EXAMINING MULTIPLE DISCOURSES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION

by

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Abstract

In an effort to increase the quality and relevance of the programs, municipal recreation departments are partnering with community-based organizations and community members through a community development approach (Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996; Millar & Frisby, 2002; Searle & Brayley, 2000). However, the use of community development across diverse sectors has created multiple discourses as practitioners translate theory into practice and attempt to resolve conflicts between social justice goals and financial imperatives, creating ambiguity in collaborative contexts. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to examine the multiple discourses of community development used by community workers involved in a collaborative community-based organization designed to increase the involvement of women in low income in recreation decision-making and participation. A secondary purpose was to examine the implications of multiple discourses in this context.

The research methods involved three data collection techniques in two phases over a 20 month period. Two semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted with three community workers representing a municipal recreation department, a women's centre, and a family service agency. This data was enhanced with field notes and observations of meetings. Data analysis was assisted by Atlas.ti, a qualitative computer software program.

The findings revealed a unique discourse of community development used by each research participant that had implications for how community development was conceptualized, the goals identified, and the role of the community worker in the process. For each discourse, central dimensions were identified and one significant tension was discussed. The analysis also explored the influence of personal experience and organizational context, and examined inconsistencies, contradictions, and resistance to other discourses that demonstrated the complexities involved in community development practice (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Weedon, 1997). This study also identified three implications of multiple discourses that both enhanced and inhibited collaboration. These findings demonstrated the complexities involved and the importance of communication and new strategies to decrease conflict and develop shared meanings to accomplish social justice goals. Given the dynamic tensions described in this study, recommendations for future research and practice were provided.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

In communities throughout Canada, people suffer from a growing list of social problems including a lack of employment opportunities, the erosion of public infrastructure, the persistence of poverty, and, perhaps most troubling, an increasing uncertainty among policy-makers and service providers about how to rectify these situations (Bradshaw, 2000; Pilisuk, McAllister, & Rothman, 1997). Facing continued budget cuts and demands for fiscal accountability, public sector organizations are facing challenges in providing services at a time when they are most needed.

Within the sport and recreation sector in Canada, a confluence of factors, including the current physical inactivity crisis, the benefits movement being promoted by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Department, and social and legal pressures to allocate scarce resources more equitably, have positioned municipal recreation departments to make a valuable contribution to society by providing health promoting services to all citizens. However, the inequities that exist within the sport and recreation system in Canada are well documented (cf. Coakley, 1994; Kidd, 1995; Searle & Brayley, 2000), and despite efforts to achieve equity, it continues to be dominated by white, male, middle class ideals. Women on low income, aged populations, and ethnic and racial minorities are among the marginalized individuals whose participation is limited due to overt and covert social barriers (Frisby & Fenton, 1998; Hall, 1996; Kidd, 1995). These include programming based on supply and demand, a lack of childcare, an emphasis on traditional competitive team sports, and social or cultural constraints (e.g., stereotypes associated with traditionally "male" or "female" activities; strict cultural norms concerning clothing).
Individuals on low income face additional barriers including the perpetuation of social stigmas around poverty, transportation barriers, and prohibitive costs associated with registration fees and equipment (Reid, Frisby, & Ponic, 2002). While some municipalities do offer subsidies meant to support the participation of individuals or families on low income, it is often necessary for applicants to “prove poverty” by submitting financial assistance records that are kept on file; an embarrassing and demoralizing experience for many. However, the benefits associated with participation, including increased self-confidence and self-efficacy, decreased depression and social isolation, and increased physical and mental health and well-being (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 1998; Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 1997; Frisby & Fenton, 1998; Reid, Dyck, McKay, & Frisby, 2000), are strong arguments favouring equitable access for marginalized groups.

In the past, efforts to increase the participation of marginalized groups in the sport and recreation system have typically been top-down, adopting a needs or deficiency model of service provision (Clark, 1994). These models see “leisure professionals” identifying the needs of clients, or gaps in service provision, and developing programs, often without obtaining input from community members (Searle & Brayley, 2000; Smale & Reid, 2002). However, it has been argued that by failing to consult marginalized groups, hierarchical power structures are reinforced and the lived experiences of the marginalized are rendered invisible (Frisby & Fenton, 1998; Panet-Raymond, 1999). In an attempt to increase the quality and relevance of municipal recreation programs, while responding to increased uncertainty within their environment, government-funded departments have turned to community development to partner with community members in the decision-making process and co-creation of programs (Glover & Burton, 1998; Parsons, 1990; Smale & Reid, 2002; Thibault, Frisby, & Kikulis, 1999; Vail, 1992).
Community development can be understood as "a process, a way of working with people such that they are seen and related to as critical participants both in their own self-development and the development of their community" (Sebaran, 1999, p. 1). Ife (1995) suggested that community development is guided by principles such as empowerment, inclusivity, partnership, and citizen participation, and that it requires a holistic approach where connections are made that challenge conventional dichotomies, such as the "haves and have-nots", and the "professional and the client". Through a process of mutual learning, consciousness-raising, and knowledge production that involves all participants, community development is meant to challenge oppressive social structures and relations based on gender, class, and ethnicity (Dominelli, 1995; Frisby, Crawford, & Dorer, 1997; Ife, 1995). From this perspective, the focus on marginalized groups is directed at their capacities or assets, what resources they bring to organizing initiatives, rather than on what skills or opportunities they lack (e.g., the deficit model) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). In contrast to other forms of community organizing, such as social planning, which situates community members in a consultant role, and social action, where community members may be in direct conflict with public or private organizations, community development relies on the active involvement of citizens and concerned agencies within a coordinated approach (Hunter, 1986; Rothman, 1995). By creating partnerships or social connections with community members and public sector organizations, it is hoped that meaningful and effective solutions will be created to bring these individuals in from the outside (Frisby & Millar, 2002; Hunter, 1986).

Women in Action

Women in Action (a pseudonym) is a community-based organization designed to address the health concerns of women on low income by increasing their access to
community sport and recreation. The organization is a collaboration between community workers (n=12) representing municipal recreation departments, family service agencies, a women's centre, and community schools; a diverse group of women on low income (n=85); and a team of researchers from the local university (n=8) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Women in Action Organizational Structure

Women in Action was started after a workshop in June 1999 that was organized in response to requests for increased access to sport and recreation opportunities by women on low income and their families, as well as legal, social, and economic pressures on municipal recreation departments to increase equity within their programs. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the barriers women on low income encountered to their involvement in recreation, the health benefits associated with their participation, and how to develop action plans to address their concerns. A university-based researcher was invited to share her experiences from a similar collaborative community-based organization and research project in another community. One of the main findings from the workshop was the identification of three major health concerns amongst the community members –
physical inactivity, social isolation, and stress - that they hoped to alleviate through their participation.

Women in Action developed a collaborative organizing structure that created room for different types and levels of participation. The women on low income participated in one of four subgroups, based loosely on geographic location, age, and/or interest. Most community workers aligned themselves with one of the four subgroups and regularly attended subgroup meetings. The women on low income, community workers, and researchers also attended monthly project team meetings where the stakeholder groups had a forum to raise and discuss issues of mutual interest and/or concern. Through the subgroup and project team meetings, community members worked with community workers and researchers to plan physical and social activities, address barriers to participation, and organize political action (e.g., community members participated in city council meetings and discussed their grievances with the welfare system). The project team meetings also served as a communication headquarters for updates about subgroup activities, community events, and issues and concerns that had been raised.

The Research Component of Women in Action

Research was integrated into the structure and function of Women in Action since its inception. I was a member of a university-based research team from the university that received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to examine how health problems could be addressed through a collaborative community organizing process designed to increase the involvement of women on low income in community recreation. In addition to the principal investigator, there were seven graduate students involved in the SSHRC project as paid research assistants; four of us conducted research as part of our academic degrees related to the project. As a research
assistant, my responsibilities included attending Women in Action meetings, collecting field notes, transcribing meetings and interviews with community workers, and coding data.

As a research team, we operated from a feminist participatory action research (FPAR) perspective that guided our involvement in Women in Action, research methods used for the SSHRC project, and how we engaged with each other. Participatory action research strategies aim to challenge typical research relationships by including participants in all aspects of the research, such as the identification of the research problem, the analysis of the data, and the dissemination of the research results (Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, forthcoming). By emphasizing collaboration and dialogue between the community members, workers, and researchers, FPAR attempts to "demystify" the research process (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000), share power between the researchers and the community, and support praxis (Reid, 2000). While a FPAR perspective benefited my research in many ways (e.g., in developing trust with the research participants), I did not use a FPAR perspective to guide my own research.

The complex nature and interesting dynamics within Women in Action created space for research team members to pursue their own research interests within the organization, but separate from the SSHRC project. As I attended Women in Action meetings and transcribed interviews with the community workers as part of my responsibilities, I became interested in their practices, and specifically in community development. I began to notice that while several of them claimed to be operating from a community development perspective, there were noticeable differences in their values and practices, suggesting the existence of multiple discourses. Mizrahi and Rosenthal (1993) suggested many community-based groups leap over their differences initially, focusing instead on stabilizing the partnership or project structure, or achieving mutual goals or
objectives. They warned that because organizational members assume working together will be easy, they may overlook key differences that impede functioning over time. Therefore, the purposes of my research were to examine the discourses of community development employed by community workers involved in Women in Action, and to identify the implications of multiple discourses in this context. After examining the concept of discourse and further developing the rational for my study, my specific research questions will be identified.

Examining Discourse

Poststructuralism is a theoretical standpoint that encourages researchers to explore the ambiguity inherent in our social world (McGannon & Mauws, 2002). While rejecting essentialist understandings of human behaviour, poststructuralists believe social life is organized within multiple realities, or discourses, and are interested in how these realities are socially constructed.

The use of “discourse” by various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints has created many conflicting and overlapping definitions (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998). For the purposes of this research, I used the concept of discourse as socially structured ways of knowing, that impact our subjectivity and social relations (Weedon, 1997). Grant et al. (1998, p. 2) suggested that, “everyday attitudes and behaviour, along with our perceptions of what we believe to be reality, are shaped and influenced by the discursive practices and interactions we engage in and are exposed or subjected to.” Burr (1995, p. 48) explained that “… surrounding any one object, event, person, etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of representing it to the world.” McGannon and Mauws (2002), argued that this ambiguity results from individuals constructing meanings in relation to the collection of texts, or
discursive resources (e.g., personal experiences or organizational contexts), available to them. They said,

because each of us carries with us a different collection of texts, the precise meaning of words varies from speaker to speaker and listener to listener. Thus, the meanings of terms vary across individuals, contexts, and time because the collections of texts from which they draw their meaning also vary. (p. 74)

Applying the notion of discourse to my research context, each community worker’s discourse of community development could be considered a collage of educational background, organizational context, and personal experience that cannot be generalized (Rail, 1998). Differences would manifest in their practice and understanding of community development, and could result in conflict or unexpected benefits when partnering with community members and other public sector organizations. Therefore, I was not trying to uncover each community worker’s “definition” of community development. Instead, my analysis focused on what dimensions were brought into focus, how personal experience and organizational context influenced their discourse, and the implications of multiple discourses on the collaborative process.

There are three reasons why I chose to frame my research through the poststructuralist notion of discourse. First, at an individual level, it is a window through which to understand how personal experience and organizational context influenced practice and how tension was mediated when these conflicted. Therefore, I was interested in exploring how the community workers made sense, and what sense they made of community development (Fifield, 1999). Second, I was interested in how discourses were negotiated at the social level, or between individuals. When working in collaborative environments, with colleagues or members of the community, decisions are made about how to act and engage with others. Therefore, we may consciously choose to alter our
discourse to produce what we think are beneficial outcomes (Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000). Finally, more broadly, poststructuralism appealed to me because it encouraged an examination of the complexity of how reality is socially constructed. It placed people’s stories in context, presenting research participants as complex individuals with diverse of experiences (Kelly, 2000).

**Competing Tensions in Community Development Practice**

Guided by the organizational affiliations of the community workers involved in Women in Action, my literature review, presented in Chapter 2, explored community development within municipal recreation, social work, and feminist organizing. While there was some consistency across the bodies of literature, competing pressures and differences in underpinning assumptions, values, and goals were evident in each and these are highlighted below.

Within the social work literature, community development was about building community capacity to increase self-efficacy so communities could initiate changes to meet their self-identified needs. It required community workers to support community members in studying their problems and seeking solutions (Morales & Bradford, 1992). This literature positioned community workers as facilitators, maintaining their identity as the expert rather than an equal partner in the community development process. Often limited by organizational cultures and professional norms, community workers operated from a casework, or one-on-one model, that created challenges in collaborative environments (Adams, Dominelli, & Payne, 1998).

Within the municipal recreation literature, community development was often seen from an economic perspective in response to increased pressure on municipal recreation departments to become more self-sufficient in the face of growing demand for services
(Hunter, 1986; Searle & Brayley, 2000; Thibault, Kikulis, & Frisby, 2004). As a result of these pressures, community development was perceived as outcome-focused, and understood as a means of increasing community responsibility for service provision, therefore enabling recreation departments to expand services and reach a wider cross section of the community (Parsons, 1990). However, Wharf (1999b, p. 267) asserted that community development is often used by debt and deficit preoccupied government agencies, and that

[i]n contrast to previous decades where the state sought to resolve social problems by sponsoring community development projects, governments ... are now interested in community only as a way of offloading responsibility for social issues.

Influenced by the new public management ideology that advocates the adoption of business-like strategies by the public sector, community development is viewed by some bureaucrats and citizens as a means for increasing efficiency and cost recovery. Similarly, Hunter (1986) found some recreation departments used community development as a means to justify staff reduction in the program area. Discussing the evolution of community associations as a strategy for delivering services, he warned, “providing effective consultative services requires a major staff commitment, and should not be abdication in disguise” (p. 19).

Community development in the feminist community organizing literature focused on facilitating the development of skills and resources within the community for the purpose of women’s empowerment and the establishment of egalitarian social relations (Dominelli, 1995; Dominelli & McLeod, 1989; Weiss & Friedman, 1995). Process was seen as an important part of building self-efficacy and community capacity, but also encouraged consciousness-raising by de-individualizing and politicizing women’s experiences (Baines, 1997). Dominelli (1995, p. 134) suggested that one strength of feminist community work has been to secure a space where “women could speak, tell their own stories and develop forms
of community action which were less hierarchical and alienating.” These characteristics
combined to give feminist community organizing a clear agenda for social change that
supported action at the individual, organizational, and social levels.

Although discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2, it was clear that the initial
differences in values, practices, and desired outcomes could influence the development of
multiple discourses of community development within Women in Action, and impact
collaboration in community-based organizations involving diverse community workers.

Discourse Dissonance: Addressing the “So What?” Question

Although there is a growing body of literature on public sector partnerships (Boase,
2000; Kernaghan, 1993; Linden, 2002), little research has been conducted on how local
government and community partners negotiate values and practices that may differ from
one another (Austin, et al., 1999). Selsky (1991) argued that partnerships consist of inter-
organizational linkages that are network-based, rather than hierarchically-based, and that in
the final analysis, linkages are between people. These individual decision-makers enact their
intentions to cooperate, thus determining how inter-organizational settings can be steered
toward resolving shared problems or achieving shared goals. As the number of partnerships
and collaborations increases as organizations try to do more with less and respond to
demands from funding agencies for collaborative community-based projects, community
workers will have to develop new strategies to create effective relationships with partners
who may have different educational backgrounds, professional languages, and values
(Sanfort, 2000; Thibault et al., 1999). This was the case with the community workers
involved with Women in Action who had different educational and professional
experiences, and represented diverse organizations with strong organizational cultures and
distinct discourses of community development. Considering the benefits of collaborating to
increase community capacity, share scarce resources, and address complex social issues (Austin et al., 1999; Bradshaw, 2000; Selsky, 1991; Thibault et al., 2004), examining the implications of multiple discourses of community development in Women in Action is an important dynamic to explore.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the discourses of community development used by community workers representing diverse organizations partnering in a community-based organization designed to increase the involvement of women on low incomes in recreation planning and participation. A secondary purpose was to explore some of the implications of multiple discourses in this context. To address this purpose, three research questions were asked.

1. What are the discourses of community development used by community workers involved in Women in Action?

2. How are these discourses influenced by the personal experiences and organizational contexts of community workers?

3. What are the implications of multiple discourses in a collaborative, community-based organization?

In this Chapter, I developed a rationale for my research, and identified the purposes of my study and specific research questions. I also introduced Women in Action, the collaborative community-based organization that served as the site and inspiration for my research. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the community development literature within the social work, municipal recreation, and feminist community organizing fields. In Chapter 3, I explain my research methods, including the selection of my research participants and data collection strategy. My findings and analysis are discussed in Chapter 4, where I describe the discourse of community development used by each research participant, and
examine the implications of multiple discourses on the collaborative process. Chapter 5 presents conclusions drawn from my finding and analysis, and suggests ways in which this research has contributed to existing literature. In Chapter 5 I also identify recommendations for future research and practice.

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i Following Ife (1995), I have chosen to use the term “community worker” to refer to both municipal recreation staff and representatives from the family service agencies and women’s centre to acknowledge their involvement in the community development process.

ii The community members involved in Women in Action used the terms “poor women”, “low-income women”, “women on low income”, “women with limited resources”, and “isolated women” interchangeably. Although there was no consensus, “women on low income” has been used throughout this thesis. While not all of the women involved were comfortable with this label, most prefer it to other labels.

iii These numbers represent the total number of participants involved in Women in Action. Over the course of the project, some members stopped participating (e.g., due to poor health, new jobs, personal relocation, withdrawal from the research field) and new members joined. During my data collection 40 women on low income, 11 community workers, and five researchers were involved.

iv As a research team, we gratefully acknowledge the research funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for this project (SSHRC 828-1999-1045).
In this chapter, I provide a brief review of literature to explore the ways community development has been theorized to deal with complex social issues. Guided by the professional backgrounds of the community workers involved with Women in Action, the review examined community development in the municipal recreation, social work, and feminist organizing literatures. The aim was to provide a social and historical context to develop a foundation for examining the discourses of the community workers who participated in my research (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Therefore, my intent was not to define community development, but to draw attention to the various ways it has been conceptualized and to identify some of the challenges and complexities involved.

**Social Work Literature**

While community development has a long history in social work, competing values within the profession have influenced the practice of community development within this field in several ways. As a profession, social work is dedicated to improving quality of life through social change (Morales & Bradford, 1992). According to Dowling (1999), the purpose of social work is four-fold: 1) to enhance the problem solving and coping capacities of people; 2) to link people with systems that provide them with resources, services, and opportunities; 3) to promote the effective and humane operation of these systems; and 4) to contribute to the development and improvement of social policy. From this, one might assume social workers operate at the individual, organizational, community, and social levels. However, while social work theory supports multi-level action, community workers are often limited by narrow mandates or organizational cultures that require them to focus on the individual as the target for change. For example, while social work theory identified
collective action as a potentially empowering process, its potential to combat oppression and reconstitute the individual as a healthier social being is what is really emphasized (Baines, 1997). Unfortunately, this individualistic discourse limits the change efforts directed at the organizational or social levels, and fails to identify and critique the social cause of individual oppression or "unhealthy" status.

From a social work perspective, Morales and Bradford (1992) suggested community development requires community workers to assist people in improving their social and living conditions. They explained that social workers are on the front lines of developing social programs responsive to the needs of society, while at the same time they work with the 'victims' of these problems so they may change their own lives or the relevant aspects of their environments affecting their social functioning. Based on a self-help philosophy, social workers encourage community members to mobilize resources, study their problems, and seek solutions, while they act as technical experts (Morales & Bradford, 1992).

This reactive casework model of social work continues to dominate the profession, evidenced by Dowling (1999, p. 9) who reported that some social work students perceived the profession as "sticking plaster - we act as sticking plaster without actually tackling and doing something". While many individuals entering the profession at this time are more social action oriented (Rothman, 1995), organizations continue to focus on the casework model as a means to serve community members. This observation was supported by Adams et al. (1998) who suggested that although in the past 15 years a new set of radical ideas and values like advocacy, empowerment, participation, and partnership have influenced social work ideology, without organizational backing or new professional education, practice is unlikely to change.
Municipal Recreation Literature

Community workers in the recreation sector also face organizational pressures that have influenced their understanding and practice of community development. With recent government cutbacks, municipal governments are increasingly seeking business-like strategies to maintain program and service delivery (Glover, 2004; Murdock, 1994; Thibault et al., 1999). This change is an important reality for recreation departments because they often are the first to have their budgets cut even though demands for their services continue to grow. It has been suggested that effective governments should enable service delivery by arranging services, but not necessarily producing them with tax-based dollars (Glover & Burton, 1998). This is in contrast to previous delivery models where municipal recreation departments were the exclusive arrangers and producers of recreation services. The financial rationale discourse that underpins the new public management ideology sees recreation departments evaluated not on their ability to achieve a social mandate, but on their efficiency and cost-consciousness (Thibault et al., 2004).

Unfortunately, while intentions to include community members in the decision-making process may be positive, efforts to ensure the voices of marginalized populations are heard are limited. Panet-Raymond (1999) suggested that proponents of the enabler role favour a return to volunteer responsibility of all programs through the development of community or neighbourhood associations. However, this system created or perpetuated inequities for marginalized groups, such as older adults, women, and persons with disabilities, whose participation in community-based projects is often not sought by active community members (Panet-Raymond, 1999; Wharf, 1999a). Botes and van Rensburg (2000) suggested some additional challenges with relying on this type of discourse. They argued the hierarchical mode of thinking prevalent in the public sector inhibits participatory
development and undermines people's own governing abilities. Pressure on recreation staff to show results and take action may force them to take matters out of the hands of community people and complete projects themselves because the lengthy periods spent on process issues (e.g. developing relationships and creating spaces for dialogue) are regarded as too time consuming and not cost-effective. However, the community development process may actually be saving more time and money over the long term because it usually ensures that people will take ownership of a project (Botes & van Rensburg, 2000).

**Feminist Community Organizing**

Increased awareness of the benefits of collective organizing (e.g., through organizations such as the Boston Women's Health Collective) has caused feminists to acknowledge some of the similarities between the ideal of community development and feminist practice (Baines, 1997; Dominelli, 1995; Rempel & Swanton, 1994). These include collective action, cooperative problem solving, and citizen empowerment. However, feminists have also critiqued dominant notions of community development for being paternalistic, patriarchal, racist, and classist (Wharf & Clague, 1997). Therefore, feminist community workers have identified a number of key differences between their values and goals and those of mainstream community development.

First, feminist community development takes as its starting point a critique of the patriarchal and capitalist system. Callahan (1997, p. 183) has suggested that, "all activities must be informed by an analysis of gender (and race and class) and modified on the basis of this analysis." Dominelli (1995) identified the guiding principles of feminist community development as egalitarian social relations that seek to replace hierarchical and patriarchal ones, and a world which celebrates diversity and sees it as a source of enrichment, rather
than inferiority. This supports the development of new roles based on mutuality and partnership for the community worker (Wharf, 1997).

Second, is the belief in the personal as political. For example, Rempel and Swanton (1994, p. 21) discussed how, for members of a rooming house community, “the personal appears far removed from the political”, as individual shortcomings, rather than systemic barriers are seen as the root cause of poverty. Therefore, notions of self-blame were challenged as community workers supported community members in focusing on systemic barriers as the root cause of oppression. Baines (1997) suggested that feminist community development necessitates moving women’s personal experiences into the political arena to de-individualize them and open them up to social analysis, arguing that social analysis is a key component of empowerment.

This leads to a third characteristic of feminist organizing: the centrality of women’s experiences. Baines (1997) suggested that social analysis as part of a community development process reconstitutes women as activist citizens, rather than private victims, and normalizes their behaviour and feelings. Similarly, Dominelli (1995) identified the main concern of feminist practice as identifying women’s experiences, clarifying their needs, and developing women-inspired solutions to them.

Finally, feminist community work is based on a model of emancipatory practice, partly in response to a critique of what Baines (1997, p. 298) described as:

... the oppressiveness of androgynous, individual, long-term psychotherapy ... a therapeutic community that reproduces and reinforces [a] largely unattainable and biased standard of good mental health based on the psychological and social characteristics of white men.

Indeed, Baines argued that feminist practice should not reproduce inequalities or oppression. This is in contrast to the social work literature reviewed where practice did little
to challenge the counselor/client dichotomy. Therefore, feminist practice emphasizes the importance of group process to challenge power structures, and support empowerment and consciousness-raising. The community organizing experience is thus seen as an end in itself, rather than solely a means to an end, and thus limits the risk of inadvertently emphasizing short-term goal accomplishment over process (Martell & Avitabile, 1998).

However, feminists working in the community have identified a number of challenges in putting these principles into practice. Discussing their experiences working in a small housing organization, Rempel and Swanton (1994) suggested that feminist values are often very different from the values of other stakeholders, thus presenting daily value conflicts. They found that rooming house tenants met collective action strategies with suspicion, fear, and apathy because they were unfamiliar with the techniques and/or believed that the community workers should be responsible for initiating change. Feminist community workers are also aware that the term ‘feminist’ continues to provoke a negative reaction by many individuals, as stereotypes of feminists as man-hating radicals persist. While some argue that it is the values and practices that are important, rather than the ‘name’, subverting their own identity can lead to feelings of having a ‘hidden agenda’ (Rempel & Swanton, 1994).

This chapter provided an overview of community development in the social work, municipal recreation, and feminist organizing literatures. The aim was to provide a social and historical overview of community development as a foundation from which to launch an analysis of the discourses of community development used by my research participants. Links to larger discussions within the community development literature have been integrated into my analysis, presented in Chapter 4. In the next chapter, I review my research methods.
While feminists prefer "community organizing" to "community development", I have used community development because it was the term used by the research participants to describe their involvement in Women in Action.
Chapter 3
Research Methods

In this chapter, I describe the research methods used to collect and analyze my data. The chapter begins with a description of the research participants. Although there were 11 community workers involved in Women in Action during my data collection period, the participation of only three was sought and the rationale for this choice is provided. In the second section, I describe my four data collection techniques that were organized into two phases. The third section provides information about my data analysis, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations important to my study.

Selection of Research Participants

Three community workers participated in my research. Lisa worked at a municipal recreation department as a Community Development Coordinator. Anne was employed by the Women's Centre as a Coordinator. Karin worked at a family service agency as a Family Enhancement Worker. Their participation was voluntary, and informed consent was received. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their anonymity. A further discussion of ethical issues relating to my research is included later in this chapter.

I sought the participation of Lisa, Anne, and Karin for a number of reasons. First, I was interested in examining the experiences of female community workers and the tensions involved as they negotiated feminist and social justice values within, or in collaboration with, hierarchical organizations that may value the bottom line over equity, fairness, and justice.

Second, in interviews conducted by the principal investigator and at an interactive meeting where the community workers discussed their roles within Women in Action, these three research participants described their involvement as “community development.” In
contrast, while other community workers believed community development was important, they did not describe their work as "doing" community development. Instead, they understood their involvement to be much more pragmatic, and emphasized their role in providing access to facilities and sharing information with Women in Action members.

Third, the diversity of the organizations and educational backgrounds represented by the research participants provided an opportunity to explore how diverse personal experiences and organizational contexts influenced the development of multiple discourses of community development. As will be discussed in the next chapter, these differences were even greater than I had anticipated. My aim was to study these differences in-depth using a small number of research participants, rather than studying the breadth of views by utilizing a larger sample.

Finally, these community workers stood out as key players at the community level. Their involvement in Women in Action and another community-based project indicated a shared commitment to, and interest in, community development. Their involvement in other projects also provided an opportunity, during the interviews, to compare their practice in Women in Action with their practice in other projects. This was important for two reasons. First, one research participant felt her community development practice was being limited by conflict within Women in Action. Therefore, this second project allowed her to provide examples of her "true" practice. Second, multiple contexts provided insight into the ways the community workers' discourses were reproduced as they reflected on their learnings.

Data Collection

My data collection was separated into two phases. The first phase drew on data collected for the SSHRC project, including field notes, audiotape recordings of an interactive
meeting, and interviews. The second phase involved the collection of new data through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with each research participant, and a second interactive meeting. A listing of the complete data set can be found in appendix A. Multiple sources of data collected over a 20 month period provided me with rich data through which to explore each community worker’s discourse of community development and examine the implications of multiple discourses within the context of the project.

**Phase 1 (January 2000 – January, 2001)**

As a research assistant, I was responsible for collecting field notes at project team meetings (n=12), transcribing audiotaped interviews with the community workers conducted by the principal investigator (n=5), and taking a lead role in the facilitation of one interactive meeting with the community workers. It was through my active participation at Women in Action meetings that I became interested in the multiple discourses of community development operating within Women in Action. For the purpose of my research, I included field notes from four project team meetings, interviews with my research participants, and the field notes and transcript from an interactive meeting. My active participation in the meetings and a preliminary analysis of the interview transcripts informed the creation of my phase 2 interview schedule and allowed me to move beyond the typical background questions during my own data collection. Further, the design provided longitudinal information about the discourses used by the research participants.

1. **Project team meeting field notes.** Field notes from four project team meetings collected during this phase were included in my data set. Field notes served as “aides-mémoire” (Sanjek, 1990), a tool and source of data a researcher can return to in order to recreate an event. While attending project team meetings, I took notes and wrote down key words or phrases that were later expanded to reflect an accurate account of the meeting. Full
accounts of the meetings were necessary in order to provide other research team members with insight into events. These field notes included my initial thoughts and reflections about the practice of the community workers, for example their attention to, and support of, group process, providing a preliminary level of analysis. The field notes were typed into an electronic document and distributed to the research team. The documents were also printed, filed, and stored on the research team computer.

The meetings covered by the field notes included in my data set included one project team meeting where two research participants were asked to lead a discussion focused on collectivity. While the community workers typically adopted a secondary role during project team meetings, analysis of these field notes provided additional insight into some of the personal and organizational influences of the community workers' discourses as they discussed their experiences with collectivity.

2. Interview transcripts. Interviews conducted for the SSHRC project with my research participants by the principal investigator during this period were included in my data set. The purpose of these interviews was to gather background information about the community workers and their organizations, learn how each became involved with Women in Action, identify initial challenges in their participation, and gain their input into how the project should be evaluated. These interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim into electronic documents. The documents were printed, filed, and stored on the research team computer.

These interviews were useful to my study in several ways. First, they provided practical information about the community workers' organizational affiliation, educational background, and involvement in the project. Second, through interview questions about Women in Action's successes and challenges, the community workers discussed their values
and practice and how these fit within the context of the community-based organization and
the organizations by which they were employed. This information provided insights I
followed up on during phase 2, enabling me to use my interview time more effectively. An
initial review of these transcripts informed the creation of the interview schedule I used for
the interviews conducted during phase 2 of my data collection. Dominant themes and
points of interest were also noted so specific questions could be asked of each community
worker. An analysis of these interviews also provided longitudinal information to examine
the prevalence and ongoing nature of tensions and how each community worker's
understanding of community development changed over time.

3. Interactive meeting. In June 2000, an interactive meeting was organized with the
community workers by the research team. Interactive meetings were held approximately
every six months, and provided an opportunity for the research team to raise some initial
observations and open discussion amongst participants. Although the meetings were as
unstructured as possible, the research team typically identified key issues and prepared two
to four questions to stimulate discussion. At this meeting, I posed two questions. The first
concerned the role of the community workers in Women in Action, which several had
previously identified in the interviews as an uncertainty in the project. The second question
concerned what the community workers, as members of Women in Action, understood their
role to be within their organizations. A conscious effort was made to seek responses from all
community workers for both questions, and an open facilitation style sought to provide
them with opportunities to offer their insights and opinions beyond the specific questions
asked. The meeting was audiotaped and transcribed into an electronic document. Field
notes were collected and typed into an electronic document. Both documents were printed,
filed, and stored on the research team computer.
Finch (1993) suggested some women lack opportunities to engage collectively with other women in ways they would find supportive, and therefore often welcome an opportunity to make sense of some of the contradictions in their lives. The interactive meetings provided a space for the community workers to speak candidly about their experiences in Women in Action, and raise issues, challenges, or tensions they felt uncomfortable raising in front of the women. Uncertainty and confusion about the role of the community workers in the organization was the primary issue discussed at these meetings. The community workers were aware of the power they had in relation to the women on low income and were unsure how to participate without 'taking over' or influencing decisions. This was particularly challenging for the community workers from the municipal recreation departments who had little experience in a collective environment and with consensus decision-making. Community workers also struggled with their role in mediating interpersonal conflict between community members.

The inclusion of the field notes and transcript from this interactive meeting contributed to my data in several ways. These sources of data provided information about the community workers' personal experiences and organizational contexts, examples of how the workers negotiated tensions between the two, challenges they confronted in their community development practices, and inconsistencies as they interacted with other community workers with diverse discourses of community development.

**Phase 2 (February 2001 – August 2001)**

Building on preliminary findings from phase 1, phase 2 of my data collection included one-on-one interviews with my three research participants, and an interactive meeting with all community workers involved in Women in Action.
1. Interviews. One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each community worker at a time and location convenient for them in April and May 2001. The semi-structured interviews were guided by an interview schedule, but allowed me to follow unanticipated leads when appropriate (Bernard, 1994). A copy of my interview schedule is included in appendix B. The complexity of the project at the time of my interviews meant there were many leads to follow. Hence, while I had initially planned to conduct only one interview with each community worker, it was necessary to meet a second time. Each interview lasted approximately two hours, yielding four hours of interviews for each research participant. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim into an electronic document. Each transcript was printed, filed, and stored on the research team’s computer. The research participants received a copy of their transcripts, providing an opportunity for them to add, clarify, or delete any information. Only one community worker took advantage of this opportunity.

The purpose of these interviews was to gain further insight into the discourses of community development used by the community workers, and how these were influenced by personal experiences and organizational contexts. Cotterill (1992) suggested an interactive interview process is the best way to find out about the experiences of women. However, Anderson and Jack (1991, p. 11) suggested women often inadvertently “mute their own thoughts and feelings when they try to describe their lives in the familiar and publicly acceptable terms.” Therefore, they suggested it is necessary to listen “in stereo” to ensure we are listening to both the spoken and unspoken experiences of the women and understanding the relationship between them. This could include, for example, tensions between personal beliefs and organizational mandates, or pressures to adhere to social or group norms. Because these were the dynamics I was interested in researching, the success
of my interviews depended on the relationship established between myself and the participants, and my ability to reflect back to the participants what I heard them saying in order to clarify my own interpretations.

At the time I was collecting my data, I was responsible for interviewing five other community workers involved in Women in Action for the purposes of the larger SSHRC project. These interviews were guided by a separate interview schedule developed to address the SSHRC project research questions and gather feedback from the community workers about issues Women in Action was confronting at the time. This interview schedule was integrated into the schedule I used to interview my research participants. A copy of the SSHRC interview schedule is also included in appendix B. While I did not analyze these five transcripts, my involvement in the interview process provided me with additional insights into some of the dynamics I was observing, thus enriching my analysis.

2. Interactive meeting. In July 2001, a second interactive meeting was held with the community workers. This meeting was initially scheduled for December 2000, but was canceled three times – twice after snowstorms, and once after an earthquake. This meeting was more unstructured than the previous meeting to provide an opportunity for the community workers to speak specifically about their roles in the project. Community workers had indicated their interest in a more informal meeting during telephone conversations in preparation for the meeting. The timing of this meeting, shortly after the phase 2 interviews, provided me with an opportunity to reflect on some of the themes emerging from an initial analysis, and attend to the research participants as they discussed their role in Women in Action in a group setting. My reflections were captured in field notes prepared after this meeting.
Data Analysis

Far from a linear process, data analysis is an "interpretive spiral of listening, reading, formulating, questioning, and reformulating my interpretations" (Fifield, 1999, p. 54). My theoretical framework, the nature of the discourses, and the ever-evolving nature of my own understandings and interpretations, created complexities that were explored then re-explored through an iterative process of data analysis and writing. My analysis was aided by Atlas.ti, a software program for qualitative analysis that offers researchers a variety of tools to assist with this process. Within Atlas.ti, my data set was compiled in a hermeneutic unit. Within a unit, Atlas.ti enables the researcher to attach codes and memos to sections of data, note emerging concepts and themes, and compare items across the data set. Having my data set connected in an electronic format enhanced my familiarity with the data and somewhat eased the burden of analysis by enabling me to easily transfer between data, find key sections of text, and search keywords for comparisons. My analysis emerged through coding the data and the writing process. I have provide information about these processes below.

Data Set Coding

My data analysis consisted of three primary layers of coding. I started by coding the interviews conducted during phase 2 of my data collection with a descriptive coding list developed according to my interview schedule. This enabled me to begin comparing and contrasting the research participants’ understandings of community development, experiences in Women in Action, and organizational contexts. Using the same coding list, I then coded the phase 1 interviews, both interactive meetings, and the four sets of field notes from phase 1. This provided me with an opportunity to enhance my understandings of the
community workers’ practice of community development, and in some cases identify ways in which their discourses evolved over time.

The second layer of coding focused on constructing the discourse of community development used by each research participant and identifying the personal experiences and organizational contexts that influenced them. This more analytic coding was assisted by the work of Parker (1992) who identified 10 conceptual criteria and 20 practical steps for distinguishing discourses. For example, as discourses are historically located, Parker suggested it is necessary to explore how and where discourses emerge. Therefore, examining the personal experiences and organizational contexts of the research participants, at the same time as exploring their organization’s environment, helped situate each discourse historically. Similarly, in considering how each research participant’s discourse reproduced power relations and supported or inhibited social and systemic change, it was important to follow another of Parker’s recommendations to ask, “in whose best interests does the discourse act?” Therefore, I created sets of identical codes for each community worker to: capture phrases that constructed community development in the same way (Burr, 1995); note the personal experiences and organizational contexts they used to support their discourse; reflect on the subject positions created for the community workers and the women on low income; and identify inconsistencies, variations, and resistance to other discourses (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Weedon, 1997). At this stage, I created codes for references to multiple discourses or understandings of community development within Women in Action, and for comments about and examples of the implications of multiple discourses on collaboration.

Finally, throughout the coding process, I coded for keywords I thought would be relevant based on my initial analysis and themes identified in the literature, and key
concepts that emerged as I analyzed the data set. These included words such as "community development" and "empowerment," and concepts such as "voice" and "power." In the case of keywords, this was assisted by the search function of *Atlas.ti*. I also created a "quote of note" code for each community worker to code passages I thought were particularly powerful or contradictory.

**Dimension Development and Writing**

From an initial layer of analysis, I began to write about the dynamics I saw emerging from the data. Moving back and forth between writing and the coding of the data set, I sought to identify key dimensions, or themes, within the community workers' discourses of community development. van Manen (1997, p. 91) described themes as "fasteners, foci or threads around which phenomenological description is facilitated." By allowing dimensions to emerge from my analysis, rather than imposing dimensions identified through the literature, I sought to "give life" to the experiences of the community workers, rather than simplifying their understanding and practice of community development into commonalities and unifying themes, or solely interpreting their experiences through discourses or lenses I had identified (Kelly, 2000). This process also allowed me to identify the subtle ways in which each community worker constructed the same object (e.g., project goal or practice) in different ways (Parker, 1992).

Throughout this process, I recorded my reflections and questions about the community workers' discourses of community development and reported practice in analytic field notes. This was consistent with Parker (1992, p. 4) who suggested that analysts must ask, "'why was this said and not that?' 'why these words, and where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world?'" This was
particularly important as significant differences in the discourses of the community workers began to emerge.

_Ethical issues_

In keeping with the principles of the larger project, and remaining open to my own identity as a feminist, I attempted to imbue my research experience with feminist values. Dr. Roopchand Sebaran once told me “values are only words unless they’re put into practice” (a particularly pertinent thought considering my focus on discourse). Therefore, more than institutional requirements, ethical considerations were important related to my personal values. Throughout the research process, I sought to challenge traditional power relationships created in the research process by speaking with and about, rather than for, my research participants (Reid, 2000). I also critically reflected on my own engagement in the research process and the ways my own identities and discourses had influenced my research topic, interview schedule, and data analysis (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). This was assisted by my participation in the SSHRC research team, where we constantly reflected on our involvement in Women in Action, questioned and each others’ actions (or lack thereof), and challenged our assumptions. My reflexive practice was also assisted by the analytic field notes I kept during my writing process where I recorded on initial thoughts and reactions to the data and emerging themes; thus allowing me to trace the evolution of my understanding.

A consideration of ethical issues also involved a concern with balancing critical analysis and preserving the professional and social standing of research participants; and ensuring voluntary participation and informed consent, and anonymity and confidentiality. Ethical approval for my study was acquired in two cases. First, as a research assistant and member of the Women in Action research team, I had access to data collected for the larger
SSHRC project. Additionally, ethical approval for the additional data collection required of my own study was granted in February 2000. Both sets of ethical approval are included in appendix C.

The Analytic Nature of Research

This study set out to identify the discourses of community development used by three community workers involved in Women in Action, and the implications of multiple discourses on collaboration. Analyzing discourses necessitated the consideration of power and an analysis of the ways in which discourses support or resist the status quo (MacLure, 2003; Weedon, 1997). Following the example of Croghan and Miell (1998, p. 448), I aspired to set aside questions of which discourses were “right” and which were “wrong”, preferring to observe “part of the process through which the meaning of events and experience and identities [are] contested in day-to-day interactions.”

Unfortunately, an analysis of their discourses of community development may cause the research participants and/or their organizations to feel criticized. I hoped to minimize this risk through two strategies. First, by exploring how personal experiences and organizational context influenced the discourses of the community workers, I aimed to give voice to complexities involved in negotiating competing demands. While some literature draws attention to the risk for government and non-profit organizations of abdicating responsibility for the delivery of programs (cf. Wharf, 1999b), little attention has been focused on the realities of these tensions for community workers, and how they negotiate such conflicts. Second, by grounding my study in the existing literature and drawing attention to its contribution to the research emerging from Women in Action, I sought to provide practical information that can inform future practice.
Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

The participation of the community workers in my study was voluntary. Following a project team meeting, I approached the three community workers and explained my research project. At that time, all indicated their interest. Telephone calls to each participant provided them with details about the interview process, the amount of time involved, and that the interviews would be confidential so they could properly evaluate whether or not they wanted to be involved. After confirming their interest, interview times and locations were established with each community worker. Two participants agreed to meet me at their offices, and one arranged the interview in her home. Prior to the interview, a letter of contact was provided and a consent form was signed. The letter of contact provided additional information for the participants about the research process and confidentiality. The letter also provided contact information for the participant should they feel uncomfortable with the way they were treated or had concerns about the research. The consent form acknowledged that their participation in the study was voluntary and that, at any time, they could withdraw. It also asked for their consent to have meetings and interviews audiotaped. Copies of the letter and consent form were provided to the participants for their own files. A copy of the letter of contact and the consent form is included in appendix D.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In order to protect the anonymity of my research participants, pseudonyms have been used and names of their organizations have been omitted. Further, the name of the community-based organization has also been changed. The relative ease with which my research participants could be identified meant framing my thesis as non-judgmental and
emphasizing the experiences and lessons the community workers had to share without jeopardizing their employment situation or social standing.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the research participants, all meeting and interview transcripts were stored in a filing cabinet in the office of the research team. Electronic copies of these transcripts are kept on a computer used solely by the research team. As my data collection contributed to the SSHRC project, members of the research team had access to all transcripts and field notes I collected. Beyond the research team, access to interview and meeting transcripts was limited to those who participated (therefore, only the interviewees had access to their own interview transcript, and only Women in Action members who participated in audiotaped meetings had access to those transcripts).

In this chapter I reviewed my research methods, explaining the research methods, data collection process, data analysis, and writing. I also reviewed important ethical considerations that sought, among other things, to ensure the anonymity of the research participants and preserve their social and organizational standing. In the next chapter I discuss the findings of my study.

\[1\] All Women in Action members (community members, community workers, researchers) were female, except for two male community workers.
Chapter 4
Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I present and analyze the findings of my research. The chapter is organized into two sections. In the first section, I present a narrative of each community worker's discourse of community development. Each narrative provides background information on the community worker, describes her discourse of community development by identifying key dimensions, and explores how personal experience and organizational context shaped them. This section addresses my first and second research questions. As previously stated, my intention is not to "define" community development as seen through the eyes of each community worker, but to explore how each discourse "brings different aspects into focus, raises different issues for consideration, and has different implications for what we should do" (Burr, 1995, p. 48). Through the analysis, I make comparisons between the discourses to reveal inconsistencies that were not always resolved. This mirrored my analysis, as described in Chapter 3, which required me to examine not each discourse independently, but to understand how they were constructed in relation to one another (Parker, 1992). By drawing on the literature and giving voice to my own thoughts and reflections, I situate myself clearly within the analysis, to ensure the reader is constantly reminded I am speaking about, not for, each research participant.

In the second section, I examine the implications of multiple discourses on collaboration in a community-based organization like Women in Action. This addresses my third research question. Ambiguity, similarities, and differences in desired goals, outcomes, and practices created an environment that both enhanced and inhibited collaboration, thus reinforcing Thibault et al.'s (1999) assertion that new strategies are required to create effective relationships with diverse partners.
Lisa, Municipal Recreation Department

Lisa worked for a municipal recreation department (hereafter referred to as the City) as one of two Community Development Coordinators. Lisa assumed this position in the Summer of 2001, just three weeks before our interview. Although she described her new position as “not really defined yet”, Lisa understood it to involve working directly with community members, as well as promoting and supporting community development at the department and City Council levels. Prior to accepting this position, Lisa was a Recreation Program Coordinator at a Senior’s Centre for three years, and, prior to that, the City’s Leisure Access Coordinator for six and a half years. Lisa had a Bachelor’s degree in recreation education. However, she initially started her post-secondary education in business. In the following quotation, Lisa described how she “stumbled” into recreation and spoke about the pleasure she gets from working with people, alluding to a fit between recreation and her personal values and interests.

Initially I had gone into business, but my friends and my sisters were like, “I don’t think that’s compatible with who you are.” And I kept forging ahead with it, but I was very unhappy, so I dropped out after. But then with recreation, I kind of stumbled upon it because my volunteer work was in recreation, but I’d never thought of it as a profession. So then after the year I decided I would go into recreation. Some of my friends are amazed that I get paid for the work that I do. But I can get up in the morning and say I want to go to work. It’s not work, I mean it’s work in the sense that it’s a routine, but the work I get to do, being with people..

Lisa was the City’s Leisure Access Coordinator when she attended a conference presentation by the principal investigator involved in Women in Action about her experiences with another collaborative community-based organization and research project designed to increase the involvement of women on low income in recreation decision-making and participation (see Frisby & Fenton, 1998). Lisa said, “There was a group of us from our department, and we were standing at the back all listening, thinking, ‘Why are we
not doing that here in [our city]?” Lisa saw the potential of a similar project in the community where she worked as an opportunity to examine the City’s subsidy program and address the needs of women on low income in the community. Lisa had assumed her position at the Senior’s Centre when the workshop that initiated Women in Action was held in June 1999. When workshop participants were grouped for discussion purposes, Lisa joined a group of women from the Senior’s Centre – this group would later form one of the Women in Action subgroups. When Lisa assumed her new position as the Community Development Coordinator, she asked that she be allowed to continue her involvement with Women in Action. When asked what was keeping her involved in the project, Lisa said,

Well honestly it would have to be that I think I work with a unique group of women ... because I am working with a group of older women, for the most part they are retired or they have been forced to retire, and they don’t have children. Their issues are more, let’s say that they can manage more easily on their own, and as a result they have the time. So I’m probably more motivated.

In contrast to some of the other subgroups that experienced periods of storming, personal conflict, and decreased participation rates, the subgroup with which Lisa was involved was relatively cohesive, had strong leadership, and organized many activities and events.

During our interview, Lisa provided some information about the City’s shift to community development. A strategic plan developed for the City in 1993 included community development as a priority. In 1994, the City engaged in a consultation process to support staff in integrating community development into their daily practice. Lisa explained,

... there was a whole staff consultation process for a year, and really it was just to talk about what is community development, in terms of your own personal beliefs and values, and then in terms of as a department, and then for the community that we serve.
Although Lisa was not involved in this process, in preparation for her new job as Community Development Coordinator, she reviewed the consultation notes and a handbook that was created as a result of the process. Additionally, Lisa worked with, or was in communication with, several consultants who participated in the process or had since been involved in mentoring City staff on community development. Through our interview, it became evident that Lisa drew on the resources generated through this consultation, and the experiences of the consultants, in developing her own discourse of community development, thus supporting her beliefs on how the City was “supposed” to be doing business.

When asked what prompted the shift to community development, Lisa spoke about community members wanting to become involved in City planning.

I like to think that people of the community wanted to get involved, I like to believe that. We were just talking about it last night. In some ways it is an oxymoron. In some ways we’re seeing less citizenship involvement, that is what I’m hearing, because people have busier lives. They can barely get their own family happening. But on the other hand, we see that people are interested in community … people want to have a voice and they want to be heard and they want to see change happen … So I think what [the City consultant] did was make it a formal process so we’re aware people do want to have a voice, and do want to make changes, and we’ve made those opportunities available to the community so they are finding it easier, “oh I can get involved with the City, I can have an impact on what is happening in the City.”

Within this quotation, Lisa positions community development as a strategy to provide opportunities for community members to participate, involving organizations in supporting group process so community members can have a voice and make changes within the City. The danger in this is that community members are then positioned to assume responsibility for all programming and decision-making. Karlis, Auger, and Gravelle (1996, p. 133) suggested this “assumes people are willing to initiate, carry out, and implement change … and that all members of an organization possess the skills needed to act as change agents in
order to adequately plan and implement change." While the risk of offloading was present within the City, Lisa emphasized the importance of always being there to support groups and provide resources.

Having provided a profile of Lisa and alluding to some of the organizational influences on her practice, the next section presents an overview of her discourse of community development.

Discourse of Community Development - Giving Voice

For Lisa, community development was an organizational strategy to engage community members in recreation programming and decision-making, so decisions were not just made for them by staff. Her discourse was constructed in opposition to the traditional top-down service delivery model that has recreation professionals deciding what programs community members need (Searle & Brayley, 2000). Lisa often described community development as creating space for community members to have their voice heard by providing input, sharing their opinions, and talking about their needs. Community workers were then challenged to listen to the voices of community members and integrate their needs, interests, and experiences into their own practice. This theme pervaded my analysis of Lisa's discourse and was connected to the following dimensions: engaging the community; focusing on marginalized populations; a proactive role; broad scope; and advocacy.

Engaging the community. The "first step" of Lisa's discourse of community development was the active engagement of community members. She emphasized the importance of "going to where people gathered" and building relationships so community workers could better understand the needs, interests, and experiences of community members. What emerged was a cyclical process of community development whereby
community members were actively engaged, provided feedback, participated in decision-making, had a positive experience, and continued to be involved. Lisa spoke about this “chain reaction” and reflected on the benefits of community development in the following quotation.

I think ultimately you see the satisfaction in people. They are communicating to you what it is they want for themselves and for their children ... and you always found that satisfaction with people. They seemed more excited, more motivated and they would come back more and more, and you just saw a chain reaction. So then after that opportunity, I’d have the same person come back and say, “well what about this, and what about that.” So, that wouldn’t just benefit themselves, it would benefit other community members.

Lisa drew on a number of personal and organizational experiences to support this dimension of her discourse. For example, she recalled a university practicum experience where she learned about the importance of actively seeking the participation of community members to learn about their interests.

I was working with seniors and they wanted me to target two senior-oriented buildings, and it wasn’t to try to draw them into the community centre at all. So already back then it wasn’t like, “come to our community centre”, it was to get to know the seniors in the building, and because they already had their own facility space, to see what kinds of opportunities they were interested in having.

Lisa also spoke about her organizational experience as the City’s Leisure Access Coordinator. At first she sat in her office waiting for community members to meet with her. However, she came to realize that to effectively promote the financial assistance program, she needed to go out and meet with them.

Through engaging the community dimension, Lisa resisted the City’s top-down approach to programming and facilitating community input. For example, in the following quotation, Lisa further reinforced the importance of actively seeking the involvement of community members and provided an example of how she resisted the City’s approach that required community members to attend meetings at City Hall.
[City staff] were trying to get people to City Hall, and [my colleague] and I were like, “we’ve found that not successful.” And already they said to us, “well we’ve used this for the City’s strategic plan and you know, people just aren’t interested – very few people came out.” And we’re like “well?” And to have a meeting solely about the City’s strategic plan? You have to go out and get into an existing meeting, and ask if you can be a guest. The people are already there for a reason, for their own regular business, and then you can talk about the City plan.

This provided further support for engaging the community dimension of Lisa’s discourse, reinforcing the importance of going directly to community members in their environment. Similarly, Lisa was critical of the City’s concern with representation, aware of the limits on who has voice.

To me the more people who can get around that table the more opinions I can have, the more we’ll know about what they are looking for. But when you start getting just six or seven of the same voices around the table, there are still different voices. They are not going to represent those other thirty or other women we are not reaching.

This quotation emphasized the importance Lisa placed on the need to engage as many community members as possible to ensure their needs and interests are appropriately met.

Focus on marginalized populations. Although, within the City, community development was positioned as a model to work with all community members, Lisa’s discourse was primarily focused on it as a means to engage marginalized populations, such as women on low income and the elderly. Through community development, marginalized or “forgotten” populations were provided with opportunities to voice their needs, interests, and experiences. In the following quotation, Lisa explained the role Women in Action played in raising her awareness about the systemic barriers to participation, while validating the experiences of community members.

At the community agency level, Women in Action helped me out as a staff person, it was to look at how we did business in the City. I think there are a lot of barriers that I’m not even aware of, and it might be something small, and I’m sure it’s something significant ... So I just want to address the way we’ve been doing business. I think for the women, the key thing I noticed right on that first day that we had our workshop, it brought together women who typically hadn’t had a voice. Just to bring
them together in a group to get that support, to say “oh what I say counts.” I don’t think they had that opportunity. And to talk about things, as I say, that get forgotten, or people don’t give it value.

With respect to Women in Action, Lisa spoke about the project as an opportunity to connect with a sector of the population the City had struggled to access by partnering with other community-based groups. She said,

...especially I think on the Leisure and Parks side we just haven’t found the approach to use and I think Women in Action has been able to mobilize more women then what I think we could have been able to think about to do on our own.

A British Columbia Human Rights Commission complaint settlement concerning the inequitable allocation of municipal government resources for sport and physical activity programs for girls and young women, and Lisa’s previous experience working with people with disabilities and seniors, were two organizational experiences that influenced this dimension of Lisa’s discourse. For example, describing the City’s efforts to increase the participation of girls and women, Lisa suggested the process increased staff awareness of existing inequities. As well, Lisa critiqued typical practice that focused on providing opportunities for healthy seniors to participate in City programs.

We have to look at everyone in a community, not just the person who is well. Which typically is what happened at [the Senior’s Centre], because at the centre are the very active, the ‘well seniors’. And the ones we are not seeing just aren’t able to come.

Lisa also drew on personal experiences that spoke to her values to support this dimension of her discourse. For example, she emphasized inclusion and described worrying about “who has been left out” in the following quotation.

I think because I grew up in a big family, a lot of my siblings were quite shy ... and I really had to work hard at getting over that shyness and try to participate to get more out of the experience. So that when I am in a community setting, I always worry about who is not talking; why they aren’t talking; who is not included around this table; who has been left out - that’s my big thing.
Much of the community development literature supported Lisa's focus on marginalized populations (cf. Bradshaw, 2000; Frisby & Fenton, 1998; Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996). While Karlis et al. (1996) suggested community workers cannot assume community members have the skills required to fully participate in program planning and decision-making, during a research party, the community members involved with Women in Action listed more than 200 skills they brought to the group, including first hand experience living in poverty (Frisby et al., forthcoming).

**Broad scope.** Consistent with her emphasis on actively engaging community members and her focus on marginalized populations, Lisa stressed the importance of a broad scope of practice (Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996) that allows community workers to move beyond their traditional mandate of service provision to address social issues that limit the participation of marginalized community members in recreation. This emerged as the third dimension of her discourse. Within Women in Action, this broad scope of practice meant Lisa supported members in addressing a wide range of issues, for example protesting changes to City bus routes that made it more difficult for them to access recreation services. Similarly, within the context of another community development project, Lisa explained the importance of addressing issues around crime and the management of a low income housing project because of their effects on well-being.

Lisa suggested this broad scope was supported at the organizational level by a planned change in the City's mandate to focus on quality of life for community members. However, Lisa reported resistance from other recreation professionals who felt addressing these types of social issues were beyond their responsibilities. Lisa reflected on this tension in the following quotation, and clearly explained why a broad scope was important.
Some of our staff are having troubles, going, "why are we dealing with these other issues like transportation and housing and health? I'm in the field of recreation." And I used to feel that way, way back when I was a student working in the field. That was my filter, I'd go "well that's not recreation so I'm not going to take part in that community issue." But I am working in the community and when you're talking about community development, if someone doesn't have the income to participate or if their health is troubling them, or they don't have the transportation to get where they want to go, then recreation isn't going to mean anything to them. And until we can deal with more important issues in their eyes, they're not going to partake in recreation.

The importance Lisa placed on a broad scope of practice was echoed by participants in Hutchison and Nogradi's (1996, p. 108) study as they reported that,

participants felt it would be self-defeating to dismiss non-recreational issues when they impact on and possibly prohibit meaningful recreation participation. Once such issues are dealt with, citizens will eventually move to other life involvements including recreation and leisure.

This is also consistent with a recent shift in the recreation sector to a benefit-based approach to recreation that positions recreation as part of the solution to social and community issues, creating room for recreation professionals to address a wide range of issues (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 1997).

Proactive role. Consistent with the literature that calls for community workers who are "Jills of all trades" (Ife, 1995), Lisa spoke to a number of roles and responsibilities she assumed in community development. These included community outreach and group facilitation, resource sharing (e.g., City facilities, promotion), networking and partnership development, developing grant applications and proposals, and liaising with City Council, City departments, and colleagues. In contrast to traditional service delivery that had recreation professional developing programs without consultation with the community, Hutchison and Nogradi (1996) suggested the types of roles identified by Lisa are more proactive, involving the community worker in actively engaging community members, and lending support to the first dimension of Lisa's discourse. Often this involved group
development and facilitation. For example, Lisa intervened in a discussion about prohibiting children’s attendance at a Women in Action retreat by educating members about the impact it would have on the participation of the single mothers. Lisa reflected on her strategy to address this conflict in the following quotation.

I think every [subgroup] member was totally opposed to having children go. And I told them that I disagreed, and I said why. I had to remind them at the last meeting that there was a consensus that children could come ... So I was trying to work it through with them. The children are going to be there so let’s suggest how we can make it work for everyone.

As a group facilitator, Lisa described her role as, “keeping them on track, keeping them organized because there are lots of things that go on.” Lisa also spoke of a continuum of involvement depending on the skill levels of the community members in the following quotation, but suggested that ultimately she was involved to support their decision-making.

I am there to just help guide, I mean I could play different roles depending on the community of people I’m with, some of them may have skills ready, others may have information that they need, so I think for every project that I’ve had, I’ve played somewhat a different role, but realized that I’ve been there to guide, to clarify, to facilitate, but to give them full participation so that they ultimately do make decisions.

Lisa was committed to being involved in the group long-term and spoke to the importance of this in the following quotation.

... when we first learned about community development, we really thought it was, people can do it by themselves and then you just left them. And I’ve found that communities always change and people who were there at the beginning aren’t there now. So I think the support always has to be there, but maybe just a presence, and let them know you’re only a phone call away, but we need to always be there.

This commitment counters claims within the literature that governments are turning to community members simply to offload responsibility for programs.

*Advocacy at the organizational level.* The final dimension of Lisa’s discourse was the advocacy work she did within her organization to support the integration of community
development into the day-to-day practice of recreation professionals and the decision-making processes of the City Council. This dimension provided an opportunity to explore the ways Lisa's discourse encouraged social and systemic change, as well as examine more closely the tensions between personal values and organizational imperatives when community development and new public management collide.

Within her department, Lisa was clear that all staff were supposed to be integrating community development into their practice. She said, “I’m not the only one wearing a community development hat. Right now all staff are directed to carry out community development to whatever degree they can, based on what their job is.” Unfortunately, Lisa suggested that efforts to follow up the 1994 consultation process and subsequently assist staff in applying community development principles into their practice were inadequate. Further, within her department, Lisa explained that increased workloads severely limited staff’s ability to reflect on their practice and make conscious changes. Therefore, she described how she actively worked to promote community development amongst her colleagues. Lisa spoke to some of these tensions in the following quotation, and shared an interaction with her manager that further supported this dimension of her discourse.

Because the status quo is so strong and I think people in their work environment have so many things on their plate, more so now, that they are just trying to survive in the sense of just working on a day to day basis, but that’s not right though, and I don’t think that is the way you should be conducting yourself in your work, if that’s what you’re doing. So if that is what I’m going to have to do, then I will continue doing that. But I think my manager does see it. He is fairly new in the system and he sees it already. Last week when I had my probation meeting he said, “yeah, I’m starting to see what you’re saying, you’re articulating things that I did see but I wasn’t really doing much about. So I appreciate when you voice that.” And so I think he, even at a higher level, is just mired in things, even more so than me. So, if I can be his voice and point things out to him, then all the better.

Watt, Higgins, and Kendrick (2000) discussed the importance of educating staff and administrators to ensure initiatives are not countered by ignorance or misunderstanding.
While Lisa’s advocacy efforts were successful within her department, she was continually challenged at the City council level, where a new public management agenda dominated. This emerged as a key tension in Lisa’s practice.

**Key Tension - New Public Management**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the trend towards a new public management approach to service delivery that emphasizes cost recovery and efficiency posed a considerable threat to the provision of leisure services and conflicts with the goals of community development to increase equity within the system (Murdock, 1994; Reid et al., 2002). Given Lisa’s position working for municipal government, this warranted special consideration of the ways in which her discourse addressed these pressures.

Lisa was often critical of the top-down direct delivery model used by her department. Reflecting on the practice of some of the other community workers involved in Women in Action, she admired their skill at emphasizing the importance of voice, saying, “I don’t think we do that as well as we could in Leisure and Parks, I think we tend to rush things still. ‘What is this idea and let’s flush out that idea’, instead of ‘has everyone’s voice being heard?’” However, Lisa’s biggest challenges were confronted at the City Council level, where the City espoused values around community involvement, but did little to ensure community members were included in the process.

I’ve already spoken to a couple of the planners because they are engaging in some important projects of the city, and already they know what I’m talking about, I can see they’re grappling with understanding what I am saying. But by the same token they are getting pressure from City Council to get something done by a certain time ... So it is an aspect of community development, I just want to go further with it. And I have to work in that way. For me to go “this isn’t community development, and that is not correct, I’m actually, I have to be positive about it, and I say, “You actually have consulted to the best of your ability.” But again, you know, how many people got around the table, how many representatives, or groups, or Joe Averages came?
While Lisa was generally optimistic about the potential for community development to prevail as the dominant model of service delivery, supported by influential consultants who remained involved in the City, during our interview she came to the realization that she currently did not have a budget to fund community development projects. While she suggested funds would become available if needed, she rationalized the absence of a budget by suggesting that part of her role was to see if projects could be sustained on their own. However, this clearly made her question her own assumptions about the intentions of the City.

Although Lisa's understanding and practice of community development was still developing, analysis revealed a discourse focused on giving voice. Five key dimensions were described: engaging the community, a focus on marginalized populations, broad scope, proactive role, and advocacy at the organizational level. I also discussed the tension between the City's commitment to community development and new public management, and the impact of these competing interests on Lisa's practice. This chapter now turns to an exploration of the discourse of community development used by Anne, my second research participant.

Anne, Community Women's Centre

Anne worked at a Women's Centre. In contrast to the bureaucratic nature of the City, the Women's Centre was run as a collective, and identified its mission as providing feminist leadership in the community. Anne was clear about the centrality of feminism to her when she said, "... my work is supported by the fact that we are a feminist organization, an anti-oppression organization. That informs everything that I do."

In contrast to the City's role as a service provider, Anne described the Centre as part of a social movement and "a place where women can support women in doing whatever it
is they need to do." At the Women's Centre, Anne had a variety of responsibilities, including administration, program planning, lobbying, and community development. She described the scope and complexity of her job in the following quotation.

Community development is my biggest responsibility, it’s the one that demands the most of my time. But I’m also a women’s advocate with government and other organizations. I do lobby work for the organization. I’m responsible for contracts - negotiating contracts, and liaising with funders, reporting on the work that I’m doing, and then all the financial reporting as well, budgets, status reports. I’m also the one responsible for programming and that means that I help develop new programs and then I am the liaison for those who run the programs ... I’m busy.

During our interview Anne spoke of her own values and practices and those espoused by the Centre interchangeably. To me this suggested her work was directly in line with her values. When I asked her about this, she responded, “... never in my life have I experienced this before, but it truly is. I live my work ... Personally I hold those things to be so important, and they are so true to me, and I live my life that way.” Anne explained how she came to be working at the Women’s Centre in the following quotation, providing additional insight into the correlation between her values and her professional work.

I came to work at the Women’s Centre and actively within the women’s movement because I was despairing of where we were at. I worked in the corporate world. I had a great deal of responsibility. Most of my employees were women and I could not tolerate any longer how they were misused and taken advantage of. I needed to be a part of something that was creating and healing, rather than something that was destroying and eating away at. So initially, when I came to the Women’s Centre, it was a personal journey for me that was very healing. It cost me a lot, but it was very, very healing, and I knew immediately that I was in the right place and couldn’t see myself going anywhere else, I still feel that way.

When asked about the Women’s Centre’s involvement with community development, Anne described the feminist movement’s concern with globalization and the government’s shift to a new public management that has resulted in a dismantling of the social safety net and decreased funding to community-based organizations. To counter this trend and keep moving forward to address the oppression of women, Anne explained how
the centre realized they needed to be more a part of the community. This was quite different than Lisa's understanding of the City's shift to community development, based on a realization that community members wanted to be involved in City business. In the following quotation, Anne explained how becoming involved in community development made them realize they were not alone in confronting social justice issues.

... in community development we're finding groups willing to address homelessness, housing issues, poverty issues. So I think we're not alone, and that in a number of ways the community is reflecting exactly what we're reflecting.

Therefore, the centrality of community development to the work of the Centre has continued to increase. In the following quotation, Anne spoke about the fit between the mandate of the Women's Centre and community development.

[Community development] goes to the very basis of feminist principles that created the Women's Centre in the first place. It is about women helping women to help themselves. And that is primarily what my job is about, it is to facilitate that process for women in the community, both through the Women's Centre and in partnership with other agencies in the community, to do whatever I can to create and promote those kinds of opportunities through community development.

When Anne began to hear from women coming to the Centre that access to recreation was a significant issue in their lives, the Centre decided to explore opportunities for action. Anne described the eventual connection between the City and the Women's Centre as synergy in the following quotation.

We started looking around for options in terms of recreation and leisure because women were telling us there was nothing out there, and asking us to advocate on their behalf. And so we started talking to the parks and recreation departments, and asking questions of our colleagues in the field about what they might know about ways of accessing recreation. And we were told to look up the Kamloops project. So we did an internet search and found their one-page description. We were just so excited about the potentials there...Around that time we got a call from [the City] saying that they were looking at the Kamloops project, and were interested in doing something locally, did we want to join them? It was synergy.
Anne participated in project team meetings, and was involved with a subgroup of primarily single mothers. When asked what was keeping her involved in Women in Action, Anne responded,

> It is a personal commitment as well as a commitment on the part of the Women’s Centre. Personally I feel a part of it. I am engaged with, and feel committed to, all of the women who are a part of it and with what we are trying to achieve. So I think even if my coworkers asked me to move on, I don’t know if I could. I think I would need to continue to be a part of it in some way, because it is so much in line with what I believe in and what I want my community to be doing. And because I care deeply about the women. I mean individually I have made some very strong relationships here and I would want to continue that.

This quotation spoke to a personal and organizational commitment to achieving Women in Action’s goals. Through my analysis, a sense of commitment was manifested in Anne’s role as an equal participant in Women in Action and her organization’s responsibility to be involved to facilitate participation. These emerged as two of the four key dimensions of Anne’s discourse of community development, to which this chapter now turns. Following the discussion of her discourse, I have discussed one key tension to which Anne continually referred.

**Discourse of Community Development - Feminist Action**

Given the nature of the previous discussion, a discourse of community development as “feminist action” may not be surprising. For Anne, it was a process through which community workers partnered with community members to address shared issues. In this way, community workers and organizations were challenged to acknowledge their participation in the perpetuation of social and systemic barriers, and to assume responsibility for supporting the full participation of community members. My analysis identified four key dimensions of Anne’s discourse of community development: social change, equal partnerships, addressing power imbalances, and responsibility to the group.
Social change. The central dimension of Anne’s discourse focused on social change to end the oppression of women. Therefore, Anne’s discourse supported a variety of actions, from individual skill learning to policy change. Anne said,

... some community development is very easily defined and is goal-oriented and it can be seen to be happening if certain criteria have been met, but it is very narrow in its focus. And I don’t see it that way, I see it as a myriad of things.

The following quotation provided further insight into the scope of Anne’s discourse, within the context of Women in Action, and her goals for change at the individual, organizational, and social levels.

I think initially the goals [of Women in Action] were specifically about recreational activities that were traditionally delivered by a parks and recreation department, and facilitating a process to make those accessible. I don’t know that anybody else at the time might have been envisioning an empowerment process and a skill building process or a process that would address policy and that would create a group that has its own power. I don’t think that that was really envisioned, but I understood that potential from the beginning, that was what I was hoping for.

At the individual level, Anne described community development as an opportunity for women to participate and have their voice heard in the larger community. She said it “meant facilitating a process where women can gain voice and address the ways in which they are denied full participation in the community.” Anne emphasized the importance of empowerment, consciousness-raising, and supporting women in challenging oppressive social structures and organizational practices. Therefore, in practice, Anne described one of her roles as “naming what is going on ... in the context of that oppression.”

At the organizational level, within Women in Action, Anne challenged members to identify alternative ways of organizing and making decisions. Anne advocated for, and supported, the use of consensus decision-making at project team meetings, a practice subsequently used in all subgroups as well.
It’s been important to me throughout the process of Women in Action, that there be a conscious choosing of decision-making processes. That there be discourse around that, so that there is an informed decision made ... I think my need, my belief, in consensus building has aided community development in that it has, encouraged more voices to come forward.

As interest in consensus decision-making began to grow among Women in Action members, Anne was asked to facilitate a two-part workshop for collective organizing with Karin, my third research participant. An integral component of this workshop was a comparison between collective organizing and hierarchical organizing, not only in terms of structure, but also in terms of how it made people feel (field notes, January 2001).

Anne also supported social and systemic change. For example, in the following quotation, she explained that if Women in Action was to address the barriers that women on low income face to participation in recreation and decision-making, social change had to happen.

If social change isn’t a part of what we’re doing then the project has not addressed its mandate, it’s original reason for being, in my opinion. I guess the mandate itself is up to interpretation, but if gaining full participation for women in the community is really the goal, then that has to include social change because of the reasons why women have been excluded in the first place. If social change isn’t present then the barriers haven’t been removed. If women have been excluded because of their economic status or because of the degree of influence that they have with the powers that be, and if that influence is based on their social status or on their race or on their ethnicity or on who they know, if we haven’t been able to remove that criteria for accessing resources in the community, then we haven’t achieved the mandate of the group. It has to be there.

Anne’s multi-level approach to social change was echoed in the feminist community organizing literature’s focus on creating egalitarian social relations by supporting the personal development of women while working towards systemic and social change (cf. Callahan 1997; Dominelli, 1995; Dominelli & McLeod, 1989). This multi-level approach as a means to social change was similar to Lisa’s discourse of community development, which focused on its benefits to validate the needs of community members, to decrease barriers to
their participation, and support policy change. The next three dimensions of Anne's discourse, equal partnerships, addressing power imbalances, and responsibility, further positioned community development as a model for social change.

**Equal partnerships.** The second dimension of Anne's discourse was the positioning of community workers and community members as equal partners in addressing mutual concerns. In the following quotation, Anne described a change in consciousness that resulted through community development, "... the consciousness has become 'us' instead of 'me and you'. It is not oppositional anymore, it is cooperative." Commenting on her desire to be an equal participant in Women in Action, Anne described her responsibility to work towards the group's goals while supporting the participation of other group members.

I hope so yes, that is my commitment [to be an equal partner]. And by that I mean that if, as a group, we have reached an understanding of what the goals of the group are and how we will achieve that, then I am committed to that. And I see myself as equally responsible for achieving those things and for working towards it.

Anne's goal to participate as an equal partner positioned her within the community development process, rather than as an outside facilitator. The responsibility she felt to achieving the goals of the group was different from Lisa, who was available to support the process and provide access to resources, but was not ultimately invested in the project's end goal. However, Anne's desire to be an equal partner was challenged by a woman on low income who believed community workers should remain outside the process. Anne shared this incident during one of the interactive meetings. "She didn't see us as partners, she saw us as kind of bosses...And when I said to her I think of myself as a participant here she just looked at me and said 'no.' And I thought, 'oh.'” While not all Women in Action members shared this belief, this realization spoke to the ambiguity throughout the project about the community development process and the roles of each stakeholder group. In this situation,
ambiguity was intricately linked to power relations between community workers and community members. The issue of power was discussed directly by Anne, and her efforts to address power imbalances emerged as the third dimension of her discourse.

Addressing power imbalances. Anne’s goal to be an equal partner was not naïve to the complex power dynamics between women on low income and community workers who act as the gatekeepers of scarce resources. The third dimension of Anne’s discourse required community workers to consider the ways they participate in the oppression of women. This was similar to the reflexive practice we sought to employ as FPAR researchers. Anne said, “we can’t really live the vision that we are reaching for until we’ve examined the ways in which we ourselves perpetuate what it is that we’re fighting against”.

Therefore, Anne emphasized the importance of putting women’s self-defined needs, interests, and experiences at the centre of the process, rather than organizational needs. For Anne, this meant her political agenda was sometimes tempered, aware that speaking critically was meeting a personal agenda, rather than the needs of the women. Additionally, Anne spoke about the need to move beyond an understanding of community development as the equitable distribution of resources, to examining assumptions about the needs of women on low income.

A key source of support for this dimension was Anne’s previous professional experience. Prior to working at the Women’s Centre, Anne worked at a financial institution, characterized by hierarchy and a concern for the bottom line over employees. She described this experience as “education in how to silence people” in the following quotation.

I have a lot of training in resource management and personnel management, which I really don’t find very relevant to any of the work that I do now. Well actually I shouldn’t say that, because it was a wonderful education in how to silence people, and so now it really helps me to understand when women talk about their experiences, to understand how that comes about, and how it’s resulting.
Despite not wanting to silence people, group dynamics sometimes required Anne to intervene, despite the impact it may have had on the women. This often was in situations where decisions were being made that neglected specific needs. She rationalized this practice by saying, "I need to address the oppression of poor women and I won’t back off on that.” Anne reflected further on this in the following quotation.

...having said all these things I know that I’m not always doing the best that I can and there are days when because I have my own pressing needs, or because of other factors that are coming in, I may be the person who is shutting down the conversation. I’m not saying that I always practice all of these things perfectly, but they are a part of my value system and who I am, and so I try to carry them with me and encourage whoever I’m working with to look at things in that way.

Power issues created complexities throughout the Women in Action project, for all stakeholders involved. As it was impossible to eliminate power differences, reflexive practice enabled both community workers and researchers to work in more authentic and meaningful ways (Frisby et al., forthcoming). While Anne aspired to be an equal partner and sought to address power imbalances, she also spoke about the need to accept responsibility and to act on the power she had. This is represented in the next dimension.

Responsibility. The final dimension of Anne’s discourse was a notion of responsibility. As gatekeepers to community resources, Anne believed community workers had a responsibility to be involved in Women in Action and respond to the needs of the community members. In the following quotation, she spoke to this and about her responsibility to not “close the gate.”

For me it is responsibility as well...because of the power that I have and because that makes me a gatekeeper. I may not like it, but that is what it does. So I have the responsibility there not to close the gate because I don’t like what I’m hearing. Or to not walk away because I don’t like what I am hearing. I have a responsibility to be there and to be open and have my hands open and to say “you know what? Just do it, and I am here to support whatever you do.”
Two incidents provided examples of how this dimension manifested in Anne's practice. First, she committed to driving members of the subgroup she was involved in to project team meetings, aware of the barrier transportation caused to their participation. While this added two hours to her workday, in the following quotation Anne described why this was so important.

I was committed and supported by my Board to continue the driving, because it meant that the group could continue. We saw a responsibility there. We had said at the beginning that we would address it in whatever we could, the barriers that were preventing them from participating, and transportation is definitely one.

Second, Anne was invited to participate on a municipal parks and recreation committee. While at first she questioned the legitimacy of her being a voice for women on low income in the community, she reflected, “maybe that is what the commitment really is. Maybe that’s how I transform the power that I have into something that is real.”

This notion of responsibility was another issue with which both the researchers and the community workers struggled. While Reid (2004) argued about the need to create boundaries, citing the risks for community members to become dependent on support that is not sustainable, the literature spoke to the importance community worker efforts to “leverage up” and support social and systemic change (cf. Dominelli, 1995; Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996).

Key Tension - The “F” Word: Feminism as a Marginalized Discourse

Feminists working in the community often report feeling like they have hidden agendas, aware that the term feminist still holds negative connotations within the broader society (Rempel & Swanton, 1994). As feminist action researchers, this was a tension we were aware of and one that Anne struggled with as well. While she spoke freely about being a feminist during our interview, she was aware of a tension using the word feminism within
Women in Action. She said, "I always feel like I have got this hidden agenda" and described this tension further in the following quotation.

I come from a Women’s Centre, feminism is the ground on which I walk, addressing sexism is the way we do it. And we haven’t talked about addressing sexism within Women in Action, although in every possible way that we couldn’t talk about it, we did ... But I think it is integrated into everything that I try to do, in terms of addressing oppression in whatever way I need to. I mean it’s integrated into that. But it is kind of a silent voice through it all.

Anne acknowledged the risk for a feminist stance to intimidate community partners or even limit collaborative opportunities because of persisting stereotypes about feminists. For example, she suggested that when Women in Action started, other members were “looking at her sideways”, not knowing what to expect because she came from the Women’s Centre, “the weird place over there”. Similarly, Rempel and Swanton (1994) found that feminist values are often different from the values of other stakeholders, and Dominelli (1995, p. 143) suggested feminist community workers should be “prepared for a hostile response from individuals, groups and the state.” However, Anne also spoke about the Women’s Centre’s reputation as enhancing collaboration, providing further opportunity to leverage up for social change.

I think in general that the Women’s Centre is seen as a place where things can happen and so that’s always a good thing to carry into a community development process. In this community we have rarely had to take a confrontational role with any of the levels of government or any of the organizations ... but we’ve handled ourselves fairly well, I think, in those processes. So again, I think that enhances our credibility. But, I think it’s also understood that we’re willing to step off the mainstream when it is necessary and I think that is actually a good thing. We’re invited to be part of things because of that, because it is seen that there is a need to have that voice there. We’re part of the homelessness project right now, and that’s the reason why we’re there, is to talk about the people who aren’t there, to talk for, like we could do that!

In this section I described Anne’s discourse of community development as feminist action, and discussed four key dimensions that emerged: social change, equal partnerships,
addressing power imbalances, and responsibility. I also examined the persistence of negative connotations surrounding the word "feminist" as a key tension confronted by Anne that was both negative and positive. This chapter now turns to my third research participant, Karin.

Karin, Family Service Agency

Karin had a Bachelor's degree in Social Work, and was employed by a family service agency as a Family Enhancement Worker. The mandate of her organization was “to provide and mobilize the resources necessary to strengthen families and communities.” Karin described the nature of her job in the following quotation. “We work with the family to build on their strengths, and help overcome some of the problems they’re having with being in the community, and raising their children.” When asked about how her organization became involved in community development, Karin described a philosophical shift within the profession. She suggested this shift emanated from an awareness of limited resources to continue direct service, and a questioning of the effectiveness of that model. Karin explained that, “if the long term goal is that people in our society are doing better, generally overall healthier, does this method of providing direct service, really is it going to get us there? And I think we’ve seen that no, that’s only a part of it.”

Karin described her organization as “proactive” and spoke to the influence her colleagues had on her practice in the following quotation, where she explained the importance of “moving up the river.”

This agency has really grounded me in that idea of looking to the big picture, they’ve stretched my thinking. My supervision and programming conversations have helped me understand why that is important, as well as helped my practice. This clinical stuff could go on forever; you would do this exact same thing forever and ever. Why would we want to do that? Why wouldn’t we want to learn from this and go, “well what can we do?” I think the analogy or metaphor of moving up the river. People are falling in the river and you pull them out and pull them out until someone goes,
“Duh! Why are people falling in the river? Let’s go find out why they are in the river and try to prevent them from getting in the river.” So this organization does that well.

In line with this, Karin explained the value of community development in strengthening communities by creating relevant solutions to shared issues. Karin highlighted the benefits in contrast to the casework model in the following quotation.

... community development is like, it’s not about providing programs as much as it is recognizing that our goals and the programs that we serve can also be served by strengthening and supporting communities in that way. And that community development has more longevity ... It could be more directly related to the people there. It could change, if they changed.

Therefore, Karin emphasized the importance of community development in “shifting from that decision-making based by the service providers, to wanting to shift to the community informing us, that we respond to the community.” This echoed the importance of putting community members in the centre of the process discussed by both Lisa and Anne. For Karin, this was supported by the mandate of her organization, and a shift toward integrated case management that puts community members at the centre of the service, being asked, “what’s most important to you?” Karin explained this approach in the following quotation.

We now have this whole different way of working through integrated case management, so we work with the social worker, and anybody else works with that family. I think it’s, the idea being that we put the family at the centre of the service, instead of traditional methods where social workers that say, “you do this, you do this and go to it” and prescribe all these things. And then things break down and the family gets blamed. So now we say, “what is most important to you” and we will try to hook you up with the right service. And then we’ll revisit and say, “how’s it going?”

Karin had been involved with Women in Action since it began. She participated at the project team meetings, and was involved with one subgroup. Although Karin was at first skeptical of the fit between her organization’s mandate and the recreation focus of Women in Actions, she described how she “read between the lines” and saw the potential of
the project to support the full involvement of women on low income in the community.

With a growing interest in community development, Karin willingly accepted an invitation to participate in the June 1999 workshop. After exploring Karin’s discourse of community development and the dimensions that emerged, the challenge of negotiating interest in community development and government accountability will be discussed as a key tension Karin confronted in her practice.

**Discourse of Community Development – Supporting Agency**

Karin understood community development was a facilitated process to connect community members to address common issues. As a community worker, Karin positioned herself outside the process in a facilitative role, supporting group members in coming together to address common issues, but not taking on those issues herself. Throughout the interview, Karin related community development to citizenship. When I asked her what citizenship meant to her, she replied,

> Being a citizen does not mean that you just have rights. Which means that you can lay claim to things. Which we do, we get to lay claim to things. It also means that you have responsibilities. And at I first went “Ah! responsibilities! That’s not fair!” You know people have a lot of things to face in their life and so asking them to be responsible, maybe that’s not generous, it’s too conservative or something, it’s kind of like the “pull up your socks you have to contribute, too”, kind of idea. But the positive part of that that I think I grasped on to was that when we look at people as everyone and if we behave as if we have responsibilities, it includes people. You get to say, and you have to say, versus a “we’ll look after you because you can’t do this.” And the “we’ll look after you” business, I mean I don’t think it’s good for anybody. Personally I think I respond better when people support me, but also have expectations of me, and go, “I would think you would join me in this” and “why didn’t you speak up”, and it’s like, rather than a, “oh you’re right, you can’t do that”. You know? That sends messages that oppress people over and over again.

This notion of citizenship emphasized the centrality of personal agency to affect change, which imbued Karin’s discourse and was evident in the four dimensions of her discourse.
identified: building community, supporting people's strengths, group facilitation, and authentic relationships.

*Building community.* Karin described community development as an "organic bringing of people" based on common interests or shared concerns. Reflecting on the demise of community as a result of society's increasing emphasis on individuality, Karin explained the value of a community development approach to combat problems, such as social isolation, in the following quotation.

[Community development] means facilitating people coming together to do what they want to do, to achieve the goals that they want to achieve. I think that their community goals are their shared goals. It's not necessarily just meeting with one person and helping them achieve what they want to, obviously. It's bringing people together who may have common interests, even if they talk about them differently. I mean for me, I think largely it's about addressing isolation, addressing or countering the idea of everyone independent and has to be self-reliant. So valuing the impact of social relationships and how much they contribute to every facet of your life, every facet.

Therefore, community development was an ongoing process that required community members to ask, "who's here, who's not here, what are the strengths and what are the concerns, and how are we addressing those things?" In the following quotation, Karin described the benefits of community development, emphasizing the importance of providing an opportunity for members to contribute to their community.

Something happens when they participate, but my guess is that one of the fundamental things is a sense of expression, that they get to express themselves in the community, publicly, even if they are the only ones that know what that is, they do it, and it's an enriching thing. They stand in the world differently, and they get to contribute then.

This was consistent with Karin's focus on citizenship, and reinforced community development as a means to support individual agency by creating opportunities for community members to be active participants in their community.
Karin was reflexive of her practice and the nature of her position as a Family Enhancement Worker. In the following quotation she critiqued this role, and alluded to the community development process as a means to decrease reliance on, and need for, her organization’s resources.

... as a Family Enhancement Worker, I go to meet with families and I meet with all these women whose primary issue is often isolation. That one impacts so much stuff, and I can only do so much working with one person to address isolation. I can drive them around to things and places and take them somewhere the first time and introduce them to different things. But then the idea is that they then must go access a service, they must go access a service for these things. It’s crazy making if I go to the same apartment building and every woman in there says, “I’m isolated”. And I go, “well I’ll take you to the Women’s Centre, that is a nice place to go meet people.” You have people in your building! How do we start, you shouldn’t need me. I would just like to facilitate that, and get the heck out of there and [my organization] might never go there again, you know. That would be good.

Karin’s goal to decrease community reliance on her organization was an important aspect of her organizational context that influenced her discourse of community development.

Primarily concerned with addressing the needs of individuals and families in crisis, community development was a means to avert crisis situations by “moving up the river”, as described previously. This emphasis on decreasing reliance contrasted with the organizational contexts of Lisa, who understood community development as a means to increase participation and access to City resources to promote the benefits of recreation, and Anne, whose organization was uniquely positioned to respond to a diverse array of needs within the community.

This dimension of Karin’s discourse was similar to what Pilisuk et al. (1997, p. 104) termed “‘community building’ ... the slower process of creating a web of continuing relationships so that people may indeed come together, share their supportive attentions and resources, and experiences a sense of belonging to their community.” They suggested community building is important because community members are often unaware other
people have similar problems, and that organizing to discuss mutual concerns and strategize to address issues is an option.

Supporting people’s strengths. In contrast to clinical model that focused on addressing people’s needs (Baines, 1997), Karin’s discourse of community development focused on supporting people’s strengths. This was consistent with Kretzman and McKnight (1993), who emphasized the importance of focusing on people’s capacities and gifts, rather than their deficiencies and needs. Karin described a shift in her own practice in the following quotation, reflecting on one of her contributions to Women in Action.

I think I bring a real belief in people’s strengths and a desire to see those and bring those out. And it’s been a shift in my career, in learning how to see people that way versus seeing what they need, and how to service those needs. So that’s a very fundamental belief. It’s not getting caught and going “oh dear these people need to be rescued and saved.”

This dimension was also supported by Karin’s emphasis on agency. Resisting Anne’s more overtly political discourse that centred on multi-level social change, Karin described a focus on people’s strengths as a political act aimed at changing the power dynamics between counselors and clients. This raised questions about a shared understanding of social change and, subsequently, of a shared understanding about the goals of Women in Action. Karin discussed her activism in the following quotation.

I think I do activism different than Anne does...Well I think she is just more politically involved. I’m just not as keen on that... It could be the agency that I work at, probably it frames a lot of that too, is that we’re not political in the same way that the Women’s Centre is political. So we don’t orient as a political entity. Whereas the Women’s Centre absolutely is. The Women’s Centre is a political stance. So it makes sense to me that there would be, that we would be different in some of those ways ... It is supported by values that are political in that we want to support people in their strengths. We have attitudes towards people, I think, that are respectful and we don’t see them as “clients” that we can continue being an expert in their lives, and they need us. I think there are a lot of political beliefs. And we don’t articulate them as politically, I think we articulate them more clinically. So it is kind of, that’s where the conversation comes around to supporting people’s strengths instead of addressing their needs and concerns and administering those.
In this quotation Karin spoke to the influence her organizational context had on the political orientation of her discourse of community development.

Group facilitation. The third dimension of Karin’s discourse of community development was group facilitation. In line with her desire to support people’s strengths, Karin positioned herself within the community development process as a group facilitator. Karin described her role as a “functional relationship”, where she contributed her skills and facilitated people using their own. In practice, Karin focused on group process, “asking a lot of questions about decisions and the process of what was happening ... ‘how did you get there,’ and sort of suss that stuff out a bit.” Karin explained the importance of this role, and provided an example of a personal experience she used to construct her discourse.

... I’ve found it helpful when someone has understood what I’m going through. When I am going through a process and somebody understands some of what that process is, they can facilitate it, they can help me understand that is the process. So that is what I see my role as being, paying attention to the process and helping people see that it’s a process. If you don’t, if you just think this is about what is happening to me and it’s hard or it “is”, and now it’s finished, things start to collapse again, so you’ve got to keep moving. So it’s about process and movement all the time. I know it helps me when I have someone who can see what I’m doing in my process and go, “so, let me ask you some questions about where you are, and where you want to go.”

In this role, Karin had the goal of supporting the development of an independent group. In the following quotation, Karin spoke about the value of this and her personal interest in watching and being part of the process as it happened.

I think as a service provider, one of the values is that you don’t become, you don’t become necessary. That you try to step out of necessary, being necessary. That’s why I like the idea of facilitating, it’s like being a part of the process and hopefully people start to see and experience while you’re there, and be part of things, and asking questions and doing all your things that you do, that they can take it on themselves, and they’ll do it in their own unique way.

Karin’s focus on facilitating group process was consistent with her agency-focused notion of social change. In supporting social change at this level, Karin was reluctant to become
involved in the larger social and systemic change goals being addressed within Women in Action, believing this type of change initiative should be driven by the community members. Karin spoke about her role in the following quotation.

I don’t think it comes from me in this group. I don’t see that. I know people are looking for me to lead that thing, but I think that would be the problem. As a social worker it is not my story, I have a story. If the personal is political then I have political stories that are mine, and I want to address those. Maybe mine is "citizenship." I own that one. I want to participate and I’m going to do that in the world. I’m going to take that and make it my thing. And I’m going to speak to it and encourage it and do what I can with it. So if these women, if theirs is disenfranchisement from participating in leisure activities, they need to do it. And I can support some of that stuff, I can figure out how to do that, but it is theirs. So I really struggle with taking on other people’s issues. I don’t want to take on the issue, I’ll take on the process.

Although Karin’s specific role of group facilitation was uni-dimensional, compared to the roles identified by Lisa and Anne, and the wide variety of roles identified in the literature (cf. Hutchison & Nogradri, 1996; Ife, 1995), Pilisuk et al. (1997) emphasized the importance of supporting community members in “thinking through” issues and developing strategies. Karin’s experience in group facilitation was a skill that was valued by the other community workers, and all three research participants spoke about the complimentary nature of their skills and identified roles within Women in Action, suggesting a benefit of collaboration to the community development practice of community workers. However, Karin’s focus on facilitation and remaining outside the process risked preserving her role as an expert, rather than challenging traditional counselor/client relations. Karin reflected on this risk during the interview and reported feelings of creating a relationship where she “parachuted in” to facilitate the group process.

*Authentic relationships.* One of the main strategies Karin used to equalize the power imbalance between herself and the community members was through the creation of “authentic relationships.” In the following quotation, Karin described the opportunity to
have authentic relationships with community members as one characteristic that attracted her to community development.

While I am doing community development it is really authentic stuff, that's what I really love about it. So my professional role and my authentic self are really, I get to be me. And, whereas in my clinical work I am certainly me but I am wearing a cloak of this function, you know? There is a little bit more separation, or maybe it just feels that way. So this one feels really like my authentic self. And I value the idea of getting to know and supporting people’s strengths and valuing their participation in how they define it. I love being a part of people’s process of experiencing it and acting on it and getting to know themselves in that way. I think when we do that we start to see ourselves differently and that is just really exciting to me.

However, the goal of authentic relationships presented challenges for Karin as she negotiated new professional boundaries. For example, at one Women in Action event, Karin and I discussed our uncertainties about our roles in the project, and she shared some of her difficulties transitioning from a client/counselor relationship where she supported people’s needs, to one of supporting people’s strength. Karin suggested this was particularly difficult because she was working with the same population in Women in Action as she did in her other work – women and women with children. During our interview, Karin reflected further on these dynamics and described her learning through her involvement with Women in Action. She said, “it was definitely a learning process to start looking at myself and seeing how I responded to people and how I was feeling internally about my role.” Karin described the challenges she faced transitioning from a counselor/client relationship and in balancing her professional role and involvement in Women in Action with her goal of authentic relationships in the following quotation.

I find it a challenging to partner with and still be a professional at the table. That’s why I’m there, I am paid to be there. This isn’t my neighbourhood, my community. I’m not going to be using these services. But at the same time having authentic relationships, I’m not serving them in the same way I do in therapeutic relationship, it’s not that. So finding this role has been interesting because I’m learning a lot, and I think I’ll take a lot about what I learned here, and take it to the other project I’m doing.
In contrast to Anne, who described her connection to Women in Action as primarily about responsibility as a gatekeeper to community resources, Karin's interest in authentic relationships positioned her involvement as a personal investment. This raised ethical considerations for Karin when there were invitations of friendship from community members.

One challenge is still around to what extent is this a personal relationship? So I need to be careful and respectful around, um, this being my job, right? So all that stuff about being authentic is really true, but then there is the invitation by people to be their friend, and that one's hard. So personally, it really is a struggle for me to go, "how do I not do that?" And whether they are clinical and sort of ethical considerations, which I think they also are, but they are also personal ones. It's like, I don't know if I can, or I don't know if this is where I want to build my social network anyway. That's not what this is, this is about my work, and I don't want to set people up or hurt people's feelings by them thinking that this is a personal friendship. And at the same time it is a personal friendship, so it is really weird! It is very strange because I do feel absolutely that I have connected with those people and we have a great relationship.

Negotiating boundaries around their involvement in Women in Action was a challenge many community workers, and researchers, confronted. One aspect of the challenge concerned dependency on the community workers or researchers by the community members, for example, to facilitate inter-personal and inter-group conflict. Karin spoke to this in the following quotation, describing her decision to not become involved during a particularly stormy period.

I've heard from Lisa and you, mostly from Lisa, that there is this tension about the retreat and "you should come", Lisa says, "we want you and Anne there." And I said to her, "well that's probably a really good reason why we weren't there, if everybody was waiting for Anne or I to do it" ... what I've been hearing is that the group looks to certain people to fulfill roles in facilitating conflict, and when they're not there nothing happens with it. So that is a problem.

While Karin reflected on the struggles involved in negotiating professional boundaries and some of the other challenges she confronted in her community development practice as learning experiences, she also suggested it may have been limiting her involvement with
Women in Action. Karin’s participation with the organization was also influenced by constraints around her time and involvement with Women in Action associated with government accountability. This was the key tension identified in my analysis of Karin’s discourse.

**Key Tension – Government Accountability**

Although Karin spoke about the importance of community development to strengthen the community and decrease reliance on their services, the realities of government funding created tension around how much time she was able to commit to community development and affected the types of projects in which she became involved.

Karin said,

> The nature of the organization is that we need funding to do specific jobs and that’s how it goes ... In our contract [with the Ministry of Children and Family Services] we do talk about community development, so it gives me permission to do community development. At the same time we are expected to deliver a certain number of direct service hours. So we report on that. So it becomes my challenge to do both.

In the following quotation, Karin spoke about being “stuck in the middle” between an organizational shift to being informed by the community, but still being required to respond to government-identified issues.

> I think the philosophy of the executive director and program directors is really about shifting from decision-making by the service providers to the community informing us, that we respond to the community. The other thing is that we typically respond to the government. The services are a response to what the government says is needed. So we become aware that that may or may not answer what the community would say they want it to. So there is that, we’re sort of stuck in the middle, so it’s, “okay how do we shift and do this different?”

Therefore, Karin described the majority of her community development work as being “unofficial” and “corner of the desk”, secondary to achieving the outcomes associated with their government grants.
So much of our funding comes for delivery of specific services, and it's getting more and more accountability in terms of outcomes and so at this time we are moving it that way. The doing things off the corner of our desk part it going to be harder and harder. So as I try to imagine in my job as a family enhancement worker, spending a lot of time doing this stuff without it being official; it's official in my agency, my supervisor certainly knows what I'm doing, but there isn't a position that's funded that says community development, so I would just love to get to say community development in your title.

This tension manifested in three ways. First, Karin had a limited amount of time to participate in community development projects. For example, a grant she received for another community development project supported her involvement for a maximum of eight hours per week. This required Karin to limit her involvement with Women in Action to balance the direct service hours she was required to deliver. Second, the nature of applying for grants meant Karin entered into community development projects with specific goals in mind. For example, this other community development project had the goal of building leadership within the community. While this is a reality for both community workers and researchers, Hutchison and Nogradi (1996) emphasized the importance of community workers not entering into community development projects with set goals or agendas to allow community defined issues and concerns to drive the project. Pilisuk et al. (1997) warned that this is particularly important because of the possible discrepancies in how community workers and community members may understand the nature of local problems. They explained,

Professional problem definition may result in a “problem” being identified that is important to the outsider, but not a major concern to residents. Alternatively, professionals may identify a problem of real salience to the community, yet define it in such a way that significant portions of the problem may be omitted. (p. 111)

Third, accountability to her organization’s Board of Directors for additional time spent on community development and to granting agencies meant Karin was required to report on
outcomes. Karin discussed the tension of having to justify time spent on Women in Action to the Board of Directors in terms of the project’s link with the mandate of the organization.

It’s going to be important for me to really speak to, and have some clear ideas about how Women in Action is impacting the community, so I need to be responsible for bringing that back, and making sure that the Board is educated as well... so [the Executive Director] can take it to the Board and go, “this is what we’re doing, this is how it’s helping.”

Unfortunately, this created challenges for Karin in defining a fit between the goals of Women in Action and her program’s goals. This is discussed further in the next section.

**Implications of Multiple Discourses on the Collaborative Process**

In the previous section, I discussed the discourses of community development as constructed by three community workers involved in Women in Action, and highlighted key differences in their understanding and practice, including goals and outcomes, underpinning assumptions and values, and the role of the community worker. My analysis included how their personal experience and organizational context may have accounted, in part, for the differences observed.

In this section, I address my third research question by examining the implications of multiple discourses on collaboration involving community workers and community members in Women in Action. As discussed in Chapter 1, a consideration of the implications of multiple discourses is important given the growing number of organizations engaging in multi-sectoral partnerships to address social issues as a response to continued cuts to social spending. Findings of this study indicated the existence of multiple discourses both enhanced and inhibited the collaborative process. Three key implications are discussed: discourse (re)production, the privileging of practices related to one discourse over others, and dissonance about the goals of the organization.
This research question provided me with an opportunity to broaden the scope of my analysis and reflect on the dynamics I observed through my participation in Women in Action’s project team meetings and in the two interactive meetings with the community workers. While my analysis has focused on the three research participants to this point, in this section I have also considered some of the dynamics involved with collaborating with other community workers and community members gleaned from my participation at the meetings in my analysis.

**Discourse (Re)production**

The first implication of multiple discourses on the collaborative process concerned the active process through which discourses are supported and resisted. Fletcher (1992) explained discourses are relational, and are involved in a reciprocal relationship as they produce and reproduce our social realities, and are, in turn, produced and reproduced themselves. Far from stable repertoires of meaning, discourses are constantly in flux as new texts are added to our discursive resources, for example through casual conversation or observing the practice of others (McGannon & Mauws, 2002). Fairclough (1989, p. 39 cited in Fletcher, 1992, p. 32) suggested “reproduction may be basically conservative, sustaining continuity, or basically transformatory, effecting changes.” My analysis revealed one key similarity, a shared belief about the importance of putting community members at the centre of the process, contributed to continuity in the discourses of the research participants and subsequently provided a foundation for their involvement in Women in Action and continued collaboration. However, research participants also reflected on incremental change in their understanding of community development through the collaborative process, and identified potential for leveraging their experiences to influence change at the organizational level.
Despite significant differences in the way community development was understood and practiced among the research participants, one key similarity provided a vehicle to validate, or sustain, the diverse discourses, and served as a foundation for collaboration (Selsky, 1991). The research participants and other active community workers were all committed to putting the community members at the centre of the community development process, and supporting their full participation. As a research team operating from a FPAR perspective, this was also one of our key values. McGannon and Mauws (2002, p. 74) explained that although new texts are constantly being added, “the fact is that the majority of these texts use terms and invoke objects in ways that are largely consistent with the dominant meanings and characteristics attributed to them.”

As mentioned, change was also evident in the discourses of the community workers. Beyond individual lessons from the “trial and error” nature of community development (Ife, 1995), differences in their discourses created space to enhance their understanding and practice. For example, Lisa expressed an appreciation for the amount of personal learning that had happened over the course of the project. When I initially asked her, during our interview, what community development meant, she replied, “I’m still learning”. Lisa described the influence Anne and Karin had on her practice in the following quotation.

I’m always learning from those two. I am, I think, a little different from those two, for sure ... as I said earlier, just on the outset, when you look at the three of us and you just bring us around the table, they vision very well and I think I summarize, my summaries are short where their summaries are longer. And I think they really articulate what is going on in their head. They really know how to voice it out ... they know how to really articulate the process and work the process, and see that vision and try to remind people of that vision. And I am just still learning, I’m on that learning curve.

Subsequent to their involvement in Women in Action, the research participants became involved in another community development project. They commented that their
experiences and learning from Women in Action enabled them to negotiate new roles and practices in this project. For example, in the following quotation, Anne spoke about shared experiences through Women in Action providing a foundation for the community workers to collaborate.

Each of us in our own way in our contacts with residents of that neighbourhood had information about the needs that were not being addressed and also about the lack of resources that were available for people to achieve things on their own. And so we started talking to each other about creating this project and it’s actually taken on quite a bit of the structure and the values that existed in the Women in Action process, in that we already had a leg up because we had experienced that together, and so we had a way of working together that was enhanced by the Women in Action process.

Additionally, the community workers discussed the possibility of discourse (re)production at the organizational level. For example, in addressing the tensions involved with government-directed community development and direct service, Karin described her organization’s role in leveraging community development experience to affect policy change to better support community development efforts.

The challenge is to spread the thinking to the larger agencies, to the people within, to everybody. And that’s certainly been a focus, and I’ve been asked to do that … that we start to build a knowledge and experience base about what community development looks like, how it works, and how our organization can participate in that.

Anne focused her discussion more broadly on changes in the cultures of the collaborating organizations. For example, she reflected on the possibility of organizational change in the following quotation.

... it’s the pressure that forces you to look in a different direction, and that’s what they’re doing. [A municipality] is a much larger body, and I don’t know to what degree it will affect their access policies. Right now we’re only seeing it terms of a much narrower definition but I’m expecting that the, the concepts of equity will reach that far. The more a parks and rec. department is forced to explain why they have women-only programs, the more they are going to come to believe what they are saying.
Considering the significant systemic barriers to recreation participation confronted by women on low income, the potential to influence organizational change through discourse (re)production and the introduction of new texts that support alternative models of practice, is important to consider.

**Privileging of Practices**

A second implication of multiple discourses of community development on the collaborative process, was the privileging of some practices over others. From a poststructuralist perspective, power is asserted through the ability to construct knowledge or define the truth (Burr, 1995; MacLure, 2003). Within Women in Action, consensus decision-making was positioned as a “true” community development practice. However, unfamiliarity with the process among some community workers and community members created frustration and silenced people within a process intended to encourage and support the participation of all Women in Action members. For the community workers from the municipal recreation departments involved, consensus decision-making was a drastic departure from the quick top-down decision-making model practiced in their organization. At one Project Team meeting, a new community worker became visibly agitated over the course of the meeting and started making side comments expressing his disbelief about the length of time it was taking to make decisions. However, while the process was frustrating at times for everyone involved, most community workers understood the value of consensus decision-making for addressing power imbalances and supporting the full participation of the community members. In the following quotation, Lisa recalled her experience the first time consensus decision-making was used at a Women in Action budget meeting and subsequent commitment to the process.
Our first budget meeting was very painful. I remember [a colleague] and I were sitting there ... every now and then we would look at each other going, “is this for real? This is so painful! It’s taking two hours to make one decision. This is so painful.” And we walked out and we all said to each other, “Is this what it’s going to be about? I don’t know if I can do this.” But I think we all continued to commit to the process, and it didn’t take as long, but I think we all understood that if it has to take that long so be it because it’s about having the women come to that understanding, getting the information they need before they can come to a consensus.

The community members involved in Women in Action also experienced confusion and frustration about consensus decision-making. Even when community members adopted the use of consensus decision-making, issues arose. In the following quotation, Lisa highlighted the challenges of integrating consensus into practice at subgroup meetings.

They didn’t like that at first at all. I wouldn’t say they don’t like it now, but sometimes when they do it, it’s kind of like they do it so quickly that I don’t think they understand the concept … in the beginning they were like, “oh what a waste of time, what’s this consensus building, why not majority rules.”

Mizrahi and Rosenthal (1993, p. 34) discussed the need to for collaborators to assess differences in organizational style to determine whether they are “dangerous or benign” and then decide whether to “accept or attempt to minimize style differences.” Despite the “dangerous” nature of the confusion and frustration surrounding the practice of consensus decision-making, the strong connection between this practice and the discourses of community development used by the research participants resulting in an acceptance of style differences. Attempts to minimize style difference, for example through further discussion about the value of consensus decision-making, may have avoided community worker and community member drop-out, and limited the negative impact. This chapter now turns to the third, and final, implication.

Role Difference - Supporting Social Change

Despite shared beliefs around wanting to address the needs of women on low income, each research participant’s discourse had unique implications for her role in
supporting social change. As discussed previously, Karin’s discourse, which focused on supporting individual agency, positioned her as a facilitator in supporting community members in addressing shared concerns. She clearly positioned herself outside the community development process and preferred to help community members with process.

Lisa’s discourse focused on change at the systemic level, positioning community development as a means to enhance program delivery. From the beginning of the project, Lisa spoke about her interest in examining the City’s subsidy program and critically examining the accessibility of the recreation system. During our interview, two years into the three-year project, Lisa discussed the need to address this issue.

What we haven’t addressed is what’s happening in our own system. The other one is our financial assistance program, that’s more my agenda actually. I don’t even know if that is a system that should have been developed in the first place. It’s a system that we inherited and it’s a system that everyone else seems to be doing. So that’s one that I want to address, I want to dismantle that one.

However, Lisa’s discourse, which focused on supporting action ideas emanating from the community members and having their agendas direct the project, meant Lisa felt she wasn’t allowed to raise these issues with the group. Despite Lisa’s clear interest in addressing municipal government policies and practices, she believed these issues would only be perceived as legitimate if they came directly from community members. This may have been a strategy Lisa used to limit the conflict between herself and the City, alluding to what Hutchison and Nogradi (1996, p. 120) referred to as “dual responsibility,” where community workers are responsible for representing and communicating the needs of both the City, and the community-based organizations with which they are involved. In the following quotation, Lisa considered what action she would take if she received feedback from the women.
Let's say we take the Leisure Access Card and you tell me this is what you don't like about it, and a few of them have, I wouldn't get defensive about it. I would just go, "okay, that's what we need to hear, what changes you want to see happen." I might need to give information as to "well I know a couple of years ago we tried this, or that is why we made this decision", but not to say I do want to influence them to say "you cannot recommend that change", but to work with them on it because it is a new group of people who are at another point in reviewing the Leisure Access Card. So I would want to support them, despite the fact that I work for the City, I mean, if a change needs to be made and many of them feel that when, then I want to support that.

In comparison to Karin and Lisa, Anne had a clear mandate for social change. She suggested this often put her in conflict with the other organizations around the table, as policies and practices were included in her targets for change.

I firmly believe that municipal policy has to change and I know that puts me in conflict with other members of the group, and that's okay, I'm fine with that, I don't need to push that, but that is definitely one of my goals to see policy change. I would like to see Women in Action incorporated into [the City's community funding framework] and I would like to see it have access to community resources. And I believe that's only right, I believe that Women in Action is actually doing the work of the community planners and of the recreation planners and the recreation providers, and should be compensated for it.

Although she was aware of the potential for negative repercussions, Anne generally portrayed this conflict positively, as a catalyst for change. This was echoed by Karlis et al. (1996) who suggested conflict can be beneficial to collaboration by allowing important issues to surface that might otherwise stay dormant, supporting the development of new communication and organizing structures. Therefore, Anne's role was often to name conflict and suggest For example, this was the case with Women in Action that was initiated partly in response to the Women's Centre approaching about increased access for women in low income. Increased awareness among municipal recreation staff about the barriers confronted by women on low income through their participation in Women has supported

In this chapter I discussed the findings of my literature, answering the three research questions presented in Chapter 1. For each research participant, their discourse of
community development was explored through the identification of key dimensions, and one central tension that emerged in their practice was highlighted. This section addressed my first and second research question. In addressing my third research question, I examined how multiple discourses both enhanced and inhibited the collaborative process. In the next chapter, I build on the discussion presented here, and provide conclusions and draw recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, I provide final conclusions drawn from my research and suggest ways this study contributes to three bodies of literature. I also provide recommendations for future research and practice.

Conclusions and Contributions to the Literature

This research had two purposes. The primary purpose was to examine the discourses of community development used by community workers representing diverse organizations partnering in a collaborative community-based organization designed to increase the involvement of women on low incomes in recreation planning and participation. A secondary purpose was to explore some of the implications of multiple discourses in this context. In this section I summarize my findings and contributions to the literature.

My analysis revealed a unique discourse of community development used by each research participant that had implications for how community development was conceptualized, the goals identified, and the role of the community worker in the process. For each discourse, central dimensions were identified and the influence of personal experiences and organizational context was explored. In the analysis, I also examined inconsistencies, contradictions, and resistance to other discourses that demonstrated the complexities involved in community development practice, and created tension that was sometimes left unresolved. One significant source of tension was discussed in-depth for each research participant.

Lisa, a Community Development Coordinator with a municipal recreation department, understood community development to be about giving voice, creating
opportunities for community members to be actively involved in the decision-making processes of the City. Her discourse focused on marginalized populations, a pro-active practice, and advocacy to facilitate systemic change. Unfortunately, trends towards new public management within the recreation sector conflicted with her social justice goals, creating confusion about what the City was “supposed to be about”. Anne, a Coordinator at a Women’s Centre, emphasized the dimensions of social change, equal partnerships, addressing power imbalances, and responsibility within a discourse focused on feminist action. Despite the feminist nature of Women in Action, persisting stereotypes of feminists as radicals caused her to subvert her feminist identity and resulted in feelings of having a hidden agenda. Finally, Karin, a Family Enhancement Worker at a family service agency, employed a discourse underpinned by the dimensions of building communities, supporting people’s strengths, group facilitation, and authentic relationships. For Karin, community development was about supporting agency, relating to her notion of citizenship. While Karin emphasized the value of community development to strengthen communities and decrease reliance on her organization, accountability to funding agencies placed constraints around her time and scope of practice.

This research contributed to the community development literature in two ways. First, it questioned idealized ways of portraying community development and began to explore the challenges of community-based practice (Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996). By describing each community worker’s discourse of community development, rather than comparing them on dimensions identified in the literature, this research gave voice to the complexities community workers experienced while negotiating competing personal values and organizational imperatives. Second, while previous research has considered the community development experiences of community members (cf. Arai, 1996; Glover, 2004;
Kretzman & McKnight, 1993), I found few studies that compared the personal experiences of individual community workers. Instead, the literature focused on the role of community workers as organizational agents (cf. Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993; Pilisuk et al., 1997; Selsky, 1991), or examined the benefits and risks of community development from an organizational perspective (cf. Hunter, 1986; Karlis et al., 1996). Unfortunately, this literature failed to convey the complexities involved as individual community workers negotiate multiple meanings, ambiguity, conflict, and competing interests. Therefore, this research built upon the literature to begin to demystify the community development process by focusing on the challenges of partnering in social justice work.

A secondary purpose of this research was to explore some of the implications of multiple discourses of community development in collaborative, community-based organization like Women in Action. While the research participants acknowledged differences in understandings and practices, the extent of these differences was greater than I anticipated. For example, my analysis identified ways in which multiple discourses both enhanced and inhibited collaboration. Similarities provided a base of support and created opportunities for community workers to learn from each other's practice. Differences limited participation in Women in Action as the practices related to some discourses over others positioned as "true" community development practices, and created tension as the project moved towards addressing social and systemic barriers. These findings built on existing literature on partnership and collaboration in community development, and more generally, partnerships to address complex social issues (Bradshaw, 2000; Selsky, 1991). Given the increasing prevalence of partnerships between organizations in the public sector to enhance or maintain service delivery, it is important to consider the implications when
diverse organizations collaborate (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993; Selsky, 1991; Thibault et al., 1999).

Finally, the use of poststructural theory and the concept of discourse to frame the ambiguity surrounding community development within Women in Action contributed to a small, but growing, body of literature from this perspective within the sport and recreation field (cf. McGannon & Mauws, 2002; Rail, 1998). The use of this theoretical framework calls into question the assumption of shared meanings, and challenges us to consider the ways in which knowledge is constructed through social practice. It also demands that we expand our understanding of power to incorporate knowledge production. Further, the findings of this study created space to consider how discourses are (re)produced through collaboration by providing opportunities for mutual learning and the development of alternative shared meanings. For this to occur, adequate initial and ongoing communication between community workers and other collaborators was essential, even though it was time-intensive. To further this agenda, I offered some recommendations for future research and practice below.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study and the interesting dynamics of Women in Action raised several questions that warrant further inquiry. I discuss three below.

**The (Re)production of Community Development**

One implication of multiple discourses of community development in collaborative community-based efforts considered the dynamics surrounding discourse (re)production. The findings of this research, drawing on data collected over a 20 month period, indicated some ways in which the discourses of the community workers changed through collaboration and mutual learning. Given continued interest in community development,
future research will need to attend to both subtle and radical changes as the notion of community development continues to be adapted in diverse sectors. To fully address this question of how discourses change over time, it will be important to consider how organizational context confine or contribute to change and whether community workers are able to transfer new meanings to other aspects of their community development practice.

*Discourses of Community Development of Other Stakeholders*

While my research focused on the discourses of community development used by three community workers involved in Women in Action, my involvement in the project as a research assistant made me privy to some of the dynamics involved as other community workers, the community members, and the research team negotiated their own discourses of community development. Although previous research has included multiple stakeholders in conceptualizing community development (cf. Frisby & Millar, 2002; Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996), my review of the literature did not reveal any studies that specifically compared differences and similarities between stakeholder groups. The findings of this research identified significant differences in the discourses of community development used by the community workers, and suggested ways in which personal experience and organizational context may have influenced them. This would suggest that the diverse experiences of other community workers, community members, and researchers would contribute to the emergence of additional discourses of community development (Parker, 1992). Future research could focus on giving voice to marginalized discourses and other interpretations of practice, examining further implications on collaboration.

*Discourses as Strategic Resources*

Beyond simply identifying discourses and their implications for action, future research could also explore the notion of discourse as a strategic resource (Hardy et al.,
Two specific examples within Women in Action draw attention to this. The first one was the use of the title Community Development Consultant on business cards created by the community members who believed they were doing community development for other women through Women in Action. Burr (1995) suggested it is a mistake to believe discourses that offer the possibility of a degree of power are reserved for particular individuals or groups. She argued that marginalized populations could gain validity by drawing on suitable discourses. In this case, the community members drew on a professional discourse in the use of “consultant” to increase their authority and legitimacy in the process, and perhaps equalize power imbalances with paid community workers and researchers. Therefore, future research could examine how marginalized populations use discourses to equalize or change power relations.

The second example is a significant example of action involving Lisa. During her first interview, Lisa explained how she reframed the City’s Leisure Access Program from an initiative that cost the City revenue by subsidizing fees, to one that generated revenue by engaging community members that would otherwise not be involved, unable to pay the full registration fee. By identifying competing discourses, future research could provide advocates and change agents with new ways to frame initiatives and programs to increase their relevance to decision-makers.

**Recommendations for Practice**

As a professional working in the sport and recreation field, the findings of my research and my experiences involved in Women in Action have influenced my practice in several ways. In this section, I provide my final reflections on the findings from this study, and identify three sets of recommendations for community-based practice.
Create Space for Discussion

My first set of recommendations concerns the importance of creating space for discussion within and between stakeholder groups. While there are many community development “how-to” resources available, community workers seldom have time to read and integrate key messages and learnings into their practice. All Women in Action members, including the researchers, valued opportunities to discuss concerns and questions about their involvement in the project. My research participants reported an appreciation for the interviews because they created space for them to critically reflect on their understanding and practice of community development. Similarly, the group context provided by the interactive meetings was a time for the community workers to discuss mutual issues, share key lessons, validate their challenges and confusion, and negotiate shared meanings. Meetings also allowed the community workers to better understand the diverse work environments and competing demands of other collaborators (Selsky, 1991). This was particularly important considering the ways in which the organizational contexts influenced the discourses of my research participants. Therefore, I recommend that similar opportunities be integrated into future participatory action research models and community-based project evaluation strategies.

Recommendation #1: Integrate scheduled meetings, like Women in Action’s interactive meetings, into participatory action research models and community-based project evaluation strategies, on a regular basis.

While the interactive meetings provided an opportunity for the community members to discuss issues they felt uncomfortable raising in front of the community members, many indicated an interest in have joint meetings that would provide a space to discuss specific issues. For example, in discussing their role in Women in Action, some community workers felt community members should be included in the conversation to
communicate their expectations of the community workers. Discussion about community development and its meaning across stakeholder groups may have decreased ambiguity and tension between the stakeholder groups. Watt et al. (2000, p. 130) suggested that,

... viewing circumstances and change as a matter of perspective is necessary, but unhelpful, unless all parties can be aware of the reality of varying perspectives ... It is only through this type of extended communication that authorities and community members can explore and address the many hidden parameters which affect circumstances and necessitate or facilitate change. All parties must work together to be proactive as well as reactive.

While no interactive meetings were organized that brought the community workers and community members involved in Women in Action together, these stakeholder groups did meet in other forums, such as the project team meeting. However, the agendas on these meetings were often full, limiting open discussion. It is likely Women in Action could have benefited from meetings dedicated to discussing emerging issues and concerns.

**Recommendation #2:** Opportunities for conversation within and between stakeholder groups should be provided.

While many issues and concerns were raised during the interactive meetings, additional issues were raised during one-on-one interviews that were not brought forward by the research participants in the group context. For example, Lisa reported sometimes feeling overwhelmed and silenced by the skills of some of the other community workers. Karin raised questions about leaving the project due to competing demands within her organizational context, unsure of the process required to exit without jeopardizing professional or personal relationships. The disclosure of these additional issues created an opportunity to validate the concerns of the research participants, but provided a challenge in how to share these important concerns within the larger group. While in some cases the research participants felt able to raise the issues after our initial discussion, or permission was granted for me to raise them anonymously, many concerns were left unshared.
Regardless, the issues that were shared enhanced the practice of the community workers and further demystified the community development process.

**Recommendation #3:** Create one-on-one opportunities to further demystify community development practice and support community workers.

While researcher roles in feminist participatory action research studies continue to be surrounded with ambiguity (cf. Frisby et al., forthcoming; Reid, 2000), researchers can play an important role in creating space for discussion. In addition to organizing interviews and meetings, as knowledge brokers, researchers can play a role in disseminating theory and promising practices to community workers for further reflection and to validate their practice. Through this process, researchers can give voice to marginalized discourses and increase awareness and understanding of competing discourses, such as the new public management discourse that placed market-driven imperatives before social justice goals. Given the ambiguity surrounding community development that surfaced in this research, discussion could also support awareness, among community workers and other stakeholders, of the benefits and potential pitfalls of multiple discourses (Karlis et al., 1996). The dissemination of findings throughout the research process could further enhance the reflexive process and collaboration.

**Recommendation #4:** Researchers should assume an active role in disseminating theory and best practices to community workers, and regularly communicate findings and analysis to enhance collaboration.

**Embrace Diverse Discourses**

A second set of recommendations addresses the importance of embracing diverse discourses. Given the benefits of multi-sectoral partnerships in sharing resources, supporting mutual learning, and accessing marginalized populations, initial goals and motives for involvement in community development should be weighed against active
process and actual outcomes. Despite diverse goals and motives for involvement, community workers, community members, and researchers collaborated to successfully increase the involvement of women on low income in recreation decision-making and participation. As gatekeepers to facilities, financial resources, and knowledge, it is important to encourage the involvement of community workers in community development projects, rather than vilify them if they are not doing community development "right." As this research demonstrated, the discourses of the community workers were influenced by personal experiences and organizational contexts that affected their practice. Introducing aspects of community development into community-based collaboration provided alternative models of decision-making and community participation that can be incorporated into the practice repertoires of community workers in other projects and settings.

**Recommendation #5:** Avoid vilifying community workers who employ top-down discourses. Rather, value the resources they bring to collaborative community-based projects, and their organizational experiences.

**Recommendation #6:** By introducing alternative models of community practice, community workers can potentially influence change towards social justice goals.

**Balance Preset Agendas with Emerging Group Goals**

One final recommendation pertains to the development of collaborative community-based organization goals or research agendas. While the literature suggested community workers should enter community development projects without a set agenda (cf. Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996; Pilisuk et al., 1997), the current realities of government funding and accountability make this difficult for both community workers and researchers. Therefore, it is necessary to find ways to balance preset agendas with project goals and objectives that emerge from the community members. Findings from my research suggested two strategies.
First, community workers need to better understand the interconnections between social issues to justify their participation in projects with goals that appear tangential to their job or their organization's mandate. Second, community workers and researchers need to promote the importance of community-driven projects with funding agencies and government organizations to educate and facilitate policy change to ensure projects are meeting the self identified needs of the community.

**Recommendation #7:** To balance preset agendas with project goals and objectives that emerge from community members, understand the interconnections between aspects of complex social issues to appropriately development project proposals and report on outcomes; and leverage community-based experience to affect change at the policy level.

In this chapter I discussed the conclusions of my research and identified my contribution to the literature. I also made recommendations for future research and practice. This research raised important issues for consideration about the nature of community development practice and the complexities involved as community workers negotiate social justice goals with financial imperatives in a collaborative environment. Within larger society, ambiguity continues to surround community development. However, Ife (1995, p. xiii) suggests the term's "popularity is a testament to [its] power perceived relevance." Therefore, I encourage community workers, community members, policy-makers and researchers to consider community development as a strategy to address society's ills.
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Appendix A
Data Set
Appendix A
Data Set

Phase 1

Project Team Meeting Field Notes
  February 8, 2000
  April 5, 2000
  August 22, 2000
  January 11, 2001

Interactive Meeting Transcript
  June 12, 2000

Interview Transcripts
  Anne - March 18, 2000
  Lisa - March 15, 2000
  Karin - March 7, 2000

Phase 2

Interview Transcripts
  Anne - April 30 & May 3, 2001
  Lisa - May 1 & May 8, 2001
  Karin - April 30 & May 4, 2001

Interactive Meeting Transcript
  July 20, 2001
Appendix B
Interview Schedules
MA Thesis Interview Schedule
(Used with three Research Participants)

1. At this time, what is your job title and associated responsibilities within your organization? Is Women in Action part of your job? What is keeping you involved?

2. What do you understand Women in Action to be about? Do you think the focus of Women in Action has changed or new agendas become apparent? If so, what are the implications of this? If not, are there issues that are not being addressed, or are there directions that you thought the project would move towards that it has not?

3. Are you involved with any of the subgroups? How often do you attend subgroup meetings and/or are you involved with the subgroup in other ways? Do you see your role being any different at the subgroup level and the Project Team level? What are the strengths of the subgroup at this point in time? Is the subgroup facing any challenges or tensions? What do you see your role being in helping them work through these challenges? Has the subgroup proposed any changes that you have been opposed to, and what did you do? Are there any changes you would like to see in the subgroup, and have you communicated these to the group?

4. In the past you have described your involvement with Women in Action as community development. What does community development mean to you? What does this type of work entail, what skills/strategies are needed? What values do you associate with community development? Is community development about self-help? Is community development about expanding community services? Is community development about empowerment?

5. Can you provide some examples of your community development practice through Women in Action? Can you tell me about some of your experiences in other community development projects? How are those similar or different than Women in Action? What key lessons have you learned through your community development experiences in Women in Action so far? What challenges have you encountered “doing” community development in Women in Action (e.g., in employing these values or strategies while negotiating power, collaborating, sharing decision-making, working with diverse stakeholders)?

6. Are there any other ways you would describe your involvement or role with Women in Action, or other agendas you feel you bring to your work (e.g., advocacy, feminism, service/program delivery)? What strategies and values are associated with this type of involvement? Can you provide some examples of how this has influenced your participation in Women in Action? What challenges have you encountered through this involvement in Women in Action?

7. How did you come to be “doing” community development? What effect have your educational and/or organizational experiences had on your involvement in this type of work and your practice? Why are you interested in/committed to community development? (Epiphany? Personal link? Key experience?)
8. Do you think other community workers involved in Women in Action share your understanding of community development? How do you think their understanding is similar or different? What might be causing these similarities or differences? What benefits or challenges have you encountered working with community workers who have i) similar understandings of community development; ii) different understandings of community development?

9. What other approaches or types of involvement/practice do the community workers bring to Women in Action? What issues have emerged in collaborating with community workers who have different organizational or educational backgrounds, values, and/or professional norms (e.g., differences in goals, expected outcomes, values, practices, commitment, accountability)? What implications (positive and negative) does/could this have on Women in Action?

10. Is there any conflict or tension amongst the community workers involved in Women in Action? What was the cause of this conflict or tension? How has this situation been handled? If a conflict should arise, what would happen?

11. How supportive is your organization of Women in Action and your involvement in the project? How does community development fit with your organization’s mandate or vision? Have you experienced any conflict working from a community development perspective in your organization? How would you compare your organization’s understanding of community development with your own? Do you have any concerns about your organization’s approach? Do you see your organization’s structure, type of service or current level of community involvement creating any challenges for your involvement in Women in Action or their endorsement of community development?

12. Throughout the public sector there has been a shift towards community development; can you explain this trend within your own field? What is a community development strategy attempting to address?

13. What current issues are prevalent in your field or profession (e.g., social, economic, legal pressures)? What are the implications of these pressures for i) Women in Action; ii) your continued involvement in Women in Action; iii) your organization’s continued support of Women in Action? How is your own/your organization’s involvement with Women in Action addressing these issues/pressures? How do you understand community development to “fit” with the environmental pressures your organization is facing?

14. How do social change and/or challenging the status quo fit into Women in Action? Do you think social change and/or challenging the status quo are important? What is your role in facilitating social change and/or challenging the status quo through Women in Action? What does social change and/or challenging the status quo mean to you? Are we empowering the women to work within existing structures?

15. What are the major challenges facing Women in Action at this point in time? What is your role in “managing” these?
16. What do you think about the diversity of participants involved in Women in Action at this time? Do you think the involvement of diverse community members is important in a project like this? Who does an organization like Women in Action appeal to and who does it not appeal to? What affects has Women in Action’s original focus on recreation had on who is around the table?

17. One subgroup has faced a lot of challenges. What is your assessment of the situation - what is the problem, what are the potential implications? Are there any strategies that you would have like to have seen used, or strategies that were employed that you think were ineffective? What is the role of Women in Action when conflict like this arises? What solutions do you see, or what advice would you give to Women in Action about this situation?

18. During the project team meetings and throughout the project so far, there has been a lot of discussion about sustainability. What does sustainability mean to you? How is sustainability linked to community development? What steps do you think are necessary for Women in Action to become sustainable? What role do you and/or your organization have in sustaining Women in Action over the long term?

19. Are there any other questions that we should be asking the community workers?
SSHRC Interview Schedule
(Used with other Community Workers involved with Women in Action)

1. At this time, what is your job title and associated responsibilities within your organization? Is Women in Action part of this? If not, where are you finding support for your involvement?

2. How do you describe your involvement or role in Women in Action (e.g., community development, advocacy, facilitation, other)?
   a) What strategies/practices does this involvement entail? What values inform this type of involvement?
   b) What does community development mean to you? What does this type of work entail, what skills/strategies are needed? What values do you associate with community development?

3. Can you provide some success stories or specific challenges you are facing through your involvement with Women in Action?

4. Are you involved with any of the subgroups? How often do you attend subgroup meetings and/or are you involved with the subgroup in other ways? Do you see your role being any different at the subgroup level (vs. the Project Team level, or Women in Action as a whole)? Is the subgroup facing any challenges/tensions that you have not yet mentioned? What do you see your role being in helping them work through these challenges? What do you see as the strengths of the subgroup at this point in time? Has the subgroup proposed any changes that you have been opposed to, and what did you do? Are there any changes you would like to see in the subgroup, and have you communicated these to the group?

5. Do you think other community workers involved in Women in Action share your understanding of your role(s) in Women in Action? How do you think their understanding is similar or different? What might be causing these similarities or differences? What benefits or challenges have you encountered working with community workers who have a) similar understandings/practice/roles; b) different understandings/practice/roles?

6. What do you understand Women in Action to be about? Do you think the focus of Women in Action has changed or new agendas become apparent? If so, what are the implications of this? If not, are there issues that are not being addressed, or are there directions that you thought the project would move towards that it has not?

7. What do you think about the diversity of participants involved in Women in Action at this time? Do you think the involvement of diverse community members is important in a project like this? Who does an organization like Women in Action appeal to and who does it not appeal to? What effects has Women in Action original focus on recreation had on who is around the table?
8. What current issues/pressures are prevalent in your field/profession or position? What are the implications of these pressures for i) Women in Action; ii) your continued involvement in Women in Action; iii) your organization’s continued support of Women in Action? How is your/your organization’s involvement with Women in Action addressing these issues/pressures? (for those “doing” community development - How do you understand community development to “fit” with the environmental pressures your organization is facing?)

9. During the project team meetings and throughout the project so far, there has been a lot of discussion about sustainability. What does sustainability mean to you? What steps do you think are necessary for Women in Action to become sustainable? What role do you and/or your organization have in sustaining Women in Action over the long term?

10. Are there any other questions that we should be asking the community workers?
Appendix C
University Ethical Approval
Appendix D
Letter of Initial Contact and Informed Consent
Letter of Initial Contact

(Date)

Letter of Initial Contact and Consent Form

Dear (Community Worker),

I am currently working on my Master's Degree at the University of British Columbia in the School of Human Kinetics. Under the supervision of Dr. Wendy Frisby, I am initiating a research project examining community development in the municipal recreation field as my graduate thesis. The title of the project is "Examining multiple discourses of community development in a collaborative community-based organization." By speaking to you about your involvement in Women in Action, I would like to learn more about your understanding of community development, what practices underpin its use, and how your understanding of community development is affected by your personal experience and organizational context.

The research portion of the study would involve your voluntary participation in one personal interview to discuss your work experiences. The interview session would be approximately 1.5 hours, and with your consent will be tape recorded for later transcription.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about the project and obtain your consent to participate. Please note that your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without jeopardizing your involvement with Women in Action. Confidentiality is ensured as the names of study participants and the specific organizations they represent will not be identified when results are reported. If you agree to participate, please sign the attached consent form. A copy of this letter and consent form is included for your files. If you have any questions about this project now or during the course of the study, please contact me at 604-737-4300 or Dr. Wendy Frisby at 604-822-6445. If you have any questions about your treatment or rights as a participant, you may contact Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the U.B.C. Office of Research Services and Administration, at 604-288-8598.

Sincerely,

Sydney Millar
Informed Consent Form

I understand that my participation in the study (entitled “Examining multiple discourses of community development in a collaborative community-based organization”) is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to my employment, participation in Women in Action, or standing in the community. I have received a copy of the letter of initial contact for my own records.

I consent to participate in this study.

Subject Signature
Date

Signature of Witness
Date

I consent to having the group meetings tape-recorded.

Subject Signature
Date

Signature of Witness
Date

I consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Subject Signature
Date

Subject Signature
Date