RESTORING A LIVABLE BALANCE IN A DOWNTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD: THE ROLE OF VALUES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN WOMEN'S WAYS OF WORK

by

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ABSTRACT

RESTORING A LIVABLE BALANCE IN A DOWNTOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD: THE ROLE OF VALUES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN WOMEN'S WAYS OF WORK

This qualitative case study explored the role played by women in their efforts to restore a livable balance within their southern Ontario downtown neighbourhood, between 1989 and 1995. Negatively impacted by the presence of crack houses, prostitution, and johns seeking sexual favours, the women who lived in the neighbourhood took leadership in ensuring that the diversity that they had previously enjoyed in their community was brought back into balance. The study participants included the women who were active in the initiative, residents from the neighbourhood, municipal officials, and various police officers. Strategies used by the women in this neighbourhood change initiative included the following: implementing leisure programmes resulting in community building among residents; becoming informed about issues and the political process; and developing extensive linkages and working relationships with community organizations and municipal officials. Key roles played by the women were those of protector/ defender of their values related to children, families, and their understanding of community. Central to the women's experience during this initiative were the friendships and feeling of affiliation that they developed with each other. These friendships served as a motivator in their protecting/defending roles and were a sustaining feature that supported the women throughout the entire initiative. The findings also show how the women's friendships allowed them to engage in a long-term social learning process and social capital development.

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This thesis has been a privilege to write. How often, in our adult life, do we get to totally focus on a project and indulge in our own learning? I am truly grateful for having had this opportunity.

There are wonderful people who have played a part in getting me to the point where I am even writing this acknowledgement. To my community advisors, who remained committed to the project until its completion, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks. They taught me about compassion, about social justice, and about the value and depth of friendships. For all the times they met with me, and responded to my various e-mails and requests for input, I want to thank them. My hope is that they will find the results useful and informative in the work that they continue to do in their neighbourhood. I hope they know how much I appreciate every one of them. They are simply amazing women!

To my advisors, Dr. Alison Pedlar and Dr. Pierre Filion, I want to say how much I have appreciated their guidance throughout the four years I have been a student under their supervision. Pierre always made me feel like I belonged in Planning and in the doctoral programme--that I had the capability to do the work. His encouragement meant a great deal to me. As for Alison, I hardly know where to begin. I have learned so very much from her. When I think back to some of our talks together—which I'm sure she will remember well—it's wonderful to finally be here. She is an amazing mentor. I will always be grateful for her. To you both, my deepest thanks.

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DEDICATION

To my mom.
(1917-2000)

For teaching our family the value of life long learning.

And for reminding me that if I just step away from it for awhile,
it will all feel so much better when I come back to it!

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For many years, my practitioner roles within both the public and non-profit sectors involved community development efforts on the local, neighbourhood level. During this time, it was my observation that it was commonly the women who resided in these neighbourhoods who were particularly active in various local initiatives. The types of concerns that these women typically addressed included political issues, concerns pertaining to safety and security, or the planning and implementation of recreation activities and services.

Of interest was that the active role that women played was rarely acknowledged by practitioners. That these women may have had particular needs, interests, or ways of work specific to their gender was ignored. It was out of these personal experiences and observations that I developed an interest in examining women's participation in addressing issues on a local, neighbourhood level and to develop a deeper understanding of women's ways of work in their neighbourhoods.

As I began exploring the literature pertaining to women's community activism, I realized that there was a need to study the roles that women assume in their neighbourhood contexts, the style of leadership they provide, the type of political action in which they engage, and the ways in which this community work contributes to their leisure experiences.

To conduct this study, I chose a neighbourhood that had addressed issues pertaining to municipal planning policies, safety, and recreation. The neighbourhood under study had experienced transition in its immediate area resulting from the business activities of drug dealers and prostitutes—business dealings that made the neighbourhood unlivable. The initiative under study consisted of the women's efforts to bring their neighbourhood into a more livable balance, so that they and their families could enjoy the neighbourhourhood as they had previously. Using a single case study, I conducted an in-depth examination of a neighbourhood in a downtown core of a mid-sized urban centre. The intent of a single case study is not to generalize, but to identify findings that might be transferable to other neighbourhood initiatives.

The following study found that the key roles played by the women in this particular case study consisted of protecting and defending their homes, children, sense of community values, and their friendships with each other. As well, it was primarily women who were the political organizers of the action taken to address the issues in their neighbourhood. This study also found that the friendships developed between these women became the sustaining feature that supported them throughout the entire neighbourhood initiative, and contributed to the development of both social learning and social capital within their neighbourhood. This exploration of the role of women in a neighbourhood initiative will begin with an examination of the role that women have historically played within their communities.

Women's Roles Within Their Local Communities: An Historical Perspective

Prior to the industrial revolution, all members of the family were customarily involved as an economic unit in the family's business (e.g. agriculture) (Mackenzie, 1988). As such, women had an economic role to play. After the industrial revolution, when families relocated to urban areas and men were employed in enterprises external to the family, women's role became centred in the home (Hayden, 1984). Their key function was to shape and sustain the moral ecology of the family unit (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985).

As families became more affluent, women were able to engage in educational pursuits, become literate, and participate in organizational activities within the church and their local communities. In fact, women have been responsible for the emergence of a number of social institutions that currently exist. These grassroots organizations include children's clubs for recreation and education, daycare centres, settlement houses, and organizations for young women (e.g., Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)) (Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996; Wekerle & Peake, 1996).

Historically, women's efforts in the community have tended to replicate the type of work and activity that they undertake in their homes and in their workplaces (Dominelli, 1995; Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Susser, 1990; Wekerle & Peake, 1996). Henderson et al. (1996) indicate that women are generally more motivated than men to spend time with their children and Horna (1994) notes that women's leisure is, in fact, often an extension

of the family. Not surprisingly then, women tend to volunteer for activities that are directly related to children and the family (Nelis & Hutchison, 1982; South Wales Association of Tenants, 1982; Wekerle & Peake, 1996).

One way that women become involved in their communities is through neighbourhood associations. It seems that volunteering to assist with the operation of a summer playground programme or pre-school activity designed for their children is a common entry point for neighbourhood participation. Mothers may offer to act as volunteer drivers or committee members and in doing so, become connected to the neighbourhood association in general, and to other women volunteers in particular. Similarly, many women become involved in the local school as an entry point into community service. By volunteering in support of an activity for a family member, they take time away from domestic duties and are able to meet some of their personal needs for leisure, companionship and affiliation (Piche, 1988).

Where women have chosen more formal, political structures for their community involvement, their interests often reflect those of human concern, ideals of care, and interconnectedness (Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Friedman, 1992; Young, 1995). Women's campaigns at the local level have tended to centre on issues like childcare, pornography, family violence, community health, and rape (Milroy, 1996; Moser, Herbert, & Makonnen, 1993; Susser, 1990; Wekerle & Peake, 1996). Women have met with some success in these endeavors through their linkages and partnerships with alternative, women-centred, community-based projects (e.g. rape crisis centres, women's shelters). While some of these organizations have had national or regional affiliations (e.g. YWCA), the local community appears to be the level at which women feel most able to

gain a voice in political activity while addressing women's issues (Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Green, 1998; Milroy, 1996; Wekerle & Peake, 1996).

Men seem to take up the "hard issues" like economic development, and assume roles where they are able to make "important" decisions. Women are generally concerned with "softer issues" such as school closures (Curno, Lamming, Leach, Stiles, Ward, & Ziff, 1982). The care of others is a way for women to experience a sense of control in their lives (Henderson & Allen, 1991). If women were to relinquish their identity as caregivers, they would have fewer options to establish or express an identity. Their community involvement, in fact, can provide them with a sense of power in at least one aspect of their lives (Green, 1998).

Women's approaches to community service have emerged from work and employment activities that differ from men, and the community service work that they do tends to reflect their social values (Susser, 1990). Rather than adapting themselves to roles that have been created by men for men, women involved in grassroots initiatives are interested in transforming social relations to be more egalitarian and inclusive—values that are in keeping with women's sense of gender identity (Dominelli, 1995; Iannello, 1992).

The key value that guides community organizing by women is that everyone has a voice. Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock (1997) suggest that voice acts as a metaphor in two ways. First, it supports the growth of the individual as she claims the power of her mind; when she uses her voice, it is heard. Second, as members of the community articulate their thoughts and collaborate to solve their problems, they are also exercising their right

to seek justice. Helgeson (1990) found that voice acts as a way for a woman to present herself to others, and to present that which she knows. In fact, women's ways of leading encourage others to find their voices in order to grow.

Community work also provides an opportunity for social acceptance and friendship, something common in women's collectives. Such milieux make it difficult to discriminate between leisure and non-leisure (Shivers, 1985). While not fully understood, there are many meanings that can be attached to these networks of friendship and support (Green, 1998). What *is* known, however, is that leisure as affiliation for women is expressed through friendships and interaction with others (Freysinger, 1995; Green, 1998), providing opportunities for self-expression leading to increased self esteem and sense of identity (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). As such, if community work provides opportunities for friendship, and if friendship provides opportunity for leisure, how does community work contribute to women's leisure? Research into this issue requires further exploration.

The work that women do is often considered part of their natures and concomitantly rendered invisible (Belenky et al. 1997; Gittel, Ortega-Bustamante, & Steffy, 2000; Morgan, 1992). Related to this assumption about women's work is the fact that we know little about women as leaders. Women have not typically been seen in leadership roles. Ironically, as Belenky et al. have stated, we likely know less about women as leaders than we do about women who have been silenced through depression and despair.

In North American society, status is often only afforded to the public domain, which is generally characterized as impartial, detached, autonomous, and lacking bias or

emotional distortion (Morgan, 1992). As these characteristics are typically defined as "masculine", it is the male perspective that commonly interprets knowledge and experience. As such, women's roles as caregivers and care providers both within and outside of the family unit, have kept women marginalized and largely invisible (Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991; Mackenzie, 1988; Wekerle & Peake, 1996). "An important critical task is to discover and render visible the hidden [public] domains of women's lives while establishing women's claim to the full spectrum of moral action and character" (Morgan, 1992, 323). This is particularly so as women are increasingly defining themselves as political actors and creating new solutions to urban problems (Mackenzie, 1988). Rather than regret the absence of power that women experience in many traditional forms of community, an approach based on the caring work that women do, invites an opportunity to re-imagine and create dynamic new forms of community, community building, and collective action (Everingham, 1996).

In summary, the discussion above notes several reasons why the role of women in communities should be studied:

a) community action by women often relates directly to issues involving their children and their families;
b) unlike males, the immediate community (being situated close to their private domain) appears to be the level at which women feel most able to gain a voice in political activity;
c) women's approaches to community work have emerged from work and employment activities that differ from men's;

d) the community service work that women do tends to closely reflect their social values;

e) women involved in grassroots initiatives are interested in transforming social relations to be more egalitarian and inclusive. These values are in keeping with women's sense of gender identity, which differs from a masculine perspective;

f) women's approaches to work concentrate on cultivating their development through a reflexive learning process, which is accomplished in relationship and dialogue with others. As such, it is a different way of work than that common to men; and

g) the work that women do is often considered part of their natures and concomitantly rendered invisible. Women have not typically been seen in leadership roles. By studying their roles in collective action, women's work will be made visible.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of women in a community initiative. The focus is on understanding the leadership and action that women contribute at the neighbourhood level. Of particular interest is why and how women act to restore and sustain their neighbourhood. Not unlike many inner city areas that have been faced with the "flight to the suburbs", the neighbourhood that will serve as a site for this exploration is one that has faced extraordinary pressures related to changes in its social, economic and physical composition over the past 10-15 years. Those people who chose to stay in the neighbourhood have remained to "fight" for its preservation as a residential

community close to the hub of downtown. This has, for some, meant taking action into the political arena. Others have worked informally to keep their community livable and secure. It is all of these activities that comprise the "community initiative" with which this study is concerned.

The social learning approach to planning (Friedmann, 1981; 1987) was used as a theoretical framework for this study because in preliminary discussions with the women who were most actively involved in the neighbourhood initiative, it became apparent that they had informally adopted a social learning approach to their ways of work. Developed in the early 1970's, but rooted in the work of earlier theorists such as Dewey and Mumford, social learning theory attempts to bridge the gap between personal, or organic knowledge (Rubin, 1994), and technical knowledge, through a process of mutual learning (Wolfe, 1989). In social learning, groups learn through their actions—commonly called 'practice'—by reflecting on what has occurred and through dialogue with each other (Wilson, 1997). Social learning has action and purposeful activity as its central feature (Friedmann, 1987).

Friedmann (1987), interested in how social learning principles could be applied to planning in the public domain, argued that the correlation between practice and learning also occurred in a public planning context. He linked social practice to political struggle, suggesting that social learning results when individuals or organizations engage in political struggle to overcome the status quo (1981). Social learning, which happens informally, generally occurs in small, task-oriented groups, and those who act are also those who learn. What is done in practice, becomes what is learned by the group and its members. It is this learning that informs action and how action is done in the future.

Social learning involves the following concepts: *theories of reality*, that are based both on the actor's current experiences, as well as that which has previously been learned; *vision and values*, that inspire the actors to act; *political strategy and tactics*, to overcome resistance or to transform the reality into what is desired; and *action*, the interventions that change the reality being transformed (Friedmann, 1982; 1987). Friedmann goes on to suggest that without vision and values, there is no radical practice. Without practice, there is no theory. Without theory, there is no political strategy. Finally, without strategy, there is no action. Each of the concepts interact with the other, and the process is fluid among them. The following schematic provides a visual outline of how the social learning process occurs. While the schematic appears linear in form, the process itself is iterative.

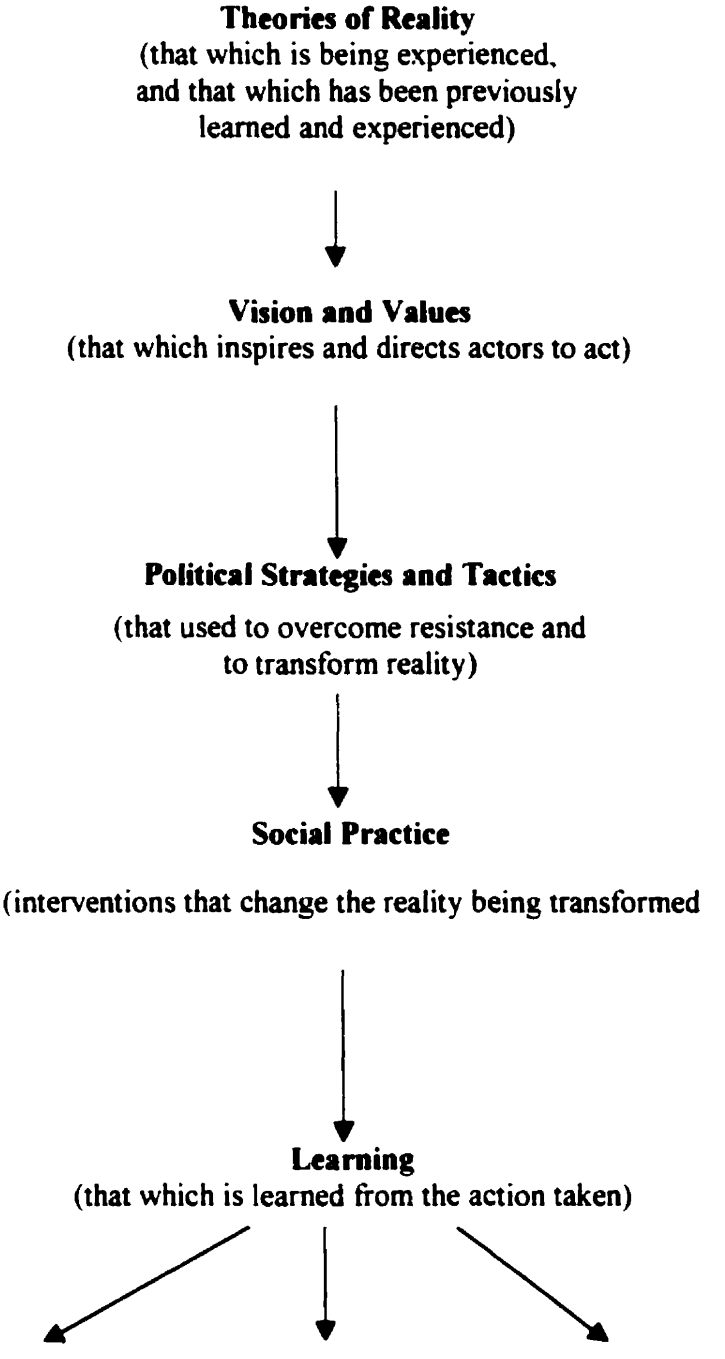


Figure 1. A social learning approach to planning (Friedmann, 1987)

The social learning approach to planning is appropriate for this study for a number of reasons. First, as mentioned, social learning commonly occurs in task-oriented groups and in a planning context, these task groups are typically involved in some form of political struggle (Friedmann, 1981). Often, these groups are situated in local community settings, with the participants being the neighbourhood residents and acquaintances. Because the work of the group is based in large part on people's everyday experiences, the neighbourhood level is the ideal setting for social learning to occur (Dewey, 1927; Hill, 1985). As the initiative being studied in this thesis relates to neighbourhood-based political activism, the social learning approach to planning can be appropriately applied.

Second, social learning primarily occurs in small groups and is experienced through personal contact and dialogue among members of the group. Much of the interaction is done in a face-to-face manner (Friedmann, 1981, 1987). Characteristic of women's ways of learning is a process of constant evaluation, experimenting, and discussing (Belenky et al. 1997). As well, women tend to create opportunities where community issues can be discussed, thereby creating space for the type of dialogue characteristic of social learning (Gittlel et al. 2000). The relevance of women's community work emerges through a defining of problems reflecting their reality, a questioning of systems and social institutions to solve problems, and a concern for the empowerment of residents within their local context (Andolsen, Gudorf, & Pellauer, 1985; Dominelli, 1995; Piche, 1988). Because dialogue is characteristic of both the social learning approach to planning, women's ways of learning, and women's ways of work, social learning is an appropriate framework in which to embed this study.

Another characteristic of social learning is that it tends to occur informally. Social learning is rarely systematically designed or intended, and is not usually articulated into any formal language or discourse (Friedmann, 1987). Similarly, women involved in advocacy work have informal ways of learning, and typically rely on their personal experience to guide them through their work. Formal education is not necessarily required to do advocacy or activism work and women, in particular, tend to learn by watching others (Mattison & Storey, 1992). As such, the social learning approach to planning is a model that closely reflects women's ways of learning.

As mentioned, the women who were involved in the neighbourhood initiative under study often spoke of the learning that they were required to do in order to be effective in their political activities. During the preliminary focus group discussions with them, numerous references were made to their learning. This learning included becoming educated about such issues as policing policies and procedures; municipal government structure, roles, and responsibilities; and political activism. When asked what advice they would give to other women attempting to start a similar initiative in a different neighbourhood, Marilyn, one of the women involved in the initiative, responded by saying "learn, learn, learn" (March 7, 2000). It became readily apparent that learning had been a key requirement and strategy for these women in their political efforts. As well, the women often spoke about their values and how central they had been to their problem solving discussions and their choice of strategic approaches. As values and learning are key features of the social learning approach to planning, this is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

Lastly, during my 25 years of professional practice consulting with neighbourhood and community based volunteer groups, I saw that these types of groups had informal, organic ways of learning. Rarely did we talk of organization theory or social action theory or other types of theory that may have applied to the task at hand. These group members—primarily women—simply shared their knowledge, made observations, experimented with strategies and approaches, and evaluated what occurred. Social learning was a common process in these groups—groups that were similar to the neighbourhood group being studied in this thesis. For all the reasons noted above, the social learning approach to planning was used to guide the development of the research questions and assist in my acquiring an in-depth understanding of the role played by the women in the neighbourhood initiative under study.

Research Questions

The research questions that the study explored were organized around the features of the social learning process and addressed theories of reality, values, and political strategy and tactics. As Figure 1 indicates, the actions that were taken in the neighbourhood emerged from these features and identified the role that women played in the initiative.

The principal research question was:

What was the role of women in a community initiative situated in their residential neighbourhood?

Sub-questions that allowed for a fuller exploration of the grand tour question were:

Theories of Reality

In what context did the leadership provided by women emerge?

What was the leadership provided by women?

Vision and Values

Why did the women involve themselves in political action?

What was the context within which this emerged (e.g. forging community partnerships, participating in policy development, formal municipal politics)?

Political Strategy and Tactics

In what political action did the women engage?

What community organizing activities did the women develop (e.g., mobilizing community in citizen's meetings, community safety walks, festivals, recreation programmes)?

Did this community work provide a site for resistance by the women to the tendency of traditional planning processes to render them invisible and voiceless?

Did these community activities contribute to women's leisure?

Social Practice

What action was taken by women to transform the reality in their neighbourhood?

Learning

What learning has resulted from the women's participation in the initiative?

Given that this research was concerned with a community initiative in a specific residential neighbourhood, a case study method (Stake, 1994, 1995; Yin, 1994) was used to explore the research questions. A case study is a form of empirical inquiry that examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The case study attempts to examine interventions made within a situation, and to explain links between

the intervention and its result. As well, case studies describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred (Yin, 1994).

Case Study Site: The Demographics of the "River Valley" Neighbourhood

Situated in a southern Ontario community, the case study site is located in the core area of an urban centre. Adjacent to the city's downtown, "River Valley" is an established neighbourhood that is largely residential but includes some commercial development as well.

The following demographic information characterizes the composition of the River Valley neighbourhood. Data were drawn from two sources: the 1991 census and the 1996 census conducted by Statistics Canada (Canada, 1991, 1996). These data are introduced to indicate the changes occurring in the neighbourhood, which itself was under transition, during the time frame explored in the study. [1]

The total population in River Valley decreased from 2270 residents in 1991 to 1890 in 1996. These data suggest a considerable demographic change. However, it is unknown whether the decrease is a result of the turmoil being experienced in the neighbourhood or other factors related to statistical data gathering difficulties given the language differences presented by a significant immigrant population in the neighbourhood.

The following table identifies the educational levels in the neighbourhood, in comparison with the city overall.

[1] It should be noted that not all categories provided by Statistics Canada in regards to education, income, and ethnic origin are included in the above discussion. Only categories considered to be particularly significant to the neighbourhood and the study were selected.

Table 1

Education Levels in River Valley and City Totals and Percentage Differences

	Less than Grade 9	Secondary School With Certificate	University with Degree
River Valley			
1991	340	305	170
1996	305	210	180
Percentage Increase/Decrease	-10.2%	-31.1%	5.8%
City-wide			
1991	14,560	20,460	13,685
1996	13,370	20,395	16,115
Percentage Increase/Decrease	-8.1%	-.31%	17.7%

The number of people in River Valley completing secondary school decreased by 31.1% from 1991 to 1996, while city wide, the number of people completing high school showed only a very slight decrease. The number of people in River Valley who had graduated with a university degree, while indicating an increase, did not compare with the more dramatic increase, which occurred city-wide. In general, the level of education in River Valley is low, compared to the city in total.

Average incomes for the River Valley neighbourhood and the city are identified in the following table.

Table 2
Average Income In Dollars

	Average Income Males 15+	Average Income Females 15+	Average Income Family Income	Average Income Household Income
River Valley				
1991	22,044	15, 969	37, 164	31,157
1996	21, 218	14,722	37, 897	28,899
City-wide				
1991	30,654	17,682	52,241	47,115
1996	31,135	19,696	54,629	48,769

Family income is defined as the total income of a census family household (defined as a married couple, common-law couple, or single parent with at least one child in the household). Household income includes total incomes of all members of the household, regardless of relationship. With the exception of average family income, the average income for males, females, and households in River Valley have all shown decreases since 1991. In both 1991 and 1996, all income levels in each category were lower in River Valley than the income averages for those categories city-wide.

Of interest are the data regarding housing tenure. Home ownership over the study period indicated a slight increase of 5.1%, which indicated some continued investment in the neighbourhood. Concurrently, the data also indicate a decrease in rental units from 1991 (n = 780) to 1996 (n = 645).

During the study period, the 1991 census information indicated a fairly diverse neighbourhood with the major ethnic origins reported as follows: English (n = 305), German (n = 205), Canadian (n = 105), Vietnamese (n = 100), Portuguese (n = 75) and Polish (n = 65). In addition to smaller representations of various other ethnic origins

such as Spanish, Yugoslvian, Croation, and Jewish, 235 residents were grouped by Statistics Canada in 1991 as coming from "Other" ethnic origins. The diversity of River Valley was similar to the trends indicated for the city, with the exception of the Vietnamese population. While Vietnamese was the fourth largest group in River Valley, it was the 10th largest group throughout the remainder of the community.

Recent History of Neighbourhood Issues

In the early 1980's, the River Valley neighbourhood was selected by the local municipality to be part of the Ontario Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (ONIP), a provincially funded programme. (Key Informant, personal communication, March 31, 2000). As a result of this funding, some members of the community formed a committee to plan the development of a local neighbourhood park.

In the mid-1980's, a secondary planning process was initiated by the local municipality. One of the key concerns of the neighbourhood residents during that time was a land use issue related to the zoning of an apartment housing development. The concern was that the housing being proposed was high density, inexpensively constructed, and located on an established residential street where the housing stock consisted of detached dwellings. Further resident activity occurred in 1987 with the threatened closure of a public school in the neighbourhood. This initiative, in particular, brought a number of the neighbourhood women together to advocate against the closure decision by the school board.

By 1989, some residents were increasingly concerned about two additional issues. First, a number of rental units owned by absentee landlords failed to meet the municipal

property standards regulations. Residents believed that this situation created problems in the neighbourhood such as transient tenants and poorly maintained homes. Second, the residents perceived a noticeable increase in crime in the neighbourhood (Key informant, personal communication, March 2, 2000).

A meeting, organized by one of the residents, was held with the local police, a social worker, a representative from the local municipal Council, and a representative from the municipal Parks and Recreation Department. Approximately 40 residents from the River Valley neighbourhood also attended. Held on July 11, 1989, the meeting served to identify the following issues: property standards enforcement, zoning by-law amendments, crime, and downtown revitalization. At this meeting, the River Valley Community Group officially formed (Anonymous report, undated).

In approximately 1992, the prevalence of crack cocaine and prostitution became apparent to residents in the neighbourhood. Residents began to liaise informally with other partners within the broader community (e.g., police, court system, municipality) in an effort to learn all that they could. By 1995, a positive change in the property standards of the housing in the neighbourhood was evident, two apartments buildings were being managed responsibly, and people were moving into the neighbourhood once again (Anonymous report, undated).

While some political activity in the neighbourhood commenced with the ONIP project in the early 1980's, I have defined the timeframe explored in this study as the formal community initiative that occurred with the inception of the River Valley Community Group on July 11, 1989 to approximately 1995. By 1995, members of the Community

Group felt that they had begun "to see the light at the end of the tunnel" (Anonymous report, undated).

With the formation of the River Valley Community Group, the residents of the neighbourhood pushed forward in their attempts to address property standards and safety issues. They were also active in community-building efforts through such leisure initiatives as youth recreation programming, an annual community music festival, a community garden initiative, and collective kitchen programmes (Anonymous report, undated).

Over the period from 1989-1995, River Valley became a neighbourhood where the Community Group joined with local institutions to improve the quality of the neighbourhood—an approach that is congruent with the definition of a healthy community (Boothroyd & Eberle, 1990)

What was quickly evident when reviewing the River Valley initiative was that women who lived in the neighbourhood played an active role in addressing the issues that had emerged. The motivation, the form, and the realization of this role was further examined over the course of this research. In addition to Friedmann's (1987) social learning framework, theories and sensitizing concepts that informed the development of the research process included: definitions of community; women's moral development; women's leadership approaches; social capital development; participatory planning processes; social mobilization strategies; community change strategies and tactics; the role of women in planning initiatives; and the role of leisure in community building.

The study used qualitative methodology. Respecting the reflective learning process typical of women (Belenky et al.1997; Dominelli, 1995), the research approach used feminist research techniques (Reinharz, 1992) in that the research involved the women who were most active in the neighbourhood initiative as community advisors (Patton, 1990; Reinharz, 1992). As such, the research process commenced with in-depth discussions with the community advisors during which the specific area of inquiry, some initial research propositions (Reason, 1994), and the process to be used to inform the research activities were determined.

Ethics clearance for this project was received from the University of Waterloo, Office of Research Ethics on November 18, 1999.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In qualitative studies, particularly those using case method, literature is used inductively—consistent with the exploratory nature of the inquiry. In fact, in some qualitative case studies, literature is not introduced until the findings have been articulated. Therefore, literature is used less to "set the stage for the study" (Creswell, 1994, 21) and more to provide some sensitizing concepts to guide the development of the research questions. Respecting the inductive nature of qualitative inquiry, then, the literature pertaining to this study was reviewed to help "frame" the issue, provide a context or a backdrop for the issue being explored by reviewing in a general way what has been written about the topic, and who has been exploring the topic under study (22).

As noted previously, two focus group interviews were held with the women involved in the River Valley initiative prior to my decision to conduct a case study of the roles that they played in their neighbourhood. In reviewing what had been discussed during these interviews, it was apparent that there were various themes or topics that emerged and were of specific interest to this exploration. While literature was primarily used to compare and contrast the findings that emerged inductively from the data (to be discussed later in this thesis), a review of the literature used as sensitizing concepts in the development of the research questions will now be presented.

The social learning approach to planning was discussed at length in Chapter One, as was literature pertaining to women's approaches to learning and their ways of work. Other topics that emerged out of the focus group interviews related to the values that the

women held in the work that they did, their understanding of "neighbourhood" and "community", and the resident mobilization and political action that they implemented over the years. As such, literature relating to concepts about community, women's moral development, women's leadership approaches, participatory planning, and social mobilization were reviewed. Because the focus of this study was the role of women, literature pertaining specifically to women was highlighted within each of the topics areas. For example, leisure theory related to gender and women will be highlighted, as will women's participation in planning. Women's roles in collective action, their ways of work, and the values that are reflected in their approaches will also be discussed.

Understandings of Community

Community as Unity

The term "community" can be understood in numerous ways: as context, as a geographic or territorial area, as a symbolic community, moral community, as a problem, or as a vehicle. It can embody concepts such as tradition, class, common interest, and connections between people and where they live (Grant, 1994). Community can also be discussed using political, social, cultural, or psychological perspectives. Hillery's (1955) commonly cited study, which attempted to define the meaning of "community", found that the points of agreement regarding a definition of community consisted of persons in social interaction, within a geographic area, and having one or more common ties.

Tonnies (1963) identified two concepts to distinguish forms of community: gemeinshaft and gesellschaft. Focusing his work on the study of mutual affiliation, a simple definition of gemeinshaft refers to the private and intimate parts of life, which he

calls "community". Gesellshaft, by contrast, is public life, which he calls "society". Tonnies goes on to say that gemeinshaft consists of "language, of folkways or mores, or of beliefs; but, by way of contrast, gesellshaft exists in the realm of business, travel, or sciences" (p. 34). Gemeinshaft can exist in ownership of pasture, fields and forest. "It is old...it is a lasting and genuine form of living together...it should be understood as a living organism" (p. 35). It is best understood in rural life, unlike gesellshaft that is "transitory and superficial...a mechanical aggregate and artifact". Tonnies focuses less on geography and more on the sociological concept of relationship in his analysis of community.

Also using a sociological perspective, Poplin (1972) discussed community in three ways: as a synonym for collectives like minority groups or religious organizations; as a moral or spiritual phenomenon, implying involvement with others; and lastly, as units of territorial organization, like villages or cities. In regard to moral communities specifically, he proposed the following four defining characteristics: *identification*—a deep sense of belonging to a significant, meaningful group; *moral unity*—members have a sense of pursuing common goals and feel a oneness with other community members; *involvement*—members are submerged in various groups and have a compelling need to participate in these groups; and *wholeness*—members regard each other as whole persons who are of intrinsic significance and worth (p.6).

Cox (1987) considered community "as context". He discussed community in the following ways: as a locus of daily activity; as shared institutions (values, norms, traditions); as a social system; as exchanges among people and institutions; as a distribution of power, and as a problem (e.g. citizen apathy).

Walter (1997) refers to community as a functional unit, multidimensional in nature. In her understanding, community is characterized by people, organizations, consciousness, actions, and context—all related to the other and all forming a whole. It is the relationships that exist, both vertically and horizontally, that allow community to exist.

The terms used to describe community thus far have included: social interaction, common ties, mutual affiliation, common goals, sense of belonging, moral unity, and wholeness. Cox (1987) is the only author of those cited above who refers to community as a problem—a contrast to the description of harmony that the other definitions imply.

Community as Difference

Young (1995) suggests that the desire and attempt to find the mutuality and unity described above results in an exclusion of some individuals or elements within society. By its very nature, any definition of "category" creates an inside/outside dichotomy. For example, masculine/feminine, public/private, or community/individualism imply opposition. Community as harmony, implied by the authors cited above, is defined as unity. Young argues that this understanding of community denies the "difference" that exists between and within people, and posits fusion, rather than separateness, as the social ideal. In fact, communitarians share a belief that the current focus on individualism—the I/we dichotomy—is out of balance (Etzioni, 1995). The sense of separation and isolation that many people experience is manifested by the "therapeutic quest" for community (Bellah et al.1985).

Haworth (1966) explored the concept of diversity within an urban context. He identified that while the city offers countless opportunities for self-expression,

community becomes withered and gets lost, in part, due to this vast diversity available to people. Rather than the human settlement being a community of people, it becomes instead an "organization of functionaries" (p. 54) and an individual's involvement with organizations—either through work or leisure—requires one to accept, and act out, roles prescribed by those particular institutions. As such, the very institutions that provide opportunities for expression and accomplishment, are the same institutions that limit and channel an individual in his/her pursuits.

The nature of the vertical and horizontal interactions that exist in community need to be examined, particularly as they relate to the distribution of power (Cox, 1987). One must examine how these interactions function and operate in communities, particularly between families and neighbours on the neighbourhood level, and between political and social institutions on a broader community level. Metzger (1996) asks who has access to power, who has a part in the decision making that accompanies power, who is excluded from decision making, and therefore who lacks control over their immediate situations? These considerations beg the question of whether freedom and diversity can even fit together within communities (Fowler, 1995).

Mason (1996) suggests that confusion exists in defining the term "community" due to the variety of theoretical and ordinary uses that exist. He suggests that community comes in degrees, that it is based on whether members share values in a significant, encompassing way. This concept of "degrees" explains people's differing experience of social cohesion, as well as alienation and social conflict. Mason's views incorporate possibilities for unity, as well as difference, in his understanding of community.

The reality of contemporary life is that individuals exist in multiple communities at any given time (Labonte, 1998). Family attachments are one community for many, neighbourhoods are another, and a community of faith may be experienced by others as a moral, spiritual community, to name a few. Belonging to several communities protects an individual from being pressured to adhere too closely to a particular set of values, beliefs, or social norms. As a result, most people are able to comfortably co-exist within their multiple communities (Etzioni, 1995).

Defining the concept of community is extremely complex as is apparent in the discussion above. The question emerges: what ideals of community might be developed to provide individuals with a sense of control over their lives and the freedom to express their own individuality, while allowing them to maintain social attachment and affiliation in their lives?

Ideals of Community

Bellah (1998) suggests that community should actually be perceived as a continuum, where conflict and argument exist, but not to a greater degree than community values and goals. He encourages a reflective process, whereby social consensus emerges in an inductive manner, changing over time to fit various social contexts. In this way, common values and goals can be identified and supported by individuals in the community.

Friedman (1992) suggests that community be "grounded in shared interests and values, mutual affection and possibilities for generating mutual respect and esteem...For women, sisterhood has been the cement of various feminist or change movements" (p.114). Often, these communities are voluntarily chosen, or discovered. "Chosen

communities" differ from those typically defined by family, church, or neighbourhood attachments. While these latter *may* be included, individuals in urban settings have numerous opportunities to seek out other communities that provide opportunities for social support, understanding, and personal growth. In a similar vein, Frazer and Lacey (1993) suggest a concept of an idealized community as "a vision of secure and committed networks of people, to an extent like-minded, rooted in a geographic area, offering fluidity and flexibility, unconstrained by biological kinship or marriage" (pp.120-121).

Young (1995) suggests forming a vision of the good society that is based on relationships that respect one's own history, as well as the other's. Opportunities exist at every turn to celebrate an individual's own space and values, as well as find new experiences. Termed "aesthetic *inexhaustibility*...[t]his is an experience of difference in the sense of always being inserted ...City life is the "being-together" of strangers...They are externally related, they experience each other as other, different, from different groups, histories, professions, cultures, which they do not understand" (p. 252). Thus, people can interact in public spaces as individuals or in groups. They can interact within their immediate locales of work settings or neighbourhoods, or they can venture into the broader community to enjoy amenities that contribute to leisure, learning, and growth. In doing so, there is always the possibility that groups, based on interest and values, may form. In this ideal community, differences are celebrated.

Pedlar (1996) interprets community as a place that allows both individual and collective interests to come together. Individual interests can exist in the community, reflecting an individual's attempt to secure one's rights. Yet, when faced with common concerns, people can come together in support of those common interests in a way that

supports the welfare of the group. As such, both individual rights and collective interests can find space in the community.

It appears that one ideal of community suggests that both harmonized values and goals, *and* conflict and difference need to be embraced. Depending on the level of "community" (e.g. societal, regional, or neighbourhood), this dichotomy might present itself quite differently. For example, the societal level could quite conceivably contain conflict and difference in a way that could be fairly removed from many people. On a neighbourhood level, however, conflict and tension could be experienced acutely on a daily basis. The question emerges as to how this conflict would be resolved and what values could be used to address this issue on the neighbourhood level.

The notion that the development of shared goals would evolve from a reflexive process, where community consensus would be flexibly shaped, begs the question as to how this consensus would be developed. For example, issues emerge such as who would be involved in the planning process, whose reality would be adopted, and how would individuals be encouraged to maintain individuality and be able to participate in a collective consensus building process? Of particular interest to this study is how the neighbourhood residents managed conflict and difference within their neighbourhood, particularly when criminal activity had gained a foothold in the community.

Lastly, the ideal community would respect and explore differences and celebrate the diversity and uniqueness of all. This ideal suggests a balance between the politics of difference, and the residents' human needs for social support, affiliation, and mutual goals. These, then, are just some of the issues that require further examination,

particularly at a neighbourhood level, such as that in River Valley, where tensions such as these, are more apparent and pronounced.

Women's Moral Development

The Ethic of Care

When exploring the caring work that women do, the work of Gilligan (1993) is commonly cited. In her discussion of women's development and its relationship to identity formation and moral development, Gilligan examined the relationships that children have with their mothers as their primary parent. She suggests that females, in modeling the gender identity that they have learned from their mothers, are most comfortable in relationships, taking care of others, and maintaining a web of human connections so that no one is left alone. Males, by contrast, need to separate from their mothers in order to define their gender identity and as such, tend to value autonomy, separation, and individuation. Situations characterized by competition, aggression, achievement, and conflict are comfortable for males, but pose a moral dilemma for females. In these situations, females fear that someone will get hurt, someone will become isolated, or that the needs of some will be ignored or denied. According to Gilligan, a female is defined as a moral person when she helps others and is in service to others, so that no one is left alone. The development of a female's gender identity results in a role typified as caring for others, and it is in this role that a woman is generally most comfortable.

With much of the female perspective rooted in the "ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1993; Sherwin, 1992), of interest is the question of its influence on women's ways of work, and their approaches to social action and change initiatives. In particular, if there is tension and conflict within a community, does this moral concern for women extend to who would be alone or alienated and who might get hurt in the process? Similarly, in choosing political tactics and change strategies, to what extent does the ethic of care suggest that women would choose strategies that foster relationships and which are less conflictual or oppositional than those which might typically be chosen by males?

Influence of Values on Women's Leadership Approaches

Rejai & Phillips (1997) define leadership as:

> *Life experiences and life chances that 1) imbue a person with a vision and a set of goals, 2) endow that person with the skill to articulate the vision and the goals in such a way as to attract a significant following, 3) provide that person with the skill to specify the means and to organize and mobilize the followers toward the realization of the visions and the goals, and 4) give that person sufficient understanding of the followers in order to devise and pursue goals that are rewarding to both the leader and the followers* (p. 9).

Like many definitions of leadership, the notions of "leader" and "follower" suggest a power difference between the two, and as such could be seen as a patriarchal or a hierarchical definition of the concept.

In her study examining black, working class women active in grassroots activities, Sacks (1988) found that leadership tended to be both a collective and a dynamic process involving a complex set of negotiations and relationships. Leadership is often shared among women in a group, based on who has the skills and knowledge needed at the time. In contrast to the patriarchal model, power is used *with* others, rather than *over* others

(Frazer & Lacey, 1993), with efforts made to share power, and thereby empower, all members of the collective. Organizational structures tend to be non-hierarchical and informal, and an emphasis is placed on mutual support and experimentation (Helgeson, 1990; Piche, 1988; South London Community Health Projects, 1982; South Wales Association of Tenants, 1982; Zepatos & Kaufman, 1995). Words such as "*flow, interaction, access, conduit, involvement, network, reach*" (Helgeson, 1990, 28) are descriptors used by women to describe their leadership styles.

Women's leadership, then, tends to focus more on the relationships among people and emphasizes the *process* of doing things, rather than the accomplishment of getting things done (Gutierrez & Lewis, 1998). Rather than a hierarchy, women see themselves positioned in the middle or the centre and the connections that they develop with others create a "web" which radiates out from that centre. Through their emphasis on community participation and capacity building, women-led groups are effective in the development of social capital and civic engagement by others (Gittel et al. 2000).

Women tend to reject the competitiveness that often comes with individualism, and the networking that women do—this web of relationships that they develop—acts as a strategy for change in that it also builds a base of solidarity (Howe, 1998). Typical of women's leadership is the transparent discussion of the issues at hand, providing others with the opportunities to share ideas, and developing the networks and trust required for civic action (Gittel et al. 2000).

Women's collectives are like public "homeplaces", and just as a family seeks to nurture the developmental needs of its members, so do women-led, locally-based

organizations (Belenky et al.1997). Just as a family has a set of common goals and values, so do these community organizations. Being "value full", rather than "value free" enables these organizations to develop common thinking to animate and guide the community.

In a study of women organizing to protect a Chicago public housing development, Feldman, Stall, and Wright (1998) found that it was through their "social reproduction work" that the women involved in that project were able to develop a community identity and sustain the social fabric of their community. Social reproduction refers to:

> *the everyday routine activities of maintaining individual households and communities as well as social arrangements that protect, enhance, and preserve the cultural experiences of all members of the community. Social reproduction activities include, for instance, the birth and care of children, housework, the maintenance of physical and mental health, cooking, personal services, and education (p. 274).*

Krauss (1998) found that much of women's leadership emerges out of their maternal roles in the private sphere, particularly when they realize that public policy issues are negatively affecting or threatening their children and families. Out of their values base of preserving their family units and their traditional role as protector of their families and the community as a whole, they are compelled to act in order to effectively fulfill the responsibilities attached to their mothering role (Fox & Murry, 2000). When they do act, Mattison & Storey (1992) found that women apply an ethic of caregiving. They use noncombative means to achieve their victories, particularly in the policy arena, and tend to use their values as well as their intellect in their efforts to affect change in public policy. The ideologies that women attach to their roles as mothers, then, become resources that they use in their political endeavors (Krauss, 1998).

Influence of Vision on Women's Leadership Approaches

Hegleson (1990) found that women tend to take a broad perspective of issues and retain a focus on the future rather than just the immediate task or issue at hand. Identifying the public realm as being in a "pervasive cultural crisis...the integration of feminine principles into the public realm offers hope for healing this condition, returning a concern for the nurturing and fostering of life to our public sphere" (p. 255). Because women are able to see solutions to problems using this broad perspective (e.g., juvenile delinquency that results from a lack of recreation programming for youth), they often become active in attempting to change institutions that are responsible for the conditions which impact their families and work settings most significantly. Their concerns extend beyond their immediate families and their efforts are motivated by their values of wanting to make the world a better place for themselves, their families, and society's members as a whole. Women are able to see and understand the issues facing society, and their training as problem solvers in family settings enables them to act on behalf of societal change (Zepatos & Kaufman, 1995).

Feminist research into social movements has identified the role that subjective beliefs play in collective actions. Politicization is a term used "to describe the ways in which individuals develop a framework of meanings and beliefs that challenge ideologies and empower political action" (Krauss, 1998, p.131). Of importance in this process of politicization is how individuals create an ideal or vision out of their everyday experiences to develop an "oppositional consciousness" (p.131) to guide them in their approaches to political activity.

Social Capital Development

Social capital refers to aspects of social organization that have been shown to facilitate the collaboration, cooperation, and coordination of community resources to the mutual benefit of the individuals who live within the community. These features include such things as community norms, trust between individuals, and the development of networks between individuals and organizations, organized to effect change (Putnam, 1993; 1996). One of the outcomes that has emerged from the accumulation of social capital has been civic action and change in public policies due to the networks that groups and individuals have been able to develop among themselves. Acting out of the strength of these relationships, the ability of residents to influence decision-making and public policies has increased (Gittel et al. 2000). When a network of individuals involve themselves in an act of civic engagement and meet with some success through their collaborative effort, the culture within the group shifts to an understanding that more successes are possible, if a similar template is used. In this way, capital creates more capital. As such, social capital becomes self-reinforcing, and therefore cumulative (Putnam, 1993).

A key feature of social capital is community building. Individuals are considered to be in "individuals-in-community" (Wilson, 1997, 756) , seeking to be part of something larger. This definition of community can relate to family structures or, in a broader context, to one's neighbourhood. It is often families that teach individuals how to build social ties and how to trust others, and as such, women play a role in this regard. The skills learned in families are the ones that individuals bring forward, then, into their broader neighbourhood or community. As such, families have an active role to play in

building social capital – a concept that makes visible the work that is done in families by both women and men (Fox & Murry, 2000).

This concept of women having a key role in the development of social capital on the neighbourhood level is of particular interest to the River Valley study, especially given the active role that these particular women tended to play on their local level. A question emerges as to if, and how, social capital was developed in the River Valley neighbourhood, and the role that these women may have played in its development.

Participatory Planning Processes

Wallis (1994) suggests that "new capacities for governance have emerged in at least three areas: 1) significantly increased and direct involvement of the private and nonprofit sectors...2) a new type of elected leadership that is willing to negotiate and partner... and 3) increased use of facilitated decision-making processes to help establish shared visions, resolve conflicts and develop consensus" (p. 291). Public participation can include a range of activities, from the simple sharing of information with the public prior to the decision-making phase, to more in-depth critical inquiry, where the public assumes a role of co-researcher, allowing social action to emerge from the research. (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Henderson, 1991; Reason, 1994).

The development of public policy has historically been the outcome of politicians and their political campaigns, rather than a collaborative effort with the public whom the policy impacts (Putnam, 1993). Since the 1960's, the emergence of various social movements has encouraged a public voice (Metzger, 1996; Morris, 1996). Urban

governance is increasingly being understood to involve both formal governments and civic engagement (Beall, 1996). Planners now have a number of approaches in which to involve the public, including advocacy planning, community participation, grassroots planning, and equity planning (Friedmann, 1995). In particular, approaches such as transactive planning, a process of mutual learning between actor and planner to create knowledge relevant for action (p. 402) and radical planning (Grabow & Heskin, 1973) involving mutual learning and finding solutions, provide planning models for community change initiatives. Necessary for the active involvement of the public in the planning and development of public policy however, is the development of social capital. In fact, Putnam (1993) suggests that social capital—often seen as a substitute for effective public policy—is actually a prerequisite for it, and often a consequence of it.

Beall (1996) uses 'participation as entitlement' (p.9) in reference to how individuals assume responsibility for, and contribute to, their households and their communities, and the types of resources they command in order to do so. Participation as entitlement refers to the process whereby individuals and groups identify their issues, negotiate for the changes they seek, and transform the organizational life that exists with their communities, as well as their individual roles within it.

The involvement of residents in planning processes and policy-making still involves professionals in the process—an involvement which often presents challenges and tensions on both sides. Milofsky (1988) found that professionals are often concerned with protecting their areas of responsibility, and intent on maintaining control over various resources. Further, when professionals and bureaucrats become visible within

community organizations, and as the organizations become more formally structured, the community voice is lost.

To counter this tendency to distance the planning process from the public, it has been suggested that planning professionals need to understand that public participation involves *all* aspects of the planning process. All too often, the public is only brought into the process after the plan has been developed and they are asked merely for comments and reactions. Rather, the public should be involved from the beginning of data collection through to its application and implementation (Agger, 1979).

Several issues must be considered when involving individual citizens and citizen action groups in various planning processes. First, planners must understand that the planning context is significantly impacted by a community's sense of values (i.e., heritage, family) and its own history, and civic participants will attempt to protect these elements of their community (Grant, 1994). Second, citizen participants want to ensure that their own political objectives, around which they have organized, are not undermined. Planners must understand, when involving constituents in planning processes, that there is no guarantee that constituents will be able to commit the necessary time and resources to a joint planning effort, especially since the hours that are committed are voluntary and in addition to other time demands in people's lives (Day, 1997). Models for participation need to be developed to meet the needs of both citizen volunteers and professional planners so that joint problem solving can occur (Susskind & Elliott, 1984).

Milofsky (1988) notes that there are four key challenges that participatory organizations encounter: defining goals and maintaining consistency between the demand for action and the need for services; maintaining control over decision making; defining boundaries and constituents; and, maintaining organizational autonomy by avoiding being taken over by larger, more powerful organizations with which they interact.

The role of planners is currently in a state of re-definition. The traditional expert/technical/authoritarian role of professional planners is now being questioned as citizens increasingly participate in planning processes (MacGregor, 1995; Sandercock, 1999). More appropriate roles for professional planners are those of facilitator/catalyst. Where in the past, the professional planner had the power to plan the urban environment, residents must now be empowered to make changes and to shape the space where they live. "The 'power paradigm', which is based on market competition, individualism, sexism, racism, and anthropocentrism, must be replaced by a new paradigm based on more communitarian and life-affirming values" (MacGregor, 1995, p. 165).

Social Mobilization

The social mobilization movement originally emerged around 1820 with the industrial revolution, and was a counter movement to social reform (the management of change "from above"). The purpose of the social mobilization tradition was human liberation and social emancipation, with specific concern directed towards the poor and the lower classes (Friedmann, 1987).

In the 1960's, citizen's groups began to form as a result of the distance that tended to exist between those making decisions and the people who were to be served (Grabow & Heskin, 1973; Greed, 1994; Hodge, 1998). Planning processes like the rational approach (Banfield, 1955), had typically stressed efficiency, but what people were seeking was "democracy, open decision-making and [community] integrity" (Wolfe, 1989, p. 74). At the root of the social mobilization tradition is that people have a "fundamental right to co-determine their own destiny. Implying not only political struggle and collective self-empowerment; it also frequently involves some sort of planning from below" (Friedmann, 1987, 255).

Radical planning theory (Grabow & Heskin, 1973) emerged as a response to the social mobilization tradition. Philosophically, radical planning suggests that decisions and the impacts of decisions must be within the reach of people. The function of effective planning is to encourage learning by doing. People learn from their experience through a process of experimentation and subsequent reflection. Both practitioners and citizens are involved as learners. While the radical planner can play an educator role by providing resources, (s)he is also a learner through interaction with the knowledge and consciousness of others.

Social mobilization activities are informed by social learning and like social learning, the goal is to unite that which is learned in practice with that which is known theoretically. Critical to any action taken is an understanding of theory. To be effective, groups that engage in political activism or struggle must engage in the learning process that emerges out of any action taken to change their reality. What is being suggested is that the action taken must be more than simply "moral fervor combined with spontaneous

reflex" to be effective...Embedded with a strategy of action, radical practice must be saturated with theory" (Friedmann, 1987, 257). It is apparent from the discussion above, that social mobilization attempts to link knowledge (acquired through a social learning process) with action.

Community change strategies and tactics

In her study of the evolution of women's and racial-ethnic organizations from the period of 1955-1985, Minkoff (1995) found that the majority of organizers would first form advocacy groups that also provided some level of direct services. A smaller number of groups took on a service agenda only, while still fewer decided to organize around action or protest only.

Women commonly have the ability to make connections between various issues that often stand in isolation. For example,

> *Many women activists understand that decreasing the incidence of crime requires attacking it from a number of angles - job creation, adequate wages, gun control, punishing domestic violence, pre-natal and children's health care, and facilitating the means for the have-nots to contribute to the community. This strategy involves a lengthy timeline for addressing the issue by providing comprehensive family support systems to replace criminal behavior. It does not treat crime as a sickness that can be expeditiously cured with a simple answer or solution* (Zepatos & Kaufman, 1995, 8-9).

Mobilizing strategies are specific to and appropriate for the actual circumstance at issue, and must be decided in the *context* of the particular situation (Friedmann, 1987). Choice of organizational form and tactics must be carefully considered, as the more visible and prevalent an organization is, the more likely it is to be seen as having

legitimacy, serious actors, and to be noticed (Minkoff, 1995). Questions typically considered when selecting a strategy include who are the actors (allies and foes) involved in this circumstance, what are the objectives, and what are the preferred outcomes?

Zepatos & Kaufman (1995) identify three steps that allow a group to become an actor in the decision-making process. The first step is to learn the roles and responsibilities of those the group needs to influence. Second, identify allies, understanding that they can be from diverse backgrounds and can actually be located close to the neighbourhood or the issue. Third, lobby and encourage others to participate in the lobbying activities.

Friedmann (1987) discusses the various organizational forms that are used in social mobilizing activities: *spontaneous uprisings*, such as general strikes or riots that are generally short-lived in nature; *local action groups*, that have extensive face-to-face dialogue and first-hand knowledge of the issue and the politics; *networking*, which are informal arrangements used for information sharing or local issues; *coalitions*, which are formally organized, focussed on specific issues; and in pursuit of a joint effort; and *formal organizations*, such as labour unions or political organizations. Further, the amount of activity and the type of activity carried out is influenced by others who share the area of interest (Minkoff, 1995). Examining the broader social and historical context in which action is occurring is essential. For example, the civil rights activities of the 1960's also led to an increase in social action and advocacy in regard to the women's movement and environmental rights.

Checkoway (1995) identifies six strategies of community change: *mass mobilization*, such as demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, and acts of disobedience; *popular education*,

such as participatory action research strategies; *local services development* to make services accessible, acceptable, and available to the people; *social action*, where powerful organizations are built at the community level; *citizen participation*, where citizens are involved in policy planning and programme implementation; and *public advocacy*, involving research, coalition building, and advocacy with legislative and administrative institutions. Checkoway suggests that no single strategy embraces all approaches or universally addresses all needs. When communities have the knowledge that different strategies exist, the possibility of choice is enhanced so that communities can be strengthened. Also, while each of these strategies can be applied separately, some overlapping commonly occurs.

One of the questions that comes under consideration when choosing a strategy is whether aggression or violence to any degree should be employed in mobilization activities, under what circumstances, and for what objectives (Friedmann, 1987). Feminist ethical principles embrace theories committed to social justice issues and as such, criticize patterns of dominance, exploitation, or oppression of one group over another (Andolsen et al. 1985; Sherwin, 1992). Again, as noted, women's activism tends to be inclusive, relational, and an expression of egalitarian values (Dominelli, 1995; Iannello, 1992).

The Role of Women in Planning Initiatives

Women define communities as human communities (e.g., sisterhood, support groups) rather than geographic or territorial terrain (Dominelli, 1995). As such, communities consist of social relationships and networks. When women are in positions where they are negotiating with others, specifically those with power, they tend to address the needs

of the human community (Piche, 1988; Wekerle & Peake, 1996). In doing so, they are able to fulfill their obligations that nurturing others places on them. This aspect of how women approach a planning process differs from the form of planning that commonly occurs.

The issues that concern women do not always fit the issues that are being addressed in public consultation processes, and the issues that do interest women are sometimes swept aside as irrelevant (Fox & Murry, 2000; Piche, 1988; Wekerle & Peake, 1996). As a result, women do not always feel that their interests are regarded as important. Increasingly, women's work involves both the domestic sphere and the wage sector, and planning concerns for women involve how public space accommodates such needs as child care, women-focused housing, safety, or health services so that the intersection between home and work is facilitated (Eichler, 1995; Hayden, 1984; Jacobs, 1961; Mackenzie, 1988; Michelson, 1988; Milroy, 1996; Sandercock, 1999; Wekerle & Peake, 1996). In their cities, women are concerned with the elimination of violence, pedestrian friendly streets, efficient and affordable public transit, public art, a wide variety of services for children and families, a healthy environment, and a close physical relationship between workplace, homes, and necessary services (Eichler, 1995).

Participation in public planning processes requires a substantial knowledge and understanding of municipal planning policy. To speak on behalf of an issue in a political forum, residents participating in a consultation process must possess some degree of self confidence, and have the necessary argumentative skills that would enable them to present their views in such a way as to have them understood and heard (MacGregor, 1995). Further challenges for many citizens consist of understanding the technical

language, being able to converse in the official language being used in the planning process, and for women, to believe that their issues are important to address (Fox & Murry, 2000; Piche, 1988).

The rational planning process (Banfield, 1955), as the name implies, would approach planning and problem solving in an objective, value-free way. This is in sharp contrast to women's styles which are interactive and inclusive, and where the worth of each individual is valued (Rosener, 1990). Women's interest in values rather than "hard facts" could create tension in a community planning process that tended to be bureaucratic and technical.

Women prefer not to work in conflictual relationships and to that end employ interpersonal approaches such as consensus building and active listening—both of which are congruent with the ethic of care. In this way, conflict can be resolved using a strengths-based approach, resulting in the dialogue and analysis essential for social change. A feminist approach to planning suggests working *with*, rather than *for*, the population (Eichler, 1995). The question emerges, however, whether professional technicians are typically willing or able to take the time necessary to move a planning initiative through this consensual process.

A further consideration when involving women in participatory planning processes is that women's traditional roles in their homes and with their families place constraints upon their abilities to get involved in community service on either a neighbourhood or local political level. Usually, this involvement is either delayed or prolonged (Dadson, 1997). Henderson et al.(1996) state that women are increasingly participating in paid

work activities and therefore lack time to devote to leisure or volunteer activities. Yet, women have traditionally been those involved in volunteerism. Any public planning process of a participatory nature, then, needs to adapt the process to the reality of women's lives, namely the constraints on their free time versus the energy required of volunteer leaders.

The Role of Leisure in Community Building

Community building has been defined as a process where the people who live in a community engage as a group in a community change initiative (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Focusing on community growth, community building is characterized by an increased sense of group identification and mapping of the strengths and assets of the community and its residents (Minkler & Wallerstein, 1998). Community and the people who live there are central to the community building process. As such, those who contribute to the process include a diverse range of people such as neighbours, students, and volunteers (Walter, 1997).

Little research has been done into volunteering as leisure within a context of community building and citizen participation. Arai (1996) and Arai & Pedlar (1997) found that participation in community work does provide individuals with an opportunity to learn new skills, experience a sense of balance in their lives, develop camaraderie, and develop a sense of connectedness to community. Reid & van Dreunen (1996) suggest that leisure can be defined as a transforming mechanism in neighbourhoods by encouraging people to redefine and improve their communities through activities that

address negative social conditions. Further, neighbourhood groups that use leisure to involve themselves in their community, develop a sense of ownership for their community, as well as the capacity to address community problems that are encountered. Davidson (1996) states that involvement in neighbourhood associations leads to social support for residents, restoring a sense of community, and self-help mechanisms to assist friends, families, and neighbours.

Community development within recreation and leisure services is often seen as an approach to local or individual change through citizen participation. It is based on the philosophy that through involvement in local affairs, the needs and preferences of citizens can be met, resulting in a greater sense of control over their lives (Hutchison & Nogradi, 1996). Those involved in community development are concerned with assisting individuals and groups to initiate a process of change in the most self-determining way possible (Pedlar, 1996). Community building occurs most effectively from the "inside out" by identifying and building upon the assets that exist in the residents and the neighbourhood. Identifying a neighbourhood's capacities and abilities provides an initial step toward community building in a strengths-based manner (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1997).

Stebbins (1999) identifies volunteerism as a form of serious leisure. Serious leisure pursuits are those that are characterized by a level of perseverance, a significant degree of personal effort, feelings of accomplishment, and a strong identification with the chosen pursuit. One such type of volunteerism is civic or community action, including such activities as advocacy. When one considers the definition of community building as a process where residents engage in an action/change initiative, it is apparent that those

involved in community building activities on a voluntary basis could be participating in serious leisure. This is of particular significance given that serious leisure has far-reaching effects upon the general welfare of a community through the contributions of volunteers in the change initiative.

Summary

The literature reviewed above identified themes that were useful in the exploration of the neighborhood under study. The River Valley neighbourhood was not homogenous. It was characterized by diversity, conflict and some may suggest, deviance. Understanding the various perceptions about "community" encouraged an exploration of how the diversity and differences that existed within the River Valley neighbourhood found both voice and expression, particularly since what was considered livable for some residents, was unlivable for others. Questions about how neighbourhoods balance elements that make a neighbourhood livable with those that make it unlivable are informed by this body of literature.

In regard to the River Valley neighbourhood, the women who have been involved in the initiative have maintained their commitment over the course of many years, in spite of numerous demands upon their free time. What became a reality for the women who were active in the River Valley initiative, however, was their inability to manage, on their own, the diversity that existed in the neighbourhood. The literature related to social capital development invites an exploration of how these women managed to amass the various resources and capacities within their neighbourhood and the broader community

to manage this diversity. As well, the manner in which these women navigated through the demands placed upon them by their careers and their families, while still managing their community work as volunteers, can be informed by this literature. Of particular interest is their motivation for this continued involvement, and the personal strategies that they have used to enable them to remain committed and active in the process.

The women who were involved in the River Valley neighbourhood change initiative had no formal training or knowledge of community building practices. Nor had they significant experience with political action or mobilizing strategies. The literature pertaining to community change strategies, social mobilization, the role of women in planning initiatives, and the types of leadership approaches that women develop will be useful in exploring how these women addressed the political issues in their neighbourhood.

The literature that has been cited has served as sensitizing concepts towards the research questions and the research process, while trying to maintain an openness and flexibility typical of case method and qualitative research (Creswell, 1994; Stake 1994, 1995). The research design that was used to study the River Valley neighbourhood initiative follows.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Design

The study used case method to explore the role of women in a community initiative between 1989 and 1995, and to identify strategies used to mobilize residents to keep this inner city area a safe and livable residential neighbourhood. The case study was an in-depth qualitative exploration of the River Valley initiative—methodology typically characterized by an in-depth type of examination (Hamel, Dofour, & Fortin, 1993). I chose to conduct a single case study, with the role of women comprising the embedded analytical feature on which I wanted to focus. The reason that I selected a single case rather than multiple cases was so that I could gain the depth of understanding characteristic of qualitative research. Conducting multiple case studies bears the inherent risk of diluting the overall analysis (Creswell,1998). Further, I was particularly interested in understanding the case in depth so that over time, I could research other cases to determine if the findings are transferable. Often multiple cases are conducted with an interest in "generalizability", a concept that departs from the intent of qualitative research. As such, the purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding of the River Valley case itself. It was its particularization that was of specific interest, rather than any intent to generalize the findings to other cases (Stake, 1995).

In regard to the case study approach specifically, it can be argued that it is "not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied.... As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the method of inquiry used"

(Stake, 1994,236). Often the term *case method* is used when referring to the methodological approach (Hamel et al. 1993) and may present a more accurate differentiation between the object of study (the case) and the research method (the case method). Methods that are commonly used in case method research are interviews, field studies, document review, and participant observation (Hakim, 1987; Hamel et al. 1993). In the River Valley case study, two methods in particular were chosen: document review and interviews.

The study participants were categorized into four distinct groups. These groups were as follows: women who were directly and actively involved in the community initiative; representatives from the municipal government including both staff and elected officials; representatives from the local police services commission; and other residents who lived in River Valley during the study's timeframe and who were either involved in, or aware of, the initiative. The study participants included the following:

Community advisors: Marilyn, Jane, Gwen, and Sue, the women who were most actively involved in the neighbourhood initiative.

Representatives from the local municipal government: Three bureaucratic staff, and two elected officials familiar with the initiative.

Representatives from the local police services commission: Three police officers, all at various levels throughout the organization.

Other residents who lived in the neighbourhood: Seven residents who had varying levels of involvement in the initiative.

It was this variety of evidence that made the case study different from simply an historical account of the phenomenon (Yin, 1994).

Three types of qualitative case study are common: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. *Intrinsic case study* is undertaken because the researcher wants an understanding of the particular case. *Instrumental case study* attempts to provide insight into an issue or to develop or refine theory; and *collective case study* attempts to extend what is learned to other cases (Stake, 1994; 1995). This project comprised primarily an instrumental case study wherein theories such as Gilligan's (1993) "ethic of care" provided sensitizing concepts in the conceptualization of the study and the "social learning" planning tradition (Friedmann, 1987) served as a guiding framework for the conduct of the study.

The study employed a naturalist paradigm in order to obtain the depth of information, and therefore understanding, that characterizes case method. As such, qualitative methods, as suggested above, were used to gather the data. Particular to the naturalist paradigm is that there can be multiple realities, or perspectives, experienced and presented by those being researched. The context is mutually shaped by the people involved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition, the study reflected a feminist research approach. Feminist methodology "is a perspective, not a research method...[It] strives to represent human diversity; frequently includes the researcher as a person; [and] attempts to develop special relations with the people studied" (Reinharz, 1992, 240). At the root of this perspective is a concern for gender inequality, and researchers who work out of this perspective attempt to ensure the inclusion of women's voices and their stories in data collection and analysis. It attempts to explore the lives of women in their everyday contexts and often includes those being studied as active participants in the research process. Reflexivity on

the part of both the researcher and those being studied is a source of learning, understanding, and insight (Harding, 1987; Henderson, 1991; Olesen, 1994; Reinharz, 1992, 1993; Taylor, 1998; Wasserfall, 1993).

In this case study, four women who lived in the case neighbourhood and who had been active in the neighbourhood change initiative agreed to act as community advisors to provide counsel in the design and the findings of the study. It was the lives, activities, and situations of the women themselves that were under study. As such, in the interests of not "exploiting women as research 'subjects' and of empowering women", those being studied were invited to participate in the research process and to explore issues of interest to them (Olesen, 1994, 166). By involving the women who were the actors in this case study, their points of view were considered and their knowledge and experiences included in the investigation (Hamel et al.1993). These four women provided input and guidance at each phase of the research process, including generating ideas, suggesting study participants I might wish to interview, research design, and data interpretation (Reason, 1994).

One feature of feminist research often discussed is its emphasis on action as an outcome (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Reinharz, 1992), be it social action or public policy changes and initiatives. In the current study of the River Valley neighbourhood, action as an outcome was not necessarily anticipated. More central to the project was the learning that was anticipated through the participation of the women in the research process that would inform future political action undertaken in their neighbourhood.

As noted, the neighbourhood chosen for this study—referred to as River Valley—is located in southern Ontario. As a downtown core neighbourhood, it consisted of both residential and commercial development. The name of the study site was changed to allow participants' anonymity, the opportunity to speak freely (Punch, 1994), and to allow critical data analysis to occur. The other reason that the identity was changed was to prevent further stigmatization of the neighbourhood, similar to that experienced as a result of local media coverage during the time period being studied (Key Informant, personal communication, March 2, 2000).

The first step that was taken was an informal discussion with one of the women actively involved in the neighbourhood initiative. The intent of this meeting was to introduce myself, outline my interests in regard to my doctoral dissertation, and learn more about the activities that the group had undertaken. One of the suggestions that came out of this meeting was that I review the group's written accounts of their activities during the timeframe under investigation. I subsequently contacted the woman who coordinated the administration of the River Valley Community Group and received access to the Community Group's records. My intent was to conduct a preliminary study, not unlike a pilot (Janesick, 1994), to determine the exact nature of the initiative, to gain an understanding of its salient features, and to assess whether the project would allow for interdisciplinary research of the sort I hoped to conduct within my two disciplines, Recreation/Leisure Studies and Planning.

Document Review

I conducted my preliminary review of records on September 15th and 17th, 1999. These records included: historical reports written to summarize "The River Valley Story"; various memos to members of the community group regarding activity updates and requests; background files and reports from the group's neighbourhood folk festival; promotional brochures for social events such as the folk festival and the community garage sale; and various notices for neighbourhood meetings and other political activities in which the Community Group was involved. The author's name was not generally specified on the various documents, although most of them were written by one or other of the community advisors. After reviewing the documents and determining the appropriateness of the case, I consulted with my academic co-advisors and was given their approval to proceed with a research proposal.

Ethics Clearance

Due to the advisory role that the neighbourhood women assumed during the inquiry, ethics clearance was required at an early stage in the development of the project, prior to further contact with members of the community group or residents in the neighbourhood. Ethics clearance was provided by the University of Waterloo, Office of Research Ethics on November 18, 1999.

Gaining Access and Negotiating Consent

Two items that required early attention included gaining entrée to the site and seeking the consent of the women who would be involved as community advisors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). Feminist research methodology assumes that deliberate thought and response be given to how those whose lives are impacted by the study will be affected. In an attempt to minimize this impact, feminist scholars are particularly conscious of issues such as exclusion and inclusion (Fox & Murry, 2000). As such, the task of making contact with individuals who were to be involved in the study had both formal and informal aspects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While I had made an initial contact with the group regarding access to their records and documents, I followed up with a letter to formally express my interest in conducting a study of the River Valley initiative. In this correspondence, I also requested an opportunity to meet with the River Valley Community Group to formally introduce my research project to them, determine if some women were willing to act as community advisors, and to request a letter from the Community Group indicating that they agreed with a project being conducted about their group and its activities. Because the "gatekeeper" was being approached in her formal position as the coordinator for the group, the letter acted as a formal contract of our understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

My decision to seek formal consent from the Community Group also originated from an ethical value of a personal nature. I, as a researcher, am an outsider to the community. River Valley had experienced a great deal of intrusion from "outsiders" over the past—elements like the negative press from the local media, the municipal planners making planning recommendations without consulting with the residents, and the johns (men who

pay for sexual favours from prostitutes) circling the neighbourhood. I did not want my presence to be regarded as yet another intrusion. As such, I believed it important that I be invited into the neighbourhood and have the Community Group's consent to investigate and explore their realities.

Relevant literature supported this approach (Punch, 1994). The political balance is almost always disrupted when a researcher enters the field, and asking the Community Group to provide their formal consent provided them with an opportunity to consider the risks, the potential advantages, but also the possible losses that may have emerged as a result of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Requesting formal approval also ensured that the group had control over their research activities in a number of ways. First, it clarified their role as a Community Group and mine as a researcher. Second, it ensured that the control of their Community Group remained in their hands as a result of their decision to participate in the study (Labonte, 1993). Third, it increased their level of empowerment in that they had control over their own decision-making (Arnstein,1969). Fourth, it supported the ethic of openness and reciprocity intrinsic to feminist research (Punch, 1994; Reinharz, 1992).

A letter from the River Valley Community Group dated December 1, 1999 confirmed their agreement to participate in the research study and identified four women from the community who were interested in working as community advisors on the project. The agreement letter also indicated that the Community Group was willing to contact any additional women to participate as community advisors, if I so chose. I decided to limit the community advisors group to those recommended, but saw the offer as assent from the formal gatekeepers to my entering their neighbourhood (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). The letter invited me to attend the December social/meeting of the Community Group. I subsequently attended the meeting, during which I introduced the project, discussed the nature of the research, and the process involved in conducting academic research.

Individual visits were then made to the four women who ultimately became the community advisors for the study. These individual meetings provided an opportunity to inform the women of the study and the nature of the research, to review ethics and consent procedures, and to answer any questions that they had regarding the research itself or their participation in it. While I had received formal agreement from, and access to, the community advisors through the correspondence from the Community Group's contact person, it was necessary to repeat these discussions and ensure that all of the community advisors were agreeable to their personal involvement in the study. The four women were also gatekeepers, and so the process of reaching a mutually acceptable understanding was necessary (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

The women each identified the location for their individual meeting. Feminist research techniques suggest that specific consideration be given to where interviews occur and who decides (Reinharz, 1992). I wanted to make study design decisions that would help facilitate the development of rapport and trust with the community advisors, knowing that this needed to be established early in the relationship. Establishing trust at the beginning facilitated the candid sharing of information and experience in a complete and honest manner (Janesick, 1994). One woman chose to meet in her own home, and the other three suggested meeting at their work settings, mainly due to ease of scheduling.

Each participant was given a letter of introduction that outlined the nature of the study, the purpose of the inquiry, their role in the project, who at the university to contact if they needed to seek recourse, data management plans, and the meaning and purpose of "consent" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All four women subsequently signed the "Consent Form to Participate in Project" and the "Consent to Use Quotations for Research Study" forms previously approved through the ethics clearance process.

Initial Data Collection Activities

To begin the data collection process, an initial meeting was held with the community advisors at the home of one of the members, at her invitation. All four women were in attendance. As this was the first meeting of the community advisors group, the issue of building trust required attention (Fontana & Frey, 1994), particularly since "the ultimate credibility of the outcomes depend[ed] upon the extent to which trust has been established" at the outset (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 257). I took considerable time to introduce myself and describe my background, outline the purpose and nature of the study, as well as the ethical concerns that are typically considered in academic research. I then introduced the issues that I suggested be the focus of the meeting's discussion.

The focus group interview method (Fontana & Frey, 199) was used, where members of the community advisors group were able to share their own comments as well as react to each other's comments. The goal was not to reach consensus necessarily, but rather to gather data on their personal views and experiences during the River Valley community initiative (Patton, 1990). I had developed a semi-structured interview schedule (Fontana & Frey, 1994) to guide the discussion so that specific topic areas could be explored. The

semi-structured approach provided freedom to build conversation and dialogue within the group (Patton, 1990).

One of the specific issues discussed with the community advisors was which research issues or questions interested them as participants in the study. Again, my interest in their views stemmed from a personal value regarding reciprocity. I wanted to ensure that these women, as research participants, were not exploited (Olesen, 1994) and that they, having given their time and effort, found something of interest to them (Patton, 1990).

In preparation for the next meeting, I reviewed my notes and using the social learning framework that I had adapted from Friedmann (1987), summarized data that the participants had provided. My intent was to use this summary as both a member check of what had been discussed at the previous meeting, as well as an introduction to the next meeting's discussion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of the social learning framework helped to guide the discussion, especially as it had included concepts that were familiar and accessible to the community advisors—words that they, themselves, had articulated at the previous meeting.

The second meeting with the community advisors was held on March 7, 2000 at one of their homes. The meeting location had been discussed at a previous meeting. It was the consensus of the group that the meeting location rotate around the four members' homes, so that hosting could be shared and so that I, as the principal researcher and someone unfamiliar with the neighbourhood, could experience part of their neighbourhood first-hand.

Research Issues

Stake (1995) suggests that when doing case method research, it is useful to organize the study around one or several issues. This helps the researcher define various data sources and inform the data collection activities. Even when research issues are identified, it is common for new issues to emerge, and for the original issues to be reconsidered as the study progresses. When this occurs, the organizing concepts are considered to be "progressively focused", changing as the study moves forward (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) suggests that the examination of the phenomenon should be guided by a set of issues that are substantively connected to the contexts of the case. Called *etic* issues, these questions reflect those of the researcher and as such, are imposed on the study as a frame of reference (Silverman, 1993; Stake, 1995). The following questions were those identified for the study:

The principal research question was:

What was the role of women in a community initiative situated in their residential neighbourhood?

Sub-questions that allowed for a fuller exploration of the grand tour question were:

Theories of Reality

In what context did the leadership provided by women emerge?

What was the leadership provided by women?

Vision and Values

Why did the women involve themselves in political action?

What was the context within which this emerged (e.g. forging community partnerships, participating in policy development, formal municipal politics)?

Political Strategy and Tactics

In what political action did the women engage?

What community organizing activities did the women develop (e.g., mobilizing community in citizen's meetings, community safety walks, festivals, recreation programmes)?

Did this community work provide a site for resistance by the women to the tendency of traditional planning processes to render them invisible and voiceless?

Did these community activities contribute to women's leisure?

Social Practice

What action was taken by women to transform the reality in their neighbourhood?

Learning

What learning has resulted from the women's participation in the initiative?

Subsequent to identifying the broad issues of interest for the study, Stake (1995) further suggests that additional questions be identified to help structure the various methods used to collect data. Informed by Gilligan's (1993) theory regarding the "ethic of care", as well as the social learning model adapted from Friedmann (1987), the initial research questions also reflected topics that had emerged from the document and literature review. These topics included considerations such as understandings of community, participatory planning, social mobilization, the role of leisure in community building, and women's ways of work. The research activity that subsequently occurred will now be discussed.

Case Study Interviews

As mentioned, the data collection consisted of three key activities: the document review previously discussed, group and individual interviews with the community advisors, and individual interviews with four stakeholder groupings of people. As noted, the community advisors' "inside knowledge" assisted in identifying some of the key

community members who were interviewed. These individuals had a relationship with the River Valley neighbourhood and were able to provide oral testimony on the initiative that formed the basis of this case study. Most interviews were face-to-face interviews. On two occasions, a telephone interview format was used. The following groups and individuals were interviewed:

Community Advisors

Two focus group interviews were held as described above to identify key issues, generate ideas, and make suggestions on the study's design.

One focus group interview was held as a member check to discuss the study's preliminary findings and to assist in data interpretation.

Each of the community advisors was interviewed individually. Subsequent interviews were held from time to time with specific advisors to gain further clarification or elaboration, as required. The instances when additional individual interviews with the community advisors were conducted proved to be especially useful. As an example, each of the four women acted as informal informants in differing ways. One of the women was particularly knowledgeable about the municipal planning and political process. Another was most directly involved with the police in addressing the issue of community safety and had an in-depth understanding of the Community Group's liaison efforts with the police, the drug dealers, and the prostitutes. Each of the four women had an "inside" and particular understanding of certain aspects of the initiative and the study itself (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, these additional interviews

were useful as part of the iterative process of case method data collection and to increase credibility of the analysis (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

In addition to the interviews, members of the community advisors group were mailed reports of findings or texts of analysis for individual comment and feedback. Their feedback often came in the form of telephone conversations and e-mail messages and all of their comments were considered data for the study.

Municipal Government Officials

Five individual interviews were conducted with officials involved with the lower-tier municipal government structure. Three of those interviewed were staff within the bureaucracy during the timeframe under study, and two were elected officials at the time of the initiative.

Members of the Police Services Commission

Three members of the local Police Services Commission were interviewed. All of those interviewed were active and knowledgeable about the River Valley initiative during the timeframe being explored.

Residents within the River Valley Neighbourhood

Five residents of the neighbourhood were interviewed with face to face interviews. All were aware of the River Valley initiative. Three of the residents had been directly involved in some facet of the initiative, while two of the residents lived in the neighbourhood during the timeframe being explored. Two additional residents were interviewed over the telephone due to their current geographic location and pressing time

schedules. The telephone interviews did not have the depth that was possible in the face-to-face interviews, but included questions that were asked of the other residents.

In all, 20 individual interviews were conducted , and three focus groups were held with the community advisors.

Data Recording Procedures

Since the raw data in qualitative inquiry are the actual words spoken by those interviewed, it was essential that their words and phrases be recorded for subsequent data analysis. One recommended method for ensuring that data are complete and accurate is to tape-record the interviews (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Silverman, 1993; Stake, 1995). As part of the informed consent process, each of the study participants consented to being audio-taped so that the data could be collected in the most accurate way possible.

In addition to audio-taping, notes were taken during and after each interview. Two kinds of information were noted. *Descriptive* notes, that reconstructed the dialogue, were maintained during the interview, and *reflective* notes, that reflected my impressions, ideas, and personal feelings were recorded both during the interview, as well as immediately after the interview was completed (Creswell, 1994). While the descriptive notes included observations of what was heard and seen, the reflective notes tended to identify methodological issues on how or where data should be collected; theoretical notes on interpretations; and personal notes about myself and my concerns or feelings that I had as the researcher (Richardson, 1994). These notes served as a log or diary of the sequence of activities, and stored relevant information such as dates, contact names,

telephone numbers and e-mail addresses (Stake, 1995). As well as this information, a number of documents were generated for the community advisors to review. Having been generated through the use of a computer, these computer files also served as a log of the various research activities.

Interview Guides

An interview guide was developed for use during the various individual interviews. As mentioned, the format for the interviews was semi-structured (Fontana & Frey, 1994) in that open-ended questions and probes were used to obtain the data. Principles of feminist interviewing were often evident during the interviews, especially in the community advisors' focus group and individual interviews. As an example, because of the active role that the women played in the design of the study and the data interpretation, the social relationships that were developed provided a sense of trust, rapport, and ease that allowed for the use of anecdotes and the mutual disclosure of personal experiences during the various interviews (Neuman, 1997). As well, many of the study participants were people I had met in my professional work over the years and so developing rapport was relatively easy to accomplish. For those I had not met previously, the women who were acting as advisors often assumed a role of gatekeeper—a method commonly used in case study (Creswell, 1998). The community advisors from time to time made telephone calls to potential informants in advance of my contact with them, in order to introduce me as the researcher and to discuss my study. Gaining access to the informants who participated in the study was easily facilitated as a result.

The interview guides were developed using sensitizing concepts that were identified in both the literature review and the initial document review. The questions were also organized around the social learning framework with direct relation to the research questions that had been identified. While all questions in the interview guide were asked of each informant, be they a resident or a community official, they were asked in a conversational manner and in whichever order seemed most appropriate to the flow of the discussion. Two interview guides, one for the community officers and officials, and one for the community residents, are attached as Appendix A.

Records and Document Review

In addition to the review of the community group's documents that was done at the early stages of the study design, other document sources were used throughout the study. Municipal files and local media reports were reviewed to inform an understanding of the historical, social, and political context of the River Valley neighbourhood prior, during, and since the 1989-1995 initiative. Data from the local planning department provided a demographic snapshot of the River Valley neighbourhood. As mentioned above, the document reviews provided a source for the development of descriptive questions that defined the values, beliefs, and, in this case, some of the activities and practices of those involved in the community initiative (Janesick, 1994).

Data Analysis

All interview data, with the exception of the two telephone interviews, were audio-taped and transcribed using verbatim transcriptions. One of the challenges, especially

because case method was being used, was data reduction due to the amount of data that was collected (Stake, 1995). N-VIVO, a data organization and management software system, was used to manage the data. Data analysis was organized around *processes* (i.e. resident mobilizing approaches; consensus building processes) and *issues* (i.e. the role of women, relationships with community institutions and partners) (Patton, 1990). A process of coding, identifying themes, making comparisons and contrasts, and clustering assisted with the analysis (Creswell, 1994; Guba, 1978; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The use of detailed coding greatly assisted in distilling the data into themes and proved to be a useful data reduction technique in my attempt to illuminate the central meanings of what the various informants were saying (Luborsky, 1994).

Having the four categories of informants (community advisors, municipal officials, police services personnel, and neighbourhood residents) provided the opportunity to conduct cross-category analysis to determine the different perspectives on the central issues of the study (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Patton, 1990). Huberman and Miles (1994) recommend a "loose, inductively oriented design" (p. 431) for single case studies due to the complexity of the data, and the intent of the case method as exploratory and descriptive. In this process, "a theme, hypothesis, or pattern is identified inductively, the researcher then moves on into a verification mode, trying to confirm or qualify the finding. This then keys off a new inductive cycle" (p. 431). Similar to that described, the data analysis design incorporated an inductive process characteristic of the fluid, exploratory nature of case method.

Guba (1978) suggests that recurring patterns be identified by reviewing the transcribed data. The development of categories was informed by the recurring patterns that had been identified by the study participants. These categories were then used as a classification and organizing system for the data. Data were continually reviewed to ensure that the categories under which they had been organized were appropriate, accurate, and meaningful. The data were priorized according to both their salient features, as well as their uniqueness.

Because I was working in case method, I sought new information throughout the process as an understanding of the case unfolded (Stake, 1995). When all the data collection and sources of information were complete, no new data were available, and no new categories were emerging, I considered the analysis process to be complete. At this point, the theoretical literature was reviewed to determine if the findings pushed the existing theory further in a substantive way, or if theory had emerged from the data itself to create grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Verification Procedures

Because case study is intended to examine the particularity of the specific case (Stake 1995; Yin, 1994), researchers using case method attempt to present their case in sufficient detail so that readers can make comparisons with other cases. Verification of findings with other cases is not a goal of the researcher, however (Stake, 1994). Triangulation of the data was used to assist in verification (Denzin, 1989). First, multiple data collection methods were used including group interviews, individual interviews, document review, and media accounts of the River Valley initiative. Accordingly, a

variety of data sources were used including members of the advisory group, representatives from the local municipality, representatives from the Police Services Commission, and residents from the neighbourhood. The many perspectives and experiences that were collected through the study participants' narratives allowed for verification of 'recall' where individual stories connected, capturing the social and institutional memory (Harrison, 1985). In addition, my academic co-advisors periodically reviewed my data analysis, and meetings and correspondence with my community advisors ensured an ongoing member check of analysis and interpretation of findings. This follow-up was required to clarify the data that were provided, or to elaborate on what was discussed.

Finally, the journal which I kept as part of my reflexive practice served as an audit trail. Of particular significance was its use as a check on myself, as the researcher. The reflective process ensured that my first impressions got borne out by evidence, and that the information I took as "being given" was reliably provided by the particular data source (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The members of the community advisors group were particularly helpful in this regard. They remained committed in their advisory role until the study was completed and were conscientious about giving me their candid reactions to questions of clarification.

Researcher Role: Ethical Issues

Case study research is highly personal in nature. Participants are studied in depth, and the researcher is encouraged to include personal reflections, observations, and perspectives into the interpretation of the data (Stake, 1995). Access to the raw data was

limited to my two academic co-advisors and me. Three interviews were transcribed by others. As part of introducing them to the task, the importance of respecting ethical procedures was discussed.

To protect their anonymity, the community advisors granted their permission to be given a pseudonym that would be used in verbal or written references, such as journal entries, transcription documents, or reports of the data. I am the only person who has knowledge of which study participant provided which specific data, except for the focus group data, which was heard by all the participants in the group interview. The tapes used to record meetings and interviews and all consent forms that were completed by the informants were stored in a locked filing cabinet (Punch, 1994) that I own. Once the data were transcribed, the tapes were erased, and the written information destroyed.

Feminist ethnography has, as two of its goals, understanding women from their own perspectives and understanding them in their social context (Reinharz, 1992). Researchers are considered active participants in the process and not merely value-free observers (Hertz, 1996). Getting closely involved in women's lives, and in their social contexts, leads to an ethical dilemma common in feminist qualitative research, namely a concern for and involvement in the lives of the women participating in the study (Olesen, 1994).

In conducting a case study, the researcher must make role choices. These can include being a neutral observer, a participant, or a critical analyst (Stake, 1995). Clearly, I was a student, doing academic research for a doctoral dissertation. Yet, I as the researcher, was doing research with women with common principles and values, and during the course of

the study, I grew to know them fairly well. I regularly used reflexive time to help me understand my various roles and to ensure that I was maintaining my ethical integrity and my subjectivity as a researcher (Olesen, 1994; Wasserfall, 1993). In addition to my own reflections, both my journals and discussions with my academic co-advisors were used as reflexive opportunities. Reviewing related literature, particularly that related to feminist research, was also helpful in articulating the felt experiences in the field and adding context and understanding to the issues involved in qualitative inquiry. This process was, of course, ongoing. Also, in accordance with the interpretive paradigm, literature was revisited as part of the iterative process of qualitative data analysis, interpretation and verification.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Resident involvement in planning related activities pertaining to the River Valley neighbourhood dated back to 1979 when the municipality initiated a secondary planning process. The purpose of this particular planning activity was to develop a more detailed neighbourhood plan than that provided by the Official Policy Plan and to make any necessary changes to the existing land use policies. The secondary planning process spanned a ten-year period until its completion in 1989 (Municipal planner, May 31, 2000).

During the 1980's, the municipality introduced a further initiative that involved the River Valley residents. The neighbourhood was designated as a project site for provincial funding assistance under the Ontario Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (O.N.I.P.). A number of long-time residents, some of whom were born in River Valley, became active with the municipal officials and consultant assigned to the project so that they could participate in the decisions regarding the improvements to be implemented. Some of the successes that resulted from this initiative included improved infrastructure for sewage treatment, the development of a neighbourhood park, and the acquisition of a community center for recreational use (Jane, March 2, 2000).

Both of these planning initiatives, the secondary planning process and the O.N.I.P. project, provide some background about previous political activity in River Valley, and the residents' experience with citizen participation.

The discussion will now focus on the specific research questions that were explored. To start, the reality that these women experienced within their neighbourhood will be discussed to provide an understanding of what motivated these women to act.

Context for the Emergence of Women's Leadership

One of the neighbourhood zoning changes that resulted from the secondary planning process was a reduction in the amount of land designated for high-density development. The intent of this zoning change was to preserve single, detached buildings and to protect the residential features of the neighbourhood. However, even with the change in zoning, provision for some higher densities in the River Valley neighbourhood still existed (Municipal planner, May 31, 2000).

In anticipation of this high-density housing development, some landowners were assembling properties in the area so that they would be able to develop, or sell, large bodies of land. There was a perception that there was money to be made through anticipated land sales. Rather than these parcels of land being developed—which was the intent of the zoning—in fact a number of these landowners were merely holding onto these properties and putting minimal effort into their maintenance. These landowners turned their properties into rental units, therefore becoming absentee landlords. As a result, the neighbourhood had a number of rental properties that were in a state of general deterioration, which became a concern for homeowners in River Valley. As Jane said, "We had already identified the issue that if the absentee landlords didn't keep them decent, you couldn't rent them to decent people and you had crime. I mean, that link you made very fast" (March 2, 2000).

By this time (1989), it was also apparent that the neighbourhood housed residents who could be termed "vulnerable". A number of residents had mental health issues, and alcohol and substance abuse was a serious problem. Prostitution was openly practiced on some of the neighbourhood streets and drug dealing was common. This, coupled with the lack of action by the municipal property standards enforcement officers, caused homeowners in the neighbourhood to become increasingly concerned about the general state of the neighbourhood. As Marilyn said, "We realized that by god, we were sitting on a precipice here and we could go one way or the other real quick if we weren't careful" (March 2, 2000).

Marilyn was concerned enough to host a meeting in her backyard to which she invited residents, the local municipal councilor, the local police commander, a social worker, and a representative from the municipal Parks and Recreation Department. This meeting was held on July 11, 1989 with 40 residents in attendance. The key issue that was identified at that meeting was the lack of property standard enforcement and the need to learn about property standards, zoning, and land use policies pertaining to building (Unpublished report, undated).

By 1992, crack houses used for dealing crack cocaine, flop houses for the use of crack cocaine, and prostitution were even more visible within the neighbourhood. One study participant said it was:

> *Unbelievable! [The neighbourhood] became an absolute supermarket for drugs and hookers. Right in front of our house! Like in the summertime, you couldn't keep the windows open for ventilation or the screen door. There were people in the back yard doing drugs, or prostitutes. I remember trying to go to work. They'd be doing drug deals in our driveway! (September 27, 2000)*

The local media had begun to publicize the issue, and the local newspaper in particular, ran a series of articles on a daily basis describing the changes in the downtown core (1992). One resident described what was going on at the time:

> *It would have been late '92. You'll find a series of articles called "Crack in the Core". It went on for days and days and I think in the end, weeks. It was the main headline. People bought the paper to find out what hell the downtown was going through next. Business dropped off, and hugely... all types of businesses downtown. People avoided it like the plague because the media were doing this. It was nowhere near as bad as they made it look. It wasn't good, but you weren't going to get stabbed in the back if you came downtown for dinner and go to a movie, but people thought that's what was going to happen (June 13, 2000).*

As well, some of the banks and trust companies were refusing mortgages for rental housing in the area and some insurance companies were refusing to supply tenant's insurance for those living in rental units in the neighbourhood (Marilyn, March 7, 2000).

For one child living in River Valley, school friends from other neighbourhoods were not allowed to come over to her house. She had the impression that her friends' parents thought the area was dirty, dangerous, and disgusting. When her friends did visit, they were concerned about even sitting on the front porch for fear they might be shot. They had this sense of fear about where she lived (October 20, 2000).

One of the police officers admitted that:

> *We had to force officers downtown because it wasn't the desired duty. The downtown walking beats, at that time, were seen as a purgatory you had to go through as an inexperienced young officer. Everybody had to go down and walk a beat. Like I say, it wasn't a duty where people relished it, because you're rubbing elbows with these people all the time (July 23, 2000).*

Residents, recalling that period of time, have described themselves as "frightened", "overwhelmed", "desperate" and "angry". What seemed to motivate the women on the

community advisory committee was a sense of anger. During one of the focus group interviews, the women recalled the following incident, which one of them described as a defining moment:

> *Jane: "You know what bothered me? ...When a local dentist in town...quite a young man...has five babies at home...five babies and the youngest was a year...was cruising the area for a hooker. That mobilized me...this just sheer anger...that someone would make this community such that I couldn't live here if I wanted to.*
>
> *Gwen: That's right. That's right. Absolutely.*
>
> *Jane: Just fury at that.*
>
> *Marilyn: [These kinds of situations] made us learn. It made us learn (March 7, 2000).*

Of prime concern was that the women who became involved in the initiative all had young children and wanted to continue to live in their homes with their families. While they all had the financial ability to move if they had decided to, they did not want to move because they were committed to the area and to move would have hurt their dignity and pride. As Jane described it, they "developed a real bloody mindedness and were going to make River Valley work!" (March 2, 2000).

By this time, the residents had been notifying the local police detachment of what they had been observing, but the police had no evidence to support the residents' complaints. Often, by the time the police arrived on the scene after a call from a resident, the drug deal had been completed and those involved had already left the neighbourhood. Marilyn was the group's key contact with the police and she tells of a time when the staff sergeant finally understood what was happening in the neighbourhood and said,

> *Just tell me what the hell you want!" I said, "I want my own police force. I don't want another squad car on this street. If you want to find out what the hell is going on, you get us an unmarked vehicle." Well to his credit,*

> *he did. He phoned me back and he said, "I've got good news and I've got bad news. The good news is, you're right. The bad news is, [the situation in the neighbourhood is] a thousand times worse than you think. And the really bad news is that we don't have a clue what to do with it" (March 2, 2000).*

Marilyn described her reaction to the news. "I can tell you exactly the first thing we learned, cause I remember it as if...I remember it like a cannon (long pause.) *There ain't no white knight comin'* (long pause)...And then we came to the conclusion real quick that this was it. It was [all up to] us" (March 2, 2000).

Out of this context, the leadership demonstrated by women residents in the community emerged.

Leadership Provided by Women Residents

As noted above, Marilyn had taken the leadership in organizing the initial meeting that brought the residents and some community officials together in July of 1989. During the data collection interviews, when the question of leadership was asked, each of the study participants indicated that they saw Marilyn in a key leadership role in the River Valley initiative. One resident referred to her as the "Queen of the [Valley]" (June 13, 2000). Other residents called her a "motivator" (June 4, 2000), "our shining light" (May 24, 2000). Those working in the community agencies with which the Community Group liaised referred to Marilyn as a "hero...a champion" (Municipal planner, June 7, 2000), and the "hub of the wheel" (Police officer, July 21, 2000). Many of the street patrol officers referred to her as "Mom" (October 20, 2000).

While Marilyn was clearly identified as the leader of the initiative, many of those interviewed also suggested that Jane played a key role in the Community Group's

activities as well. Jane is credited with having verbal skills, the ability to be the group's spokesperson, and especially conversant on land use issues (Municipal planner, May 31, 2000). One of the municipal representatives called her the "champion of equity across the city" (June 14, 2000).

Jane thought that perhaps Marilyn could more accurately be called a champion, particularly in regard to the organizational structure that the group had chosen:

> *Yeah, because the whole notion of leadership and organization and strategic thinking... like when we formed the River Valley [Community Group], we made an absolute deliberate decision, right from day one, that we weren't interested in having positions, organization... ya' know, roles, records, anything. Didn't care. It was an action group. Mainly because I think we just couldn't cope with one more thing like that, what with all that was happening at the time (June 5, 2000).*

Regardless of the precise term to define Marilyn's role, it is apparent from the comments made by study participants that the major responsibility for the Community Group fell on her shoulders during the early years of the initiative. It was Marilyn who got the Community Group started initially. She sat on numerous committees related to the downtown as it was her belief that problems could not be solved without the neighbourhood residents being involved. During those early years of the River Valley initiative, Marilyn worked long hours doing community work. Jane talked about this during her interview:

> *I mean, what you've got to understand, is that Marilyn literally lived this 24 hours a day. She would be gone for 7:00 meetings [in the morning] and she would be home at about 11:00 at night. At times I'd just get so frustrated by her because I could never get hold of her (March 7, 2000).*

Marilyn's home seemed to be the first point of contact when an issue arose in the neighbourhood (Resident, September 25, 2000). Residents would regularly phone, asking for advice on how to handle situations that emerged. In time, attempting to spread

leadership among more residents, Marilyn welcomed someone wanting to take some initiative, outlining verbally what should be done and encouraging them to follow-up on the issue. This approach was effective in relieving Marilyn of some of the burden of leadership. One of the agency representatives who worked closely with the group said that it was quickly identified that Marilyn was special. She was there because:

> *She was chosen by the neighbourhood to lead and they reinforced her and encouraged her and fed her. The more she did, the more they wanted her to do, which I think could have been extremely draining. The downside of all of this is that it became an impossible task...and everything was on her shoulders (June 7, 2000).*

In time, the tasks of the Community Group became shared by various residents involved in the River Valley initiative, and a practice of shared leadership, particularly among the women involved in the Community Group, eventually emerged.

Shared Leadership Among Women in the Neighbourhood

One of the community officials who participated in the study suggested that Jane was always involved in any of the writing required for the Community Group and in making various presentations, while Marilyn would represent River Valley at various committee meetings (May 31, 2000). Marilyn was also active in working with the police or City officials to push for a particular issue on the Community Group's agenda. It appeared that Sue had a different contribution to the Community Group.

Sue had the ability to plan programmes and activities like the art festivals, garage sales, and plant exchanges. Marilyn described the roles of the various women. She said that Sue did all the things:

> *that take away the 'edge' of the neighbourhood. The nice things. The soft things. That gentle side of a neighbourhood. The political arm of the Community Group then does all the horrible, disgusting stuff, like tell everyone they'd better clean up their act, ya' know, or we're coming (laughter). So when you put that together then, you have a balance. And that's why we've created it that way. So that you've always got a balance (May 19, 2000).*

Marilyn went on to describe one of the other women saying that there were certain things that Gwen did and the Community Group members would never interfere with that. Gwen would be the one who would make suggestions on how to deal with issues "from a perspective of healing. Ya' know, Gwen would be the person that would help us to get through some of that kind of stuff." Jane agrees, saying that Gwen "kept us on the ground" (March 7, 2000).

At one of the focus groups of the community advisors (March 2, 2000), the women talked about how power within the Community Group "ebbed and flowed" depending on who had the expertise on the particular topic. Power was never in one individual's hands. Jane had the political and legal understanding of the issues and would advise the Community Group on what should be discussed with City Council, but Marilyn was the one who could mobilize residents to attend the City Council meeting in support of the group's presentation. Both Jane and Gwen made presentations to City Council, but Jane typically took leadership on what each speaker should say. Jane also provided input on what should be included in any correspondence to community officials, but Sue did all "the grunt work". Sue ensured that letters got written and sent, and that notices were sent out to the residents in the neighbourhood so that the information communicated was up to date and regularly distributed.

Each of the women in the Community Group had a different approach and personal style and this very often determined the roles that the women assumed. Marilyn described the difference between her style and Jane's:

> *Jane can't talk to the police like I do. Jane can't go and walk up to a police officer and say, "Look, you asshole. You know that region you didn't impregnate? You know what the result was? This!" Jane couldn't do that. Jane would be in there and she'd be all nice and sweet offering the cop a donut. But she can go to City Hall and she can say, "O.K., this is what you did, Buck". Whereas I can't do that. They'd look at me and go, "Huh?" But when Jane would walk in, they'd listen to what she would say and they'd go, "Maybe we'd better pay attention to this" and they'd do it (May 19, 2000).*

Likewise, the women in the community advisors group described how others were willing to do things for Sue just because of who she is. Sue is well liked and has a personal style that appeals to people. As Gwen said, "everybody loved her. So people did things just because it was Sue" (May 24, 2000).

The tasks that the various women in the Community Group agreed to do were based on the amount of time that they were personally prepared to give. As well, their involvement related closely to their particular area of interest (e.g. political issues, recreation programmes, policing), and their personal values in regard to what they perceived to be important for themselves, their families, and their community. Two of the women had full time jobs outside of the home during the timeframe being explored, and two had chosen to stay home while their children were young. As Jane often said, she had no interest in the recreation programming level. She was involved at the political level and that was her only interest. The rest, she had little time for because it was of no interest to her (June 5, 2000).

Why the Women Involved Themselves in Political Action

There appear to be two major reasons why the women in River Valley became involved in political action within their neighbourhood:

a) A strong sense of community values. As individuals, these women valued their families and wanted a safe place for their children to live.

b) Frustration and anger towards bureaucrats as the residents attempted to address issues within their neighbourhood.

These will now be explored.

Strong Sense of Community Values

One of the key staff people involved with the River Valley neighbourhood in the implementation of the secondary plan commented about the neighbourhood women. She said, "If I could think of one thing that stood out [about these women], it was their wanting to make the neighbourhood a place where their children were free to walk around the street and not have to worry about anything" (June 14, 2000). She went on to say that school closures were another major concern of the Community Group and they would make presentations to the school boards, to city council, as well as anybody else that they could mobilize to try and stop the encroachment on city schools.

During one of the focus group meetings with the community advisors, Jane said:

> *Even though we're all pretty "Bolschie" and come out of the '60's movement, basically, we're ornery. In terms of community values, we're very conservative. We want a stable area. We want it kept the same way with the diversity that we respect, so it's not gentrification (March 7, 2000).*

During an individual interview, Gwen said that the members of the Community Group "have the same basic philosophy of life. It's all wrapped up in the care giving and in the future and what our place is in society" (May 24, 2000).

Similarly, one of the police officers who worked closely with the Community Group said that he felt the Group had a common purpose—that they believed in themselves and their neighbourhood. Their commitment to making their neighbourhood a pleasant place to live with their families and their children was absolute. They were not going to be driven from their homes or give in to the problems in the downtown core (July 21, 2000).

Frustration and Anger Towards Bureaucrats

As the women in the River Valley Community Group began to approach various community agencies and institutions regarding the issues in their neighbourhood, they encountered a number of experiences that led to a level of frustration and anger. This reaction was caused by the following attitudes, behaviours, and obstacles:

a) Arrogant attitudes held by various professionals in the municipality and in the police services;

b) Attitudes that resulted in stigmatizing the neighbourhood;

c) A lack of resources or commitment to the River Valley neighbourhood;

d) A lack of recognition of the unique nature of the neighbourhood and resident concerns;

e) Lack of access to public officials.

Arrogance of professionals. The secondary planning process is cited as one that was highly offensive for the residents involved in that particular planning initiative, and was the start of the neighbourhood's frustration with the municipal planners. Jane often

commented that the long-time residents who were involved in the secondary planning process at that time were often humiliated by the city planning officials. As she describes, these particular residents had basic education, or little education, and so were not always able to argue their points and articulate their concerns. In Jane's view, the city officials would play intellectual games with these residents. As a result, the planners could always win, because out of frustration, the residents would lose their tempers at the planners who taunted them (March 2, 2000).

One of the things that was particularly frustrating for the women in River Valley was the language which City Hall bureaucrats and the police would use when the women attempted to address their issues. Sue recalled, "It was really hard to speak the language. They were talking way over our heads. What they were saying was foreign. They talked a language that we didn't understand." Marilyn agreed and added that finally the members of the Community Group got angry and insisted that things be explained in a way that could be understood by residents who lacked the professional background of the bureaucrats involved (March 2, 2000).

One of the police officials recalled the frustration that he witnessed in the women's efforts to deal with the municipal Planning Department:

> *They would go to City Hall and say, "Look, we've got building code violations here and these are the same people who are prostituting on the streets and selling drugs." City Hall would tell them, "Don't tell us how to do our job." So they got the same response from that level of government... that facet of government... as they got from the police (July 23, 2000).*

Attitudes that resulted in stigmatizing the neighbourhood. Many examples in the data describe negative comments about River Valley made to residents by municipal staff,

members of the police service, local columnists and school officials. Jane believed that it was this type of experience that sustained the members of the Community Group during those years.

> *It's kind of amazing. That's what I think always gave us our fight. How people were so prepared to tell you to your face about how bad the area is that you're living in. It's the most respectable, solid, stable area you could live in but it's diverse. I mean, the perception from outside is that they're all crack addicts... or at least our children are (March 7, 2000).*

Marilyn described her frustration with one of the columnists from the local newspaper who was insistent on writing a story about the problems in the neighbourhood. When challenged about why another article was necessary, the columnist insisted that people had a right to know. Marilyn replied, saying that River Valley was a neighbourhood where people lived, and that no matter what condition they were in, they were still human beings. Marilyn went on to say, "You don't have the right to destroy their life by plastering it all over! Who in the public needs to know about their life? Who in the public needs that kind of information?" To which the columnist allegedly replied, "Oh, screw the neighbourhood!" (May 19, 2000)

Lack of resources or commitment to River Valley neighbourhood. A number of the residents interviewed shared the sentiment that they felt as if the municipality had "written off" the River Valley neighbourhood (September 27, 2000). While funds were being spent in other parts of the downtown core, there were few efforts to beautify the River Valley area. As well, one of the residents recalls the difficulty the Community Group had getting the municipality to jump in and do anything to help the neighbourhood. The residents of River Valley felt like they were always having to push

and that their experience was that of "kicking and screaming all the way" (June 13, 2000).

The women in the River Valley Community Group experienced a number of obstacles to the changes that they were interested in initiating. One of the first political activities undertaken by the women was to approach the Chief Administrative Officer of the municipality to request that property standards enforcement be implemented in the neighbourhood. The intent of the women was that the owners of those properties in disrepair would be required to comply with the property standards bylaws. What resulted, however, was that all owners were forced to comply and as one resident said,

> *So those of us who were fighting so hard to find a solution got caught up in this property standards crackdown. We received these long official letters giving us 30 days to shape up our properties too. We had to find thousands of dollars to get this work done and so we were penalized at the same time that we were trying to save our neighbourhood! Looking back, it was one of the most unfair, unkind things the City could do. Sure, none of our properties were perfect, but we were working on them. We were the kind that don't let them sit and fall apart. We do continue to work on them as we can afford to, not like the absentee landlords who were allowing the drug dealers in (June 13, 2000).*

The police described their experience being approached by the Community Group to implement changes. For the police services, what was being proposed by the River Valley group was very new to policing, particularly the discussions held in the early stages. The police were being asked to work with the neighbourhood in a way that was taking typical enforcement strategies in a direction that created some resistance from the police. It was a new way of doing business and it departed significantly from conventional police enforcement methods (July 21, 2000).

What is apparent is that the women in River Valley were pushing the bureaucratic institutions into new ways of liaising with the neighbourhood and as a result, were forcing these agencies to consider changing their traditional ways of work. In addition to various institutional regulations and policies that were experienced as roadblocks to the Community Group's efforts, resistance to change experienced by the bureaucracies involved proved to act as an obstacle to the efforts of the Community Group, and the vision of what they wanted their neighbourhood to be.

Lack of recognition of the unique nature of neighbourhood and resident concerns. The Community Group had been particularly frustrated over the years by the municipal Parks and Recreation Department's lack of recognition of the unique characteristics of both River Valley and the Community Group that represented it. For example, the residents had an interest in developing neighbourhood recreation programmes that were affordable and accessible for the residents. At times, they had been criticized by municipal recreation staff for offering a programme at a cost which was cheaper than that charged by other neighbourhood associations or commercial suppliers elsewhere in the city. This proved frustrating for the women in the River Valley Community Group, as they were committed to offering programmes at a cost that neighbourhood families could afford (Sue, May 24, 2000).

The women in the community advisors group often made references to the struggle for control that seemed to exist between the neighbourhood and the municipal recreation staff. This power struggle between the two bodies had resulted in the residents feeling a lack of trust for the municipal staff. At times, the residents had wanted to develop programmes that addressed the issues in the neighbourhood, but had experienced

resistance from municipal recreation staff. Using a Parks and Recreation community facility for the John School is one such example (Municipal bureaucrat, September 15, 1999).

Johns are the men who pay for sexual favours from prostitutes. Through Marilyn's advocacy work with the Crown Attorney's office, part of the court sentencing that convicted johns received was compulsory attendance at "John School". Offered by the women in the River Valley Community Group under Marilyn's co-ordination, the John School was an all day workshop addressing the impacts that the presence of the johns had on both the families in River Valley, and on the prostitutes themselves. When Marilyn began setting up the workshop, its logical location was the municipal community centre located right in the neighbourhood. The impression that the Community Group got from the Parks and Recreation Department staff at City Hall was that the John School would give the centre a bad image. The municipal staff was rather upset about offering a programme like the John School in a city-operated neighbourhood center. Often, the city recreation manager would cite concerns about liability as the reason to refuse a programme that was not strictly recreational in nature. In contrast, the view of the women in River Valley, expressed by Marilyn, was that "They wanted us to be doing, ya' know, reccie stuff and we didn't want to do reccie stuff. We'd had enough of reccie stuff, thank you very much!" (March 7, 2000).

At the root of the Community Group's frustration with the Parks and Recreation Department staff was their perception that the municipality wanted all neighbourhood associations to operate in a similar manner. They wanted consistency in regard to the types of programmes offered, the constitutional documents by which they were governed,

and the pricing formulas used. Jane pointed out that each neighbourhood was different, and to impose this type of "cookie-cutter" approach across the entire city was unrealistic due to the unique features of each neighbourhood. She reminded everyone, "Eaton's went bankrupt trying to do that!" (March 7, 2000).

One of the planning staff members, who worked closely with the group, recalled a struggle that the women in River Valley had as they attempted to secure some funding from a provincial programme for their neighbourhood. The province was insisting that the Community Group comply with eligibility criteria to receive funding. The criteria required that the group be incorporated, submit their constitution and by-laws, and have executive positions. The women in the neighbourhood decided to resist this policy. One of the local planners who was assisting the group with the grant application process said,

> *We got stubborn about it and said [to the province], "That's not the way this particular association works. It's a more informal association but that informality allows it to be what it is, so don't impose a structure on us and then force us into that structure to get a grant. It's just not worth it" (June 7, 2000).*

Lack of access to public bureaucratic officials. As noted, the women in the Community Group experienced frustrations in gaining access to appropriate bureaucrats who would take action on a neighbourhood concern. Because the residents lacked the knowledge of how government organizations were structured, they found that they would end up talking to several people within an organization before getting to the person who was responsible for the issue. The residents would phone the municipal Planning Department, the Police, the Fire Department and others – all in an attempt to find a solution to a problem. What commonly occurred when the residents spoke to a bureaucrat was that

they were told that it was someone's else's problem, and so the phone calls would begin again (Marilyn, March 7, 2000).

Jane described a time when she contacted the municipal planning department regarding an illegal rooming house next to her residence. The rooming house had been partially converted and was non-compliant with the local zoning by-laws. When Jane called City Hall, she got to talk to someone after approximately five phone calls (March 7, 2000). In time, the group succeeded in getting a "one stop shopping" programme implemented where a resident could call one agency or department within local government and that department took responsibility for disseminating the information to the other relevant agencies. While it took approximately four years to institute the programme, it proved to be an effective remedy to the problem.

What has been explored thus far are the motivations that prompted the women in the River Valley Community Group to engage in political activity. What will now be discussed are the values held by the women and the context within which this political action emerged.

Values of the River Valley Community Group

The political actions that the women initiated were informed by their values as individuals, and subsequently by their values as a Community Group. One of the municipal staff that worked with the River Valley Community Group throughout the initiative reflected on the difference that he had perceived in working with various neighbourhood groups over the years. In describing typical male approaches, he said that men tend to achieve their objectives with more overt types of actions. As an example, he

said that if men did not like something happening in their neighbourhood, they might threaten to go to the Ontario Municipal Board—a provincial dispute settlement agency. In describing approaches that he had observed being used by various women, however, he said: "I think women use a stronger approach in terms of what are the values we're trying to preserve here. They use a more value-laden approach as opposed to one that's more direct" (May 31, 2000).

One of the residents interviewed suggested that it is not just *what* you are defending, but *how* you go about defending it that must also be considered. This resident went on to say that "*how* you go about defending is about the values" (October 20, 2000) and she suggested that the River Valley Community Group could not do the kind of work that they did without being very clear about their values.

Fundamental to the Community Group's values was a respect for others, whether the person was a bureaucrat, a member of the drug culture, a resident from an ethno-cultural group, or a resident considered vulnerable. In regard to political action specifically, the bureaucrats interviewed indicated that they were treated with respect by the women in River Valley, even though they were initially on opposing sides of the issue. One of the municipal staff said,

> *At no time in working with that group did I ever feel that they would come out and nail staff for doing something, and I've had that happen in other neighbourhood groups. I think they sincerely appreciated that the department was trying to work towards the same objectives that they were working towards. That doesn't mean that we didn't have our differences, but at no time when we would present material to Council or Planning Committee did I ever have any kind of feeling that they were going to chastise staff (May 31, 2000).*

Another municipal staff person mentioned that the Community Group members tended to be very open-minded. They listened, thought things through, and did not come in with closed minds (June 14, 2000).

In referring to their approaches with political bureaucrats, Jane recalled the Community Group's frustration with one of the municipal staff members responsible for property standards. "The worst thing was that he was the focal point for us. Because he was the only person we could turn to, to try and get action. And nothing happened. And I *hated* the way we had to go after him." When asked if the group had ever gone after him publicly, Marilyn replied: "We never did anything public. *Ever*. We never did the nasty stuff public", meaning that if they had to confront a staff member on an issue, they would do that within the confines of a private office rather than in any public forum. Marilyn went on to say that "We might all whine" and Sue added, "and really want to" but the women agreed that they kept those sentiments within their Community Group meetings rather than go to the press or publicly embarrass a staff member at a meeting. Marilyn concluded by saying, "That would *never* happen. Never" (March 7, 2000).

As mentioned previously, one of the Community Group's key approaches to political activity was to develop linkages and build relationships. This focus on relationship building was a result of the values that guided the Community Group's actions. To maintain the respect for others—the foundation of their values base—the Community Group processed issues with staff within the various bureaucracies, outside of the formal meeting structures, and partnered in the planning activities of the municipality and the police services. The term "web" is an image that repeatedly emerged to describe the context that River Valley developed for their political activities, and this web consisted of

numerous relationships and partnerships with agencies, committees, and others within the broader community (Marilyn, March 2, 2000).

Political Action in which the Women Engaged

The political activity of the group involved various government bodies and included the following:

a. Local government departments, including Planning, the Fire Department, and Parks and Recreation;
b. Regional municipal government departments, including the Police Service and the Community Health Department;
c. Advisory Committees to the municipal Council, including the Downtown Business Improvement Committee and various other committees addressing downtown issues; and
d. Local school boards.

The initial context within which some of the women on the community advisors committee became involved in political action occurred in 1987. At that time, residents from the downtown neighbourhoods joined forces to save a public school from being closed. It was through this school closure initiative that some of the women from River Valley initially met each other. Jane maintained that the school closure project is one that cannot be ignored for its contribution to the River Valley initiative (March 2, 2000). As a result of that particular involvement, the women in the Community Group developed some political expertise, became acquainted with the various city councilors, learned how to lobby, and became politically savvy.

The political strategies that the women used to address their issues of concern in River Valley were:

1. Developing networks and building linkages;
2. Becoming informed about the issues and the political process;
3. Mobilizing community residents to action; and
4. Developing programmes.

Developing Networks and Building Linkages

The key political approach that was used in the River Valley initiative was building linkages and relationships with members of the broader community, be they the neighbourhood residents, community officials, or others interested in similar issues within the community.

Marilyn was the group member most active in developing these networks and relationships. In describing what she learned through the neighbourhood initiative, she said that she realized that everything is interconnected and that it was necessary to take a systems approach to understanding an issue and to find solutions. To only use one resource to address an issue would only move the solution one step. In order to resolve issues, it was necessary to go the next step, and the next, until the solution was found (May 19, 2000). As a result, the Community Group developed a degree of expertise in a number of areas such planning, zoning, and policing.

Marilyn was skilled at bringing people together and mobilizing them around an issue. She was able to "get the Fire, the City, the Police, everybody together and have a meeting. "So how do we solve this?" she would ask. She was able to coordinate them all into a cohesive group. In other words, she took the hand and turned it into a fist" (Resident, September 25, 2000). One of the police officers described the approach that was taken:

> *Enforcement was a common theme through this and it's not a question of any one thing works and one thing doesn't work, it's a matter of doing everything... [The] drug dealers themselves were fearful of prosecution because we would seize their drugs, seize their money ... those type of things. Then we thought, okay, that in and of itself is not good enough. We have to close these [crack] houses down. So that's when we thought*

> *of the other options–going through City Hall, going through the lending institutions that were financing these places, going to the Fire Services, and jointly going around and doing these things. Getting the local councilors involved. Getting them down there (July 21, 2000).*

The officer went on to say that it was an evolution and not something that was initially understood. The members of the Community Group initially went to the police and saw this as a police issue. The police did as well. The police officer continued saying, "I think the transition occurred over time whereas the end result, when you're looking at '93, '94, '95 was this multi-pronged approach. [The River Valley initiative] didn't start as that" (July 21, 2000).

Through their participation on various committees throughout the broader community, the women learned to make contacts with other people who were active on neighbourhood issues. In developing relationships, over time the women from River Valley got to know these other people well. Eventually these acquaintances became individuals the River Valley Community Group members could count on for assistance. One municipal official said that one of the most effective ways the group had of communicating with others was figuring out who knew whom, and simply asking for favours. The Community Group asked a lot of people for assistance, and in her view, people agreed to help because they liked the way they were being asked. She went to say that the Community Group had a way of making people feel great simply because they had helped out (June 7, 2000).

Becoming Informed about Issues and the Political Process

A further political strategy that the Community Group used to address their neighbourhood issues was to become as informed as they could about the problem at

hand, the bureaucratic system through which they were trying to navigate, and the policies and regulatory measures that existed. They would gain an understanding of the municipal committee that was dealing with an issue, how the committee was structured, who the ward councilors and/or staff members assigned to the issue were, and how the public could access the committee.

Marilyn talked about the frustration that the members of the Community Group experienced as they attempted to get the information they needed. Using property standards enforcement as an example, she said,

> *They [city hall staff] would say, "Is this lot maintenance or property standard enforcement?" Which meant the outside or the inside [of the house]. What the hell! We didn't know there was a difference! We didn't know what constituted a fire infraction. We just knew that there were wires hangin' down. You know, that's all we knew. Well, the expectation was that you bloody well better know that because you had to get to the right person before the job was done! (March 7, 2000)*

The women in the Community Group learned by trial and error depending on the issue. Again, their participation on various community-wide committees gave them access to significant information and people. Marilyn, as the member most actively involved in community-wide committees, would teach the other women involved in the River Valley initiative what she learned. As Sue said, "I still phone Marilyn all the time and say, "Who do I call again?" (May 24, 2000) Even Jane, the group's political spokesperson agreed, saying she would always listen to Marilyn, because Marilyn could educate her on things that she had found out through her community-wide contacts (June 5, 2000).

While some of the Community Group's learning pertained to policies, zoning by-laws, and regulations, there were a number of issues related to the political process that

required their attention. Gwen thought it was a case of learning how to get what they wanted, how to manipulate the system. She felt that they had to learn that there were politics involved in everything and toes in high places that could inadvertently be stepped on. In her view, rather than be intimidated by it, they had to learn to work with it (March 13, 2000). Consequently, the approach that the women in the Community Group used was to approach the bureaucratic official and say:

> *We think this is the problem that we're seeing. We're not exactly sure. Do you kind of think that this is the problem, and if you do..." We never once said, "This is your fault." God knows we wanted to, I'll tell ya', but we were smart enough to know that if we did that, we'd lose. They'd never help us. They'd never help us. So we went in and we said, "This is the problem. What do you think we can do?" So they'd throw out something and we wouldn't have a damn clue what the hell they were talking about, so we'd have to learn. And we did (March 7, 2000).*

Mobilizing Community Residents to Action

One of the ways that the neighbourhood residents became involved in the River Valley initiative was through their attendance at the Community Group's monthly meetings (Municipal elected official, October 20, 2000). The purpose of these meetings was to educate the residents about the issues impacting the neighbourhood and the political context surrounding these issues. Agendas would be circulated to the residents prior to the meeting, identifying what was to be addressed. Often, representatives from Police Services or the municipality were invited to the meetings to speak with the residents about various issues and to give the residents an opportunity to vent their concerns. This proved particularly helpful to the people who lived in River Valley because they were often highly frustrated and angry about the situation that existed in their neighbourhood.

The meetings provided an opportunity to bring the relevant local officials to *them*, rather than the residents having to track down the right people within the various bureaucracies.

The neighbourhood meetings resulted in a number of benefits for River Valley. First, the meeting structure established a group entity that not only functioned on a normal, regular basis, but also could, as Jane said, "be plugged into at any time. We just gather the troops and off we go" (June 5, 2000).

Second, the Community Group meetings provided an opportunity to have current information fed into the their members on a consistent basis. Updates on what was happening on a particular block or a specific property would be shared with the residents. The residents could, then, be aware of and alert to the issue as they moved throughout the neighbourhood in their daily lives. One of the strategies that the Community Group used was to increase visibility on the street and to observe what was occurring in the neighbourhood. Without any formal organizational structure, the residents were watchers (Gwen, March 7, 2000). Having updated information helped them in that role. During the course of their day to day activities such as walking their dogs, walking with their babies, or out jogging, the Community Group members would observe what was going on in their neighbourhood. If they saw anything of concern, they would pass the information along to others so that they were alerted to a potential problem in the neighbourhood.

Third, by informing and educating the residents about the issues, people were encouraged to take ownership of the problem and therefore feel empowered to act. The residents were advised of the specific municipal department to call, the phone numbers to

try, with whom to speak, and what to say. While some residents did not have the confidence to follow-up with public officials, others would. As a result, the number of residents involved in political action expanded over time.

Developing Programmes

The women in the community group were instrumental in developing a number of programmes that were used as political action strategies.

177 police patrols. Through Marilyn's liaison efforts with Police Services, an innovative form of community policing was initiated in the Division responsible for River Valley. One of the frustrations that the residents were experiencing when they phoned to report an occurrence was that they would get a different officer each time they called. What the members of the Community Group thought was needed was some consistency in policing – a team of officers who understood the problems of the River Valley neighbourhood and what the residents were trying to accomplish. One of the officers who became active in the neighbourhood described what eventually became known as the 177 team:

> *So the idea was to have a team that understood the problems, knew the players, the people that were down there. Someone who would be familiar with the residents and community members that were calling so they could be on a first name basis, as opposed to reacquainting themselves each time they called. Also that the officers were available to respond to those things in a timely fashion" (July 23, 2000).*

To assist the 177 officers in their efforts, the River Valley residents were educated to request a 177 officer when they called the detachment with a complaint – a practice that became known and well-used within River Valley. Assigning specific officers to a six block area on a routine basis was uncommon in the Police Service at the time, but as Jane

said, "our argument [to the police and the municipal officials] was always, if you don't learn how to handle that one block from *this* experience, you haven't got a hope in areas where there are large tracks of rental properties. That was always our argument" (June 5, 2000).

Citizens on Patrol programme. The Citizens on Patrol (COP) programme was another police innovation that was prompted by the liaison that Marilyn and the Community Group had with their local police division. The purpose of the COP programme was to involve the residents in patrolling their own neighbourhood and reporting issues of concern to the police detachment. Volunteers formed teams and used either their own vehicles or ones provided by the police. The patrols had scheduled shifts and either the police would request surveillance of a particular address or the volunteers would do a general patrol of the neighbourhood and report any occurrences they observed.

The COP programme was developed in part because the police feared that residents in an adjacent neighbourhood might be endangering themselves by attempting to take their situation into their own hands (Police officer, July 21, 2000). Some of the residents in the adjacent neighbourhood had begun to stand out on the streets in an attempt to "take back the street" and the group active in the adjacent neighbourhood was taking an aggressive approach to handling the situation. One of the municipal officials recalled:

> *That's why the COP programme in part was set up. To provide a more organized outlet to all that. We needed something other than what was perceived to be potentially a vigilante group on the street [in the adjacent neighbourhood]. The COP programme was good on its own merits, but was a means to have some order to what was happening, because in order to go in the COP programme, you had to go through a police check. You had assigned shifts You had to play by the rules. (August 29, 2000).*

KICK advocacy/educational campaign. Advocacy and education campaigns, while not specifically targeted to government bureaucracies, were political actions directed toward bankers, real estate agents, residents, and landlords. A programme called KICK was designed to educate residents about effective strategies to deal with crime in the neighbourhood (Municipal elected official, August 29, 2000). A door-to-door canvass of the entire neighbourhood was implemented and brochures and information from the police pertaining to drugs and crime were distributed to each home. A seminar was held for landlords to alert them to the risks of renting to drug dealers and the impacts that this would have on the River Valley neighbourhood. In particular, the potential damage or loss of property that commonly resulted was stressed. In a separate initiative, a campaign was directed to real estate agents to determine how best to market the neighbourhood and to whom to direct the marketing efforts.

One Stop Shopping. As mentioned, the One Stop Shopping programme was developed to coordinate the government departments responsible for enforcement, and emerged out of a sense of frustration that the residents experienced when trying to get an issue in their neighbourhood addressed. When there were problems and the residents attempted to contact one of these departments, they were often referred to another phone number or another department. As Marilyn said,

> *You had to phone the Fire Department. You had to phone the police. You had to phone them all, but everyone said it was somebody else's problem. But you didn't always know where to go. The expectation was that the citizen was the friggin' expert! (March 7, 2000).*

What the One Stop Shopping programme did was coordinate complaints so that no matter where a resident entered the system, the department receiving the complaint would

circulate it to all the regulatory bodies. In this manner, the complaint was coordinated to get a response from the department responsible for that type of issue.

Neighbourhood recreational activities. Another form of political action through the development of programmes was the various recreational activities planned and organized for the neighbourhood. The intent of the programmes was to make a statement about community ownership to both the residents of River Valley, as well as those in the community at large. An elected official, active in the River Valley initiative, made a comparison to other urban areas like New York City: if nothing is done to address problems of crime, what eventually occurs is that the neighbourhood is left with a park, for example, without anyone in it but the people who are causing the concern as no one else feels safe going there. He went on to explain that the River Valley women attempted to plan activities that would normally occur in a neighbourhood, such as street parties or community picnics so that residents were publicly visible (August 29, 2000). While there continued to be police-related solutions, the River Valley Community Group also developed community solutions where the neighbourhood residents worked together to get people out and enjoying their neighbourhood. In describing the intent of one of these events, a resident said:

> *I remember when this all happened. Especially the big street party. We let the world know and every druggie within miles of here that you better step lightly because there was a strong, vibrant community here and if you did anything to destroy it, there were enough people here to do something about it. And there was. 'Cause the police were here. The fire were here. Everybody was here. Children...that there were children involved, and look out. And I think that was the message that we tried to send (June 13, 2000).*

A further example of a programme planned so that residents could participate in their neighbourhood was a Christmas tree decorating party for families and children. A

donated tree was erected in one block of the neighbourhood that was typically active with drug dealing. Consequently, it was an area that residents would normally avoid. The children made their own decorations, decorated the tree, and then the neighbourhood residents sang carols and enjoyed refreshments. Again, the intent of the programme was to make a statement about community ownership (Gwen, March 13, 2000) and as such, the programme successfully brought the residents out of their homes to enjoy where they lived.

Relationship web. During one of the focus groups, the women discussed the concept of a web consisting of various relationships developed throughout the neighbourhood. Jane wondered if one of the reasons why the Community Group was viewed as a success by community organizations is because of their ability to link up various partners (March 7, 2000). River Valley had managed to link a number of organizations that had previously been isolated, unable to make their own interconnections. One of the police officers who participated in the study described the multifaceted approach that the women used. He credited the women involved in the River Valley initiative with bringing the Fire Department into the solution, as well as City Hall, and the police. In his view, the same women advocated with all three (July 23, 2000).

In describing the web, Marilyn said:

> *This is how you deal with massive issues. Like a work of art. You know, a plant is made up of all different shapes, so that's all you do. You figure out how those shapes are going to come together to make a leaf. So I have this big vision of what it should look like, and I have to divide the vision up into the little shapes, and so you pick off the shapes, put it back into the puzzle so it fits together. To me, [figuring out solutions to these problems is] just logic, and I can't understand why can't these people see it? 'Cause it's so clear to me. It's so clear (May 19, 2000).*

I explored this concept later with Jane, asking her how Marilyn would know this. Jane replied by saying that it becomes apparent after awhile. All the interconnections become quite obvious (June 5, 2000).

At one of the final focus group meetings (November 18, 2000), the community advisors attempted to articulate the various groups and organizations that were part of the relationship web which River Valley had developed over the years. They identified the following:

1. municipal Planning Department staff
2. municipal recreation staff
3. municipal Fire Department staff
4. City council, particularly their local council representative
5. regional Police Services Commission officers
6. regional Community Health Department officials
7. provincial Crown Attorney's office
8. local public schools and local high schools
9. local school board staff
10. local business owners
11. various community-wide committees, such as the Downtown Advisory Committee
12. other neighbourhood associations within the downtown core and elsewhere in the broader community
13. other community agencies such as the Social Planning Council
14. residents within the River Valley neighbourhood
15. social service agencies within their neighbourhood (e.g. men's shelter, group homes).

Out of the relationships in the web emerged programme partnerships such as the COP programme or the street party; joint planning ventures such as the secondary plan; joint problem solving, such as issues of the downtown addressed by the Downtown Advisory Committee; and joint political initiatives such as closing crack houses through the combined efforts of the Police Services, municipal Fire and Planning Departments, and the regional Community Health Department.

One of the municipal planning staff said;

> *There's a lot of regulations written into our zoning by law that actually came out of issues of River Valley. They were issues of River Valley but they were regulations that are now applied citywide. It's just that River Valley was experiencing certain things that other neighborhoods weren't, so in developing regulations to deal with their issues, they were equally applicable to other neighborhoods. Things like distance separation between lodging houses so that you wouldn't get a concentration in one neighborhood. Trying to plan better for that transition. We wouldn't have even thought about it unless they really hit that point home. So a lot of things like that, that came out of River Valley, were a benefit to the whole city. It really made us think too (June 14, 2000).*

Marilyn provided most of the leadership in developing partnerships for the group. As noted, Marilyn sat on many community-wide committees dealing with issues of the downtown core. One of the police officers described Marilyn's approach with the Police Services saying that she was very persistent, and would not take "no" for answer—that it just was not in her nature to take no for an answer. He went on to say, though, that while she likely did not get everything she wanted, she was willing to compromise, understanding that resources were limited. He concluded by stressing that in spite of the compromises, the relationship between her and the police quickly developed into a positive and productive one (July 21, 2000).

One of the municipal staff members who participated in this study commented on the approach that the women in River Valley took with the municipal planning department. He appreciated that unlike some other neighbourhood associations, the group understood that the municipal government departments were not a "them" and the neighbourhood group an "us". The members of the River Valley Community Group seemed to understand that if they worked together, the solutions would be better (May 31, 2000). Marilyn often mentioned that she was amazed that the various agencies had not learned that they cannot go into a neighbourhood and "do *to*". Rather, the only strategy that works is that: "You've gotta' do *with*" (March 7, 2000).

Community Organizing Activities Developed by Women

Community organizing activities that were developed by the women in River Valley can be categorized as follows:

a) community building, community bonding, and community involvement leading towards community empowerment;

b) community enjoyment; and

c) community mobilization.

The types of activities that were implemented, and the intent of their efforts are described below.

Community empowerment: a result of community building, community bonding, and community involvement. Some of the mobilizing efforts of the River Valley Community Group resulted in a feeling of empowerment for the community residents. The street party in 1992 was particularly effective in making the residents feel like they had control over their neighbourhood. As such, it was an effective community empowerment

strategy. The block that was most active in drug dealing and prostitution was closed one Saturday night so that an outdoor party could be held in the street. Hundreds of people attended, from both the River Valley neighbourhood, as well as the city as a whole. One of the residents felt that the street party united the residents, commenting that oddly enough, it was the drug dealers and the prostitutes who gave residents the push to introduce themselves to each other. In his view, "That was when all the good things began to happen" (June 13, 2000).

One of the male residents described the street party as making a statement to the drug dealers:

> *"This has been your block for some months now. You have been up and down the street in the middle of the night with your knives, and your pieces of broken glass in your hand. You're intimidating us, but yes, we can use this when we feel like it." That was the number one message: "We are still in control. Not you" (September 25, 2000).*

This sentiment was echoed by Gwen who saw the street party as "taking back the street" (March 13, 2000). One of the municipal officials described the party as "contrary to that garrison mentality where you just sort of pulled yourself inside. This was a chance to get everybody out on the street and show the dealers that the neighbourhood belonged to the families. That people were part of that community" (August 29, 2000). The street party was effective in accomplishing four goals. The party gave residents an opportunity to meet each other, make some connections with others in the neighbourhood, show the larger community that River Valley was a safe place to visit, and give residents a sense of control over their physical environment.

Another event that proved effective in community bonding was the annual plant exchange. The neighbourhood is characterized by a number of well-established and

beautiful gardens that have been cultivated over the years. Held in May of each year at one of the local schools, the plant exchange was a small event that was easy to organize. Local gardeners simply brought in potted cuttings from their gardens and exchanged them for other perennials. While everyone got plants for their gardens, the event also gave neighbours a chance to see each other after the winter months and chat about common interests. Gwen, who particularly enjoyed the plant exchange, said that "people loved it! It just took a couple of hours, and we got talking, you know, and 'where did you get that plant from?' And you suddenly found that you knew people. That brought a lot of people together" (May 24, 2000). Again, this event was effective in community building around a sense of pride in their properties and their gardens, and community bonding in the relationships that were fostered among the residents.

Other programmes and activities planned by the River Valley Community Group included a community picnic with a particular focus on family and children activities, and an annual folk festival. The children's picnic was held outside of the immediate neighbourhood at a children's safety village on the grounds of the police headquarters. The organizers wanted to provide an opportunity for the children of the neighbourhood to play in a safe outdoor space—something not available in all parts of the neighbourhood—and for the parents and adults in the neighbourhood to get to know each other (Resident, September 27, 2000).

The Christmas party is another example where the residents reclaimed neighbourhood space for themselves. Noted previously, the residents gathered together to decorate a tree in a plaza usually avoided by residents due to the drug dealing there. When the tree was vandalized, the group set it upright again to demonstrate that this was *their*

neighbourhood, and that they intended to use the space for the entire neighbourhood and all of its residents. It is apparent from these various examples that the intent of these activities were multifaceted. They provided opportunities to do some community building, for neighbours to come together and talk with each other, and to make empowering statements about their rights to the physical space in their neighbourhood (Gwen, March 13, 2000).

In a neighbourhood characterized by cultural diversity, some of the activities that the Community Group planned were done in an attempt to get residents acquainted with each other (Sue, May 24, 2000). A key activity planned each year was a folk festival in the neighbourhood park. This one-day event consisted of entertainment by various musical groups, children's activities, crafts sales, and food venues. The event was offered for a number of years and while it was fun for those involved, the group came to realize that it was not involving River Valley residents to the extent that had originally been intended (Gwen, May 24, 2000). It was hoped that the Vietnamese and Portuguese families that comprised the primary cultural groups in River Valley would participate. While their children participated to some extent, very few of the parents attended. Also, the folk festival was attracting residents from elsewhere in the city, and while this brought an opportunity for others to come to River Valley and see that it was a neighbourhood that took pride in itself, the event was originally intended to bring its own neighbours together so that they got acquainted with each other. The event was subsequently discontinued because it was not doing the community building that was originally hoped.

One of the strategies that provided some ongoing bonding of the neighbourhood was an informal information exchange among the residents. Residents became accustomed to

informing each other of things they observed or heard. Comments like 'Oh, I called the cops about this, this morning' or 'There was a drug bust this morning' provided an early warning system about potential problems for the other residents (Resident, September 25, 2000). The ongoing communication with each other helped to strengthen the bonds between the residents, and as well proved useful when addressing specific issues related to River Valley.

Through his involvement in the COP programme, one resident felt that he developed relationships with his neighbours that were almost like an extended family. He felt connected to a larger group, rather than just a few of his friends, and as he said, "There was a common cause. So it brought you together. Sort of like I guess guys bond in wartime" (Resident, September 27, 2000).

One of the municipal planners described what she perceived to be the intent of these various events. She said,

> *I don't think any neighbourhood association does it just for the leisure of it, even in the suburban areas. I think it's to build that neighbourhood cohesion, so you know who's living down the street from you. So you know who your kids are playing with. You know who you can go to for help. I really think it's to build that sort of neighbourhood base and not be just be a bunch of strangers living in the same area (June 14, 2000).*

Community enjoyment. Some of the events were organized so that the neighbourhood residents could take a break from the stress that existed in the neighbourhood and simply enjoy each other. Sue talked about times when the difficult work that the women were doing was stressful for them, and that some of the more social activities provided opportunities to just have fun, not think about all the neighbourhood issues, and simply enjoy each other's company (May 24, 2000). One of the police officers expressed a

similar sentiment, saying that some of the social activities that were organized by the Community Group meant that the focus of the community went into something that was enjoyable as opposed to a constant focus on the problems (July 23, 2000). While there were certainly elements of community bonding in these activities, the programmes were intended to be recreational.

An example of an activity that was developed for the enjoyment of the neighbourhood was a fashion show that Sue organized annually at the school. This event also involved the school children as models, and was intended simply as a fun activity for the neighbourhood residents (Gwen, May 24, 2000).

Community involvement. Residents of the neighbourhood became involved in the River Valley initiative through activities that were both formally and informally organized. The formal activities consisted primarily of neighbourhood meetings, previously discussed. The regular monthly meeting was basically an opportunity to share information. Often, representatives from the municipality or the police were invited to discuss the issues of concern in the neighbourhood. Held at the local schools, these meetings seemed to vary in attendance depending on the issue. When the COP programme was brought to the neighbourhood, "the gym was filled to overflowing with people, yet at other times there may be only eight or ten people " (Municipal elected official, August 29, 2000).

Volunteers from the neighbourhood were organized as street representatives to distribute the meeting notices and agendas for the Community Group meetings to each household. These volunteers were often the children of the Community Group members

and this was a way to involve residents of the neighbourhood who do not typically become involved in neighbourhood activism.

A more informal way in which residents became involved in the River Valley initiative was through what the group referred to as "porch sitting" (Marilyn, May 19, 2000). On a nightly basis for a period of several months, homeowners and tenants who lived near the block particularly active in the drug and prostitute trade sat on Marilyn's porch, or on their own porches, to observe what was occurring. When the residents observed anything suspicious, they would call the police to report the occurrence. As one of the residents active in porch sitting described, there would be a different mix of people out every night and they included both property owners and tenants who had lived in the neighbourhood for a period of time. Also, the number of people ranged anywhere from two to 20, depending on the night (June 13, 2000). Jane said that porch sitting would only be done by those living in view of the drug dealing. "It's the people that you know in that immediate vicinity you're gonna' get out." "Plus, " Jane went on to say, "I could never sit out till three in the morning which is what they did" (June 5, 2000).

Community mobilization. The ongoing work of the River Valley Community Group was done by Marilyn, Sue, Jane and a few others. Yet when required, the neighbourhood residents could quickly mobilize to support an issue or participate in a political activity. Jane described how the neighbourhood functioned. When an issue required a neighbourhood presence, it was simply a matter of making a few phone calls and a group of residents could be mobilized to participate. Jane believed that this was one of the real strengths of the Community Group and something the group was geared to do. Jane went on to say:

We always had the reputation of being able to tell people sufficient information and get people rallied when it was necessary to have bodies... Like if our regular meetings had eight or ten people, that's just fine. But if it's an issue that effects people, you'll have a whole lot more... So, in some ways it's a bit like a phantom group in the sense that it's there but not there, but it really is always there. It's just most people don't have the staying power or the inclination to be there on a constant basis, but they're there. They'll always be there if you need them (June 5, 2000).

One of the elected officials who was involved in the group's activities described how residents would be asked to mobilize around an issue: "Marilyn would call in the morning and say, 'You've got to be down at Courtroom 3 at one o'clock today because Shabo [drug dealer and pimp] was arrested last night and he's up for show cause, and we've got to be there to...ya' know...show our part.' " As he said, "So you'd go, spend a half day sitting in court...That sort of stuff would happen. You had to be ready to mobilize quickly" (August 29, 2000).

It seemed the group's most effective way of mobilizing residents was through making connections, and developing a grapevine. They became knowledgeable about who knew who, what skills or abilities various people had, and asking for favours. One of the municipal staff described it like "building a nest" and asking individuals to assist by contributing their little piece (June 7, 2000).

Community Activities as Leisure for Women

When I asked the community advisors if the community activities in which they were involved were a source of leisure for them, their responses seemed to indicate that they found the question to be almost offensive. The women's reactions seemed to suggest that by my even asking the question, I seemed to lack an understanding of the seriousness of the issues that existed in their neighbourhood, and the fears of violence with which the

residents lived. Their typical view of recreation and leisure seemed to be defined as "fun and games". For these residents, their lived experience over this period of time was not, in their view, fun and games. Rather, the experience was one of primal fear and survival. While we were able to have the discussion about the role of leisure in the initiative, many more prompts were needed than was initially anticipated.

Two reactions were expressed repeatedly. The immediate and common reaction to the question about leisure was that the situation that existed in the neighbourhood was experienced by the residents as being too stressful to be considered leisure (Residents, June 13, 2000; September 27, 2000). The residents experienced risks to their physical safety and their quality of life, and they feared losing their financial investments, their homes, and the friendships they had gained.

Even though deep and lasting friendships developed as a result of the group's community efforts, the women were getting together to address the issues rather than for their need for social activities. Jane recalls that for her personally,

> *[The work involved with the Community Group] was always the last thing I needed. At that time we were together because we were dealing with issues. You're all just so damn busy and ground down that you don't think in terms of what it isn't and what it is. But at that stage, we wouldn't have been socializing. We weren't getting together on a social basis just to yak, because none of us had any time for that (June 5, 2000).*

Gwen expressed a similar sentiment saying that she would go to the Community Group meetings because she felt compelled to do so, in order to keep apprised of what was occurring in the neighbourhood. She added, though, that if she did not have to go to the meetings, she would not have attended (March 13, 2000).

The second most common reaction to the question about leisure was that while the time, work, and effort that were required to address the problems in the neighbourhood were unpaid and done during 'leisure time', the work that needed to be done was extensive, exhausting, and of a serious nature. One woman described how the issues presented themselves so consistently that "it wasn't like, "Oh well, we'll scan the neighbourhood from six to eight". You couldn't! Like there's somebody in your yard at 4:30 when you got home. You had to address it...him...*then*. You *had* to. You were on call all the time!" (September 27, 2000).

The residents' concern for what was occurring in the neighbourhood was very pervasive for some and remained with them even when they were away on holidays. Marilyn's husband said,

> *There was never any leisure for me. Even if we went away on holiday, we were always wondering what was going on here. We didn't know what we were going to come back to. We were never free of the grip of this place. No matter where we went, we took it with us. We'd come home and oh my god, I'd find out that there was a big fight next door or there had been a drug raid (September 25, 2000).*

Sue talked about some of the recreation activities like the folk festival and the street dance that the group planned for the neighbourhood. For her, these events were not something she would define as a source of personal leisure. She found the events stressful in that she would get really nervous and be going over the checklists in her head to make sure that everything went as it had been planned. As such, the events were not leisure for her because of the amount of work that went into each event and because she found the events to be very intense for her. Any fun that she did have was not until the event was over (May 24, 2000).

Even with the exhaustion and stress of the neighbourhood issues, the women who were involved in the River Valley Community Group acknowledged that they did have fun together even though they were working extremely hard to address the issues within their neighbourhood. The women on the community advisory committee agreed that although the group would be planning a project or conducting its business, as Sue said, they would often joke around and have a good time with each other (May 24, 2000). One municipal staff member who worked closely with the group over the years also commented that even though these women were intense about the issues and the job that had to be done "they clearly did like each other and enjoyed being together as a group" (June 7, 2000).

The friendships that developed for these women have been described as "tribal" and familial (Municipal elected official, August 29, 2000). One of the residents who grew up in the River Valley neighbourhood during the timeframe being explored described how she would now define family on a broader scale. She feels that family also includes her neighbours as well, because they were people she could turn to for help if needed (October 20, 2000). Jane also said that it was the friendships that kept the group together, and while there might have been times when it was good socially, that was not the reason that they were involved. As she says, "The personal friendships are sort of what you recognize afterwards" (June 5, 2000).

Sue felt that planning and implementing the recreational events proved to be therapeutic for the group. In her opinion, the group needed a balance between something social for the group and their families, and the seriousness of the problems with which they were dealing. While the women did the work of arranging and implementing the

activity, at some point in the event she said they could relax a bit and say, "Ya' know, this is good." However, Sue went on to say, "You usually didn't have time, now that I think of it, to have a lot of fun" (May 24, 2000). When Marilyn talked about the activities that were planned for the neighbourhood, she said "It had nothing to do with recreation. It was always a way to keep the community together and to celebrate the good things of our community" (May 19, 2000).

None of the study participants defined the work done to address the issues in the neighbourhood as leisure. There were, though, repeated references to the sense of camaraderie between each other that resulted. Sue commented how in the midst of the work, there were fun times with each other. Some of the social activities gave them an opportunity to think about something other than the problems in the neighbourhood for awhile and they were able to enjoy each other's company (May 24, 2000). These social occasions extended beyond the planned recreational activities that were opened to the entire neighbourhood. Potluck suppers and annual Christmas or New Year's Eve parties were held regularly for those who were most actively involved in the River Valley initiative. These events fostered a sense of cohesiveness and camaraderie in the neighbourhood and between the people most directly involved in the initiative. Jane seemed to sum up the sentiments expressed by the various women in the neighbourhood when she said, "It always came down to the friends. It was always the friendships. Yeah, it was fun. But it was more a job to be done" (June 5, 2000).

Community Work as a Site for Resistance to Traditional Planning Processes

The public officials who participated in the study acknowledged that the women who were involved in the River Valley initiative took on roles that began to challenge the traditional practices within various political and social service institutions. It was with the municipal Planning, Parks and Recreation Department, and the regional Police Services, that the women were most active. Those involved in this community work were demanding that there be resident involvement in finding solutions, and in changing policies and practices to be more inclusive of community members. The women assumed a role of holding the agencies accountable for the work they were mandated to do within the community—a role that is not typically done by community citizens.

One of the police officers who was interviewed described his reaction when he began to hear from Marilyn and some of the other residents how they experienced the police in their neighbourhood:

> *Actually, I was a bit embarrassed to hear from their perspective, how the police had treated them. When I started to realize some of the frustrations that these people were facing, this wasn't right. We're supposed to be here to work with people, not to be an impediment to them getting what they want. We shouldn't be saying, "Give me 12 ½ million of your tax dollars, but don't tell me to be accountable on how I'm going to spend it. I'll tell you how I'm gonna' police you (July 23, 2000).*

Another police officer talked about the Community Group's attempts to develop a partnership with the police to find solutions to the problems in the neighbourhood. He described the traditional approach used by the police, which was that the complaint would be taken and the police would decide how they wanted to address it. Having the community participate in determining how an intervention would be managed was not typically done. The women from River Valley knew that the usual forms of intervention

were not effective. The existing state of the neighbourhood was proof of that. The police officer described Marilyn's approach, in particular, in her persistence with the police saying "No, this is a together thing. This is not about you doing something for us. It's about us doing something together for us" (July 21, 2000).

As the women from River Valley described their interactions with the community-wide agencies, it was again a situation where the women knew that in order to see any change occur, they would need to be active and assertive in their liaison efforts. Gwen said eventually they were able to develop a rapport with staff in the municipal Planning Department where the staff would listen, and respond to, what the women were asking. While a positive relationship emerged from their efforts with the Planning Department staff, Gwen felt that the women involved in the initiative had not had a good relationship with the Parks and Recreation department. In fact, she said, "I think we've been a thorn in the flesh of the City quite a bit" (May 24, 2000). Sue made a similar comment saying, " They didn't like us very much, 'cause we were telling them that they weren't accountable and that they weren't doing anything that they were supposed to do. And Parks and Rec...I don't remember them *ever* being on board with us" (May 24, 2000).

The River Valley residents who participated in the study described the interactions with the public agencies and organizations as "*very* antagonistic" (Jane, June 5, 2000), "fighting" (Gwen, March 13, 2000), "hostile" (Sue, May 24, 2000), "abusive" (Jane, March 2, 2000), and with "roadblocks set up for us to succeed" (Sue, March 2, 2000). In recalling the early years of the River Valley initiative, representatives from the community-wide agencies described the relationships as "adversarial" (Police officer, July 23, 2000), in "complete conflict" (Municipal bureaucrat, June 7, 2000), and

"frustrated" (Police officer, July 21, 2000). These descriptors suggest that the women were assuming roles that were atypical from the usual working relationships that the bureaucracies had with local constituents. In their attempts to strike a more livable balance within the neighbourhood, Marilyn and Sue moved out of their traditional roles as full-time homemakers, took the time to learn about the organizational structure and the operating practices of the local bureaucracies, and fight for changes that would make the neighbourhood safer for their children, families, and neighbours.

A further example of women moving outside their traditional roles was in regard to their participation in the COP programme. One might stereotypically think that the COP programme would have had primarily male participants because the patrols commonly went into the middle of the night. Yet, approximately half of the patrollers in the programme were women. As one resident said, "in the old days, the man's supposed to be the protector and go out there and physically protect" (September 27, 2000). Obviously, though, the women in the neighbourhood moved into this protective role as well.

The Role of Women in a Community Initiative

The discussion above provides the context for the analysis of the grand tour research question: What was the role of women in a community initiative, situated in their residential neighbourhood? This discussion will continue in the following chapter. The social learning process, which has been used as a theoretical framework for the study, can be applied to the findings of the research questions that have been discussed above. The schematic below is an application of the social learning framework to the River Valley case, discussed thus far:

Social Learning Process

Theories of Reality

History of minimal resident involvement in previous planning initiatives

Increase in rental properties and neglect /deterioration of rental properties, primarily by absentee landlords

Increase in residents who could be termed vulnerable (e.g. mental health issues, substance abuse)

Increase in prostitution, crack houses, and crime

Stigmatization of the neighbourhood by the local press, city residents, and public agencies/organizations



Vision and Values

Belief in and commitment to the neighbourhood

Strong sense of community values

Frustration and anger towards bureaucrats

Values of the River Valley Community Group



Political Strategies and Tactics

Developing networks and building linkages

Becoming informed about the issues and the political processes

Mobilizing community residents to action

Developing programmes



Social Practice

Relationship web

Partnership development



Learning

Acting out of resistance to traditional political strategies/tactics by public officials.

The grand tour question relating to the role of women in their community initiative will now be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS/INTERPRETATION

The Role of Women in the River Valley Initiative

There were two key roles played by the women who were involved in the River Valley initiative. One role was that of 'protector-defender' of the people, the relationships in the neighbourhood, and their values. The other role was that of 'political activist-leader'. A key feature of both roles is the significance that relationships and values held for these women. The following discussion describes these roles in greater depth.

Protector-Defender Role

Using Merriam-Webster Dictionary definitions, to protect is defined as "to shield from injury" and to defend is defined as "to repel danger or attack from; to maintain against opposition". These definitions were used with the women involved in the River Valley initiative during the member checks held to verify the findings. At the core of their protecting and defending work, these women shared concerns for their own families, the friendships that they had developed while living in the neighbourhood, children, other people's families, their sense of community, their homes, and their values.

In a discussion with Marilyn and Gwen, they described the importance of these relationships by saying that without their families being whole and together, they would be unable to survive. For them, family was defined using a broad definition: "as all relationships that really matter" (Gwen, November 18, 2000). In their views, it is not the houses or the buildings that allow societies to survive. It is the people, and it was the people in the neighbourhood who were their primary concern.

The friendships that developed between the women involved in the neighbourhood initiative were almost familial. Commonly, these women had moved into the city from distant communities or from other countries. As such, their extended families were not easily accessible to them. Over the years, the women in River Valley developed a system of social support that consisted of things like sharing child caring responsibilities and celebrating family holidays together, as well as offering support and consolation in times of stress and fear. When the activities of the drug dealers escalated to levels of violence, information was quickly passed along to each other with offers to help if the need arose. Children were moved out of the immediate vicinity where risk was most likely to exist and were cared for by women who lived a couple of blocks away from the "hot spot" (Sue, May 24, 2000). Other women often protected Marilyn's children when events made staying in her home dangerous. Marilyn's home was particularly vulnerable, due to its location in the middle of the drug dealing activity, and it was common for dealers to be on Marilyn's front and backyard properties. As a result, Marilyn would take her children elsewhere for their protection.

The people that the women were protecting and defending extended beyond their own families, neighbours, and neighbourhood friends. They were also concerned for the prostitutes and their children, and the johns' wives and their children. While the women residents were appalled and at times disgusted by what the prostitutes were *doing*, there was also a strong sense of compassion, understanding that the prostitutes were substance addicted and working to feed their habits. At times, the residents would call the police in an effort to protect the prostitutes after they had been beaten up over drug deals that had gone bad. The ethic in the Community Group was that the prostitutes were treated like

anyone else in River Valley (Marilyn, May 19, 2000), and they were protected from the name-calling and threats to their personal safety that were common in an adjacent neighbourhood.

In regard to the wives and children of the johns, the residents involved in the River Valley initiative were often conflicted as to how they should manage the information that they had about these men. On one hand, they were concerned that the johns would carry sexually transmitted diseases home to their families, and on the other hand, they were concerned about the hurt that they would cause for the wives and the children by disclosing the information they had. In describing how the Community Group members wrestled with this conflict, Marilyn's husband discussed the differing reactions between the males and females who lived in the neighbourhood:

> *I remember many times the discussion as to whether or not—especially when the doctors and dentists went by—as to whether or not we should phone the wives and I think that the males would have. Like "Yeah. Let's do it. The sons of bitches." But it was always the women that would say "No. It's gonna' be devastating to the wife and the kids." In other words, the side effect was you'd hurt the loved one also, so that was the topic of discussion a lot. And we could never get ourselves to come to grips with that, 'cause ya' know, as much as we discussed it, we always moved on because we could always... we always saw other ways (September, 25, 2000).*

In addition to protecting the individual people who were impacted by the events in the River Valley neighbourhood, the women involved in the neighbourhood initiative were protecting and defending their fundamental sense of community. Jane talked about the terror that she felt whenever she thought that one of her friends would become defeated by the entire situation and decide to move out of the neighbourhood. For Jane, the River Valley neighbourhood provided a secure place for her to live. All of these women had their young families together and their children had gone to the same schools. As she

said, "This is what makes my life possible is the fact that I've got a solid base here and if anyone attacked that—if that gets taken away from me, I'd have to create that world all over again. I *can't* even think about that" (November 22, 2000).

The women were also protecting their homes. When they defined "home", it was apparent that they were not merely referring to their own four walls. Gwen's home consisted also of Sue's home, and Marilyn's home, and Jane's home (Gwen, March 13, 2000). For these women, their homes extended into their neighbourhood and the community as a system provided their experience of "home". One of the other residents who participated in the study said that her home was her sense of peace—her sense of place—and when she had dealers pulling knives on police officers in her back yard, her sense of home was threatened. To protect their home, her husband became heavily involved in the COP programme (September 27, 2000).

Finally, these women were protecting the values that they wanted their children to learn as part of their family upbringing. These women were concerned that if they treated the dealers and the prostitutes with a lack of dignity and a lack of humanity, what were they in fact teaching their children? If they simply packed up and left the neighbourhood rather than discuss the problems, and deal with the problems head on, what would they be teaching their children (Jane, June 5, 2000)? These women believed that it was by watching their actions that their children would learn about their values, and that to act in accordance with their values was to teach.

Marilyn spoke about how easily the residents could have fallen into blaming the Jamaican community for the drug dealing problems in the neighbourhood. Her concern

was that the residents could easily become racist in their attitudes—an attitude that was incongruent with their personal values base. In order to protect these values, she discussed her fears of becoming racist with the local race relations officer. When Marilyn went seeking help for her neighbourhood, she said, "You've got to help us because we run the risk of becoming racist in this. I mean, we're raising children. Recognize what we're dealing with here. We can't be dealing at all these levels. It's just too hard. *It's just too hard*" (November 18, 2000).

It is apparent from the discussion above that the women involved in the River Valley initiative acted out of a strong values base, and out of a strong commitment to the relationships that existed within their experience of reality. In addition to their protector/defender roles, their neighbourhood activities also involved their roles as political activists.

Political Activist-Leader

Under the broad umbrella of political activist-leader, the specific roles that the women assumed in regard to the political aspects of the River Valley initiative were that of organizer, political spokesperson, negotiator, and neighbourhood animator.

Organizer

It was primarily the women who participated in the community advisors group who were involved in the Community Group during which the political organizing occurred. The strong presence of these women in this role was commonly identified by the study participants.

Many of the professionals in the community commented on the attention to detail, and the regular follow-up that was done by the women in the Community Group to ensure that any commitments that were made were in fact implemented. One of the police officers spoke of the accountability that the Community Group members insisted upon if something had been promised from his office (July 21, 2000). It was his experience that the group would remember the exact date that had been discussed for follow-up and contact him on that specific date to get the information or action that had been promised.

What is apparent from the data is that the organizing work that was done was closely meshed with the skills of the various women involved. Marilyn was particularly effective on city-wide committees. In addition to organizing her own neighbourhood, she was also responsible for mobilizing the other downtown neighbourhood associations around common issues so that their presence would be greater at City Council. Gwen enjoyed research and letter writing, and Sue had the ability to involve others, make phone calls, and do a great deal of the work required behind the scenes to implement the political activity. Jane's skill, in addition to writing, was clearly that of the primary political spokesperson.

Political Spokesperson

As Jane explained,

> *I was kind of the "rent-a-mouth". I would write the letters, do the presentations, but I always considered people like Marilyn and then later Sue as doing the real labour. The dog work. They're constant. I mean, Marilyn? Constant hard work. But when you needed a delegation at Council... that kind of thing, I would go yap (November 22, 2000).*

As noted, Jane's sole interest in the River Valley initiative was the political activity, rather than the recreational programming and community building aspects of the group's

work. Her academic background and previous training provided her with the skills to identify problems and issues, consider alternatives, identify solutions, liaise with bureaucrats, and address members of City Council with ease. Jane's training also provided her with the ability to draft correspondence or give feedback on what should be included in correspondence that the group was generating. Marilyn referred to Jane's "pedigree" and said,

> *You know, they would see her as viable. She can rub a noun and verb together so that by the time she's finished, they're going, "What was that all about?" I love the look on their faces, because they think, "Oh. Here comes this stupid neighbourhood again." And then they go, "But oh my god. They've got Jane!" (May 19, 2000)*

Marilyn generally acted as the spokesperson with the media, and as a result, was regularly identified *as* River Valley. She understood the media as far as the neighbourhood was concerned. Marilyn realized that she was not necessarily liked by all the reporters, but she felt respected by them. Marilyn was also the spokesperson with the Crown Attorney's office and suggested that in that environment, Jane's pedigree would have been a liability. Yet, Marilyn had credibility in that office and was able to liaise comfortably with the lawyers in that role (May 19, 2000).

Negotiator

In reference to advocacy strategies, negotiation refers to direct communication and liaison with public officials who have the ability to make changes due to their official mandates within the government organization (Mattison & Storey, 1992). The women involved in the River Valley Community Group used this strategy with great regularity, and as such, developed their skills as negotiators.

The main government officials with whom they negotiated within the local municipal structure were the planning staff, Parks and Recreation Department personnel, and upper level management. As well, they were in active negotiation with the local police service, the Crown Attorney's office, the local school boards, and several of the human service agencies.

On the municipal government level, the group negotiated such issues as increased property standards enforcement, secondary plan amendments, safe city initiatives, and various park improvements. With the local police services commission, the group negotiated additional enforcement resources within the neighbourhood, innovative policing approaches, and programme partnerships. Their negotiation with the Crown Attorney's office focused on the impact of their experiences in the neighbourhood, the acknowledgment of their victim impact statements as legitimate evidence during court hearings, and sentencing issues pertaining to the johns and crack dealers. In regard to school issues, the women in the Community Group were active negotiators in a number of issues related to school closures or school services. The residents of River Valley neighbourhood knew that if they lost their downtown schools, the residential mix in their neighbourhood would be threatened. They did not want their children to attend school outside of their neighbourhood, but just as importantly, they negotiated around school closure issues to maintain the integrity of their neighbourhood as a place to live, play, and learn.

Marilyn and Jane were particularly effective at negotiating – Jane most actively with the planning department, City Council, and the school boards; and Marilyn with both those as well as the others noted above. Some of the institutions with whom they

negotiated have traditionally been resistant to input from the public. The police, for example, are highly wedded to a standardized, centralized model of control over policing policy decisions (Bass, 2000). That Marilyn was able to work with the police services in the way that she did was commendable in view of the police culture that existed at the time.

The Community Group developed a number of different negotiating strategies. They actively sought out the people with whom they needed to communicate, either through direct liaison efforts or through membership in city-wide committees and task forces. In so doing, they learned to speak the language most commonly used by the various organizations. They presented themselves in an informed way because they had done their homework and knew both the issues at hand and the solutions they were seeking (Municipal planner, June 14, 2000). They simply refused to "back off" until they were able to find solutions that were mutually agreeable to both sides. They did their lobbying with City Council and the other relevant decision-making officials privately and ahead of time, and were seasoned through a previous school closure initiative on how to lobby effectively. It was this combination of approaches that made their negotiating efforts effective.

Neighbourhood Animator

The fourth key role that these women played in the neighbourhood was that of a neighbourhood animator. The term "animator" is being used to encompass activities such as neighbourhood mobilization, community building, and neighbourhood communication and networking.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were a number of strategies that were used: a) to educate the neighbourhood residents about the actions being taken for the River Valley initiative (e.g. newsletters, meeting agendas and notices); b) to build a sense of community among the residents (i.e., recreational activities such as festivals and picnics); and c) to mobilize the residents when a strong presence was needed for a City Council meeting, a school closure issue, or a court hearing for one of the dealers. Numerous examples were provided regarding these activities in the previous chapter, and again, these activities were primarily led by Marilyn and Sue. Both women devoted much of their time outside the home to their unpaid volunteer work related to the River Valley initiative. Being located for the most part within their neighbourhood, they made the time for, and had the flexibility in their work schedules to take leadership in these activities.

Discussion of Grand Tour Question

Unlike many women who are active in grassroots, working-class neighbourhood activism, the women in River Valley have not typically been restrained from having a voice as individual women in their own right (Jane, November 22, 2000). Marilyn had the personality, physical presence, and personal charisma that translated into a sense of personal power that was apparent to others. Jane came from an educational background that provided her with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to speak out on behalf of issues in which she believed. As she explained,

> *We've come from a position where of course you say your mind. That's what you do! You're a participant in this world like everybody else and you do your thing. It's not a coincidence that we're all women. I'm not saying that isn't an issue. Just be careful how you capture us, because I suspect we're women of privilege in some respects (November 22, 2000).*

Clearly, Jane had privileges that many women do not have. This sense of privilege became most evident in the level of self-confidence that typified Jane's involvement with the initiative. Would Sue or Gwen have said the same thing about themselves? Perhaps not. For Sue, there was a great deal of learning that resulted from her involvement in the initiative over the years. Her experience with River Valley allowed her to develop a political astuteness and understanding of bureaucratic obstacles and action strategies, but her starting point as a community activist was far less experienced and confident than Jane's. As for Gwen, while she had paid work outside her home throughout her career, her experience in community activism was further developed through her involvement in the River Valley initiative.

The River Valley case is not a story of women who have been marginalized, finally finding a voice. As Jane said, the educational level of the initiative's participants was not highly sophisticated, nor were their economic levels, but they enjoyed a degree of social privilege grounded in the solid marital relationships that they had (November 22, 2000). Certainly Jane's training was an asset to the group. Her knowledge and confidence allowed the group to have a voice—a voice heard by the community officials to whom she was speaking. Marilyn's tenacity and commitment to the neighbourhood and the support that she received from the other women involved in the initiative gave her the confidence to ask questions, to learn how the community institutions operated, and to insist on help for her neighbourhood. These women had the confidence to act, and as such, were able to provide the leadership that resulted in positive change within their neighbourhood.

Gendered Nature of Men's and Women's Roles in the Neighbourhood Initiative

Of those residents involved in the River Valley initiative, the roles played by men were distinctly different than the roles played by women. Where women were the organizers of the political and recreational activities, the men generally followed the direction set by the women. Where the women planned the arts festival, the men provided the manual labour required to set up the booths or transport the refreshments. Where the women attended various committee meetings and strategized the political lobbying that the group undertook, the men escorted the women back to their homes and acted as bodyguards or protectors of the women's personal safety. Repeatedly, the strong moral and physical support that the men offered the women emerged from the data, and yet it was clearly the women in the initiative who assumed the active leadership roles in River Valley.

Jane stressed that an important point to remember was that unlike many women involved in neighbourhood activism, all the women involved in the River Valley initiative had intact marriages that had weathered the stress produced by the neighbourhood issues (March 7, 2000). Unlike some women-led initiatives that have resulted in divorces for some women involved (Krauss, 1998), the women active in this initiative had spouses who shared responsibilities on the home front. Their experience was more in keeping with Mattison & Storey's (1992) finding that families and friends often give advocates the support they need to do their political work. Having childcare and other household responsibilities covered by their husbands, the women were free to attend neighbourhood meetings, do the planning and organizing, and attend various meetings out in the community. If, for some reason, the women could not attend the

neighbourhood meetings, their partners would. Jane spoke further about the privilege that the women involved in River Valley enjoyed:

> *The privilege is the fact that we had supportive relationships in the sense that it was never questioned. Ours was very much a partnership thing with the males. It may be that we fell into roles, and it may be that the women were the ones who are more tenacious and persistent, but I don't have any doubt, like I couldn't have done what I had done without Eric always being supportive, and pitching in and never questioning. Marilyn certainly couldn't. None of us could have (November 22, 2000).*

This analysis will now turn to a discussion of the key themes emerging out of the River Valley case.

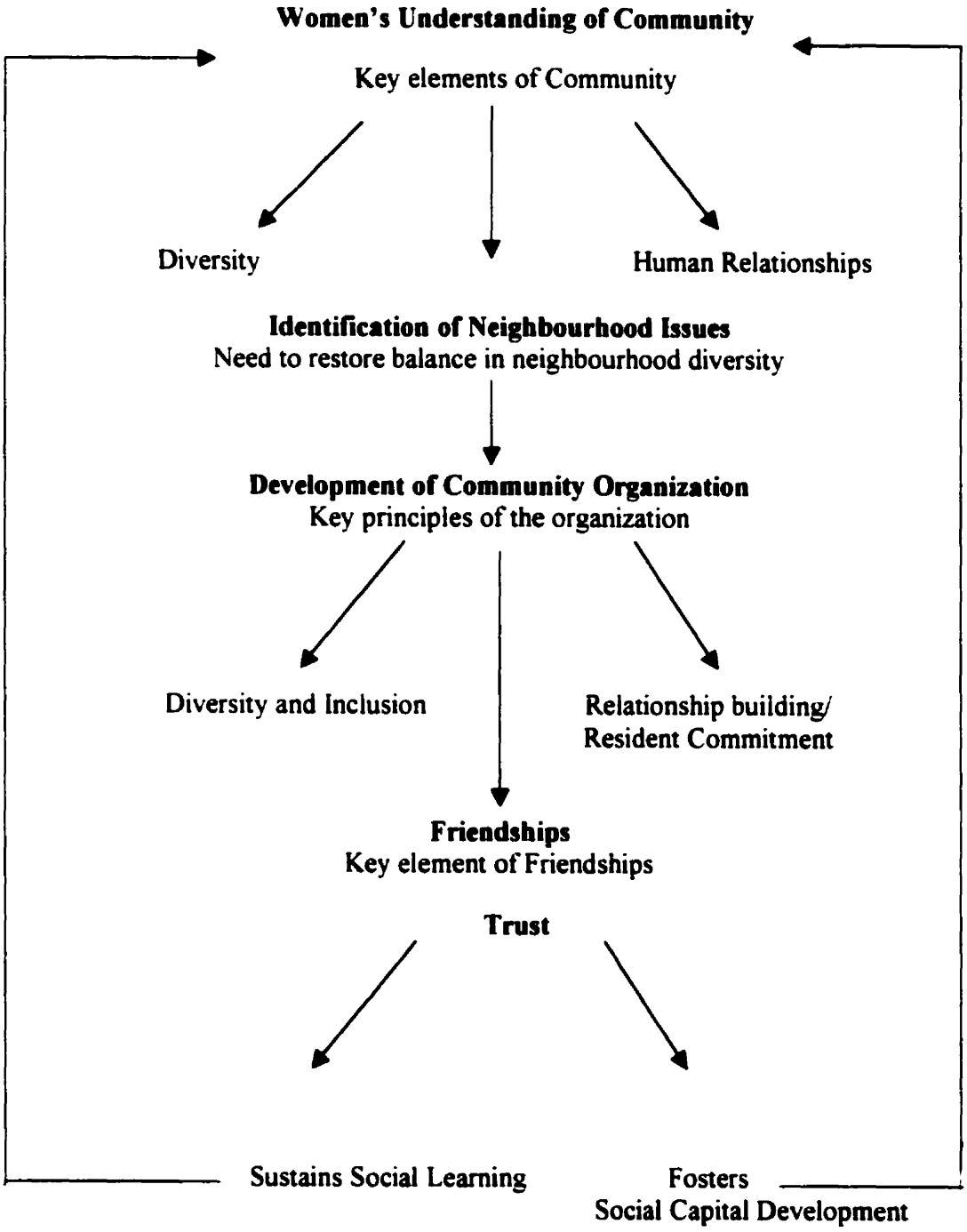
CHAPTER SIX: UNDERSTANDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Case studies, particularly single case studies, are not intended to produce generalizations. Seldom do case studies result in entirely new understandings of the issue under study. Rather, the intent of case studies is to refine or increase our understandings of a phenomenon or theory (Stake, 1995).

In this chapter, I will examine the assertions and understandings that have emerged from the study on the role of women in the River Valley Community Group. It is the lessons learned from this case, which are of value in this inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, this chapter will explore the following topics:

1. the leadership style demonstrated by women in the River Valley initiative;
2. the way in which relationships and friendships fostered the development of social capital within their neighbourhood; and
3. the way in which relationships and friendships influenced social learning in their task group.

This discussion will show that because these women defined their neighbourhood in human terms—as the human relationships that existed there—their approaches to addressing neighbourhood issues centred on relationship building. As a result, the friendships formed and trust established between these women were key factors in their ability to sustain their social learning process over time. Concurrently, social capital development was fostered. The following schematic depicts the understandings which will be discussed in this chapter.


Women's Understanding of Community
Key elements of Community
Diversity
Human Relationships
Identification of Neighbourhood Issues
Need to restore balance in neighbourhood diversity
Development of Community Organization
Key principles of the organization
Diversity and Inclusion
Relationship building/
Resident Commitment
Friendships
Key element of Friendships
Trust
Sustains Social Learning
Fosters
Social Capital Development

Women's Leadership Approaches

The style of leadership demonstrated by the women in the River Valley Community Group echoed the way in which they defined "community" as a "human" community, (Dominell, 1995; Kaplan, 1997). Unlike the male study participants, who referred to their neighbourhood in geographic and physical terms (e.g., the land and the buildings), these women defined "community" as the friendships and sense of "family" that they experienced with each other.

These women valued the diversity of the neighbourhood represented by various immigrant groups, differing educational levels, and various socio-economic levels. As Jane said, gentrification—a phenomenon of new people, generally with higher incomes, moving into a neighbourhood and dramatically changing the area's essential character (Gratz, 1989)—was not a goal. The women in the River Valley Community Group celebrated the diversity of the neighbourhood and hence chose leadership styles that were interactive, relational, egalitarian and inclusive (Belenky et al. 1997, Dominelli, 1995, Ianello, 1992, Rosener, 1990). It was relationship building and connectedness with others that were central features of their leadership styles and political strategies. As noted, relationship building included the following:

1. Networks and linkages with various community-wide organizations to address the issues in the neighbourhood;
2. Community activities organized for all residents within the neighbourhood for the purpose of community building, community bonding, community mobilization, and consequently community empowerment; and
3. Community Group activities, which mobilized residents of River Valley to address the political issues in the neighbourhood.

Terms such as "conduit", "interaction", and "network" have been used to describe women's leadership styles (Helgeson, 1990). Centrewomen are women at the centre of a social action initiative and primarily responsible for network formation (Sacks, 1988). Marilyn's role as the centrewoman in this initiative was critical; she was instrumental in gathering information and facilitating networks and connections. These linkages, termed by Marilyn as a "relationship web", (March 2, 2000) reflected non-hierarchical approaches common in women's leadership approaches (Gittel et al, 2000; Frazer & Lacy, 1993), in that partnership development and shared learning between the residents and practitioners was the implicit goal.

As the network developed, over time the leadership demonstrated by the women in the Community Group was shared, based on needed skills and knowledge (Sacks, 1988). The women's roles as "negotiators", described in the previous chapter, reflected skills typically learned by women in their mothering roles (Ribbens, 1994) and it was these skills that proved effective in bringing groups together to find solutions (Mattison & Storey, 1992).

Of relevance to the role of women in the River Valley Community Group is Gilligan's (1993) theory of identity formation and moral development. Gilligan's findings suggest that because female children are similar to their mothers and therefore less differentiated, they lack any need to separate from their mothers in order to develop their gender identities. As a result, Gilligan found that females value nurturance, connectedness with others, and relationships as they attempt to locate their position in the world. It is isolation and standing apart which are dangerous for females, and due to their tendency to

take care of others, women maintain a web of human connections so that no one is left alone.

The women involved in the River Valley initiative made conscious decisions to include others as much as possible in the activities of the Community Group. One example of this was the choices made regarding the organization's structure and ways of work. Acting out of an ethic of care, these women believed that organizational structure often encouraged the "elite" of a neighbourhood to participate and hold the key leadership roles, leaving those with less education, experience, or privilege intimidated and outside of the leadership process. As Gwen said, "The minute you make it formal, it seems to be the people '*with*'...[the people] that '*have*', that become the leaders and we didn't want that" (March 2, 2000). From the outset, the women who started the River Valley Community Group wanted it to be accessible to, and inclusive of, all residents in the neighbourhood. Morally, the women wanted to include everyone in the neighbourhood so that no one was left outside of the process (Gilligan, 1993).

By welcoming civic engagement from all residents, the diversity that existed in the neighbourhood found expression and involvement in the Community Group as well. The women in River Valley created a space where all residents could be heard, ideas exchanged, and mutual support could emerge (Gittel et al. 2000; Piche, 1988; South London Community Health Projects, 1982; South Wales Association of Tenants, 1982). These women intuitively knew that involving residents in the initiative was the key to their effectiveness and success. It was this involvement that contributed to the development of social capital within the neighbourhood.

Relationships and Civic Participation: Impact on Social Capital Development

When the literature on social capital is reviewed, it is apparent that what is central to social capital development is trust, network formation, reciprocity, and civic engagement (Putnam, 1993, 1996; Wilson, 1997). What will be shown in this discussion is that out of their ethic of care, the women in River Valley focused on relationship building activities that, subsequently, enhanced social capital development within their neighbourhood.

Like many community action initiatives, the River Valley Community Group intentionally brought people into the solutions (Mattison & Storey, 1992). One resident involved in the Community Group explained its decision-making process: "Number one, we discuss it as a group before we do anything. Nobody does anything in the name of the neighbourhood on their own" (June 13, 2000). Out of this consensus and inclusive approach, all members of the Community Group participate in the decisions and actions of the group—itself, a form of civic participation.

When the political activities of the Community Group required a large show of support, a network of residents was readily available to participate. Relationships had been cultivated for this purpose. While these particular residents may not have attended the regular meetings of the Community Group, they actively participated when asked. Like other networks of civic engagement, a success in one collaboration provided the encouragement and template for further engagement (Putnam, 1993) and this core of residents was repeatedly called upon to act.

The Community Group's use of recreation and leisure activities as community-building activities was also instrumental in developing relationships and social capital.

Detailed in Chapter Four was a discussion of the community building activities that the Community Group implemented in the neighbourhood. These activities were developed to provide residents with an opportunity to become acquainted with each other, to learn more about their neighbourhood, and to take pride in where they lived. The leisure activities were planned and organized entirely by volunteers from the neighbourhood, and resulted in a sense of connectedness, empowerment, and commitment to River Valley. Sue explained that by getting people involved in their own area of interest, more commitment and connectedness to the neighbourhood was fostered, a finding similar to that found by Arai and Pedlar (1996) in a Healthy Communities project.

Planning and implementing the various leisure activities required many hands and many skills. While some residents of the community may have lacked confidence participating in some of the political activities (e.g., making a formal presentation to City Council; letter writing), the tasks involved in implementing the festivals, community picnics, and street parties could easily be done by any resident (e.g., carrying ice, setting up tables, handing out flyers). Social capital is "built in a very humble, piecemeal way" (Wilson, 1997, p.746) and as mentioned, once involved in a successful collaboration, a network is formed which tends to be cumulative and self-reinforcing (Putnam, 1993). As well, networks in support of human capital development became multi-layered (Gittel et al.2000), spreading out beyond the women most actively involved in the Community Group to the various residents who participated in both the leisure and political activities.

The relationships developed among the residents in the neighbourhood were also instrumental in sustaining the Community Group's social learning process. How these

women overcame the weaknesses commonly observed in the sustainability of the social learning process and pushed its usual limits will now be discussed.

The Role of Relationships in Social Learning

Friedmann (1987) suggests that obstacles exist that can prevent groups from sustaining a social learning process over time. Two of these obstacles are particularly relevant to this case study:

1. Social learning groups tend to form out of a concern for a particular issue or task. Once this task is complete, the action group typically disbands. Two things occur at this point. First, the learning-action-learning-action cycle breaks and no further action is taken. Second, once the group disbands and the members dissipate, the learning that has occurred is lost.

2. Social learning groups typically engage in a dialogue that occurs "face-to face". This is one reason why social learning groups are particularly effective in neighbourhoods where members reside and are accessible to each other. For a social learning process to be effective, however, this dialogue requires interpersonal communication skills, trust, and a willingness to make oneself vulnerable with other members of the group. To develop trust, there must be "a willingness to suspend rank" and a responsive approach to the needs of other group members (Friedmann, 1987, p.187). As such, collaborators within the social learning task group must understand that actors and learners are considered to be one and the same and be willing to step into a level of vulnerability and trust that supports a social learning process. If group

members are unwilling or unable to do so, the social learning process can no longer be effective or sustained.

What is of particular relevance to this case study is that the women involved in the River Valley initiative not only sustained their social learning process over the six years of the initiative under study, they are—at the time of this writing (2001)—still active 12 years later.

How these women have pushed the usual limitations of social learning beyond its typical practice, will now be discussed.

Temporary Nature of Social Learning Task Groups

For the women most closely involved in the River Valley initiative, the friendships that emerged through their participation provided them with a valued emotional attachment to each other. When asked how the group was able to sustain itself, Jane said "It always came down to the friends. My roots are here. My friends are here. The personal friendships are sort of what you recognize afterwards. Ya' know, you suddenly realize 'Hold on. This is what kept us together.' " (June 5, 2000).

Involvement in the various activities of the community group—be they related to leisure or political activism—provided these women with an experience of camaraderie. The women's involvement in these neighbourhood activities provided the opportunity to both develop and maintain friendships (Freysinger and Flannery, 1992).

Raymond (1985) suggests that friendships, traditionally considered to be personal and intimate, are not generally understood to be political. Yet, it is friendship that provides a

common world and a common space for women—a place where values and concerns are shared. Raymond goes on to say that "both politics and friendship are restored to a fuller meaning when they are brought together, i.e., when political activity proceeds from a shared affection, vision, and spirit, and when friendship has a more expansive political effect" (p.166). Jane mentioned, "We couldn't do it without each other because I don't think we have ever sunk to the point where we haven't been able to pick the other one up. To which Marilyn replied: That's right...We've never all been down together. We can always figure out a way." (March 7, 2000). By finding this common space where these women's experiences were constantly affirmed by each other, a "grounding for their social and political existence" (Raymond, 1985, p.165) emerged so that they did not lose their anchor or focus. It was this form of grounding that was being expressed by Jane and Marilyn when they spoke about the friendships and support that they provided each other when things got difficult—friendship and support that enabled them to go on.

Interpersonal Communication in Social Learning Task Groups

The women in River Valley, because of the deep and sustaining friendships that they had with each other, shared a level of trust and vulnerability that enabled them to step into conflict in problem solving discussions (Wrigley, 1998). As Jane said, even if the relationships were tested at times, the group knew two things. First, they knew that ultimately, they would always fight "to the death for each other". Second, they knew that it was always more important to get on with the task that needed to be done (June 5, 2000).

The women involved in the initiative were unafraid of conflict. One of the residents who was familiar with the women said:

> *They fight all the time. All the time. But I think that in those fights I see so many things I've gained because they're not pushovers. If they disagree with ya', they'll tell ya'. They won't just nod their head and go "okay" to avoid conflict. Conflict is not seen as a negative with these women. It's not a negative thing. I guess you could define family as those people you can go through conflict with and learn something. (October 20, 2000)*

These women developed a culture of trust as a norm within their group—trust that is essential to both social capital development (Putnam, 1993, 1996) and social learning (Friedmann, 1987). As the community advisors all agreed during one of the focus group interviews, they argued regularly and had their battles as they tried to determine the best approaches to use on an issue. The presence of trust, however, ensured that they knew unconditionally "where each other was coming from" (March 7, 2000).

The friendships that the women had with each other allowed the group to push social learning past its usual limits and was the glue that sustained the group over time. Of further interest, however, is how social learning became part of the day-to-day activities of these women, and how social learning became internalized into their relationships as friends and neighbours.

As noted, it is the women's friendships with each other that have made their learning-action-learning-action cycle durable over the 12 years. Their learning is not compartmentalized to occur once a month at their Community Group meeting, but emerges seamlessly within their work, leisure, and social lives. These women interact with each other several times per week because they are friends, and it is during these

day-to-day interactions that the neighbourhood work gets accomplished and the social learning process continues.

As well, these women were able to develop linkages and networks between community-wide organizations in a way that practitioners had previously been unable to do. Friedmann (1987) suggests that professionals who are involved in a community group's political struggle often play a role as change agents. What occurred in the River Valley Community Group, however, is that these women initiated the change in the way policing was provided in the neighbourhood, how property standards and by-law enforcement was implemented, and how planning initiatives were determined. The social learning process was not institutionalized and embedded in the bureaucratic infrastucture of the broader community. Rather, the social learning process was located where these women lived with their families, their neighbours, and their friends

Areas For Further Exploration

Significant to the women in the River Valley Community Group was the tenuous balance in their neighbourhood between elements that made the neighbourhood livable, and those that could make it unlivable. Gwen referred to this tenuous balance as "the archetypal battle between good and evil" (November 18, 2000). When the women were asked why they did what they did—why they put numerous hours of volunteer time into restoring balance in their neighbourhood, at personal risk of their own safety, their investments in their real estate, and time away from their homes and families, Sue replied by saying "it was the right thing to do" (November 18, 2000). They felt that the elements that made the neighbourhood unlivable involved people who were vulnerable due to drug addictions and poverty—people without the benefit of loving families, homes, and

friends (March 7, 2000). These women understood a basic premise of feminism that power does not exist equally in society. Like other feminists, these women attempted to not only right the balance for themselves as women, but to right the balance for the empowered as well as the disempowered (Code, Ford, Martindale, Sherwin, & Shogan, 1991).

Twelve years later, now in 2001, these women sometimes question what they have accomplished. There are still crack houses in River Valley and the presence of prostitution and drug dealing is being observed once again. Like many advocates who do not stop merely because their own problems are resolved (Mattison & Storey, 1992), Marilyn knows that the prostitutes are still on the streets and still freezing cold in the middle of winter. The johns are still circling around and around in the area. Meanwhile, no one in the broader community is addressing the needs of the prostitutes. What really has been accomplished?

Typical of women's activism is an interest in the broad perspective (Code et al., 1991). In that vein, the concern that Marilyn expressed above, in regard to what has actually been accomplished, extends beyond the River Valley neighbourhood to the broader community context. This macro perspective echoes Gittel's et al. (2000) finding that women have the ability to move from the individual to the community, from the personal to the political. Helgeson (1990) notes that while men tend to focus on day-to-day tasks, women tend to focus on broader societal impacts. These women believed they had a role to play in the world, and an ability to make a difference. Even if their work focuses initially on the local level, feminists believe that women can learn about their strengths, and gather their confidence about their ability to make change. By seeing their successes

on this level, accomplished on their own terms and using their own approaches, they can work toward change on a broader, global level (Code et al., 1991).

In regard to further study, the most compelling question that emerges out of the River Valley case is how community-wide planning processes can be integrated into the "relationship web" so that resources are allocated in response to community needs. When Marilyn was asked what she thinks is the next step in the action cycle she replied,

> *I think what really needs to be addressed is how everything is interdependent on everything else. There is enough pie to go around and communities and the residents are absolutely dependant on all pieces of the pie being eaten together. All the awful problems that we continually read and watch and tut-tut over are simply not independent problems. They are not problems of inner cities, outer cities, the country. They are problems with and of society. And only we hold the key to solutions. Sounds simple. We know it isn't. But there are real reasons why we cannot get a grip on poverty, homelessness, child prostitution, drugs etc. The resources are there. The will ain't (July 13, 2001).*

A further issue that needs to be more thoroughly examined is the role of leisure and recreation activities as resources for social capital development on a neighbourhood level. The role of leisure in this regard is not well understood in our academic institutions, governance structures, or in communities. In my observation, many municipalities are still using direct programming planning models which are expert-driven with the professional in charge of what is offered, where it is offered, and when it is offered. Moving to community development models of planning for recreation and leisure activities furthers the potential for leisure to play a key role in social capital development, and hence in addressing the health and vitality of our communities. Women, in particular, have a leadership role to play due to their ability to develop networks and build relationships—two of the key ingredients for social capital development (Putnam, 1993).

Understanding the concept of 'community' continues to be a challenging focus of study. The understanding of community that existed among those involved in the River Valley initiative resembles many of the elements identified by theorists such as Poplin (1972), Mason (1996), and Bellah (1998). It could be suggested that the nature of "community" experienced in the River Valley initiative is similar to Poplin's (1972) moral community in that those particular residents share a sense of belonging to the group (*identification*), the pursuit of common goals (*moral unity*), a desire to participate in the group (*involvement*), and a regard for each other as whole and integrated people of intrinsic worth and value (*wholeness*). However, if one considers the River Valley neighbourhood beyond those who were involved in the initiative, as Mason (1996) suggests, residents experience differing levels of social cohesion, as well as varying degrees of isolation, alienation, and social conflict. Bellah's (1998) understanding of community has elements that partly describe River Valley, in that conflict and argument exist in the community, but not to a greater degree than community values and goals. Bellah describes a continuum along which both conflict and values reside. The difficulty that these understandings present, however, when considering the River Valley neighbourhood, is that they do not allow for the dynamic nature of the close relationship and tenuous balance that exists between elements that make a neighbourhood livable and those that make it unlivable. It is the tenuous nature of this balance in a neighbourhood that requires further study.

Limitations of This Study

As noted, the lessons learned from a single case study, are not intended to be generalizeable. Rather, they become a source of knowledge that may transfer to other cases that are explored for further study.

The women who were the focus of this case study considered themselves to be women of privilege. Their marriages were intact, they owned their own homes, and while they had varying levels of education, they all had successfully completed highschool.

The women in the River Valley Community Group did not reflect the ethnic origins that were represented in the residential mix of the neighbourhood. They were either born in Canada or were immigrants from other British Commonwealth countries and as such, experienced a degree of privilege as members of the mainstream culture in the Canadian context.

The fact that River Valley exists in a mid-sized city allowed the women the opportunity to make contact with local bureaucratic officials due to the proximity of these institutions to their neighbourhood. As well, because this particular municipality tends to involve residents as volunteer members on various city-wide committees, the women were able to dialogue relatively easily with the professionals in the broader community. This proved to be an advantage for the women in this initiative—an advantage which may not always be evident in larger metropolitan centres. In pursuing further case studies, these limitations should be considered, particularly if the findings from this case are to be considered transferable to other sites.

Implications

Having been a practitioner for over twenty-five years, I can gratefully say that I have learned a great deal from the organic wisdom of the residents with whom I have worked in neighbourhoods. As professionals we seldom use our voice to share what

neighbourhoods teach us. The members of the River Valley Community Group have much to offer practitioners. Hopefully the following provides them with a voice.

Recognizing Women's Leadership On The Neighbourhood Level

First, leadership development on a neighbourhood level requires a gendered understanding and should allow for a focus on women who live there. Being located close to their home places and the human relationships that shape their understanding of community, women have the ability to identify issues that are most relevant to their home communities. They participate in relationship building, and develop social capital which is due in large part to their values of respecting others, caring for community, and seeking social justice for themselves, their families, and their friends. Women typically are the leaders at this level. Resources for leadership development should logically be directed to them, as women.

Recognition of the Unique Characteristics of Neighbourhoods

All neighbourhoods are not the same, and yet practitioners, particularly those in municipal government, attempt to treat each neighbourhood as if it were. Under the guise of equitable planning and an equal allocation of resources, there is little effort to recognize that neighbourhoods differ or that their needs and issues differ. Some neighbourhoods require differing levels of resourcing than others. All too often, bureaucratic policies and organizational cultural norms compel practitioners and elected officials to "cookie-cutter" the approaches used to support neighbourhoods. This study suggests that neighbourhoods can be quite diverse in both their composition and their

needs, and practitioners should take leadership in educating decision-makers about the relevance of uniqueness.

Exclusionary Policies

Many municipalities have affiliation policies with which community groups need to comply in order to receive municipal services or support. Often, these policies require groups to have constitutions and by-laws. Such requirements are exclusionary for some members of the population (e.g. residents from other cultural backgrounds, those with literacy issues). Insisting on these procedural practices ignores the differences among neighbourhoods. Innovative ways must be developed to balance bureaucratic requirements (e.g., accountability for funds) with ways of work that respect the uniqueness of neighbourhoods and the residents who live there.

Adapting Practice to Women's Ways of Work

Practitioners must understand women's ways of work, and incorporate these in practice. For example, building relationships and friendships is typical of women's approaches to their work. As well, women learn through experimentation, discussion, and evaluation. Meeting agendas should allow time for these processes (e.g. socializing, discussion). As well, women's concerns will be deeply anchored in values and their concerns will be framed in this manner. Women's use of values language and their interest in relationship building will thread through their debates and in how they put forth their arguments. This gendered difference should be respected, welcomed, and seen as credible and legitimate by practitioners and decision-makers, particularly in domains that tend to focus on "hard fact" issues, like budgets and rational planning processes.

Re-defining Leisure

Parks and Recreation practitioners need to broaden their definition of recreation and leisure to understand that leisure activities can enhance a community's ability to address political issues. Leisure activities can support community building and resident empowerment. As such, these activities may require different and unique levels of municipal support, tailored to the residents' needs. Further, resident control over decision-making, operating procedures, and planning processes will be required. Attempts by practitioners to insist upon consistent approaches such as, programme pricing formulas, will constrain residents' efforts and intent for programmes and services. Practitioners must relinquish control and trust the organic wisdom of residents. What is needed is a genuine commitment to developing equitable and balanced relationships between residents and community organizations so that trust can be strengthened between them. Through dialogue, reciprocal relationships, and trust building neighbourhoods can be shaped to be livable, diverse, and inclusive communities for those who live there.

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APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide Questions

Individuals to be Interviewed:

- Community advisors (4)
- Neighbourhood residents – supporters of community group
- Neighbourhood couple – previously active, but no longer in neighbourhood

General Review of Consent Procedures

To start, I would like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The interviews generally take about an hour and a half, but each one differs depending on the people involved.

Before we begin, I would like to ask for your consent to be interviewed. This is part of the ethics procedures that researchers at the university follow and would require you signing some forms. There are a number of things related to consent. The first thing I am asking you to agree to is your participation in the study. What this involves specifically is participating in the interview today. As well, I may want to chat with you a second time to go over what you said today, in the event that I feel I need clarification or more elaboration on something.

My general practice is to tape the interviews. I do this for two reasons. First, the "data" in the kind of research that I do are the actual words that people speak. I want to make sure that when I am working with the data that I have *your* words, rather than *my* interpretation of your words. Second, while I keep notes as we go along, (just in case there are some technical glitches), generally what I do is transcribe, word for word, what is said on the tape so that nothing is missed. Just taking notes would not allow me to get down everything that you say.

There are a number of ethical procedures that I want to tell you about regarding who sees the data and where it is stored . The only people who would actually see the data are my two co-advisors and possibly, the transcriber. Generally, though, I prefer to do my own transcription. The tapes and records are kept in a locked file cabinet and I am the only one who has access to it. All of this information will be destroyed once I no longer need the data.

The names of individuals who participate in the study are not used. I have a coding system that I use so that I know who provided the information, but it is that code, rather than any names, that appears on any of the written transcriptions.

As we go through the interview, there may be questions that you do not have comments about, or that you would rather not answer. In this case, please feel free to "pass" on that

question. I also want you to know that you are free to stop participating in the study or this interview at any time.

The second item for your consent is the use of your quotations in any reports, articles, or the final thesis itself. Again, it is your words that tell the story and in the kind of research that I do, the use of quotations is very important. Your identity would be kept anonymous so that no one would know who made the comment.

I have a letter for you that outlines these various points and provides you with the names and phone numbers of my co-advisors in the event that you would like to contact them for some reason. The phone number of the Office of Research Ethics at the university is also included.

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me about any of this?

If not, would you be willing to sign the consent forms: one agreeing to participate in the study, the other allowing me to use quotations? (If so, consent forms are signed at this point).

Introduction to the Interview Format

I have a number of topics that I am interested in exploring in relation to the River Valley neighbourhood initiative. The specific time period that I am studying is from 1989 when the community group first organized itself, to 1995 when they were more comfortable with what was going on in the neighbourhood.

The general topics that I am interested in learning more about are: your general impressions of the neighbourhood and the community group during that time period; the role that women who lived in the neighbourhood played; some of the ways that the residents organized to act on the issues; some of the activities or strategies that the neighbourhood used to address the issues; and some of the relationships that existed with other agencies. While I have some questions noted to guide us along in the interview process, I am interested in hearing about anything else that you think would be useful to my understanding of this particular case. I hope that we can use this time as an opportunity for a dialogue, and not feel restricted by a question and answer type of format.

Would you like to begin now?

Is it okay if I turn on the tape recorder?

Interview Questions

1. How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?

2. When you think back to 1989 and through to 1995, what were your impressions of the River Valley neighbourhood?

   Prompts: How was it talked about here, within the neighbourhood, by the people who lived here? How did that make you feel as someone who lives here?

   How do you think people in other parts of town viewed the neighbourhood? (If a negative-type response), how did that make you feel as someone who lives here? How did you think the residents felt about living here?

   How was the media portraying the neighbourhood at the time? (If a negative-type response), how did that make you feel as someone who lives here? How do you think that made other residents feel about living here?

   How come you moved into this neighbourhood?

   What are the things that you liked best about your neighbourhood during that period of time?

   Were there things that you did not like about the neighbourhood during that period of time? If so, what were they?

3. Were you involved with the community group at all during the years 1989-1995 when they were actively addressing some neighbourhood issues? If so, can you please describe your involvement?

   I'm interested in your impressions of the community group during that time period.

   Prompts: What seemed to be the main concerns that the community group was addressing back then? Did you feel that they were addressing them?

   Was the group addressing issues that in your opinion were the key issues facing the neighbourhood at that time?

What would you say the group was trying to accomplish in the neighbourhood during this time period?

What strategies did the community group use to address their concerns?

The group seemed involved in some street activities such as barbeques and street parties. What do you think the group was attempting to do there? Why do you think they were organizing these things?

(For those involved in the community group) Your involvement in the group was done on a volunteer basis, and likely done in your spare time. Did you experience any of your involvement in the group as a leisure activity?

Who seemed to be the leader(s) of the community group during the neighbourhood initiative? Were any of them women? How did that happen, do you think? And why do you think that happened?

Were there any men in similar roles? How did the roles between men in the neighbourhood and women in the neighbourhood seem to differ, if anything? Were there any differences in the activities that the men and women did?

How did the community group keep the residents informed and up-to-date on what they were working on?

Do you think that most residents were aware of the efforts of the community group?

How did the group seem to be operating at the time? (e.g., small number of committed people only; broad resident involvement; resident consensus).

What would you say were the group's strengths?

Did you have any concerns about how the group was operating?

How would you describe the rapport between the community group and the municipality at that time? And the police? (e.g., working as partners; adversarial; resistance)?

4. As I mentioned, I am particularly interested in the role that women played in the neighbourhood initiative during that time.

   Prompts: In regard to the women who acted in a leadership capacity, how would you describe the type of leadership that they provided? (e.g., one leader primarily, shared leadership, rotating leadership depending on the issue).
   Were there any characteristics, in particular, of the leadership provided by these women that you noticed?

   Was there any learning, in particular, that the women had to undertake in order to act upon these issues? If so, how did they go about learning what they needed to learn? Were community organizations asked to help in any of this? If so, how did they respond?

   In your opinion, were the women effective in mobilizing the community residents to act on these issues? Do you recall how they got the residents involved?

   Were there particular values that seemed to be at the root of how the group operated? (e.g., ensuring that all members of the community had a voice; informing residents about the issues or activities).

5. Do you have any other thoughts or comments that you would like to share that you think might be useful to me in this study?

Thank you for your participation.

Sample Interview Guide Questions

Community Officers and Officials

Individuals to be Interviewed:

- Senior municipal managers and elected officials (5)
- Senior managers in the local police service (3)

General Review of Consent Procedures

To start, I would like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The interviews generally take about an hour and a half, but each one differs depending on the people involved.

Before we begin, I would like to ask for your consent to be interviewed. This is part of the ethics procedures that researchers at the university follow and would require you signing some forms. There are a number of things related to consent. The first thing I am asking you to agree to is your participation in the study. What this involves specifically is participating in the interview today. As well, I may want to chat with you a second time to go over what you said today, in the event that I feel I need clarification or more elaboration on something.

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As we go through the interview, there may be questions that you do not have comments about, or that you would rather not answer. In this case, please feel free to "pass" on that question. I also want you to know that you are free to stop participating in the study or this interview at any time.

The second item for your consent is the use of your quotations in any reports, articles, or the final thesis itself. Again, it is your words that tell the story and in the kind of research that I do, the use of quotations is very important. Your identity would be kept anonymous, though, so that no one would know who made the comment.

I have a letter for you that outlines these various points and provides you with the names and phone numbers of my co-advisors in the event that you would like to contact them for some reason. The phone number of the Office of Research Ethics at the university is also included.

Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me about any of this?

If not, would you be willing to sign the consent forms: one agreeing to participate in the study, the other allowing me to use quotations? (If so, consent forms are signed at this point).

Introduction to the Interview Format

The way the interview will work is that I have a number of topics that I am interested in exploring in relation to the River Valley neighbourhood initiative. The specific time period that I am studying is from 1989 when the community group first organized itself, to 1995 when they were more comfortable with what was going on in the neighbourhood.

The general topics that I am interested in learning more about are: your general impressions of the neighbourhood and the community group during that time period; the role that women who lived in the neighbourhood played; some of the ways that the residents organized to act on the issues; some of the activities or strategies that the neighbourhood used to address the issues; and some of the relationships that existed with other agencies, like your organization. While I have some questions noted to guide us along in the interview process, I am interested in hearing about anything else that you think would be useful to my understanding of this particular case. I hope that we can use this time as an opportunity for a dialogue, and not feel restricted by a question and answer type of format.

Would you like to begin now?

Is it okay if I turn on the tape recorder?

Interview Questions

1. What was your professional relationship with the River Valley neighbourhood during the years 1989 to 1995?

   Prompts: What was your job title at that time? What did this mean in regards to your relationship with the neighbourhood? With the community group?

   Can you describe what kind of interaction you had with the group and what your interaction with them was like?

   What would you say were the key issues facing the neighbourhood at that time?

2. When you think back to 1989 and then through to 1995, what were your impressions of the River Valley neighbourhood?

   Prompts: How was it talked about here within your organization?

   How do you think people in town viewed the neighbourhood? How do you think that was for the people who lived in the neighbourhood?

   How was the media portraying the neighbourhood at the time? How do you think that made the residents of the neighbourhood feel? Were there any changes in how the media was portraying the neighbourhood over time? What do you think was the reason for those changes?

3. What was the role of your department/organization with the neighbourhood at that time?

   Prompts: Did your staff have any specific concerns about the neighbourhood at that time? If so, what were they?

   Was any staff member specifically assigned to the neighbourhood? If so, what was staff attempting to accomplish?

   What activities was staff conducting in the neighbourhood? (e.g., information sharing, consultation activities, participating in public meetings).

How would you describe the rapport between the community group and your department/organization at that time? (e.g., working as partners; adversarial; resistance)?

4. What were your impressions of the community group, again thinking back to the period from 1989 to 1995?

Prompts: What seemed to be the main concerns of the group?

How was the group liaising with your department/organization at that time? (e.g., meetings with staff; requests for information). How did this interaction get initiated? Who initiated the interaction? When did this occur? Was it in any way viewed as a partnership?

What would you say the group was trying to accomplish in their neighbourhood during this time period? Can you comment on the safety issues that existed in the neighbourhood at the time?

What strategies did the community group use to address issues related to the work of your department/organization?

The group seemed involved in some street activities such as barbeques and street parties. What do you think the group was attempting to do there? Why do you think they were organizing these things?

Do you think that any of the residents who were active in the community group would have experienced their involvement as a leisure experience?

Who seemed to be the leader(s) of the community group during the neighbourhood initiative? Were any of them women? How did that happen, do you think? And why do you think that happened?

Were there any men in similar roles? How did the roles between men in the neighbourhood and the women in the neighbourhood seem to differ, if anything? Were there any differences in the activities that the men and women did?

How did the group seem to be operating at the time? (e.g., small number of committed people only; broad resident involvement; resident consensus).

What would you say were the group's strengths?

Did you have any concerns about how the group was operating?

Were there particular values that seemed to be at the root of how the group operated? (e.g., ensuring that all members of the community had a voice; informing residents about the issues or activities).

What frustrations do you think existed for the neighbourhood in their relationship with your organization? What frustrations existed for you in dealing with them?

Was this neighbourhood group different from any other neighbourhood groups that you were working with? If so, how were they different? Why do you think that was the case?

5. As I mentioned, I am particularly interested in the role that women played in the neighbourhood initiative during that time.

Prompts: (If women are among those named as leaders in response to the question above): In regard to the women who acted in a leadership capacity, how would you describe the type of leadership that they provided? (e.g., one leader primarily, shared leadership, rotating leadership depending on the issue).

Were there any characteristics, in particular, of the leadership provided by these women that you noticed? How was this different, or the same, do you think, as men involved in leadership roles?

What do you think was the motivator for these women to get involved? What do you think were the issues from their perspectives?

Was there any learning, in particular, that the women had to undertake in order to act upon these issues? If so, how did they go about learning what they needed to learn? What ways did your organization help them to learn what they needed do learn, if any?

In your opinion, were the women effective in mobilizing the community residents to act on these issues? Do you recall how they got the residents involved?

What strategies did these women use to address issues related to the work of your department?

6. In your opinion, did recreation activities or leisure play a role in this neighbourhood initiative in any way? I am thinking here of perhaps its role in bringing residents together, or in addressing the issues within the neighbourhood.

   Prompts: Could you comment on what you think the group was trying to accomplish with some of the leisure activities like the arts and music festival and the street parties?

7. Do you have any other thoughts or comments that you would like to share that you think might be useful to me in this study?

Thank you for your participation.