my advisor, and a few times with the other WOAW researchers.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained ethical approval for my study through UBC Research Services under the ethical approval of the principal investigator for the WOAW research project (see Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project in Appendix A). In addition to official university ethical approval, there were other ethical considerations based on principles of feminist action research that needed to be taken into account for my study, including researcher representation, participant feedback and reciprocity.
Opie (1992, p. 58) indicated that the researcher must "continually re-examine the extent to which [her] ideology contributes to a failure to see beyond it, and to question particular truths which adhere to it and the stereotypes which develop from it." My involvement with the university research group helped me with these negotiations. As researchers, we met once or twice a month during Phase I to discuss our understandings and experiences of WOAW and feminist action research. Invariably, we discussed ethical issues of researcher representation, roles and power relations in WOAW. I also had several individual discussions about self-reflexivity with members of the research group while driving to and from the research site, in passing in the graduate office or at arranged meetings. What I have come to terms with is that every feminist researcher imposes her own interpretations when analyzing, translating and communicating data and theory. Consequently it is up to her to declare her assumptions and reasoning up front, as well as speak in the first person to clarify whose voice is being represented, which I have done throughout this paper.

In addition to self-reflexivity, Tom (1999c) indicated that confidentiality, anonymity and reciprocity are also important considerations for feminist researchers. Following with the university ethics procedures about confidentiality and anonymity, WOAW participants were given the option to be identified in meeting transcripts and research reports with pseudonyms of their choosing or with their own first names as they saw fit. In addition, I contacted WOAW participants on an individual basis via email, mail or in person, to show them demographic information, quotes they provided, quotes others said about them, or fieldnote excerpts that involved them that I wanted to use in my work. I was explicit that should they have comments, changes or omissions to the information I had included, that it would in no way affect their previous, current or future involvement in WOAW or their relationships with the researchers.

In an attempt to actively involve WOAW participants in data analysis (Ristock & Penell, 1996), the researchers prepared a Phase I Report, in which I included the
responses I collected for my first research question at the IRMs. The Phase I Report was
distributed to WOAW participants (both the community partners and women on low
incomes) for their consideration toward the end of Phase II. Two weeks later, the
researchers held a collective evaluation meeting at one of the local community centres to
discuss this report with members, get their feedback, as well as to engage them in
reflective data analysis. At that meeting, some of the women on low incomes indicated
that they were unsure about the organizations that the community partners were
representing and were expecting the researchers to provide specific answers to some
questions. This uncertainty suggests that the resources being brought by these two
collaborator groups were not readily transparent. This lack of communication between
participant groups about available resources is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Finally, I plan to include additional research findings and follow-up
recommendations in the Phase II Report, which the research group is currently working
on. If I am able to, I will also attend the Phase II Report evaluation meeting to discuss
possible follow-up actions further. In addition, I have invited WOAW participants to
attend my thesis defense, and some members have indicated that they would be interested
in coming\(^4\). If some members are not able to attend but would like to see a copy of my
completed thesis, I would be happy to provide them with a copy.

\(^4\) As it turned out, only the researchers attended my thesis defense. While a local transit strike may have
been one of the prohibitive factors, the commuting distance to the university would be quite long for some
WOAW participants. In addition, questions arose in my thesis defense about the exclusive nature of having
a defense in an academic setting, which I believe may also have contributed to the researchers being the
only WOAW participants to attend.
Chapter 4
Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Interactive Research Meeting Participants

The first section of this chapter provides a context for the discussion of results by profiling the demographic characteristics of participants from each of the three Interactive Research Meetings (IRMs) (see Tables 1-3). The diversity of the women on low incomes who participated in IRM 1 (n=13) is reflected in the demographic data contained in Table 1. The ages of participants ranged from 30-69 years, their domestic and family status varied, and none were currently employed although 9 indicated that they had previous work experience. As shown in Table 2, the community partners ranged in age from 30-50, and had different institutional affiliations, ranging from municipal Leisure and Parks work to a School District, to a Women's Centre and other social justice organizations. Table 3 shows that the researchers also ranged in age, as well as highest level of education and roles in the WOAW project. There were also power imbalances inherent in the researchers' relationships with one another, as Wendy was acting as thesis advisor to Sydney and I and a committee member to Colleen. In addition, Colleen was supervising Sydney and I in our roles as Research Assistants for WOAW.
Table 1: Demographic Profile of Interactive Research Meeting Participants - Women on Low Incomes (n=13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>APPROX. AGE &amp; ETHNICITY</th>
<th>MARITAL / FAMILY STATUS</th>
<th>WOAW SUB-GROUP</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>WORK STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Arlene</td>
<td>66 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
<td>Confidential secretarial/ Decorating consultant (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Ethel</td>
<td>&gt;60 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single (widowed), 2 daughters, 2 grandchildren</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Worked 25 years as a receptionist for a local school board (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Carole</td>
<td>61 Caucasian</td>
<td>Third marriage, 7 adult children and 14 grandchildren</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Worked full time (details not provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Irene</td>
<td>Late 50’s Caucasian</td>
<td>Single (divorced), 2 adult children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Some college, art school</td>
<td>Worked full time (details not provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Trina</td>
<td>56 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single (divorced), 3 adult children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>Has worked as a sales rep., a cook, home support worker, a cashier and made records (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Tammy</td>
<td>28 Caucasian</td>
<td>Not married, no children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Katharine</td>
<td>50 Caucasian (French Canadian)</td>
<td>Single (divorced), 2 adult children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grade 12, some university</td>
<td>Worked as a translator, executive assistant and real estate agent (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Elizabeth</td>
<td>32 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single (separated), 6 year-old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Donna O.</td>
<td>33 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single, 12 year-old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some elementary</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Donna A.</td>
<td>34 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single (separated), 3 year-old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grade 12, some University, College diploma</td>
<td>Has run a home daycare and a small business (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Susan</td>
<td>44 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single (divorced), no children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Worked in daycare for 20 years, owned a daycare for 5 years (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Pat</td>
<td>69 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>University (B.S.W.)</td>
<td>Worked as a social worker (not currently working)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Jennifer</td>
<td>30 Trinidadian</td>
<td>Single (divorced and widowed), 5 and 7 year-olds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Demographic Profile of Interactive Research Meeting Participants - Community Partners (n = 10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>APPROX. AGE &amp; ETHNICITY</th>
<th>MARITAL / FAMILY STATUS</th>
<th>WOAW SUB-GROUP</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>WORK STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Carla</td>
<td>&gt; 30 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single, no children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>University (B.S.W.)</td>
<td>Working as a Family Enhancement Worker for SHARE (family services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Geri</td>
<td>&gt; 40 Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
<td></td>
<td>Working as a Leisure and Parks recreation programmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Brenda</td>
<td>&gt; 30 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single, no children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>University (B.P.E.)</td>
<td>Community School Coordinator for a local School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Louise</td>
<td>49 Caucasian</td>
<td>Common law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some university</td>
<td>Working for a local Women's Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Jim</td>
<td>&gt; 30 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single, no children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Working as Access Coordinator for Leisure and Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Christine</td>
<td>50 Caucasian</td>
<td>Married, 5 children, 4 grandchildren</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>College diploma (E.C.E)</td>
<td>Working for Family Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Andrea</td>
<td>&gt; 35 Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Working at an Aquatics Centre through Leisure and Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Sandy</td>
<td>&gt; 50 Caucasian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Information not provided</td>
<td>Working for Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Bonnie</td>
<td>&gt; 35 Caucasian</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Working for Leisure and Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Gwen</td>
<td>35 Asian-Canadian</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Working for Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Demographic Profile of Interactive Research Meeting Participants – Researchers (n=4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>APPROX. AGE &amp; ETHNICITY</th>
<th>MARITAL / FAMILY STATUS</th>
<th>WOAW SUB-GROUP</th>
<th>HIGHEST EDUCATION</th>
<th>WORK STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Colleen</td>
<td>30 Caucasian, Recently married</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended Subgroup, Research Team and WOAW meetings</td>
<td>PhD Candidate (Interdisc. Studies)</td>
<td>Working as the Project Coordinator for SSHRC Grant for WOAW and as a fitness trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Wendy</td>
<td>45 Caucasian, Married, 16 year-old, 13 year-old</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended some Subgroup meetings, mostly WOAW meetings</td>
<td>PhD (Hkin)</td>
<td>Working as the Principle Investigator in WOAW research project, acts as advisor to Sydney and Beth, committee member to Colleen and is an Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Sydney</td>
<td>26 Caucasian, Not married</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended WOAW meetings only</td>
<td>MA Student (Hkin)</td>
<td>Working for CAAWS and as a Research Assistant for WOAW project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Beth</td>
<td>25 Caucasian, Not married</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attended some Subgroup meetings, mostly WOAW</td>
<td>MA Student (Hkin)</td>
<td>Working as a Teaching Assistant for the university and as a Research Assistant for WOAW project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The membership of WOAW was not ethnically diverse, which poses implications on the scope of resources brought to the organization and for the ability of WOAW to develop action plans that would be relevant to a broader range of women on low incomes. While over half of the women who attended the original workshop were non-Caucasian, and non-English speaking, these women did not carry on with the project for a variety of reasons. First, some indicated that participation in community recreation was a Western concept that conflicted with cultural understandings of their roles as women. Others indicated that their families were not supportive of this type of involvement. In addition, two community partners who served as translators at the workshop were overburdened in their paid work and roles as mothers, and were unable to continue to act as facilitators. In

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5 CAAWS is the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity.
Phase I, WOAW attempted to encourage these women to stay involved and made activities open to all who expressed interest, but did not actively entertain strategies to enhance the racial diversity of membership.

It is important to provide a context for my analysis by explaining the structure and activities of WOAW in the first six months of the organization (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: The Structure of WOAW**

At WOAW meetings, all three participant groups including the women on low incomes, the community partners and university researchers came together to develop action strategies designed to increase access to community recreation for women on low income. In general I would describe the climate of these meetings as warm, caring and cooperative, despite occasional differences of opinion. For the most part, everyone was treated with respect and opinions were solicited and listened to by the group. In addition, there was a shared concern about stereotypes and barriers created by poverty, and a desire to advocate for entitlement to public recreation.

In addition to regular WOAW meetings during Phase I the women on low incomes divided themselves into four 'Subgroups,' primarily based on shared demographic and geographic locations. Some of the community partners were also members of the Subgroups and one researcher normally attended Subgroup meetings that were held bi-weekly. At WOAW meetings, Subgroup members usually reported on their
activities and collective WOAW activities were planned. The Subgroups were named according to their geographic location, but I will use numbers for this report. Table 4 contains information on subgroup composition and action.

Table 4: Phase I Subgroup Composition and Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Number and Description of Women on Low Incomes</th>
<th>Number and Description of Community Partners</th>
<th>Examples of Phase I Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3-5 Some single mothers, some not married women</td>
<td>3 Two with Parks &amp; Recreation, one with a local social service agency</td>
<td>&quot;They organized activities such as a walking group and an English discussion group, and were active in their community making connections with groups such as a single mother's support group.&quot; *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6-12 Primarily single mothers with young children</td>
<td>2 One with a local Women's Center and the other with a local 'Family Place'</td>
<td>&quot;...organized activities such as qi gong, tai chi, yoga, moms and tots, weight training, aerobics, 1st aid, and computer classes.&quot; *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8-15 Majority of the women identified as seniors (&gt;60), some married, some divorced, some not married</td>
<td>1 Working for Parks &amp; Recreation at a community center for seniors</td>
<td>&quot;They organized activities such as belly dancing, tai chi, computers, and 'Safety Day.'&quot; *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6-12 Primarily middle aged women with either no or adult children</td>
<td>4 One with local School Board, and three with Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>&quot;They organized activities such as career planning and fitness and had a series of workshops, including one on stress management.&quot; *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Also, Colleen facilitated ‘Research Team Meetings’ for her doctoral dissertation, which became a forum for the women on low incomes to discuss common issues and concerns outside the business meetings of the larger group. During Phase I Research Team meetings, the women on low incomes “discussed at length their meanings and experiences of health and poverty, which were intricately linked” (Reid et al., 2000, p. 6). I attended the Phase I Research Team meetings in my role as a Research Assistant and observed that there was a considerable amount of personal exchange and discussions about the structural dimensions of poverty at these meetings. In contrast, the Subgroups
and WOAW meetings were more ‘business oriented’ and focused on increasing opportunities for participants in recreation. My analysis of resource utilization is limited primarily to observations of WOAW meetings and I acknowledge that different types of resources may have been shared in other forums and informal conversations.

Resources Named and Valued by WOAW Participants

We [as researchers] need to understand the inequities and internalized oppression faced by the people with whom we work and seek not just to understand the problems, but also to establish our relationships based on peoples’ perceptions of their strengths and community visions. (Wallerstein, 1999, p. 49)

When I asked WOAW participants to list the resources they were bringing to the organization, I was overwhelmed by the more than 200 items they named, which ranged from being a mother to being university educated, to having a car, to having political contacts, and to knowing how the local recreation department works. Drawing on the descriptions of resources as value-based in Foa et al.’s (1993), Goldsmith’s (1996) and Hobfoll’s (1989) work, I believe that the frequency of naming of resources in discussion was one way to assess which resources were considered to be valuable by participants. In addition, I compared each participant group’s stated resources with one another to demonstrate how participants’ social locations, as well as locations within WOAW influenced the resources they thought other collaborators were bringing to the organization. If gaps were identified, it would indicate that members were unclear about resources brought and this, in turn, could lead to power imbalances or resource under-utilization.

With such an abundance of examples of resources named by WOAW participants, I have assigned categorical labels to resources, in part based on participants’ language and in part from the literature, to facilitate analysis and explanation. The resource labels I have used in my discussion that reflect terminology used by WOAW participants are
knowledge (understanding or ideas about something), networks (both social and professional), funding, time, legitimacy, lived experience, skills that are job-related (facilitation, organization, note-taking) interpersonal (friendship, being a good listener), and recreational (baking, gardening)\(^6\), and commitment. The labels I used based on the literature were emotional energy (laughter, support, caring) (cf. Foa, 1993; Goldsmith, 1996), information and materials (staff, programs, facilities, transportation). While I critiqued the use of ‘categories’ in the literature, I have done so in my work for descriptive purposes, but have then attempted to blur categorical boundaries in Figures 3-5 by showing their interrelationships as described by WOAW participants. In addition, I present multiple meanings of single resources based on participants’ responses.

How the Women on Low Incomes Assigned Value to Their Resources

“Everybody brings their own different strength and stuff to the groups.”

(Donna O., Interactive Research Meeting 1\(^7\))

“There is a deep group consciousness that is cementing right now. We are really connecting, getting support and all sides of it. We’re all diverse women, diverse age and diverse races and tastes and what not, but we’re joining together as one group so that is great. And all toward the same goal of bettering everything. We have to know each other’s specialties, talents, knowledge, that’s something that we want to work on. And so that we can use that more efficiently and empower each of us. We’re here to make a difference…”

(Katharine, IRM 1)

The women on low incomes listed over 80 examples of resources brought by 13 individuals in IRM 1, blatantly challenging the stereotype that women on low incomes have few resources to bring to a feminist community organizing initiative (Wallerstein, 1999). The types of resources most often discussed by the women on low incomes were lived experience, skills (both job-related and interpersonal or recreational) and emotional

\(^{6}\) While there is some overlap, I have made a distinction between job-related and interpersonal or recreational skills in order to show that there are different types of skills that participants can contribute to an organization like WOAW, and that the more traditionally valued job-related skills may not be the most important in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative, especially one with a goal of increasing women’s participation in recreation.

\(^{7}\) The abbreviation IRM will be used in the rest of the discussion to denote quotes from Interactive Research Meetings. The abbreviations will also be numbered as follows, 1 for the women on low incomes, 2 for the community partners and 3 for the researchers.
energy (see Table 5). The quotes in Table 5 are from women on low incomes who are describing the resources their partners were bringing to WOAW, based on the discussions they had in pairs in the IRMs. The multiple meanings of single resource types are reflected in the diverse interpretations presented in the quotes for each category.

As is demonstrated in Table 5, the women on low incomes listed more examples of the interpersonal and recreational skill resources they were bringing to WOAW than any other type. Their inventory of interpersonal skills demonstrated multiple interpretations of this resource and included such elements as being a supportive listener, a good friend and a ‘people person.’ Their list of recreational skills incorporated hobbies like calligraphy, woodworking, crocheting and baking. In the context of WOAW’s initiative, which was designed to increase women’s participation in recreation, the combination of interpersonal and recreational skills the women on low incomes spoke about had the potential to lead to increased leisure opportunities for them through mutual learning and social exchange. In addition to listing a number of examples of their interpersonal and recreational skills, the women on low incomes connected these resources with other types of resources they felt they were bringing to WOAW. For example, in quote 5.1(c) Katharine explained that Irene was bringing her skills as a quilter and a gardener to the group, but went further to make a connection between Irene’s hobbies and her skills as an organizer.

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8 Due to the abundance of data from the IRMs, I have used Tables to present participants’ quotes in response to my first research question. Additional quotes that have been used in this section of the text are supplemental to the discussion about resources or about WOAW in general. In the second section of my discussion (about resource use in WOAW), I have used direct quotes in the text, rather than in a Table format.

9 The first number (in this case 5) denotes the Table. The second number (1) corresponds to the resource type, and the letter (c) refers to the specific quote.
Table 5: Resources Named by the Women on Low Incomes (n = 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TIMES ITEM NAMED</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Interpersonal or Recreational Skills</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>a) “Hobbies are calligraphy, sewing, beading necklaces, cooking, writing, loves to read and research things.” (Irene describing Katharine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) “I think her biggest talent is she likes people, and that is a talent.” (Carole describing Elizabeth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) “But you know it pays to be artistic. She’s very artistic. She’s the creator. She’s the creator of many things; the quilt is one of them, but she creates all the time in everything. She is growing a garden, but she also grows ideas. She takes something from the seed through development to the end. So growing a garden in both senses, subjectively and objectively.” (Katharine describing Irene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d) “She loves the out of doors and loves gardening. And she also does some crafts; she crochets and has some knowledge of different crafts.” (Tammy describing Trina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Lived Experience</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>a) “...she’s also bringing the experiences as a mom of a 12 year-old son and talking about some of the problems they’ve run in to.” (Wendy describing Donna O.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) “This is Carole; she puts me to shame. She’s had 7 children and 4 foster children. I don’t know how she’s still sane! (Group Laughter) And we were saying that one thing you have to learn to sink or swim is that you all of a sudden have to learn how to run a household, you know. Learning to cook, learning to bake and keep eleven kids happy. Organizational skills. And working on top of it, to boot.” (Elizabeth describing Carole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) “This is Katharine...She’s raised two children on her own, so that means she has money skills.” (Irene describing Katharine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d) “She has direct experience in union, so structure and the politics and all that line of (pause) that is pretty abstract to us.” (Katharine describing Irene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) I would just like to add that I do, I’ve worked a lot with the provincial, federal governments plus all the hierarchy that it takes to run a daycare center, all the inspectors and things like that. And I really am quite well (sic) at getting to who you should talk to cause I won’t talk to anybody but the person at the top. I learned that real quick (Susan describing herself).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCE TYPE</td>
<td>NUMBER OF TIMES ITEM NAMED</td>
<td>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Lived Experience (cont'd)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>f) 'Bridging' the age differences... increasing the understanding from all ages -- between one another, I feel is important. I also believe that 'highlighting' the fact that us (seniors)... have all been young... so very well know what that is like. However, the reverse is not true... the young have never been old... hence it is much more difficult for them to understand the 'seniors' difficulties... and resulting point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Emotional Energy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>a) “Because you can throw any ideas at her and she tells the way to go. And then she'll empower you. She'll bring you. She is so strong in herself and gives strength to others. And doesn't mind being behind the scene, but she'll push you forward. So that's a force. She believes in empowerment very much. That's a quality that obviously she gives to WOAW and to women.” (Katharine describing Irene) b) “This is Donna O. and one thing that Donna brings to the project, and I don’t think it's been mentioned yet, is a really good sense of humour. She finds the fun in things and the humour in things and brings laughter to the group, which I think is really important.” (Wendy describing Donna O.) c) “She brings energy and eagerness and a humanitarian point of view to issues. I think the big one is energy.” (Irene describing Katharine) d) “Donna has really begun to like herself and I think that's really coming out...and enjoy herself which I think is a big one, too” (Susan describing Donna A.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Job-Related Skills</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>a) “And she loves to research everything. Her organization skills are superb. She does the newsletter and phoning for her group.” (Trina describing Tammy) b) “And what she brought is she worked for 25 years for the school board, so she brings fantastic secretarial skills and phone skills.” (Sydney describing Ethel) c) “She’s been an executive assistant, a translator, in management and organization. And I believe at one time you were selling real estate. She’s a real people person.” (Irene describing Katharine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Knowledge</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>a) “Her power is her great and diverse knowledge. So many things and she’s always do this, do that, check this out; it’s amazing. She sees WOAW as an idea that must be helped along, so she's ready to do the work behind it...Her common sense is very powerful.” (Katharine describing Irene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>a) “...and the time to be able to come to meetings is really important.” (Sydney describing Ethel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Commitment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>a) “She’s always at her meetings and commits.” (Trina describing Tammy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Materials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a) &quot;...she owns a car, an antique car.” (Susan describing Donna A.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Networks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a) &quot;And through her diverse experience she has great contacts in so many fields.” (Katharine describing Irene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other women on low incomes connected interpersonal or recreational skills, such as baking or crafts, with meaningful social interaction and social networks. When Carole reported that Elizabeth knew how to bake, she added with a smile “I’m really going to make friends with her” (IRM 1). Susan and Donna A. joked about how they were going to have to start spending more time together after finding out through the IRM that they had personal skills such as singing and cooking in common. In addition, during Donna A.’s introduction, one of her friends around the table commented that “She’s awesome at making Chinese food” at which two other participants suggested that the group should have a potluck and that Donna should teach others how to make her ‘famous’ egg rolls.

Through this discussion, the women on low incomes established that interpersonal and recreational skills have the potential to become conduits for social exchange, friendship and recreation, which are all related to capacity building in a community organizing initiative through creating meaningful networks and bonds between participants. Ife (1995, p. 191) stated that community building “involves strengthening the social interactions within the community, bringing people together, and helping them to communicate with each other in a way that can lead to genuine dialogue, understanding and social action.” Indeed, many of the women on low incomes have stated during Phase I that one of the most meaningful outcomes of being involved in WOAW was the opportunity for increased social interaction and friendships. For example, Susan reported that Phase I of WOAW should be celebrated for “networking...feelings of solving problems together, overcoming age, ethnic and cultural differences, brought women of various age and backgrounds into our lives and it’s working” (IRM 1).

Lived experience was also frequently mentioned as a resource and was typically associated with the experience of having been or currently being a mother. Seven of the 13 women included experience mothering in their list of resources (which represents 100% of the women on low incomes in that meeting who had children). As an example,
Donna A., whose list of resources she brought to WOAW included organizational skills, baking, singing, communication, facilitation and mechanical knowledge of cars, emphasized the importance of the lived experience of mothering. She indicated to the group that this was the most meaningful resource on her list.

In their discussion of mothering, the women on low incomes made a number of connections between their diverse lived experience and skills they had developed as a result, such as being organized and budgeting with scarce financial resources. While introducing Carole in quote 5.2(b), Elizabeth described the relationship she saw between Carole's experience as a mother and the development of her organizational, relationship, and domestic skills. Irene also illustrated the interrelationship between mothering and skills in her description of Katharine in quote 5.2(c). For the women on low incomes, the categories of lived experience and skills as resources were interrelated with one another.

Lived experience was also discussed by the women on low incomes in other contexts such as previous paid work or general life wisdom, which they linked with knowledge they felt they were bringing to the WOAW project. Susan illustrated this relationship in quote 5.2(e) when she explained how her experience operating a daycare led to her developing knowledge about bureaucratic systems. Similarly, Colleen reported that Pat had knowledge of the welfare bureaucracy from job experience as a social worker in Alberta. Katharine connected Irene's work experience in a unionized organization with her knowledge of politics and organizational structure, as well as a less often valued form of knowledge, common sense in quote 5.5(a). I think what Katharine was talking about was Irene's 'no nonsense' approach to WOAW's work in Phase I, in which Irene was constantly using her knowledge from past experience to address individual and group concerns or barriers. In an electronic mail correspondence about my study (subsequent to the IRMs, cited in quote 5.5(f)), Arlene provided additional insight into how she saw her lived experience, and that of the other older women involved in WOAW, relating to unique knowledge that they could contribute. Again, the women on low incomes made a
fluid interconnection between two resource ‘types,’ lived experience and knowledge, showing how one resource is tied to another. In addition, they had multiple understandings of lived experience and the connections between this resource and others.

The women on low incomes also related their lived experience in the form of past paid work with job-related skills they saw themselves bringing to WOAW. Nine of the thirteen women who participated in IRM 1 indicated to me that they had previous paid work experience (some participants did not provide this information). While introducing Ethel in quote 5.4(b), Sydney pointed out that the skills she was bringing to WOAW were related to her paid work experience. Irene highlighted the connection between Katharine’s work experience and her interpersonal skills in quote 5.4(c). Other job-related skills the women on low incomes associated with their work experience were group facilitation, research and teaching. One might expect that the community partners and researchers would have brought the job-related skills to WOAW; however the women on low incomes demonstrated that they were also bringing a wide range of skills, challenging familiar stereotypes that they did not have valuable resources to contribute to such an initiative.

In their discussion of lived experience, the women on low incomes associated both personal (mothering) and professional (previous paid work) experience with capacity and other resources they saw themselves contributing to WOAW. Dominelli (1995, p. 134) emphasizes the importance of both types of lived experience in the context of community organizing, when she writes that “enhancing the substance of everyday life forms the crux of women’s action in the community, replicating and drawing upon the labour women undertake in the privacy of their homes and in waged work.” Interestingly, the women on low incomes did not focus on their lived experience of poverty as a resource, despite its potentially vital contribution to WOAW’s initiative through their understandings of the barriers to accessing recreation for women in poverty. The emphasis that women on low incomes placed on their lived experience as mothers and
paid workers may indicate that they sought legitimacy in the project based on their identities as good mothers and workers, rather than the myriad of stereotypes commonly associated with women living in poverty\textsuperscript{10}.

Another kind of resource that the women on low incomes spoke about often was emotional energy, a resource that is intimated in the literature but not well developed in the context of feminist community organizing. This is surprising given that emotional energy is probably drained when living in poverty and when dealing with a number of mental and physical health concerns. The women on low incomes talked about a wide range of emotions that were considered to be resources salient to WOAW. Irene emphasized the importance of the energy she saw Katharine contributing to WOAW in quote 5.3(d). Other women talked about such elements as support for the group, compassion and understanding as important emotional energy resources (see Table 5). Meyerson (2000, p. 175) indicated that while emotions are not typically valued as skills or competencies in organizations, if they were they would lead to a “much more humane and full portrait” of participants working in an initiative like WOAW.

The women on low incomes demonstrated that they already had an awareness of how emotional energy as a resource was contributing to the capacity of their group. While Katharine was introducing Irene she called her a “great force to WOAW.” When I asked her to clarify what she meant by ‘force’, Katharine indicated in quote 5.3(b) that she saw that Irene’s personal strength, and her ability to share that strength in a way that made other participants feel more powerful, was an example of emotional energy contributing to both individual and group capacity through empowerment. Wendy pointed out the importance of another example of emotional energy, having a sense of humour, in her summary of Donna O.’s resources in quote 5.3(c). Similarly, Trina said

\textsuperscript{10} As mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, the women on low incomes did discuss their lived experience of poverty more in the Research Team meetings, so perhaps they did not feel they needed to emphasize this as much in IRM 1.
she thought one of Tammy's biggest contributions to WOAW was that she was always happy and smiling.

Many organizational environments encourage or expect that members suppress emotional expression (Acker, 1990) or fail to consider such expression as valuable to organizational work (Meyerson, 2000). However, the examples from the women on low incomes indicated that emotional energy resources were significant to WOAW organizing, perhaps because they kept participants going at times when they needed support or when there was conflict in the group. Reid et al. (2000) report that some of the women on low incomes were spending upwards of 10 hours a week doing WOAW-related work in Phase I. Perhaps emotional energy also played a role in their continuing desire and ability to devote so much time and enthusiasm to the project.

Susan talked about emotional energy in the form of self-worth and esteem as another valuable resource while speaking of Donna A. in quote 5.3(e). I think that emotional energy in the form of self-esteem may have led to organizational capacity through enabling the women on low incomes to take the risk of being involved in Phase I, for example by dealing with 'professionals' and bureaucratic organizations such as municipal parks and recreation departments which had contributed disenfranchising them in the past or with researchers who they may have viewed with suspicion (Austin et al., 1999; Wallerstein, 1999). In addition, many of the women on low incomes indicated that their welfare workers and even their own families were expressing skepticism about their involvement in WOAW, which may have been putting them at social, emotional and perhaps even economic risk because of their participation. I think that each of the women on low incomes in WOAW drew on personal emotional energy in some way, perhaps in the form of self-esteem in order to take the risk of becoming involved in WOAW's work in the community and that it is important to recognize and honour this energy as a resource. Emotional energy is a resource that needs to be further researched in order for participants in organizations like WOAW to develop a better understanding of its role in
such initiatives. Meyerson (2000, p. 173) is one of the few to acknowledge the importance of emotional energy in organizations:

First, to acknowledge the effort involved in accessing and ‘joining’ others’ emotions as ‘real work’ that requires a developed skill would be to develop a radically different language of ‘work’ and ‘competency.’ Since there exists no readily available vocabulary to describe this work in terms of competency (as opposed to women’s natural traits), it largely remains invisible. However, if the work involved in honouring and encountering emotions ‘counted’ as real work, more people would learn to do it well and would be rewarded for doing so.

In Figure 3, I have tried to create an initial visual depiction of the interrelationships between the resources the women on low incomes talked about. According to the women on low incomes, personal skills were related to professional skills and networks. Lived experience was connected to professional skills, which were both linked with knowledge. Finally, emotional energy seemed to be associated with relationships between members, as well as their capacity to share their other resources by taking the risk of being involved in the project, thus it encompasses all their other resources.

Figure 3: My Interpretation of the Interrelationships Between the Resources of the Women on Low Incomes
Following is a description of the resources the community partners and researchers felt the women on low incomes were bringing to WOAW. Both the community partners and the researchers emphasized the emotional energy brought by the women on low incomes, in addition to skills, knowledge, time, legitimacy and lived experience (see Table 6).

How the Community Partners and Researchers Assigned Value to the Women on Low Incomes' Resources

When I asked the community partners what resources they felt the women on low incomes were contributing to the group, the first five answers they gave were: courage, strength, energy, humour and perseverance, which I interpreted as examples of emotional energy. Bonnie described how she saw the women's emotional energy as a resource contributing to WOAW's capacity in quote 6.1(CP). Bonnie's statement linked the personal strength or emotional energy of many of the women on low incomes with their ability to be involved and active in WOAW organizing, which in turn increased the capacity of the group through their participation. The researchers also talked about emotional energy being an important contribution made to WOAW by the women on low incomes when they named such things as strength, caring, effort, endurance and resilience as resources. In excerpt 6.1(R), Colleen and Wendy discuss how they understood emotional energy as resources, and how these potentially enabled the women on low incomes to participate in WOAW meetings and activities.

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In the numbering of quotes for the comparative Tables (6 and 8), I have used the abbreviations 'CP' to denote quotes from the community partners, 'WLI' for the women on low incomes, and 'R' for researchers.
Table 6: How the Community Partners and Researchers Assigned Value to the Women on Low Incomes’ Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMPLES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Community Partners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Emotional Energy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“For me personally, I have incredible respect for the fact that they do this, that they come out of their own lives, they come out and they do this because they put time into this; they come to meetings; they take part; they participate. It’s all because they are motivated to do it themselves, that they, despite the fact that they may have some difficult things in their lives that create barriers, they have the energy and dedication; they’re an inspiration.” (Bonnie).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I think a lot of them have also created resources, of free activities all through the community… it’s just amazing to hear all of the things they’re aware of that you can do an low cost or no cost.” (Andrea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“The women that may be new, or scared or upset, the women are there to connect and nurture. It’s so incredibly valuable.” (Geri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“… attendance of meetings…” (Bonnie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Job-Related Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I think that a lot of them have a number of skills that… you know they may not be able to find a job for whatever reason; their situation is such that they can’t be out working, but they have tremendous skills that they can share with other women.” (Andrea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Legitimacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I think the women make it real for anybody who is working with them, that the women bring the issues to life and bring some kind of connection.” (Geri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Researchers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1) Emotional Energy | 6                  | Colleen: I think it’s also, in terms of time, like the effort, as well that they’ve put in. Like what it takes us to get to a meeting, versus what it takes them.  
Wendy: Here we’re talking about cars being a resource.  
Colleen: Walk there…  
Wendy: Walk there with the kids…  
Colleen: Four year old on the bus…  
Wendy: Get kicked off the bus cause your child is crying. Like their personal resources to get there and to get home.  
Colleen: Strength and endurance and…  
Wendy: Resilience. |
<p>| 2) Interpersonal Skills | 4            | “I’d say caring for each other, and perception about one another. Like Carole is a really good example of that; in meetings now she’ll ask the quiet people to talk.” (Beth) |
| 3) Knowledge        | 4                  | “Give me a break, that you’d have to have a Master’s degree to be insightful and analytical. They’re incredible in the knowledge and insights and just the different skills we’re seeing, whether it’s leadership or budgeting, juggling all this stuff and issues that they’re juggling, their support for one another.” (Wendy) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE (Researchers)</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMPLES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4) Lived Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;It’s interesting because the women, in discussions we’ve had... have all said ‘If only someone in social services was forced to live in our situation for a week or a month. Then they would know.’ But on the other hand, they don’t identify that experience as a resource. But I see it as a huge resource... Like what they know about how it is to live in poverty, how it is to live on three hundred dollars a month, or whatever, you know, I think that’s the biggest resource they bring because it keeps everyone else, I think, honest&quot; (Colleen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Job-Related Skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;...and tons of skills. Like it’s just so neat to see these skills blossoming and just really challenging the stereotypes...&quot; (Wendy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;I think the time they’re committing to the project.&quot; (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Legitimacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;I think that both in terms of doing both FAR [feminist action research] and community development they bring legitimacy to the project.&quot; (Beth)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to emotional energy, the resources that the community partners and researchers said the women on low incomes were bringing to WOAW included knowledge, both interpersonal/recreational and job-related skills, time and commitment to the organization (see Table 6). Different from what the women on low incomes said about themselves, both the community partners and the researchers indicated that the women on low incomes were bringing knowledge and legitimacy to WOAW through their lived experience of poverty, as well as the barriers they had faced in accessing recreation. Traditionally, elements like funding (brought by the researchers in this case) or materials (brought to a large degree by the community partners in WOAW) are thought to lead to the legitimacy of a project (Phillips et al., 1999). However, in the case of WOAW, Geri pointed out in quote 6.6(CP) that the women on low incomes were contributing a great deal of legitimacy to the project through their connection with the issues WOAW was working to address.

The researchers also thought that the women on low incomes were bringing legitimacy to WOAW, as exemplified in quote 6.7(R) from me. The researchers stated that there was a connection between the legitimacy they saw the women on low incomes bringing and their knowledge and experience of living in poverty, which Wendy
articulates in quote 6.3(R). In quote 6.4(R), Colleen further explains how she saw the lived experience of the women on low incomes being an important source of knowledge for the WOAW project.

Colleen and Wendy pointed out the importance of the women on low incomes sharing their knowledge from their lived experience in terms of mutual learning between participant groups in WOAW:

Wendy: But part of the reason that lived experience and academic knowledge and the knowledge of the system is being shared within these [WOAW] meetings is because there’s respect for the different resources and different ways of looking at things and the different situations. And that’s really hard in our society, you know that’s meritocratic, achievement-oriented kind of...

Colleen: Well, when you think that most systems in society are based to some degree on not understanding...that’s how they’ve been perpetuated in a way. Everyone’s [WOAW participants] willingness to debunk that is huge.

Poland (1993) and Wallerstein (1999) both seem to corroborate with Wendy and Colleen’s point, indicating that mutual learning is a key factor in successfully mobilizing people and resources in community organizing.

The women on low incomes’ focus on their lived experience of mothering and previous paid work as a source of legitimacy in being involved in the WOAW project was in contrast with the community partners and researchers who indicated that the women on low incomes were bringing legitimacy to WOAW based largely on their experiences of living in poverty. It is possible that the women on low incomes were deliberately trying to minimize their identities related to living in poverty by emphasizing resources that challenged poverty stereotypes, such as the possession of knowledge and skills. This dissonance demonstrates that perhaps there could have been more communication in Phase I between participant groups about the resources that were being brought and the value assigned to them by the various participant groups.
How the Community Partners Assigned Value to Their Resources

In contrast to the women on low incomes who talked in very personal terms about the resources they felt they were bringing to WOAW, the community partners discussed resources in relation to their professional roles. They emphasized their jobs and examples of resources relating to their paid work including materials (e.g., facilities and staff), social and interorganizational networks, and job skills (see Table 7). As one of the goals of WOAW was to bring service providers together with community members to address a shared issue, it is not surprising that the community partners centred their discussion around the job-related resources they felt they were bringing. For many of the community partners, it was the first time they had partnered with other professionals and women on low incomes to work toward improving their access to local recreation facilities, programs and policy-making.

As illustrated in Table 7, the community partners linked their paid work experience with an extensive list of job-related skill resources that they felt they were bringing to WOAW, including communication, facilitation, organization, advertising and working with media, planning, managing, fundraising and time management. Often the community partners listed the job-related skills they felt they were bringing without elaborating on them. In a few instances, they offered more explanation of the importance of these skills, such as Jim’s description of Louise’s skills using collective organizing in quote 7.1(a). Geri also elaborated on the importance of a job-related skill in quote 7.1(c) while explaining Christina’s organizational ability.

Another frequently mentioned resource among the community partners was access to materials and human resources, including facilities, staff and volunteers, equipment, programs and transportation that they were contributing to WOAW through their paid work. Nine of the ten community partners named material and human resources in their lists.
Table 7: Resources Named by the Community Partners (n=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>TIMES ITEM NAMED</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1) Job-Related Skills 18 | a) “She encourages and makes sure all voices are heard, making sure all the women have a say or that the women trust their opinions. She also pushes the group to think of things they probably would never think of.” (Jim describing Louise’s skills using collective organizing)  
  b) “Carla brings her skills through social work.” (Geri describing Carla)  
  c) When we did the thing at the community school [a WOAW activity]...she just came in and just chop, chop, chop; she’s just majorly organized” (Geri describing Christina), “...providing opportunities for them to use space, so space, providing instructors for programs…” (Brenda describing Gwen)  
  d) “The resources that she would bring to the group are access to, I would say, pools, spray parks, which she oversees, fitness areas, rooms.” (Sandy describing Andrea)  
  e) “And Sandy has made it possible for all those research meetings cause she’s organized child care.” (Wendy describing Sandy)  
  f) “We’ve seen it happen. We’ve seen it. In terms of the WOAW group, there’s been a tremendous amount of things that have been possible because of Jim and the city’s involvement. A lot of that has to do with space, actually, games and all that kind of stuff that’s needed for programming...And being able to rely on the programs that are already operating to support whatever activity we’re doing or to help with childcare, all that kind of stuff…” (Louise describing Jim).  |
| 2) Materials 17 | a) “…providing opportunities for them to use space, so space, providing instructors for programs…” (Brenda describing Gwen)  
  b) “The resources that she would bring to the group are access to, I would say, pools, spray parks, which she oversees, fitness areas, rooms.” (Sandy describing Andrea)  
  c) “And Sandy has made it possible for all those research meetings cause she’s organized child care.” (Wendy describing Sandy)  
  d) “We’ve seen it happen. We’ve seen it. In terms of the WOAW group, there’s been a tremendous amount of things that have been possible because of Jim and the city’s involvement. A lot of that has to do with space, actually, games and all that kind of stuff that’s needed for programming...And being able to rely on the programs that are already operating to support whatever activity we’re doing or to help with childcare, all that kind of stuff…” (Louise describing Jim).  |
| 3) Networks 13 | a) “This has been my home town for 40 years, so I feel pretty well connected with just about anyone in any of the tri-cities.” (Christina describing herself)  
  b) “She generally partners with schools to create programs in the community so that it’s more accessible for families in communities” (Geri describing Carla)  
  c) Jim: Louise and the Women’s Centre have tons of resources and connections to the community, which we have used and continue to use.  
    Beth: Like what, Jim?  
    Jim: Connections to other organizations in the community that I don’t think are at this table that involve women or help women. She has connections to women in the community who could use the program.  
    Beth: What else?  
    Jim: They have connections to government organizations I guess, the Ministry and the Justice system, Thursday at 8pm, channel 4 [referring to a TV special about women’s rights that Louise was involved in].  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TIMES ITEM NAMED</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4) Interpersonal and Recreational Skills | 7 | a) “Christina’s very flexible.” (Louise using a play on words to describe both Christina’s interpersonal skills and her hobby as a dancer)  
   b) “Bonnie has creative arts, like the fence at [the local community centre]. She brought people in the community together to paint a picket fence around the children’s area which before was thorny bushes, and it’s just beautiful.” (Geri describing Bonnie) |
| 5) Knowledge | 5 | a) “Cause of all the resources that they have at SHARE, I think that having someone around who knows how far the obstacle [for the women on low incomes] can reach is really good” (Geri describing Carla).  
   b) “And she’s pretty media savvy.” (Geri describing Louise)  
   c) And the resources that she brings to WOAW, I think, one of the things that is different is that if anything is happening in the city, for example important surveys or something like that, she’ll make it known to them [the women on low incomes] that 'look we really need your feedback because this might impact on how the government deals with your population.’ So important information from a government perspective (Brenda describing Gwen). |
| 6) Information | 5 | a) “And I think that one of the resources there that’s implicit but I want to name it is that [he] provides women with a potential for deeper understanding of all the access programs and issues in the city.” (Louise describing Jim) |
| 7) Commitment | 5 | a) “I think Bonnie brings a real personal commitment to community, a real understanding of what that is.” (Carla describing Bonnie) |
| 8) Time | 4 | a) “She attends meetings regularly.” (Brenda describing Andrea) |
| 9) Lived Experience | 4 | a) “He’s our guy!” (Louise describing Jim – who was the only male participant in WOAW) |
| 10) Emotional Energy | 2 | a) “I’ve seen Carla with the women at the couple of meetings I’ve gone to, and certainly that is, her gentleness and kindness and her encouragement of people who may not be as comfortable speaking…” (Geri describing Carla) |
| 11) Finances | 1 | a) “She’s associated with the Canadian Family Place, as well as the BC association. She has a lot of access to funding possibilities and grants and she does that a lot in her work.” (Andrea describing Christina) |
| **TOTAL** | **81** | |
In her introduction of Andrea in quote 7.2(b), Sandy listed the types of materials Andrea had access to, which was a very common type of response. Louise described how Jim’s access to material resources had led to action for WOAW in quote 7.2(d). While the community partners did not make the relationship clear, the material resources they discussed were inextricably linked with their experience in paid work.

A third type of resource that the community partners connected with their paid work were their job-related social, political and interorganizational networks, which they discussed frequently. The community partners talked about networks within their own organizational environments: Leisure & Parks, a Women’s Centre, Family Place, a local School Board and a Family Service Agency. In addition, the community partners indicated that their networks included connections with politicians, municipal administrators, the education system, the health field, the justice system, the arts, within their own organizational environments, local caterers, other community organizations that help women, women in the community, and the media. While introducing Geri, Carla gave an example of how such networks potentially contributed to WOAW in quote 7.3(b). In excerpt 7.3(c), Jim explained how Louise’s contacts were salient to WOAW organizing. In addition, Andrea pointed out that Christina had possible access to funding through her contacts in a national social advocacy organization. During the discussion of social and interorganizational networks, the community partners talked about their network resources as an extension of their paid work experience.

The community partners often made connections between their job-related networks and knowledge that they were contributing to WOAW. In quote 7.5(a) Geri explained how Carla’s networks through her place of work, SHARE (a family service agency), gave her access to knowledge that had the potential to benefit WOAW. In a similar way, Brenda talked (quote 7.5(c)) about how Gwen was using the knowledge she was gaining through her job networks to create awareness about local policies among WOAW participants, especially the women on low incomes. In these examples, the
community partners talked about simultaneously integrating and drawing on work experience resources, as well as knowledge and communication skills to generate action for WOAW.

In Figure 4, I have tried to visually display the relationships the community partners described between their resources. The community partners linked access to materials, professional skills, knowledge and networks to their lived experience in paid work. In addition, they connected their job-related networks with knowledge. The resources the community partners' chose to value were all centred around their experience of paid work.

**Figure 4: My Interpretation of the Interrelationships Between the Resources of the Community Partners Resources**

![Diagram showing the interrelationships between professional skills, paid work experience, materials, knowledge, and network]

While the community partners were justified in their focus on the job-related resources they were bringing to WOAW in light of their reasons for participating in the project, Ife (1995, p. 178) cautions that “social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and personal/spiritual development all represent essential aspects of a community’s life.” After reading Ife’s statement, I wondered if perhaps the community partners were missing an opportunity to connect with the other WOAW participants on a more personal level.

The following section outlines how the women on low incomes and the researchers assigned value to the community partners' resources (see Table 8). Of particular interest were the women on low incomes’ emphasis on the importance of the
emotional energy the community partners were bringing. Also, the researchers highlighted certain skills that the community partners did not.

How the Women on Low Incomes and Researchers Assigned Value to the Community Partners’ Resources

The women on low incomes put a great emphasis on the emotional energy resources brought by the community partners, including an eagerness to help, love (they actually used this word), appreciation, energy and enthusiasm, smiling and encouragement. The quotes in 8.1(WLI) from Katharine and Carole are good examples of the kinds of things the women on low incomes said about the community partners with respect to emotional energy. In addition, Susan pointed out in quote 8.2(WLI) the importance of the personal interactions she was having with the community partners in her Subgroup. While the women on low incomes also indicated the importance of the knowledge, interpersonal skills, job-related skills and materials they saw the community partners bringing, their emphasis on emotional energy indicated that they considered this resource highly valuable and important to WOAW organizing.

During a WOAW meeting in Phase II the women on low incomes indicated that they did not have a clear understanding about what the community partners did in their paid work. They were also not aware of all the resources available to WOAW through the community partners’ jobs and places of work. As this information is from Phase II, it is not technically part of my data sample. However, it provides potential insight into why the women on low incomes emphasized the importance of the emotional energy resources of the community partners in the Interactive Research Meeting in Phase I. This comment is not intended to negate the value the women on low incomes placed on the community partners’ emotional energy, but to point out that perhaps there was some ambiguity in Phase I between participant groups about the scope of resources brought by the community partners.
Table 8: How the Women on Low Incomes and Researchers Assigned Value to the Community Partners’ Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMPLES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Women on Low Incomes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Emotional Energy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>&quot;...understanding. Like we say something, they understand and they support it emotionally and physically. We need that.&quot; (Katharine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Gwen makes me feel good. She’s got such a smile on her face every time you see her.&quot; (Carole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;[Some community partners...have not only taken a professional role] in our group. They have also done the very personal. And they’ve had to share some personal stuff because we’ve had to share it, too...So we’ve gotten to know them as people as well as community service people.&quot; (Susan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;They have the knowledge we don’t have...they know the system.&quot; (Katharine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Job-Related Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;Ours [community partner] has helped us with skill building, such as conflict resolution...&quot; (Susan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Materials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I know at the beginning Louise really helped us with transportation. She picked everybody up and that.&quot; (Donna A.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMPLES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Researchers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Knowledge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wendy: Knowledge of policies, existing policies and how to get around them or improve them. Sydney: They bring a knowledge of community, other community resources, whether it’s instructors or other facilities or childcare. (excerpt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I think that Louise...like she’s an activist, self-proclaimed.&quot; (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Materials</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Facilities, equipment.&quot; (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Job-Related Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I think as a resource what she’s done with this group over the last year has headed off a lot of potential conflict that could have made the group combust. And it’s her skills that she’s bringing there. And one of the biggest ones is checking for understanding. So you know people get going on something and she’ll come back with ‘is that what I hear you saying?’ And she often asks it in the form of a question...So it’s a real sensitivity to everybody’s value there and not really wanting even one person to feel badly or silenced when they come out of there.&quot; (Wendy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Networks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;The network is huge. And some kind of, again there’s a political connection there. Most of them have boards of directors or their funding comes from government, or they’re employees of government.&quot; (Wendy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;Information sharing.&quot; (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;And incredible commitment. Again, when those women and one guy talk about what their jobs are and the amount of time they have been devoting to this...and again, it’s problematic ‘cause it’s a scarce resource for them. But they’ve chosen to put...probably more time than they ever expected when it started.” (Wendy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Commitment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researchers focused more on the knowledge, materials, networks and job-related skills that the community partners were bringing to WOAW in a way that was congruent with what the community partners said. In addition, Wendy recognized the time and commitment the community partners were contributing to WOAW in quote 8.6(R). The researchers also accentuated the importance of some skills that the community partners did not emphasize, relating to collective group process. In quote 8.3(R), Wendy highlighted one community partner’s skills in relation to the collective group process. Colleen responded to Wendy by indicating that the other community partners were also contributing job-related skills to the collective organizing process through being open to learning about it and trying to implement them:

I think that a resource that the other community representatives are bringing is that they’re open to that [collective organizing]. Like they are not turned off by it [the process] and saying that’s not the right way of working, even though it’s frustrating to a lot of them. They’re willing to go with it. And they recognize that, you know, it leads to good decisions being made and the group being ok with it all (IRM 3).

While both the community partners and researchers valued skills brought by the former, their slightly different understandings and interpretations of how these related to WOAW demonstrates multiple meanings of this resource.

How the Researchers Assigned Value to Their Resources

It was important that the researchers (including myself) participate in my study, as we were an integral part of WOAW’s work in Phase I. In addition, Ristock and Penell (1996) recommended that feminist researchers should aim to interrupt the binaries of ‘me/us’ and ‘them’ through methods that involve critical reflexivity, transparency and responsible use of power. Gatenby and Humphries (2000, p. 90) expanded on the point by stating: “Researchers are not separate, neutral academics theorizing about others, but co-researchers or collaborators with people working towards social equality.” While I acknowledge that it is impossible to avoid some degree of power imbalances or
researcher-participant dichotomies in this study, by taking part in answering my own research questions and being subject to analysis along with the other WOAW participants, I think that as researchers we moved toward a more collaborative role in co-generating knowledge.

I found the process of including myself simultaneously as a participant and researcher very challenging. I felt uneasy and self-conscious naming my own resources in the researchers’ IRM, and at one point I said, “This is difficult; this is harder than I thought” (IRM 3). I was hoping that my study could partly celebrate the diverse resources participants were bringing to WOAW and contribute to a positive sense of self through the act of naming one’s own resources. However, when it was my turn to talk, I felt shy and overshadowed by other group participants whose resources I deemed far more valuable than my own. For example, I felt that the knowledge and lived experience brought by both the women on low incomes and the community partners were much more legitimate in the context of WOAW, and that my contributions were less important than those of the other researchers, especially Wendy (who is also my thesis advisor) and Colleen who had larger roles in the initiative. My own discomfort gave me great appreciation for the courage of WOAW members, especially the women on low incomes, who had talked so openly about their resources despite inherent power imbalances between the researcher and researched.

It has also been difficult including myself in data analysis. My reluctance to talk about my own resources, coupled with my intent focus on the responses of other participants translated into little data that includes my own voice. While I have tried to include myself in the analysis where I can, my voice appears far less than those of the other researchers. Wendy and Colleen generally spoke more often in our IRM than did Sydney or I, perhaps because their roles in the project were more extensive, which is why their comments and ideas figure more prominently into my discussion.
During IRM 3 we discussed our own resources, rather than pairing up as was done in the other two participant groups because we were a small group who were all very familiar with one another. Our quotes tend to be longer, perhaps because we had sat in on the other IRMs and had more lead-time to consider our resources. I found our discussion interesting in that, like the community partners, we focused to a great extent on the job-related resources we were bringing, although they were more academic in nature. While we did mention emotional energy such as passion and compassion, interpersonal skills like building trust and the lived experience of being a woman (see Table 9), our lists contained resources that were related to our professional affiliations and roles as researchers in WOAW, specifically knowledge and funding. As with the community partners, the researchers became involved in WOAW in a specific role (as investigators), which is reflected in the resources we chose to value. We also discussed multiple meanings of the resources we were bringing, as well as how these resources related to the legitimacy and power we saw ourselves having in WOAW, and how these might be resources, as well.

Knowledge was most frequently named by the researchers, though in many different forms and from various sources and experiences. Sydney discussed the knowledge she was bringing through her work as coordinator for ‘On the Move,’ a national project aimed at increasing inactive girls’ participation in physical activity, which contributed to her understanding of some of the issues and systemic barriers faced by the women on low incomes in accessing recreation. Sydney also indicated that she was bringing knowledge of other resources and organizations that could contribute to WOAW organizing and, finally, a critical and questioning mind about WOAW processes and issues.
Table 9: Resources Named by the Researchers (n=4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMPLES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1) Knowledge  | 19                 | a) “So that academic knowledge, but I’d say probably...[also] what’s wrong with it. Like what’s wrong with current depictions of community development in feminist action research and the whole notion of partnerships, intersectoral partnerships.” (Wendy)  
 b) “…understanding of the issues that women on low income face I think is a resource.” (Sydney)  
 c) “I guess my past experience doing research is a resource, as well, because I kind of knew from doing my Masters in particular what didn’t work and some lessons I learned there.” (Colleen) |
| 2) Job-Related Skills | 8 | a) “I guess from an individual perspective I think I bring an attention to detail that is useful in tracking budget stuff or keeping track of just stuff going on.” (Colleen)  
 b) “You’re a pretty important support to Colleen when she’s been doing her research and group interviews.” (Wendy describing Beth) |
| 3) Legitimacy | 7 | a) “And in a way, I’m a safe lighting rod for that. I’m speaking to all this [the WOAW project] from learning in [a previous research project involving women on low incomes accessing community recreation]. It was way safer for me as an academic to go and make these presentations that it was for staff who were under the control...or community groups that are not supposed to really be doing recreation, or the women. So, it brought some legitimacy.” (Wendy)  
 b) “One is legitimacy in that if another community did it then we can too, and [making reference to the community partners] ‘I’ll have more clout when I go talk to my boss and tell him that I should be spending more time on [WOAW] and that it’s important.’ But also legitimacy from a research point of view in that it was important enough to do research on and that there were results there that...linked some credibility to that...And I’d say probably um, it would be related to trust...it’s a trust that I know what municipal recreation is about. And again, that’s mainly through past other volunteer things I’ve done or research.” (Wendy) |
<p>| 4) Lived Experience | 5 | a) “I’m a woman; I think that’s a resource.” (Sydney) |
| 5) Materials | 5 | a) “I mean the ability to afford a car and also to use it. It’s a positive use of my power, I guess. Right?” (Colleen) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EXAMPLES</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6) Interpersonal and Recreational Skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>a) “I think your flexibility, too...I’ve appreciated this. Like you know the last Research Team meeting there’s seven kids: ‘Ok Beth, can you child mind?’ ‘Oh sure, no problem.’ And then you managed that, meanwhile you were under the assumption that you were going to sit quietly and take fieldnotes.” (Colleen describing Beth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Commitment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>a) “Commitment and support for the program is an individual as well as collective one.” (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>a) “You’ve done twenty transcripts...that’s work.” (Wendy describing Beth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Networks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>a) “…the huge resource I bring is grad students to the project, ones that I’m either directly supervising or have in the past or am working with...you know the three of you [Colleen, Sydney &amp; Beth] have been a huge resource to me not only in making this thing possible and not overwhelming, because community based research can be pretty overwhelming, but to the organization as well. So, I see you, my having a connection with you as being a resource.” (Wendy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Emotional Energy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a) “I bring a sort of passion and compassion to the project in terms of just my interest in the women’s lives and experiences and to what happens.” (Colleen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Finances</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a) “I think we bring resources from the SSHRC grant...” (Sydney)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a) “And information, you know. I guess the library, having access to that.” (Wendy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>59</td>
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Colleen felt that she had knowledge from her Master’s project involving single mothers living on low incomes, knowledge from academic literature about the principles of feminist action research, as well as an understanding of relationships between participants in WOAW, which she was using in her coordinating and informing role in the organization. Wendy said she was bringing knowledge through her experience in a research project very similar to WOAW, the Kamloops Women’s Action Project (also involving women on low incomes accessing municipal recreation), coupled with her knowledge of the literature, which both contributed to her understanding and critical thinking about how community recreation works in relation to women on low incomes. Wendy also talked about her knowledge of the university ‘system,’ including obtaining grant funding and ethical approval.
The knowledge the researchers listed were all related experience in either work or study, or both. We commented that the other WOAW participants were saying this brought legitimacy to the project, as quotes 9.3(a&b) reveal. Colleen added to Wendy’s comments about the kinds of legitimacy the researchers were bringing to WOAW. The following excerpt illustrates the different manifestations of legitimacy as a resource, as well as its problematic nature.

Colleen: I think you [Wendy] kind of provide legitimacy in two ways. You provide legitimacy to the people involved in the grant, whether that’s a good thing or not is another question. But it still is an important piece. And I think for them and for the continuity. But you also provide legitimacy to them [WOAW participants] about their perspective of academia. So that they feel that their relationship is important and valuable and integral. So, it’s not like they’re having a negative experience with someone like a prof. That legitimizes the university in a way.

Wendy: That’s interesting.

Colleen: I think it’s a really important piece considering all the literature there is on exploitation and how so many community groups have been exploited and have really negative feelings toward researchers.

Wendy: And you never know if this might happen in the end. I mean we’re trying hard for that not to happen, but you know, but in the end...

Colleen: If we continue working the way we are...well, it’s not impossible, but it’s less likely for sure.

This quote reflects the ongoing struggle the researchers were having, negotiating how to contribute resources to WOAW without disempowering other participants.

Probably the most difficult resource to negotiate with regards to the potential power imbalance it created in WOAW was the financial resource the researchers were bringing to the initiative in the form of the government (SSHRC) grant. Sydney described some of the contributions the researchers were making to WOAW as a result of this funding. She stated “Money, staff...like I was thinking that we [the researchers, who were all receiving some pay with money from the grant] are all kind of staff, human power. Also we have access to literature [a library of articles we were putting together
relating to the WOAW project using a photocopy card] and business supplies, computers, paper, that kind of thing” (IRM 3). The grant money was also funding a considerable amount of Phase I WOAW programming, as well as catering and transportation to WOAW functions for the women on low incomes. Finally, the SSHRC grant was also paying for Colleen’s work as WOAW Project Coordinator and Sydney’s and my work as Research Assistants.

While I argue in this thesis that financial and material resources should not be considered the most valuable in a community organizing initiative, the researchers indicated an awareness of how much power was associated with their contribution of financial resources to WOAW. In the following quote, Colleen talked about how she saw Wendy negotiating the power related to the funding, stating:

I was thinking that a major resource I see you having is your ability to leverage power in a way that...suits the needs and what you want to accomplish in this, which is a very different environment from academia. So, it’s kind of...the appropriate use of power, but it’s more than that. It’s about how you use it in a way that...got this grant funded, but also remains true to WOAW but be able to figure that out. And you know, you still work with it, the economics (IRM 3).

Wendy also talked about how she would like to try and use the power relating to the grant, as well as to the legitimacy she has based on her past research experience, in a positive way that would create action for WOAW through political influence. She said:

I guess it’s latent power right now cause we’re not out lobbying city councillors or politicians. And we haven’t really started hitting higher up staff than the people that we’re working with. But I constantly see that as a resource that I want to be able to use at some point...I’m waiting to be able to be a resource to the group if that seems appropriate as some part of a team that does that. And if I can deflect some of the risk that people living in the community might encounter I’m aware of that role and don’t mind playing it (IRM 3).

She went on to say, “We have the power to maybe influence in some way the academic community or policy, whether through our knowledge of how to communicate our knowledge to those audiences, they’re not the only audiences that need to be communicated to” (IRM 3).
Power, both related to the grant funding and to the legitimacy of the university environment, is predominantly conceived of as a barrier to equitable relationships between participants in a collaborative organizing initiative such as WOAW, which is why I have not included it as a ‘type’ of resource (Austin et al., 1999; Dominelli, 1995). However, Wallerstein (1999) suggests that simultaneous to discussing and deconstructing the origins and effects of power on group relations, participants also need to learn how to use their power. Feminist action researchers Gatenby and Humpries (2000, p. 99) described similar struggles in terms of the power-laden resources we saw ourselves bringing to WOAW:

We know that we continue to hold much of the power because we have the time and the funding to direct the research (not that either time or funding are easy to come by for us either). We have the opportunity through our other work to read and think about feminist issues. The exercise of that kind of power seems to us a legitimate one.

Ristock and Penell (1996, p. 10) indicate that a legitimate and responsible use of power means the responsibility of researchers “to strengthen, not diminish, our capacity to affect the world while holding ourselves accountable for our actions” through critical self-reflexivity and transparency. Despite these positive outlooks, most of the literature I read portrayed power as a very contentious term and issue for feminist researchers and community organizers (cf. Lather, 1988; Ife, 1995; Stanley, 1990). While I agree with Wallerstein (1999) and Ristock and Penell (1996) that power can potentially be exerted in ways that benefit participants in organizations like WOAW, further research needs to be done specifically about power in feminist community organizing initiatives before I would feel comfortable stating that it is a resource.
Figure 5 is my pictorial interpretation of the connections between the resources the researchers talked about most often. We indicated that knowledge was related to legitimacy. We linked legitimacy with power, which was also tied to the financial resources we said we were bringing.

**Figure 5: My Interpretation of the Interrelationships Between the Resources (and Power) of the Researchers**

![Diagram of the interrelationships between knowledge, legitimacy, power, and funding.]

The following section contains a discussion of how the women on low incomes and community partners valued the researchers' resources. As there was different and less data for this section, I have not used a summary Table as part of the discussion.

**How the Women on Low Incomes and the Community Partners Assigned Value to the Researchers’ Resources**

The women on low incomes identified just a few resources they saw the researchers bringing to WOAW. This may have been due to a lack of understanding of the researchers' roles because ambiguity was created when the researchers tried not to exert their influence too often in WOAW organizing in order to diffuse power imbalances. While the researchers focused on the knowledge and funding, the women on low incomes emphasized the importance of the personal nature of the researchers, talking about emotional energy and lived experience that the researchers were contributing. While introducing Colleen, Pat talked about her “tremendous patience.” Donna O., in her introduction of Wendy at the IRM for the women on low incomes, stated simply:

> This is Wendy. And she always seems like she always has an awesome smile every time I’ve seen her. She seems to care an awful lot about the project that she’s involved in and she took a lot of time and thought into the research and how it’s going to affect everybody personally (IRM 1).
Donna O.'s choice to focus on Wendy’s smile and caring spoke volumes about the resources she valued and challenged stereotypes about researchers only bringing academic-oriented resources such as knowledge and funding to a project like WOAW.

Donna O’s identification with Wendy’s personal self was echoed in an informal discussion with another woman on low income, Susan, who commented that she felt it was important to see the many sides of people involved in the WOAW project. She remembered that when she had visited the university and saw the pictures of Wendy’s children in her office, Wendy was no longer just the “head honcho,” but a “woman and mother.” While the researchers focused on the professional identities and related resources we saw ourselves bringing to WOAW, the women on low incomes indicated that emotional energy and personal lived experience were also really important resources brought by the researchers. Indeed, at one regular Phase I WOAW meeting Wendy asked if the researchers should give input about the upcoming vision meeting, to which Carole replied “Well are you a woman?” (WOAW meeting, May 10, 2000).

I did not ask the community partners what resources they felt the researchers were bringing to WOAW in their IRM, as there was not enough time. I did, however have an informal discussion with one of the community partners, Louise, about the power the researchers were bringing to WOAW after she brought it up at the first budget meeting, and then again at a subsequent Phase I WOAW meeting. Louise approached the researchers and said, “You have the power to shut things down and move on but you don’t use that. You allow us to do the process and I really appreciate that. Of all the people in this room, you have the most power” (WOAW meeting, June 6, 2000).

I talked to Louise later to clarify about her perceptions of the sources of power held by the researchers. She said undoubtedly the financial resources we were bringing were important, pointing out that the women on low incomes involved in the project had

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12 This is a humorous term some of the women on low incomes use to describe Wendy (the Principal Investigator), but at the same time it acknowledges her power within the group.
experienced disempowering relationships with money and structures of financial provision, and that there was tremendous potential for them to be taken advantage of again in WOAW. The second major source of power Louise saw the researchers bringing was the legitimacy associated with research and the university. Again, she said that because the women on low incomes had been disempowered by such establishments for so long, there was a real potential for the same to happen in WOAW. She added that she thought the researchers had so far not wielded power in a way that was detrimental to WOAW or its members by allowing the collective process to develop, rather than asserting ourselves (and our power-laden resources) too often.

A Summary of Resources Brought to WOAW

The above discussion of resources brought by the three WOAW participant groups shows that resource ‘types’ were quite interrelated, stemming from and affecting one another in the way WOAW participants talked about them. In addition, there were multiple meanings and examples associated with various resource ‘types’ described by each of the groups. There were also some incongruities between the participant groups’ views on the salient resources each group was bringing and the reasons why such resources were important or valuable to the organizing initiative. These incongruities show a limitation not only in the design of the IRMs, which did not permit cross communication between WOAW participants about what resources they felt they were bringing, but also demonstrate that there was a general lack of communication between participants during Phase I of WOAW about who was bringing what resources. One result of this lack of communication about resources was the WOAW brochure (please see Appendix B), which included a pictorial representation of the structure of WOAW that was put together by one of the women on low incomes in Phase I. She attributed legitimacy and power to the researchers in a traditional way by placing them at the top of
the hierarchy, rather than considering or valuing the spectrum of resources that she and the other participants were bringing to the organization.

The lack of communication between WOAW members about resources is partly attributable to the community partners and the researchers assuming that their resources were clear to the other participant groups, combined with their trying to empower and provide a space for the women on low incomes to contribute to WOAW, which both potentially led to ambiguity about their resources (Martin, 1992). The lack of communication was also partly due to all WOAW participants making personal judgments about which of their own and others' resources were valuable to the initiative. Finally, community members' perspectives on resources, such as those of the women on low incomes, are rarely analyzed in the literature, so the types of discrepancies I have pointed out are not often referred to.

The multiple meanings and interrelationships among resources and inconsistencies in how members interpret each others' resources poses implications for resource utilization, which is discussed in the next section.

Resources Used and Not Used in Phase I WOAW Organizing

For my analysis of WOAW meetings, I considered whose resources were figuring most prominently into the discussion and decision-making processes, as well as those that were significant in leading to action generated by the group. To maintain consistency, I used the resource categories developed from my analysis of IRMs when examining utilization at WOAW meetings. These included: knowledge, information, networks, funding, materials, time, legitimacy, emotional energy, lived experience, job-related skills, interpersonal and recreational skills and commitment . I was particularly

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13 These terms are not in any specific order as there were differences in the ways in which resources brought by the three participant groups were used.
interested in how the group’s evolving use of feminist collective organizing practices affected which resources were used and not used.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that resource patterns could change over time and that it is unlikely that all resources would be required equally in the start-up phase of a feminist community organizing initiative. Thus, some of the resources named by participants in the IRMs may not have been used in Phase I WOAW organizing because they were not applicable in that stage of the organization’s development. In addition, WOAW meetings provided only one site where resource utilization could appear. It is possible that resources that appeared to be under-utilized in WOAW meetings were being shared elsewhere (e.g., Research Team meetings, social interactions). Finally, some resources were not actively discussed or expressed at WOAW meetings, but were being used in the Subgroups and Research Team (see Table 4), as well as informal interactions of participants (which were not captured in fieldnote or tape-recorded data).

During Phase I, WOAW participants had not yet decided by consensus to operate as a collective. However, feminist collective organizing processes and structures such as consensus decision making, shared or rotating leadership, valuing each individual’s contribution and empowerment were openly espoused early on in Phase I and participants tried to use these practices at WOAW group meetings. In a summary report about Phase I, the researchers, Reid et al. (2000, p. 8), observed that:

Since the beginning of WOAW, we have observed the group evolving towards a collective process with the following characteristics:

The vision was developed collaboratively.
There is shared respect for each other’s ideas, knowledge and skills.
The leadership, responsibility and work are shared.
Members adopt a facilitator and not an ‘expert’ role.
Consensus decision-making is used at most meetings.
Diversity is sought and valued.
Conflict is acknowledged and members strive to deal with it openly.
While collective structure and practices enabled many participants to contribute to WOAW in a more equitable and empowering way than a hierarchical and authoritarian leadership style would have permitted, WOAW participants faced two major problems using a collective organizing structure to utilize their resource pool. First, most participants were unfamiliar with collective organizing and had little previous experience using it. As Brown (1992) described, WOAW members' differential familiarity with collectivity led to confusion about who should take on what roles, as well as questions and uncertainty about the merits of collectivity. Second, Phase I WOAW meetings were often focused on generating action, which conflicted with the more time consuming nature of collective organizing, and at times led to some members having a greater influence in decision-making, on the organizational direction and, thus, on resource use than other participants. According to Callahan (1997), this is not surprising; she indicated that a major challenge to doing feminist community organizing work is recognizing and incorporating the spectrum of diversity brought by participants from various social locations.

Resource Utilization – WOAW as a Whole

One important resource that I think all three participant groups brought which was used in almost every WOAW meeting in Phase I was commitment to collective group process, including using consensus decision-making, working through differences of opinion through discussion and treating one another with respect and genuine concern for each member’s well being. In the vision meeting, Donna A. said,

That's kind of a neat thing about the group I find, that everyone's opinion is valued. That everyone's body, like every human being in the group is respected, you know. It doesn't matter your age… (WOAW meeting, May 30, 2000).
Community partner Louise had particular skill in using feminist collective organizing practices, and often interjected to remind the group about process issues, as demonstrated in the following quote from the vision meeting:

Can I interrupt for a moment? I'm aware that there's nobody here from Susan's group and so I just need to say that because I know what we're doing today is going to be a really powerful thing and by the very fact that they aren't here, then they will be left behind in that respect. And so I'm asking us to be aware of that and to be aware that they will need a bridge into what we're doing today and to make room for that, too (WOAW vision meeting, May 30, 2000).

The researchers also demonstrated a commitment to collective process, particularly with respect to the co-production of knowledge, as illustrated in the following fieldnote excerpt:

Wendy also had questions concerning how the research process can support the group, and how discussion is needed to identify other research questions (Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, March 15, 2000).

I think WOAW participants' commitment to collective process contributed to the group's ability to make most decisions by consensus, rather than a majority vote, an underlying sense of support and caring at most Phase I meetings, and making it through difficult and tension-fraught discussions such as working out the budget.

Another resource that I thought all three participant groups brought to Phase I WOAW that made a big difference were interpersonal skills, such as approachability, warmth, being a good listener and talking openly. Interestingly, there are no real examples of personal skills written into the transcripts or fieldnotes from Phase I WOAW meetings, probably because most of the interpersonal exchange took place informally either before or after meetings or outside WOAW meetings altogether. I observed that as time went on during Phase I, participants developed a rapport with one another and relationships began to form between people. I remember being shocked and surprised when I walked into a meeting mid-way through Phase I to be greeted with a giant hug from one of the women on low incomes. She said she was really happy to see me and
asked how I was doing. The interaction evoked an emotional response on my part and made me feel like a more valued and important part of the group. I saw these kinds of interactions between other participants, too, in the form of smiles and laughter when members saw each other, casual joking and banter, and even sarcastic cheering one day when a group of women on low incomes arrived a few minutes late for a meeting. I believe participants’ interpersonal skills played a big role in bringing the group together, making people feel welcomed and valued and in the development of friendships between members.

Emotional energy is one resource that I observed less at Phase I WOAW meetings, but did see more overtly in Subgroup and Research Team meetings I attended as a Research Assistant, as well as in social and recreational activities organized by participants. While emotional energy did appear in some instances in WOAW meetings as occasional laughter, friendly chatter or a cheer when a decision was finally reached by group consensus, I think it played a significant role in generating trust, relationships and support networks between participants through work and interactions outside of WOAW meetings. Also, emotional energy in the form of frustration or anger about barriers to accessing recreation, damaging stereotypes, or group conflict was usually expressed outside WOAW meetings, most often at Research Team meetings or during informal interactions, and only occasionally dealt with in Phase I WOAW meetings. This may have been because WOAW meetings were viewed as ‘business meetings.’ The following excerpt is an example of one of the few times I saw emotional energy figuring overtly into a Phase I WOAW meeting. Here the women on low incomes are describing their experience of emotional energy in WOAW to a newcomer who was unsure about the organization’s purpose:
[One of the women on low incomes], who admitted to attending only 3 meetings, said that she has noticed progress, and it seems to her that "everyone has a heart for women's needs and desires". At this point someone said that we are going to have to start passing around Kleenex. Someone said hormones, someone else mentioned warm fuzzies. Katharine suggested "this emotion was contagious, but that it was the best thing you can catch" (Fieldnote observation recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting May 10, 2000).

In addition, there were two resources, time and legitimacy, that were present in Phase I WOAW meetings in an underlying way that affected all decision-making, discussion and action generation, but were not overtly recognized. For example, all participants contributed time when they attended WOAW meetings, yet this was hardly ever actively acknowledged in those meetings. Also, legitimacy, so frequently discussed by participants at the IRMs as vital to WOAW's initiative through generating validity and credibility for the project, was hardly ever openly discussed as a resource that could be used to generate a specific sort of action for the group in Phase I. It is possible that legitimacy was not needed as much in Phase I as the group was generating ideas about what kind of action to take, but not specifically working to change local policy.

However, in Phase II, for example, Wendy used her legitimacy as a researcher and university professor to add strength to a request for a local community centre to continue allowing a WOAW Subgroup to meet in the facility free of charge.

Similar to legitimacy, participant networks were not used as often in Phase I as perhaps they will be in later Phases. While some participants shared information that was related to their networks, perhaps these resources will be needed more as participants begin to disseminate information about WOAW to wider communities, as well as make policy recommendations to recreation departments and municipal governments in later stages of the project.

Of all the resources I heard participants say they were bringing and observed being used, the one I thought could have been used more in Phase I WOAW meetings
was lived experience. While the women on low incomes’ lived experience was used a bit in conjunction with their knowledge, and outside WOAW meetings at the Research Team, in general there was not a lot of direct sharing of lived experience between participants in Phase I WOAW meetings, which I think was unfortunate. The Phase I WOAW meetings were focused on information sharing, successfully generating action as a group (recreational and social programs and getting the ball rolling on policy issues) and producing knowledge, thus it is understandable that knowledge, information, organizational and communication skills, materials and funding were used often and were important contributors to the progress the group made during its first six months. In my opinion, lived experience would have enhanced participant interactions by contributing to a greater understanding between participant groups about who we were outside our roles as researcher, community partner or woman on low income. Sharing lived experience not only validates one’s own experiences but it also fosters trust and perhaps even solidarity through the process of sharing the personal in a society that is so focused on the professional (Butterwick, 2000; Maguire, 1987).

The women on low incomes seemed to be developing close relationships with one another through their participation in the Research Team and Subgroups, as did the researchers through our own small group meetings. I am not sure how well the community partners came to know one another in Phase I, but it seemed to me that some were closer than others through their experiences of working in the same facility or municipality. During Phase I, I often wondered at what expense, both personally and as a group, the researchers and community partners chose not to value or share their personal lived experience with the other participants at WOAW meetings by trying to give the women on low incomes so much space to bring themselves to the project and be validated for doing so. In their self-reflexive description of their experience working as researchers in a feminist action research project, Gatenby and Humphries (2000, p. 98) asked:
Our own participation and disclosures vary, not only according to the practical realities of our lives, but also according to the emotional realities of living with feminist ideals in a patriarchal world... Sometimes participants raise things we find unsettling or even threatening, things we have experienced in our own lives, and may have chosen to ignore. At times we are not willing to open up those conversations. And if we are not willing, then what is it like for participants sometimes as they reflect on their significant relationships in the light of a consciousness-raising project?

While careful negotiation of one’s power is important for feminist researchers (cf. Ristock & Penell, 1996) and community developers (cf. Ife, 1995), it is my interpretation that WOAW would have been strengthened as a recreational, political and social organization through a greater sharing of lived experience by all participants at WOAW meetings. The lived experience of the women on low incomes was being addressed in Colleen’s Research Team Meetings, but in Phase I, other members of WOAW were not aware of these discussions because no links were being made between the two types of meetings. In part, this was because Colleen wanted the women on low incomes to make decisions about whether to act on some of the issues that came up in the Research Team Meetings, including communicating these discussions with the larger WOAW group.

Following is a breakdown of which resources brought by each of the WOAW participant groups, the women on low incomes, the community partners and the researchers, were used and not used in Phase I WOAW meetings and how collective organizing played a role. Again, it is important to acknowledge that this is my interpretation and analysis of resource utilization and that other WOAW participants may have different and multiple interpretations of the same data.

Resource Utilization – The Women on Low Incomes

The three types of resources brought by the women on low incomes I observed being used most predominantly in Phase I WOAW meetings were knowledge, professional skills, and information. Knowledge sharing was evident when the women on
low incomes spoke about an understanding of something, such as local transportation barriers, or their ideas about ways to generate action for participants or the group. In the following excerpt from the WOAW visioning meeting, Irene illustrates her contribution of knowledge through describing how a community bartering system could contribute to WOAW organizing.

Irene: Well say you needed somebody to watch your child for an hour. I could come and do that. Maybe I need somebody to come and scrub my bottom cupboards and you could come and do that. Maybe I don't need any help right now, but I've just got lots of time on my hands and I can help you in some way. Eventually I'm going to need...

Donna A.: Like the barter system.

Irene: ...that's right. And it's a way for a community to have a better quality of life without having to put out a lot more money.

Donna A.: Yeah, the barter system is good.

Irene: It's a way of making our community a better place to live. Enhancing it.

In this excerpt Irene expressed knowledge in addition to sharing ideas and engaging in the co-production of knowledge with Donna about ways to develop sustainability for WOAW by trading work, rather than using funds to generate the same action.

When the women on low incomes were willing share their ideas and understandings with the WOAW group in Phase I, the other participants were generally very respectful, sensitive and attentive, and worked to incorporate this type of knowledge into the discussion as much as possible. I saw this as being a form of empowerment that resulted from the use of feminist collective organizing, such as that discussed by Dominelli (1995). The following fieldnote excerpt, written by Colleen during the vision meeting, is an example of the WOAW group incorporating Elizabeth’s ideas into the vision statement:
Elizabeth was writing the whole time, and occasionally showed me sentences that captured the vision for her. At one point, the group was struggling with the second sentence, and I asked Elizabeth to read her sentence. She was initially shy, but the group grasped onto what she said, and asked her to read it a few times. Finally, they decided to use it and...Elizabeth was visibly pleased that we had used her sentence (Fieldnote excerpt taken by Colleen at a WOAW meeting, May 30, 2000).

There were some instances in Phase I, however, when participants failed to honour the collective process and either inadvertently or intentionally exerted power over the women on low incomes by failing to consider their knowledge in discussion or decision-making. An example of a participant failing to use collectivity at the expense of the women on low incomes' knowledge occurred at the WOAW vision meeting in Phase I, which was facilitated by a community partner who took control of the process. While this community partner may have been well-intentioned in getting the vision statement written in under three hours and in the space of one meeting (a goal stated by the group prior to the meeting), her facilitation style included making executive decisions about how the visioning process would work and controlling the editing of the vision statement by leading the discussion and selectively recording participants' responses.

In part, the community partner was exerting her influence because of her previous experience and thinking about the visioning process in more hierarchical organizations, but she was also trying to meet the group's time deadline of writing the vision statement in only one meeting. Acker (1995, p. 141) argued “Collective decision-making is impossible when there are large differences of knowledge and experience between participants, accompanied by time pressures for effective action.” The WOAW vision meeting is a good example of how the more time consuming nature of the consensus model contributed to its breakdown in practice. The group had created a deadline that would have been impossible to meet using complete consensus and collectivity. Thus, the community partner moved to the use of a more familiar and time efficient hierarchical
model to accomplish the group’s goal, which resulted in the women’s knowledge being used less than it potentially could have in the visioning process.

Another group of resources shared by the women on low incomes that I observed being used in Phase I WOAW meetings were their job-related skills, including organization and communication. The women on low incomes often reported about programs they had organized for participants, including belly dancing, moms and tots swimming, and a stress reduction workshop. They also talked about contacting instructors for programs, calling women they knew in their communities to let them know about WOAW activities, or getting in touch with local media about circulating WOAW information. The following fieldnote excerpt is a good example of the way the women on low incomes were using their organizing skills during Phase I:

Katharine is also organizing a TransLink [local transportation] meeting. It will be held between 7-9pm on the 24th, at Irene's building. The meeting is being organized under the WOAW name, and free pizza will be provided (by TransLink, although only two larges!). A lot of people are expected. If anyone has any questions, issues or complaints and cannot attend, they can call Katharine (Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, March 13, 2000).

Sometimes the women on low incomes agreed to facilitate the WOAW meetings, however they never volunteered to do so unless encouraged by one of the community partners. One community partner in particular almost always took on a coordinating role at the beginning of WOAW meetings. The women on low incomes were always reluctant to take on this leadership role, which is illustrated in the following fieldnote excerpt from a WOAW meeting where a community partner asked for a facilitator for the meeting.

Bonnie asked for a volunteer to Chair the meeting. As usual no one wanted to volunteer. Bonnie suggested that maybe we all take turns and do it alphabetically. Susan, who had been speaking a lot while the agenda was made commented that Bonnie kept stopping and looking at her because she had been talking so much before the meeting, but said she didn't want to do it. [Another of the women on low incomes] was asked to do it but she said "no thank you". Finally Katharine volunteered, commenting that this would make her exempt from this duty for the next 2 years (Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, May 15, 2000).
Part of the reason why the women on low incomes may have been reluctant to assume this role is a traditional lack of recognition or valuation of their skills in the social system (Callahan, 1997). This may have contributed to their feeling that there should be an 'expert' doing the work rather than using their own competencies in WOAW organizing. The community partners may have unintentionally perpetuated this stereotype by filling in the 'gaps' of organization and facilitation at WOAW meetings when the women on low incomes did not want to take on these roles voluntarily. The researchers, working according to feminist action research principles, were careful not to take on powerful facilitation or organization roles at WOAW meetings unless specifically called upon. Brown (1992, p. 184) acknowledged the challenges of organizations trying to use feminist collective organizing:

In practice women participate in different ways and vary in the extent to which they are 'mobilizable' around any given issue, event or task. In all cases where there is an intention to combine some attributes of the cohesive group, together with an emphasis on accessibility and responsiveness to a wider constituency of women, competing pulls on organizational style will have to be managed.

Feminist collective organizing made the distinction of who should be sharing professional skills difficult in WOAW due to participants' confusion about who was to assume what roles, coupled with a lack of communication between participants, which led to ambiguity and assumptions about who had the resources to take on certain roles.

Information was a third type of resource of the women on low incomes' that I observed being used in Phase I WOAW meetings. There was an information sharing time on the agenda of each WOAW meeting where the women on low incomes reported about recreation or instructional programs they were organizing or wanted to work on in their Subgroups, as well as local contacts and programs outside WOAW for women or families with financial need. The following excerpt is a typical example of the type of information brought by the women on low incomes at Phase I WOAW meetings:
Donna A. gave the update for [Subgroup 1]. They are meeting every two weeks, and have on average 10 women at each meeting. They were doing weight lifting 1x/week, which will continue this year, and have been swimming at [the community centre]. This has been the most successful, and the women and the children really enjoy it. They are planning a social night, and are investigating 1st Aid courses. Some are interested in tae kwon do, which will be offered on Wednesday nights (Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, January 8, 2000).

The collaborative creation of meeting agendas by WOAW participants at Phase I meetings, a collective organizing principle, facilitated information sharing between participants, and many of the women on low incomes took part in this. Often, however, it was the same few women on low incomes who shared information at each meeting, while several others routinely remained quiet unless specifically called upon. Ife (1995) points out that community development projects can often reproduce structures of marginalization through using specific organizing practices. While WOAW members were trying to empower individuals and be respectful of all participants’ contributions, perhaps the ‘business’ orientation of Phase I WOAW meetings led to only a few of the women on low incomes feeling comfortable contributing in that environment.

Due to the associations the women on low incomes described between the types of resources they were bringing in their IRM (see Figure 3), I think that their lived experience and interpersonal and recreational skills were also being used to some degree in Phase I WOAW meetings in connection with their knowledge and job-related skills. Through my role as a Research Assistant I know that the women on low incomes’ lived experience was used much more in the Research Team than at WOAW meetings and that their interpersonal and recreational skills were used in the leisure and social activities they organized in their Subgroups. Despite these other sites for the use of lived experience and interpersonal and recreational skills, I think they could have been used more often in Phase I WOAW meetings to contribute to understanding, especially between participant groups. For example, I observed that the women on low incomes were developing trusting relationships with one another much faster than they were with
the community partners or researchers, which in my view was partly attributable to the sharing of their lived experience and interpersonal and recreational skills in the context of the Research Team, their Subgroups and at leisure programs they organized.

While I understand the ‘business’ function of WOAW meetings in Phase I, and hence the use of more ‘business-related’ resources at these meetings, perhaps trust and communication between the women on low incomes and the other participant groups could have been cultivated earlier and more deeply if they had shared their lived experience and interpersonal and recreational skills more often. Ife (1995, p. 183) seems to agree in his argument that:

When the link is made between the personal and the political, individual needs, problems, aspirations, sufferings and achievements can be translated into effective community-level action. The dominant paradigm has tended to break the link between the personal and the political, resulting in the individualizing of social problems which has reinforced the dominance of conservative, individualizing and therapeutic solutions.

While the Research Team was one site for the women on low incomes to share their lived experience, perhaps if they had done so more at Phase I WOAW meetings, it would have spurred political action, such as addressing welfare concerns, earlier in the project.

In general, the women on low incomes seemed reluctant to share their resources at WOAW meetings in Phase I. I think there were a few reasons for this. First, many of the women had not recently been in positions of having an influence in local organizing, programming or policy that directly affected them, and consequently often deferred to either the community partners or the researchers to do much of the coordination and facilitation that went on at WOAW meetings. Second, though participants were working through how to use principles of collectivity at Phase I WOAW meetings, many of the women on low incomes expressed that such practices as consensus decision-making and not having a ‘leader’ to tell the group what to do confused or frustrated them. Third, because the lived experience and personal skill resources brought by many of the women on low incomes have not been traditionally valued in ‘formal’ organizations, including
community-organizing initiatives (Dominelli, 1995), perhaps many of the women on low incomes refrained from actively sharing these with the group because of shyness, uncertainty or being unaware of the resources they had. Indeed, Carole stated, "Women don’t understand what talents they have themselves" (IRM 1). Finally, perhaps something about the way Phase I WOA meetings were conducted, or the environment created caused some of the women on low incomes to be more hesitant about contributing (Ife, 1995). However, some of the women on low incomes may have felt they were making a contribution through their attendance, or were happy with what was happening and did not feel they always needed to contribute verbally (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000).

Resource Utilization - The Community Partners

I observed the community partners’ resources being used more frequently and visibly at Phase I WOA meetings than those of either the women on low incomes or the researchers. Those being utilized were materials, knowledge, information and job-related skills. As the community partners were involved in WOA as representatives of community organizations working collaboratively with the other two participant groups to address the lack of access to recreation for women on low incomes, it is not surprising that the resources I saw being used in Phase I WOA meetings related so strongly with their roles and experience in paid work. Indeed, the community partners were playing an integral role in working with rather than for the women on low incomes toward WOA’s goals in order to improve communication between the three participant groups, meet members’ needs and generate legitimacy for both the need for improved access to recreation and the community partners’ involvement in such an initiative. Thus, the materials, knowledge, information and professional skills brought in Phase I by the community partners in conjunction with their paid work were integral to both group process and outcomes.
While they were not discussed often at WOAW meetings, I think that the materials brought by the community partners in the form of facilities for meetings and programs, childcare, instructors, and catering (usually coffee and a snack) for WOAW meetings were very important resource contributions. These material resources enabled much of the WOAW action generated during Phase I to take place, including meetings, recreational programs, instruction at low or no cost to participants and helped to reduce barriers to participation that were previously encountered.

Knowledge was another frequently used resource brought by the community partners, which incorporated their understanding or awareness of issues or ideas based on their experience in paid work or community organizing. Examples of the community partners’ knowledge resources that I observed being used at Phase I WOAW meetings included an understanding of some of the barriers that the women on low incomes potentially faced when trying to access local recreation facilities and programs, knowledge of the local political climate and systems, knowledge about how to access childcare during WOAW meetings and programs being held at local recreation facilities. The community partners’ knowledge was invaluable in Phase I WOAW organizing in terms of generating awareness about available programs as well as potential paths of local action. For example, mid-way through Phase I, a community partner distributed a local recreation survey at a WOAW meeting and asked the women on low incomes to fill it out. One of the questions in the survey referred to the municipality’s access policy for individuals or families living on low incomes, which WOAW participants had indicated needed to be changed.

In general, it seemed to me that while the group was trying to honour all members’ contributions by using collective organizing practices, the community partners’

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14 While this statement makes it sound as if the community partners were speaking for the women on low incomes, I mean to convey that some of the community partners (especially those who were working for social justice organizations) brought an understanding about some of the difficulties women face when living in poverty through their current or previous experience working with women in similar situations.
knowledge resources were favoured because of their perceived value in terms of mobilizing the group’s recreation goals, perhaps at the expense of the women on low incomes’ or researchers’ knowledge resources.

Connected to the knowledge resources brought by the community partners was their access to information, which was also used frequently at Phase I WOAW meetings. The community partners most often shared information about community programs that were designed for or deemed to benefit women or families on low incomes. The community partners also shared information about contact names and numbers for women on low incomes to find program instructors for recreation activities, as well as print information on specific topics such as welfare rights. The types of information brought by the community partners were often connected to their job-related networks. The following list, compiled in the fieldnotes from a Phase I WOAW meeting illustrates the types of information the community partners were typically sharing.

Handouts and other information received from community partners:

1. Budgeting Outcomes and Suggestions Handout
2. Article appearing in the local newspaper about a WOAW activity
3. World March of Women 2000 flyer
4. Women’s Day Open House at [a local] Women’s Centre
5. Community Connections Brochure
7. Single Mothers’ Resource Guide

(Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, February 22, 2000)

As mentioned in the discussion about the women on low incomes’ resources, the WOAW group regularly made time on agendas at Phase I meetings for information sharing among participants as part of collective organizing, which allowed the community partners to share a great amount of information, as exemplified here.

The job-related skills of the community partners were also important resources used at Phase I WOAW meetings, nearly always in the form of coordination and facilitation. Almost every Phase I WOAW meeting began with a community partner
(usually one in particular) asking for a volunteer to facilitate the meeting. As the researchers and women on low incomes were reluctant to do so, often a community partner ended up performing the facilitating role, which entailed leading the collaborative agenda setting, directing discussion about agenda items and taking responsibility for making sure all voices were heard during the process of consensus decision making. The following fieldnote excerpt is an example of how community partners ended up contributing their professional skills as the meeting facilitator:

As usual there was a struggle to identify a willing candidate. Someone mentioned what a good job Carla had done before, and someone else mentioned that there was value in having a variety of people do it. Gwen was coaxed into being the chair (whose responsibilities were identified as writing down the agenda and reminding us of the items throughout the meeting), even though she was eating (Fieldnote observations taken by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, April 5, 2000).

A few community partners who had experience working in collective organizations previous to WOAW also shared their skills by helping the group with process issues and aiding in conflict resolution. The following fieldnote excerpt is an example of how community partner Louise used her collective process skills to dissuade tension at a meeting where a discussion about how the available grant money should be divided among the Subgroups had led to disagreement. The researchers had indicated that they wanted the group to come to a decision about the budget by consensus, rather than dividing the money up themselves. Financial discussions were always very stressful for the WOAW group in Phase I, especially for the women on low incomes who lacked this resource in their daily lives (Hara, 2000).

Louise stopped the discussion by asking the group how necessary it was that we make decisions today. There were a lot of issues on the table, and if things were not dealt with properly it could be damaging. She pointed out that when hasty decisions are made they are often the wrong ones. To prevent feelings from getting hurt, and to ensure that decisions are reflective of the needs and interests of the group, [she] suggested that each group take note of the options available, and return to the next meeting with a realistic list of activities and budgeting needs (Fieldnotes observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting: February 8, 2000).
While this example is also related to Louise's knowledge about how collective organizing works, she used her skill here to know when and how to interject in order to remind the group about working together collectively, rather than against one another.

I offer two possible explanations as to why the community partners' resources were being used more often and overtly than those of other participants at Phase I WOAW meetings. First, at times the community partners took on more of a leadership role in Phase I WOAW meetings than that of participants in a collective. For the most part, I think this is due to a general lack of experience or familiarity that WOAW members had working in a collective, coupled with the community partners' daily experience of being employees who were expected to demonstrate leadership in hierarchical organizations. Reinelt (1994) indicated that it is often difficult for community development workers to negotiate working in hierarchical and feminist organizations simultaneously due to the conflicting skill sets required in each environment.

Also, as discussed earlier, the women on low incomes and researchers were, for different reasons, at times reluctant to volunteer their resources at WOAW meetings, which further contributed to the community partners having difficulty negotiating their roles in the process. Community partner Gwen provided an example of this when she said:

Well I guess when I first started I played more of a leadership role. It started to get uncomfortable because it seemed like people in our group couldn't move unless they knew what I was thinking of. They kept looking at me all the time when decisions were being made, I had to try to walk away. Now I'm finding the groups, they're chairing the meetings themselves, doing up the agenda themselves, but they like having me there though. And I'm still struggling with what my role is and how much I'm able to say and contribute and not have that kind of, I don't want that kind of influence over the group, to make sure that its coming from the group and not from myself (IRM 2).

Several other community partners echoed Gwen's comments. I think this confusion about the role they were supposed to take in WOAW's developing collective greatly
contributed to the community partners sharing and using their resources more often than the women on low incomes or the researchers at Phase I WOAW meetings.

Brown (1992, p. 184) offers further insights into this dilemma associated with using feminist collectivity:

...some actors attain greater visibility than others since their contributions to the production of social order are more influential than others. This so far has two reasons. First organizing activity, as we have argued, requires the exercise of certain skills which may not be held by all participants and second...those who are most often present or choose to make more commitment to the setting will be more influential.

In her study of a Women's Centre staff who tried to collectively partner with local women to better meet their needs, Brown (1992) found that the workers at the Centre routinely found themselves conforming to hierarchical roles of responsibility despite attempts at sharing them with participants. She showed (p. 185) how the paid workers:

...experienced considerable difficulties in effectively distributing power to the extent they wished. The level of support from other women was variable – at its highest during periods of crisis, but for many participants reduced to attendance at meetings after the crisis had passed. Without a sufficient group of women to share the day-to-day tasks the paid workers found themselves assuming almost total responsibility for necessary administrative tasks, such as bookkeeping, coupled with the feeling that they had to provide support for other women...

In my view, the lack of communication and ambiguity between WOAW participants about their resources during Phase I led to silences and assumptions about whose resources were most legitimate. I believe the women on low incomes considered the community partners' resources more legitimate than their own and relied on the community partners to provide certain types of resources when they were unwilling to or felt uncertain about the process. In addition, the researchers often held back in an effort to avoid usurping power from other participants. In a similar pattern to what Brown (1992) described in her research, the community partners in WOAW often shared resources related roles of responsibility when the other participants did not.
Resource Utilization - The Researchers

While the researchers' resources, especially the grant funding, made a significant contribution to action that occurred in Phase I of WOAW, they were generally used less overtly than either those of the women on low incomes or the community partners in Phase I WOAW meetings. This may be partly due to the fact that there were fewer of us in comparison with the other participant groups. In addition, we were self-conscious about contributing to group process too much, which stemmed from our use of feminist action research principles that demanded constant self-reflexivity on our parts. The exceptions to this were the two budget meetings, in which the funding brought by the researchers was discussed for the entire meeting. However, the researchers wanted WOAW participants to come to a decision about the distribution of funds collectively, which contributed to the amount of time spent discussing this resource.

The researchers' major contribution to Phase I WOAW was the grant funding. I observed that it enabled a considerable amount of the action generated by the group in Phase I, including transportation for the women on low incomes to and from meetings and events, some of the instructors for programs, stipends for the women on low incomes' participation, support for a day-long information seminar about WOAW for other women in the community and (more indirectly) the evolution of the collective process through the group working to make budget decisions by consensus. The funding was explicitly discussed at two budget meetings in Phase I where representatives from all participant groups were invited to decide by consensus how monies designated for Phase I and Phase II should be divided. In regular Phase I WOAW meetings, the funding was brought up a few times, but the researchers seemed reluctant to emphasize it too much in full group proceedings and often addressed participants' concerns on an individual basis either before or after WOAW meetings.

Another resource brought by the researchers that I saw being used at Phase I WOAW meetings was knowledge relating to areas such as understanding how the federal
grant money could be accessed for WOAW programs through the university, as well as which activities could and could not receive funding (for example, child care could not receive funding according to the parameters of the granting agency). There was also much interest in Wendy’s involvement in The Kamloops Women’s Action Project (KWAP), a community-based project similar to WOAW (Frisby & Fenton, 1998), so Wendy answered a number of questions and provided input using her knowledge from this previous experience, as illustrated in the following fieldnote excerpt:

Wendy provided a background on KWAP as the roots of the WOAW group, and explained how her involvement in KWAP led to the application for the grant to support the program and provided an opportunity to learn from the women and community organizations (Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting, February 8, 2000).

In addition, Colleen shared knowledge about how to make contacts with policy makers and in the health sector, and explained how these networks might help WOAW.

Finally, the researchers also shared knowledge through engaging with other participants in answering questions from new members about the structure and goals of WOAW. Often newcomers to WOAW asked interesting questions that deepened discussion about the structure and processes of WOAW as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Pat (the new WOAW member) questioned whether the following input was relevant, but stimulated a very interesting conversation. In talking about the involvement of the university and the funding from SSHRC (particularly about what happens when the money is gone) she said that this project "seems loose", and that there seemed to be "no defined paths to come to consensus on"...Wendy explained that WOAW isn't ending in 2 years, that just the SSHRC money is. Wendy said that the money is just a resource, and not what the project is about. Wendy said that there are "all sorts of other ideas to keep things going" (Fieldnote observations recorded by Sydney at a WOAW meeting on May 10, 2000).

While this excerpt is a good example of the way the researchers shared their knowledge and understandings of WOAW with other participants, I think it also shows that other WOAW members contributed to the co-production of knowledge by asking critical
questions. Such questions led the WOAW group to the development of a more profound shared understanding of the initiative based on participants clarifying their thoughts and ideas with one another.

As researchers, the four of us met with each other once or twice a month during Phase I. These smaller meetings were an opportunity for the researchers to reflect openly and think critically about our experiences and understandings of WOAW, as well as discuss how we felt feminist action research principles were relating to our roles in WOAW. As I was part of the research group, I think that the researchers’ knowledge was used most in these smaller meetings, even though we shared our knowledge by providing short ‘Researcher Updates’ at Phase I WOAW meetings. Throughout Phase I, the researchers struggled to negotiate the method and frequency with which to share our knowledge resources at WOAW meetings. On one hand, we wanted to respect the evolving process and structure of the group without influencing it too much because none of us lived in the community where WOAW organizing was taking place. On the other hand, we felt accountable to the group to answer questions about the funding, as well as our own thinking about how the collective process and action generation were unfolding in WOAW. We were aware that being passive did not fit with the action dimension of feminist action research (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000), thus we spent a lot of time at our researcher meetings in Phase I talking about how to bridge our knowledge of collective process and community recreation programming, from both the literature and previous experience, with the development of WOAW organizing while at the same time avoiding taking on a power role. We did not resolve this issue in Phase I, and as a result felt discomfort and uncertainty about our contribution of knowledge resources almost constantly at WOAW meetings.

Another resource brought by the researchers that was used at Phase I WOAW meetings was information. Colleen took the initiative to start a WOAW newsletter during Phase I to circulate information among participants. She distributed four two-page issues
at WOAW meetings. After the fourth issue, two of the women on low incomes indicated that they wanted to take over the newsletter and jokingly told Colleen that they were ‘firing her.’ From that point, those two women on low incomes began acting as editors (a third woman on low income joined the editing team not long afterwards) for the newsletter and collected submissions from other participants each month. The researchers were also asked for and provided detailed information about the WOAW budget, as illustrated in the following quote where Colleen talked to participants about a handout the researchers had prepared showing budget figures:

> We want the whole process to be as transparent as possible. I know it's confusing anyway, but just so that we have the time to address any concerns or issues you may have about the research budget. And speaking of trying to be transparent, that is why we have written the first little section of the first page, so that you know exactly how much money there is in the budget for the whole duration of the research project and how it's been divided up so far (WOAW meeting, June 6, 2000).

The researchers also shared the information they had from participating in different WOAW activities and informal interactions with members in order to supplement communication between participants about the various types of action going on in Phase I.

Other resources the researchers contributed were their job-related skills. The researchers facilitated the two budget meetings that occurred in Phase I, during which they used their collective organizing skills, making an effort to test for understanding and consensus in the decision-making process by asking for clarification or additional comments from participants, as well as asking participants who had been quiet during the discussion if they had anything they felt they needed to contribute. In addition, Sydney volunteered (when asked by one of the community partners) to write minutes for Phase I WOAW meetings, which she typed and distributed via email and hard copy to participants. While the researchers tried to be ever-conscious of collective organizing principles in relation to their sharing of job-related skill resources in WOAW organizing,
it seemed that the other participant groups assumed that the researchers would contribute these skills, rather than discussing and deciding as a collective who else brought these skills to the table and how the tasks performed by the researchers might be distributed or rotated among all WOAW participants. Due to this lack of discussion, collective organizing practices had very little to do with the degree of use of the researchers' professional skills in Phase I WOAW meetings.

Conclusion

WOAW participants named hundreds of examples of resources they were bringing to the initiative, which they connected with one another in a number of different ways. These connections build on depictions of resources in the current organizing theory, community development and feminist organizing literatures by providing a more comprehensive and integrated description of how diverse participants in a feminist community organizing initiative view resources. In addition, participants provided multiple examples of single resource types, demonstrating a number of interpretations and meanings they associated with the same resource type. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Callahan (1997) pointed out that valuing the diverse contributions made by members from varied social, economic and political locations is a challenge for those involved in feminist community organizing. Uncovering the connections between resource types and the multiple meanings of singular resources indicated by participants in WOAW is an initial step in addressing this challenge.

My analysis also demonstrated that there was a lack of communication between participant groups about available resources, coupled with personal and group judgments about what resources were valuable to the group in Phase I. Martin (1992) indicated that lack of communication between participants can lead to ambiguity, which was the case in WOAW in terms of what and whose resources should be mobilizable toward group goals. Consequently, while each group made important resource contributions to Phase I
WOAW meetings, silent assumptions may have been made about whose resources were most legitimate and best suited for specific tasks or roles. For example, the community partners did more facilitating than the researchers and the women on low incomes. The researchers provided the greatest amount of funding and contributed by doing tasks such as taking minutes and starting the newsletter. Finally, some of the women on low incomes participated and shared their resources, but others were often silent, or did not even attend the Phase I WOAW meetings, indicating that perhaps the organizational structure or environment was only conducive to certain forms of participation, as suggested by Ife (1995).

Finally, WOAW’s evolving use of collectivity provided an organizational environment where certain resources could be openly shared and valued in a way that was congruent with the feminist organizing literature (cf. Dominelli, 1995; Feree & Martin, 1995). However, WOAW members ran into difficulties using collectivity, including time constraints, inexperience or unwillingness to work in a collective, as well as members’ differential perceptions about the value of their own and others’ resources. Many of these same difficulties have been described by feminist researchers who have done case study work in organizations trying to use similar structures and practices (Brown, 1992; Martin, 1990). As a result of these challenges, some participants’ resources were used more often and more visibly than others in Phase I WOAW meetings. My research has continued the work of other researchers (cf. Dominelli, 1995; Callahan, 1997) in exploring the possibilities brought to community organizing by feminist collectivity. However, this study also raises further questions about how participants in groups like WOAW can negotiate issues such as power imbalances related to traditionally-valued resources, and the need to generate action while at the same time honouring diverse contributions through making decisions and policy by consensus.

It is important to restate that not all of the resources named by WOAW participants in the IRMs were as relevant to Phase I organizing as others. For example,
legitimacy was important in Phase I as it gave participants a sense that WOAW had a reason for being, but I think this resource will come into play much more as the group begins to take greater political action in subsequent Phases of the project, perhaps by attempting to influence municipal recreation or welfare policy.
Conclusions

My study contributes to an understanding of resources and their utilization in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative like WOAW. While I agree with Selsky (1991) and Ife (1995) that making an inventory of resources in the start-up phase of a feminist community organizing initiative is an important step in leading to capacity for the project, based on the research I have done, I think there are several factors to consider in terms of both theory and process.

Research question #1 (What resources do WOAW participants, including the women on low incomes, community partners and researchers say they are bringing to the project?) addressed some of my questions and critiques about current depictions of resources in the literature. First, while financial and material resources were important to the generation of action in Phase I, participants indicated that other resources such as interpersonal skills, emotional energy and lived experience were also integral in the development of the organization in its first six months. This finding builds on Foa et al.'s (1993) and Ife's (1995) arguments that social justice issues cannot be addressed by financial means alone.

Second, my work in WOAW has ‘cast a wider net’ in terms of the number and types of connections between resources based on diverse participants responses. For example, the women on low incomes connected their lived experience as mothers and paid workers with life and business skills including budgeting and organization. The community partners connected their jobs with access to facilities, networks and information that was important to WOAW. The researchers also made links between their resources, specifically connecting the knowledge they felt they were bringing to the project and legitimacy other members associated with their participation. I have
amalgamated Figures 3-5 from chapter 4 to show the participant resources being brought to WOAW (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Participant Resources Being Brought to WOAW at Start-up
The variety of participants’ examples of resources also demonstrated that members from diverse social, political and economic locations attach multiple meanings to resources and value them differently. One of the most striking examples of this was the distinct way in which members from the three participant groups valued the lived experience of poverty brought by the women on low incomes. While the community partners and researchers indicated that the women on low incomes’ understandings and knowledge of barriers to recreation and healthy lifestyles due to poverty were integral resources to WOAW’s initiative, the women on low incomes did not identify this type of lived experience as an important contribution or legitimate source of knowledge for the project. Callahan (1997) argued that feminist community organizations should honour the different types of contributions made by participants from a wide range of backgrounds and orientations. Thus, it is important for members of an organization like WOAW to talk about and to know one another’s different understandings of the resources available to the group, as this will have an effect on which ones get used and not used in the work of the initiative. While I had reasons for conducting the Interactive Research Meetings with the three participant groups separately, upon reflection I realize that it would have been helpful to have the groups work together on this issue.

My analysis also showed that there was a lack of communication between participants in WOAW during Phase I about who was bringing what resources to the project, which resulted in members adopting certain roles based on assumptions about whose resources could be used for what kinds of work. This was due in part to the community partners and researchers trying to refrain from inserting themselves too often in an effort to empower the women on low incomes. In addition, members were focused on creating action and their success in this regard helped to sustain their involvement in the project. What resulted, however, was ambiguity, especially on the part of the women on low incomes, about the resources that the community partners and researchers were
bringing to WOAW. Another factor that contributed to an ambiguity were assumptions made by members from all three participant groups about which resources they were bringing that would be valuable to the group. For example, the researchers focused on their knowledge and funding, while some of the women on low incomes indicated that the lived experience of the researchers was also important to the initiative as it enabled participants to identify with one another on a more personal level.

My analysis of research question #2 (What evidence is there of participants’ resources being used and not used in the start-up phase (first six months) of WOAW organizing?) further showed how the lack of communication about resources between WOAW participants contributed to some members’ resources being used more than others. Ife (1995) indicated that through a discussion of the resources they feel they bring to a community organizing initiative, participants would raise awareness among one another about the pool of resources available to the group. While such a discussion is important, it has to be tempered with an understanding that if participants in the initiative are from diverse locations, as is the case in WOAW, that they will assign different value to resources based on their experience (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition, participants may be less willing to share more personal resources like difficult lived experience in the early stages of a project where there has not been sufficient time for people to develop trust with one another. Therefore, ongoing communication about resources is needed.

However, there is a difficult balance to negotiate here. While it is important for participants to know what resources other collaborators are bringing to a feminist community organizing initiative, it takes time for people to negotiate and develop trust with other participants. It also takes time for participants to be comfortable with respect to resources they are willing to share or feel they are justified in sharing, as well as how to address power imbalances in the group. Based on literature I read, I suggested that feminist collective organizing practices would facilitate the processes of communication,
the valuation of diverse participants' resources and aid in the diffusion of power more effectively than traditionally practiced hierarchy.

In addressing my third research question *(What role does the use of feminist collective organizing play in which resources are used and not used?)* I found that WOAW's developing use of collectivity did enable many participants' resources to be used in a way that was empowering and respectful to contributors. In addition, it was my impression that participants tried to communicate with one another at WOAW meetings in a way that valued and was considerate of all opinions. However, the time consuming nature of feminist collectivity, coupled with people's general lack of experience using this form of organizing sometimes led to certain WOAW members' resources being used more than others, even in instances when most participants could have contributed. For example, the community partners often ended up facilitating WOAW meetings due to a reluctance on the part of the women on low incomes or researchers to take on this role even though other participants were capable of doing this work.

Another difficulty with the theory about feminist collectivity and feminist community organizing is that a focus on empowering and valuing the resources of those who have been marginalized may unintentionally create feelings of disempowerment in participants who have access to potentially powerful resources. For example, it was clear from my study that the researchers and community partners were highly prioritizing the lived experience of the women on low incomes, particularly their difficulties in accessing recreation and knowledge of living in poverty. However, the researchers and community partners did not seem to consider their own lived experience valuable to WOAW's initiative, which was reflected in their minimal references to their own life struggles, emotions and difficulties.
Reflections

While analyzing my data, I became aware of some limitations to my study. The first limitation relates to the Interactive Research Meetings, which I decided to hold separately with each of the three WOAW participant groups in order to provide space for people to feel comfortable talking freely about their resources. In particular, I was aware that the community partners and researchers were feeling very awkward about their roles in the project and struggling to negotiate how often to insert the resources they felt they were bringing. Consequently I thought that they might feel reserved about having a discussion about their resources with the women on low incomes present. What happened, however, was that I inadvertently perpetuated a lack of discussion between participant groups about what resources they felt they were bringing. This became especially apparent late in Phase II when some of the women on low incomes indicated that they did not feel they had a complete understanding of the resources that either the researchers or the community partners could contribute to WOAW. In fact, a few of the women on low incomes said that they did not even know what organizations some of the community partners represented or what they did in their work.

A second limitation of my research methods was that I was not able to look at how resources were being utilized in all aspects of WOAW organizing. Even though I had some understanding of the reasons why some resources were being used more or less in activities outside regular WOAW meetings, the parameters of my methods and time constraints prevented me from being able to fully explore these in order to enrich my analysis. In addition, the types of resources identified by participants and used in WOAW organizing are likely to change over the course of the project, and some resources may not have been as applicable in Phase I as they would be in later stages of the project. Therefore, while looking at the start-up phase provided a snapshot of resource valuation and utilization and laid the groundwork for further investigation, a longitudinal study would have been able to develop these ideas more completely.
A challenge that I faced while doing my work was using the feminist principle of empowerment evaluation, which involves including participants in the interpretation and analysis of data (Coombe, 1997). While I was eager to share my results with participants and engage in discussions with them, I found it difficult to generate discussion about my results with WOAW members. I tried in three ways to share my work with WOAW participants: (i) I included my initial findings in a Phase I report that was distributed and discussed with WOAW members at an evaluation meeting held by the researchers at the end of Phase II, (ii) I contacted participants named in my study on an individual basis with information about my work and an invitation to discuss my analysis, and (iii) I reported my work at a Phase III WOAW meeting. In all three instances I felt minimal engagement from participants in my research. Coombe (1997, p. 303-304) suggests that a difficulty with empowerment evaluation is that:

it takes a great deal of time, effort and personal commitment, which both evaluators and community members may find difficult to make. They may feel that the process is diverting precious resources away from “real work.”

I feel somewhat responsible for not including enough participant feedback in my analysis, however, the lack of response from WOAW members made it difficult for me to do so. On one hand I felt that perhaps I should be presenting my results more actively in some way; but on the other I did not want to ‘force the issue’ if participants did not feel it important to discuss my study. Perhaps the time lag between the IRMs and my initiating discussion of my analysis (six months from the IRMs to the Phase I Report) played a role in reducing participant interest in my work. Or, participants may not feel that a direct analysis of resources is necessary at this time because they are happy with the way the organization is working or because the IRMs contributed to this discussion. Finally, perhaps there is another way that I could present my findings that would be more interesting for participants than the methods I have already tried.
A second challenge I faced during the whole process of conducting this study was
the problematic nature of naming resources in categories and determining the degree of
their use in Phase I WOAW organizing. I have deliberately refrained from adding my
own definition of the term in order to try and provide participants' multiple
understandings of resources instead, but acknowledge my own interpretations in the
discussion. In addition, determining which resources were used and not used was
difficult because some were used very often and very visibly, while others were less
transparent. However, almost all of the resources I brought into my discussion made
significant contributions to WOAW in Phase I. I am aware that if I had a different
perspective of WOAW (such as that of another participant) I might have understood
resource use in Phase I quite differently based on that alternate experience.

Community partner, Louise, affirmed that I have, at least for her, portrayed her
understandings of resources. In an electronic mail correspondence requesting permission
to use Louise's quotes, she replied:

I have to say that reading the transcripts you sent was pretty
overwhelming. I often forget that you are taping/recording, so was taken
aback by what you recorded. I find it striking that the incidents that
you chose to quote were mostly times when I felt I was jumping into the
breach, and as a result, was really worried that I was overstepping my
role (and was feeling my usual fear of being punished for saying
something unpopular, something I often find myself doing !!! teehee). But in most cases, I also felt something was at risk if something wasn’t
said to bring the context to the fore. So now I am experiencing YOUR
contextualizing (and your transcripts are accurate, as I remember the
situations) of MY comments, and it is very powerful. Because not only
have I not been punished, but the transcripts placed in context confirm
my take on the situations and therefore validate my effort to speak up
and speak out. It didn't occur to me that this would be one of the
outcomes of participating in the research. So I want to thank you and
all the research team for that particular piece. I am honored to be in
such wonderful company (March 29, 2001).

While I cannot claim Louise's statement is true for all those who participated in my study,
it is my intent and hope that my work is also affirming in some way to the other WOAW
participants who were involved in terms of their perspectives of resource valuation and
utilization in WOAW.
Finally, my analysis has begun to uncover some new ways of thinking about power in terms of how it is linked to all types of resources and the value placed in them by participants sharing and mobilizing them. My study really was all about power because it examined how resources can be utilized in a collective way to work towards accomplishing the goals of a feminist community organization that operates within an existing patriarchal structure. My work leaves room for more in-depth analyses of power in relation to resources, resource valuation and resource utilization in the context of feminist action research and feminist community organizing projects. Based on this research project, I believe that power, including that associated with highly coveted resources, can be negotiated and mobilized in a way that is beneficial for participants and not self-serving or damaging to group process or individuals. This reinforces Ristock and Penell’s (1996) contention that power can be directed in positive rather than destructive ways.

Being involved in WOAW has been a wonderful experience for me, and I am very sad to be ‘leaving the field’ as my thesis work comes to an end. When I began my role as a Research Assistant in WOAW, I remember being frustrated by the stereotypical comments made by acquaintances and even close family members about women living in poverty. Through my experiences in WOAW I now feel better able to address misconceptions about why some women live in poverty, whose social responsibility it is to address this issue, and what resources diverse participants in a feminist community organizing initiative potentially bring. I already miss attending WOAW meetings, as I very much enjoyed the camaraderie and discussion among women from so many different backgrounds who were committed to social justice and women’s rights. In that sense, WOAW has been an invaluable ‘real-world’ classroom for me. As a result of my experience in WOAW, I hope to continue working in similar initiatives that address women’s needs in the community at a grassroots level.
Recommendations for WOAW

Further work could be done in WOAW to investigate how resources are being used differently in the various organizational forums under the WOAW umbrella, and how this changes over time with fluctuations in membership, the evolution of collectivity, as well as the achievement and new development of goals for the organization. For example, WOAW participants could choose to have a 'resources check-in' at the beginning or end of each of the remaining Phases in a setting similar to the Interactive Research Meetings that I facilitated. These meetings would provide a forum for participants from all three groups to document changes, additions or omissions of resources to reflect the evolving nature of the group, its goals, and its members' understandings of their own resources and how they relate to WOAW. Such discussions might also begin to address the lack of communication between participant groups as to what resources each of the participant groups are bringing.

In relation to these resource check-ins, I wonder if there is a way for the important resources being shared at Colleen's Research Team Meetings, such as the lived experience of the women on low incomes, to be shared with the larger group at WOAW meetings. I know that this is problematic, as Colleen is hoping the women on low income will initiate this communication, rather than having her or one of the other researchers suggest it. Interestingly, at a recent WOAW meeting, one of the women on low income who participates in the Research Team asked if it would be appropriate to give an update from the last Research Team meeting, asking if the two groups 'should cross paths.' This communication is something that Colleen and the other researchers will have to spend more time discussing in terms of the principles of feminist action research before taking any action.

I also think that the researchers and community partners involved in WOAW perhaps need to state their assumptions about their roles in WOAW and why they are choosing to contribute certain resources and not others. While this would be a difficult
discussion to negotiate in terms of both participant-centred community development and feminist action research, it seems from my results that such transparency might begin to tackle the ambiguity in WOAW about the kinds of resources the researchers and community partners are bringing and why they feel a reluctance to share them. A longitudinal study might also show how the development of trust between participants and the co-production of knowledge through mutual learning and exchange might alleviate some of these tensions over the course of the three year project.

As discussed above, I have begun to communicate my analysis and recommendations with WOAW participants through contacting them individually to discuss their involvement in my work. At this point, participants have been supportive of my work (though not very engaged) and have not had any major questions, critiques or disagreements. I acknowledge that this is probably not the case with all WOAW participants, and I would be happy to enter into a discussion with individuals or groups in order to clarify our respective understandings of my work and its relationship to WOAW. I hope to share my results and discussion more fully in upcoming reports that the research group prepares for WOAW, as well as through the submission of a summary article to an academic journal.

Recommendations for Feminist Community Organizations and Future Research

While my results cannot be broadly generalized, I would expect similar patterns of findings to emerge in organizations comparable to WOAW. My study has addressed some of the questions I raised after reading the literature; however it also asks further questions that I have not been able to consider in this thesis. First, I think that non-traditionally valued resources, especially emotions and power both merit additional research in terms of how they are valued and used in the context of a feminist community organizing initiative. Second, a more in-depth understanding of how participants assign value to resources based on their experience and locations could be cultivated through a
longitudinal study and methods that permit more clarification with individuals, such as personal interviews. Third, Selsky's (1991) and Ife's (1995) arguments about the utility of making an inventory of resources in the start-up phase of a feminist community organizing initiative in terms of developing organizational capacity should be investigated in other case-study organizations in order to provide more information about this process for people who are doing such grassroots work. In conjunction with this, further work could be done to build on the interrelationships and multiple meanings of resources in other feminist community organizing initiatives. Finally, the use of feminist collectivity as an alternative to hierarchy could be studied in other case study organizations with respect to its role in resource identification, valuation and utilization by participants.
Epilogue

Since the end of Phase, WOAW members have continued their work in many ways. During Phase II the Subgroups organized a number of recreational and instructional activities, including a family barbecue, a stress reduction workshop, computer courses, and the continuation of the ever-popular belly dancing. In addition, one Subgroup ran a very successful fundraising barbecue at a local grocery store. The Research Team began discussion about the possibility of WOAW becoming a non-profit organization as an option for sustainability when the SSHRC grant runs out. Among other things, the non-profit discussion caused tension, as it led some WOAW members, especially some of the women on low incomes, to question whether or not collectivity was the best organizational structure for WOAW. As a result, some of the women on low incomes asked two of the community partners (who had experience working in collectives) to run a ‘Collective Organizing’ workshop for the group, which was held in October, 2000. The workshop was well attended and began to address some of the conflict in the group, however some tension around the non-profit idea persisted. Also during Phase I, the organization received local media attention and WOAW members made presentations in other communities about how to start-up similar initiatives. Finally, all four researchers made presentations about our work and research in WOAW at international conferences in Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

Phase III saw the continuation of tension between WOAW participants about Subgroup membership and the non-profit idea. A second ‘Collective Organizing’ workshop was held by the same two community partners, which furthered group thinking around these issues. Despite the discord, the Subgroups continued to organize activities such as moms and tots swimming, a conflict reduction workshop and a book club. Some of the women also lobbied for changes to local transportation in order to make recreation
facilities more accessible for people with disabilities and young children. Three other municipalities in the Greater Vancouver area heard about WOAW and began organizing similar activities on their own (i.e., without the support of the SSHRC grant). Several WOAW members attended meetings for these new groups to share ideas and provide feedback. Also during Phase III, a new PhD student joined the university research group to begin work with WOAW, taking over as the Project Coordinator.

Finally, one of the most exciting accomplishments for WOAW in Phase III was the group's nomination for a Leadership Award by a non-profit organization that works to further girls and women's participation in sport and physical activity in British Columbia. The awards ceremony was held on International Women's Day and over 30 WOAW members from all three participant groups attended. WOAW won the award and the entire group took the stage to receive it!

Since the awards ceremony, WOAW members have begun discussions about the issues in the upcoming provincial election. In addition, they are planning a group retreat at a lodge outside the Greater Vancouver Area to kick off Phase IV in the fall. At a recent meeting, one of the women on low incomes also brought up the issue of lack of racial diversity in WOAW and asked that members start thinking about ways to include more women of colour in the group. Finally, the researchers are planning to write the Phase II report in the coming weeks and distribute it to WOAW participants later this spring. We are also planning another group evaluation meeting, in conjunction with the Phase II report, to discuss participants' feedback and analyses.

Women Organizing Activities for Women is still developing collectivity, which in turn is affecting resource utilization. For example, at a recent WOAW meeting, one of the women on low incomes called the group to order and facilitated the meeting, rather than one of the community partners taking on this role. In addition, one of the community partners told me a few days ago that she is becoming more comfortable with the way resources are being shared the Subgroup she attends. She said she does not feel
like the women on low incomes are relying on her as much anymore, and consequently, that she now feels much more comfortable contributing to the group. The researchers are still negotiating when and how much to insert their resources in relation to the principles of feminist action research.

As I have been working on finishing my M.A., I have been applying to overseas internships with Canadian international development organizations. I am hoping to use the experience and knowledge I have gained through my work in the WOAW project to contribute to similar projects outside Canada.
References


Hara, L. (2000). Informal discussion after a Women Organizing Activities for Women meeting. December 5, Greater Vancouver Area, BC.


Kretzman, J.P. & McKnight, J.L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets*. Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications.


Appendix A: Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project
11. Brief Summary of Progress of Study:

12. Number of Subjects Admitted to Study: Number of Normals:

13. Describe any unexpected side effects that may have been observed.

14. Briefly describe any new information or changes in scientific knowledge that might alter the ethical basis for continuing the research design.

15. Additional Information:
Elizabeth Pinnington, a MA student of the Principal Investigator, will be included in the Letter of Initial Contact for both the Women on Low Incomes and and the Community Representatives as a member of the research team who will be assisting with the research methods and data analysis.
WOAW
Women Organizing Activities For Women

For women of all ages.

Come and join us.

We are Women trying to break down the barriers of isolation.