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PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND
THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:
SUPPORTING WOMEN'S
PRACTICAL AND EMOTIONAL
NEEDS IN A CANADIAN RURAL
ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

by

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SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

WITH JADE CREEK WOMEN

Background

This study brings together feminist participatory research, social work practice and Canadian Aboriginal women. My inclinations towards social and community work practice in British Columbia (BC) First Nations¹ communities evolves out of longterm interest in international community development and grassroots change. The Aboriginal communities in this part of the province are fairly remote with limited access to health and social support services. I had spent ten years in this central interior region of the province as a social worker and counsellor, working primarily with Aboriginal children, youth and women around male violence and sexual abuse. I have mostly been employed outside of mainstream social services other than a couple of years spent in child protection in the same

¹ 'First Nations' refers to Indian Bands. 'Indian' was what the indigenous people of Canada were originally named by the British colonisers – thus the *Indian Act* and Indian Policy and Indian reserves and so on (British Columbia, 1987). Jade Creek *Indian Band* was the legal representation of the community in which I undertook my research. 'Native' is another familiar term especially in terms of 'native' and 'non-native.' 'Aboriginal' is used to cover status and non-status Indians as well as Metis and Inuit – all groups of which are separated through the *Indian Act*. 'White' has always been used by Indian people to describe 'white' people – and is used by Razack (1998) to differentiate between Indian/Aboriginal, people of colour, and 'white' Euro-Canadians.

area of BC. Jade Creek Band which comprises the villages of Jade Creek and Crystal Creek was one community I visited as a counsellor over a two year period where I worked primarily with women at Jade Creek, mostly in relation to male violence.²

I became interested Paulo Freire's (Chapter Three) work in the 1970s and later participatory research in the 1980s when I was last in Africa. A stronger community and participatory development background than that of Western social work meant that my practice inclinations predominantly and idealistically moved in the direction of supporting local people in affirming their own knowledge in order to solve their own problems. The dearth of adequate and long-term support services including an accessible women's shelter, meant that women at Jade Creek were primarily struggling on their own, often isolated because of the silencing effects of violence and abuse. My commitment to combining research and social work practice in order to support local initiatives afforded an opportunity to return to Jade Creek in order to explore more thoroughly through participatory research, women's needs and interests and ways of addressing them.

² All names, including those of community members, are fictitious to guard anonymity.

The Research Process

The research explores the application of participatory research with certain women of Jade Creek Indian Band. The focus is on methodology: how *this* participatory research can support these particular women at this time in their lives. How participatory research transpires is more important than research outcomes (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). This is influenced by the attitudes and purposes of the outside researcher, the context within which it occurs, those who participate, how the research process is shared, how the process unfolds, the relationship between the ‘outside’ researcher and ‘inside’ co-researchers’ and between ‘insiders’ involved and therefore differences, power dynamics, external and organisational influences, actions taken, participation and preoccupations, changes in direction, dialogue and communication difficulties and so on.

Participatory research is a complex process which is why I have presented an extensive review of participatory methodology including feminist participatory research (Chapters 5 and 6)

Substantive Themes

What was important to understanding and contextualising the methodology was the substantive themes that guided the research. I wanted to know more about participatory research as social work practice – as a way of coming together with

others to find answers. Most importantly, as mentioned above, those answers should be developed by community women. Substantively, then, methodology relied on their knowledge and practices to guide the process as specific to their lives and experiences, their history and culture, their material and emotional concerns, their lifetime experiences of multiple traumas including male physical and sexual violence and abuse. In this sense, it's a very holistic endeavour.

The research was situated in the structural position of First Nations in Canadian society and women as part of that. Therefore, as a white woman, I needed to learn how to participate with these First Nations women in this First Nations community – as situated in its own historic relationship with whites in that area of the province of BC – and within a fairly recent history (1880s) where land was greedily taken by white 'settlers', including the houses that were on it (British Columbia, 1987). As one elder told me, her parents thought the whites would give the land back – that they just needed 'a loan of it'. Her father's house is still on the now multi-million dollar ranch that surrounds Crystal Creek (research notes: 05/2/1999).

[W]ithin Aboriginal history is the construction of primarily white and female social workers as agents of the white government – coming 'on reserve' only to investigate child neglect or abuse – and take children away. Since working as a

social worker in BC – my impetus has predominantly been overshadowed by how, as a white social worker, given this historical and contemporary ‘baggage’, and the structurally maintained white-Indian divide from the time of the 1876 *Indian Act* and the institution of ‘Indian reservations’ – how do we engage together? Where are the spaces for connection? How do we heal what has happened between us?

Situated in this is my own history with these particular women. There was a familiarity there – based on a very deep past sharing over a two year period, that I only had with a few other women (and some men) in the Band. Feminist participatory research with these women was very much about continuing a relationship – and in a reciprocal way – using my research role to support their needs. Methodology is also important in feminist research including the need to explore women’s lives and experiences – and *the how to do this* so that women benefit from the research process (Maynard, 1994a). Feminist and participatory research seek transformative interactions through which the researcher-researched relationship is changed and we are changed in the process through what we go through together. I can say – without reading to the end – that this research was incredibly transforming for me – and that ‘transformations’ are painful.

There are a number of words that crop up regularly in this account including: 'situated', 'contextualised', 'positionality', 'constructed', 'deconstructed', 'power', 'process', 'complexity', 'difference', 'agency', 'empowerment', 'spaces'. These reflect a transition from modernist to post-modern thinking going on throughout the research process. I knew nothing about post-modernism going into the PhD and resisted it – until I found myself reading about what I was experiencing. Probably most relevant was 'situating' and 'contextualising' the research both within the First Nations community context and the context of women's individual lives. It was also having to continuously situate my own 'outsiderness' and with it my 'positionality' as a white, middle class female academic and social worker who was also a mother. 'Difference' becomes a major theme – protruding unexpectedly from leveling intellectualised assumptions and reductionist thinking. Power was central as it is meant to be in participatory research. Power demanded consistent self-reflection and 'deconstruction' – in order to figure out what was happening and why, to explore and change accordingly, as is familiar to both participatory and feminist practice. 'Power' challenged 'complacency' and 'smooth' process. As a *process* important were the changes in perception and understanding about the potentials of participatory research – and how directions and expectations have to be adjusted to what actually can and did occur. Instead of assuming unitary and predictable connections, I increasingly began saying things like 'spaces' where connection

occurred. 'Spaces' of participation and of dialogue. Finally 'empowerment', separated from modernist and totalising assumptions, becomes women's 'agency' and therefore what women do in their everyday lives, alone and possibly with others, given constraints, windows of opportunity, power-plays and modes of resistance. Although this research is not from a post-modern perspective, the nuances borne in practice are plainly evident.

How the Research Unfolds

A review of literature in Section One: Chapters 2 and 3, position the research in the substantive topics that inform my time with Jade Creek Band. These include: First Nations history with specific reference to women, child welfare, mothering and childcare and violence against women. Chapter 2 brings together 'empowerment' and social work practice and the need to learn from women *how* to support them which might include not assuming we can

Participatory methodology absorbs a number of influences in the interests of research that supports change (Tandon, 1996). Section Two, Chapter 4 presents such an overview. Power and positionality, differences between myself and other women, and uncertainty, frustrations, conflicts specific to being an outsider to a semi-isolated Indian reserve meant that I needed to go farther afield in understanding and contextualising the research process. Thus I turned towards

relevant feminist and ethnographic accounts. As the research unfolded, women's agency became more important in a community where participating with others in order to plan direction was unfamiliar. An actor-oriented perspective, and in particular Villarrael's (1992) account, opened my eyes to realising what was actually transpiring while engagement in feminist participatory research precipitated uncertainty and personal anxiety in a community divided in multiple ways yet displaying pockets of possibility. I thence moved from a presumed group of women to certain women participating in what made sense to them.

Section Two, Chapters 5 and 6 cover the research methodology of participatory and feminist participatory research. As already mentioned, these chapters are extensively developed giving weight to the *practice* of participatory engagement and the learning process as a result. The 'research' then – as many have said – is the learning that happens in the actual doing based on a research methodology for which there are no blueprints (Maguire, 1987). The feminist perspective starts from the standpoint of these particular women's lives and what they want to focus on. But these women are not an homogenised group and so feeding into participatory research is what individual women struggle against as well as take action on. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 in Section Three confirm that this is easier said than done – and so the importance of contextualising what *can* occur becomes apparent throughout the research process.

Initially the focus of participatory research was the development of a childcare centre as identified by administrative staff and community women. There were many issues involved in participatively doing this but the overriding one was power: the power to decide and define as exercised by Band staff over community women; power dynamics between myself as an outsider intruding in the administrative territory of primarily female Band staff; and the personal sense of power women needed in order to exercise control over their own lives and over decisions that directly affect them. Therefore, the need for emotional support and a place or 'space' where women's knowledge, agency, and experiences of oppression could be spoken of and validated led into the planning of a women's sharing circle. Personal 'empowerment', then, became a more central feature of women coming together as per a feminist, participatory and social work engagement that responds to what women articulate as their needs at this point in time.

Therefore, the analysis and conclusions of Section Four, Chapter 10 and 11 integrate social work practice, feminist participatory research and ethnography's actor-orientation within a critical and feminist standpoint perspective.

Conclusions add to a limited body of knowledge in the North and in the South on feminist participatory research particularly in relation to social work practice and post-modern change. Yet outcomes indicate both the potential and uncertainty of bringing together feminist participatory research as it informs and is informed by post-modern exigencies. Such can inform future feminist participatory research in the post-modern era and the relevance of an actor-oriented perspective to that.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW: CANADIAN FIRST NATIONS

This literature review explores the background to the research. In this chapter, I overview the main points of colonisation affecting First Nations or ‘status’ Indians and specifically women. The themes covered are: child welfare, women and the legacy of colonisation, violence against women, mothering, childcare, and capacity-building in the community. In the next chapter, I explore social work responses, particularly empowerment ideals, from both an international and experiential perspective, since the community in which I conducted my research is allied to Third World and post-colonial struggles, even though it is situated in a Second World country. In all cases, the context of struggle is the economic and political priorities of a dominant cultural group.

Child welfare

By the 1880s, First Nations people had typically been pushed off the land they had survived on for centuries onto small parcels called ‘Indian reservations’ (Furniss, 1992, p.4). Loss of land and livelihood left Aboriginal people dependent on state control and paternalistic benevolence (Furniss, 1992; Mussell, 1993; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996, 2 [2]). Reserves were ‘one of the original ways in which our family lives were disordered’ (Monture-Angus, 1996, p.175). The 1876 Indian Act gave control

over all 'aspects of their lives' to a faceless government bureaucracy that had little sense of First Nations reality (Furniss, 1992; Mercredi, 1993; RCAP, 1996, 2[2]). Thus began the social construction of the 'Indian problem' and the imposition of outside help in the form of missionaries, government agents and the present-day armies of consultants (Furniss, 1992; Helin, 1993; Montour, 1993). Church and state collaborated in developing the residential school system, the primary aim of which was the preparation of First Nations children for assimilation into Christian, 'civilised', Euro-Canadian society (Furniss, 1992; Armitage, 1993; Mussell, 1993; RCAP, 1996, 2[8]):

The residential school was used as a general welfare resource for the care of children who, in the view of local Indian agents, were not being competently cared for by their parents.' (Armitage, 1993, p.144)

Children were removed from communities for ten months of the year and imprisoned in institutionalised life where they were not allowed to speak their languages or learn about their own cultures, where they were prepared as future hired help and domestic servants and where, as present-day disclosures indicate, they were frequently, it appears, physically, sexually and emotionally abused (Furniss, 1992; Armitage, 1993; Chrisjohn and Young, 1993; Assembly of First Nations [AFN], 1994; RCAP, 1996, 1[8]). This system continued into the 1980s and its adverse effects continue to be felt today (source: research notes). For some children, though, residential school

provided safety from homes where there was violence and alcohol abuse (Armitage, 1993; AFN, 1994; research notes).

There has always been a jurisdictional problem in child welfare delivery to status Indians because the federal government left it to provincial control (Armitage, 1993; Gray Withers, 1997; McKenzie, 1997). Provinces refused funding in the absence of federal reimbursement and also because the relevant locations were remote (Armitage, 1993; Timpson, 1995; McKenzie, 1997) and they failed to perceive First Nations people as distinct or as the original peoples of the land (Dullea, 1992). Perversely, federal government only paid for crisis intervention and maintenance of children in care (Armitage, 1993), thus placing the focus on the removal of children from families and communities rather than on providing adequate and accessible child and family support services amidst a legacy of poverty, unemployment and inadequate housing (Armitage, 1993; McKenzie et al., 1995; Timpson, 1995):

There is something inherently wrong in a system that will pay 'strangers' more money to look after our children than they will allot to an Aboriginal family. (Helin, 1993, p.161)

An individualised casework approach was inappropriately transported from urban nuclear family relations to small, inter-related and inter-dependent communities (Armitage, 1993; Collier, 1993). Government funding continues

to be directed at crisis intervention rather than prevention and First Nations have to be ingenious to divert it into providing family support services (Gray-Withers, 1997; McKenzie, 1997). The Canadian public, politicians and provincial child welfare agencies took little interest until a Metis teenager committed suicide after sixteen foster home placements in thirteen years and the Canadian Council of Social Development, in 1983, exposed the number of Aboriginal children being placed for adoption in distant, non-Aboriginal locations (Armitage, 1993; Timpson, 1995). Momentum increased for First Nations communities to take over their own child welfare through agreements with the federal and provincial governments, although within the confines and definitions of provincial child protection legislation (Armitage, 1993; McKenzie et al., 1995; Schmidt, 1997). The hope is to eventually control their own child welfare standards (Mercredi, 1993, p.92; McKenzie, 1997), including the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) programme (Health Canada, 1999).

Aboriginal mothers, in particular, have had to watch their children suffer (Monture-Angus, 1996). Dominant child welfare discourse rationalises intrusions into their lives and communities in the name of 'maternal neglect' and 'maternal deprivation', defined primarily from an urban, middle-class and Euro-Canadian standpoint (Swift, 1995a; Monture-Angus, 1996; Razack, 1998). Answers to child poverty and 'neglect' are seen as lying with placement in affluent white families and 'race,' culture and family/community

connection are not allowed to take precedence (Armitage, 1993; Swift, 1995a). Yet children have often not been safer in these placements (Sugar and Fox, 1990; Armitage, 1993; Monture-Angus, 1996). The child welfare standards of dominant society continue to conflict with Aboriginal reality, forcing them to be accountable to an alien system in how they choose to protect their children (McKenzie et al., 1995; McKenzie, 1997; Gray-Withers, 1997; Schmidt, 1997). Aboriginal children continue to be over-represented in state care¹ and an adversarial legal approach pits family and community against the 'best interests of the child', parents against each other, and mothers against everyone: the state, male partners and their families, and even their children. There is a failure to support reconciliation, community ownership of child protection, participation, negotiation, or alternative ways of reaching solutions (Monture-Angus, 1996; Schmidt, 1997). The professional and individualised focus on women represents them as lacking knowledge, skills and stability,

¹ Swift (1995a) notes that in her own 1990 research where Aboriginal families made up only 4 percent of the population in the location of study – they constituted 50 percent of child welfare clients (p. 131). McKenzie (1997) notes that, even with First Nations' control of child welfare services in their own communities, there has been a 30 percent increase in children in care statistics, though Aboriginal children in care 'may be in more community-based, culturally appropriate placements' (p. 102). Timpson (1995), quoting the Director of the Child Welfare League of Canada (1993), says that 4 percent of status Indian children are in care. This then does not include non-Status Indian children. Timpson says: 'The proportion of Native children is ten times the proportion of non-Native children who live out of their own homes for their protection' (p. 540). Finally, Callahan et al. (1998) say that their study on social work 'best practices' should be replicated with a focus on First Nations experiences with child welfare practice in British Columbia, because their children continue to be over-represented on child protection caseloads (p. xiii). Similarly, they question an official silence on the number of Aboriginal children coming into care and being placed with non-Aboriginal families in the aftermath of the Gove inquiry (Callahan et al., 1998, p. 63), as cited on p. 16 of this chapter.

thus distracting child welfare practice from confronting 'racism', sexism, colonisation and poverty (Swift, 1995a; Timpson, 1995; Razack, 1998).

Canadian-style 'child welfare' continues to be 'an unkind process, not one that offers any kind of hope of building or bettering human life let alone true, human caring about the 'clients'. (Monture-Angus, 1996, p.208)

There has been previous research attention to these issues. McKenzie et al. (1995) engaged in participatory research using focus groups with members of eight First Nations communities in Manitoba in order to develop 'culturally-appropriate' and 'community-based' child welfare standards (ibid., p.635). The participatory methodology sought to empower community members by qualitatively recognising their 'experiential knowledge' in order to inform education and action. There were 27 groups in all, working across boundaries, for example one included parents and community service providers together. Participants highlighted the need for preventive services and to keep children in the community in response to the decades of lost children. Non-Aboriginal fostering was a last resort. Children's emotional and physical well-being and safety was the first priority but it did not have to be sharply divided from the support needs of those involved in the care of the children, which often included extended family members. Generations of losses led to people preferring a reconciliatory approach that did not preclude accountability (see

also Schmidt, 1997). Cultural inputs were important, although this priority differed in importance because some people were closer to their culture than others. Gender was not highlighted in the McKenzie et al. study, in terms of women having a different experience of child welfare, loss of children and inadequate service provision (see Gray-Withers, 1997). Yet this is essential in terms of community power relations and the ability of mothers to be taken seriously relation to their children's needs.

Schmidt (1997) examines the conclusions of a 1995 British Columbia inquiry undertaken by Judge Thomas Gove into a child's death, presumably due to neglect by his mother. Here, we find a present-day example of the historic conflict between two vastly different world views: that of the dominant society based on an individualised and psychologised western approach to child protection, peculiar to the nuclear, two-parent, middle-class, urban family model, and that of the world's indigenous peoples in which children are a community responsibility and family problems become community problems to be solved through group discussion promoting consensus and resolution rather than retribution (also Waldegrave, 1990; Dulwich, 1995; Ewalt and Mokuau, 1996; Bar-On, 1999; Penn, 1999). There are particular tensions around child (and woman) abuse. Gove worries about family conferencing because the dynamics of abuse might be obscured and a child's rights compromised (Schmidt, 1997). Offenders might be protected (Gray-Withers, 1997). (There are related concerns for women experiencing male violence and

community conferencing approaches to dealing with the behaviour of the offender; see LaRocque, 1993; Schmidt, 1997.) Yet, dominant child welfare does not have a good track record in protecting Aboriginal children, as mentioned above, and the presumed superiority of Euro-Canadian child-rearing practices is contentious (Swift, 1995a). Also, McKenzie et al.'s (1995) participatory research shows that Manitoba First Nation communities' priorities in terms of child safety and protection were no different from those of the dominant society. Attitudes are polarised at a time when First Nations are increasingly taking control of their own child, family and community services but the underlying nuances are crucial (Schmidt, 1997). Schmidt concludes that we need to learn from each other and from our mistakes.

Women and the legacy of colonisation

Before European contact, indigenous communities in Canada had their own patterns of gender relations (Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996 4[2]). The Jesuits, apparently, were not impressed by the degree of 'control' Indian women exercised in their communities and over Indian men (RCAP 1996, 4[2]). Their roles, and the degree of equality with men, differed culture to culture but European patriarchy (see Chapter Six), imposed through colonisation and legislation, changed women's status irrevocably (Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996 4[2]; Gray-Withers, 1997). Thereafter, they were often objectified into commodities as servants, go-betweens from Native male fur-traders to white men, and sex partners for the lonely European male. They

were exploited in these particular ways because of their ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Bourgeault, 1991). The Indian Act made women subservient to men, entrenching male prerogative and ownership (RCAP, 1996, 4[2]). Colonisation, and post-colonial 'development', targeted men as primary producers of goods for cash and trade, making invisible women's roles as primary food producers, carers, and instrumental to family and community survival (Sen and Grown, 1987; Kabeer, 1994; Elson, 1995; Parpart, 1995; Koopman, 1997). The internalisation of white male devaluation of women's important roles in their own Nations has assisted in perpetuating the violence and abuse they experience from men, including white men (Emberley, 1995; Gray-Withers, 1997; Koshan, 1997).

The Indian Act legally entrenched a patriarchal, hierarchical and authoritarian form of governance not coherent with traditional consensual values (Cassidy, 1991; Mussell, 1993; Fiske, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996 4[2]; Gray-Withers, 1997). It defined who was a 'status Indian' and who was not (RCAP, 1996 4[2]). This had nothing to do with how people saw themselves.

An Indian woman lost her status, as did children born to her, if she married 'out' to a non-status Indian or a non-Indian (Silman, 1987; RCAP, 1996 4[2]).

An Indian male, on the other hand, did not lose his status; rather, his non-status Indian or non-Indian wife acquired status, as did their offspring (RCAP, 1996 4[2]; Anderssen, 1998). A woman who lost 'status' also lost access to a house on reserve and to social, health, education and employment benefits

(Silman, 1987; Fiske, 1995; RCAP, 1996, 4[2]). She also lost her community as she was not allowed to live on reserve.

After a number of legal challenges, and finally the 1982 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the relevant section of the Indian Act was amended through Bill C-31 (RCAP, 1996, 4[2]). The First Nations women who legally confronted the Act's sexual discrimination received little or no support from Aboriginal leadership, the federal government or their communities (Emberley, 1995; RCAP, 1996, 4[2]). Taking on the Indian Act, according to Aboriginal leaders, merely reinforced its legitimacy to control Indian status (Emberley, 1995; p.107; RCAP, 1996, 4(2), p.33) and colluded with the power of federal government bureaucrats (Mercredi, 1993). Another reason for opposition was the cost of reinstating status which by 1995, included 95,429 persons, 57 per cent of them women (RCAP, 1996, 4[2], p.36). The cost factor comes in because reserve communities are small, resource-strapped and land-limited (Fiske, 1995). Fiske suggests that an influx of women is a threat to entrenched male control. Statistically, First Nations women are often better educated than men and likely to start taking on administrative positions that can influence political control (RCAP, 4[2]). This is happening alongside a situation in which a few families, in some communities, are said to be monopolising resources and power (Anderssen, 1998). Gray-Withers' (1997, p.96) interviews with First Nations women speak of 'nepotism' and 'corruption' entrenched in the politics of many communities which they fear

will worsen with male-dominated self-governance. Reinstated women, then, according to Fiske (1995), may find themselves still excluded from, or in conflict with, their own communities and the roots of their Indian identity.

An interesting account was that of women of Tobique, Newfoundland (Silman, 1987). These women had all 'married out' and had therefore lost their status and their community. When they returned, they found themselves not welcome and no longer having a place to stay: 'No, when you married that guy, it made you white' (ibid., p.97). The account is of the women organising for themselves, in response to male control of housing and Band resources, male violence, and political corruption. They had no protection other than each other and limited leverage, having come back to the Band 'non-status' (1987, p.133). They eventually mobilised, marching from Oka, Quebec, to Ottawa in July 1979, to draw public attention to the effects of the discriminatory Indian Act.

The desire on the part of many First Nations women is to be heard and taken seriously in community decision-making processes (RCAP, 1996, 4[2]; Gray-Withers, 1997). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996, 4[2]) recommended that federal funding be directed at Aboriginal women's organisations for research and development purposes, so that they could participate in self-government. The federal government has funded male-controlled Aboriginal organisations as if representative of gender-neutral and

homogenised interests (Fiske, 1995) and is slow to change. In 1997, in *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, the Federal government provided only a short, hesitant paragraph on this Royal Commission recommendation, saying it would '*consider* additional funding for this purpose' (ibid., p.16, emphasis added).

Violence against women

Violence against women in many Aboriginal communities is high (Timpson, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996 4[2]; Gray-Withers, 1997; Razack, 1998): 'It is an exception rather than the rule to know of an aboriginal woman who has not experienced some form of family violence throughout her life' (Canadian Council for Social Development (CCSD) and Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), 1991, p.25). Aboriginal women's experiences of male violence and abuse have to be contextualised in their histories:

For Aboriginal women, the psychological battering in a violent relationship is twinned in our experience of the social and political reality. Racism and colonialism are psychological violence with the same effects as overt physical violence. (Monture-Angus, 1996, p.170)

The wider Canadian society has historically endorsed violence against women despite laws against it (Johnson, 1998). The police recorded 46,800 male

physical assaults against female partners in 1993 and 15,200 sexual assaults; the Violence against Women survey recorded the much higher figures of 201,000 physical and 572,000 sexual attacks, amounting to 39 per cent of Canadian women sexually and 34 per cent physically abused in that year (Johnson, 1998). Women are far more vulnerable to attack by men they know than by strangers. These are the most recent figures available.

Since Aboriginal women's experience of male violence occurs in a specific historical and cultural context, and is different from white women's experiences, it is important that they define it for themselves and find their own solutions (Emberley, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; Koshan, 1997):

Ensuring the right to live without violence in your life as an Aboriginal woman requires a degree of creativity that the women's movement has never been required to fully imagine. (Monture-Angus, 1996, p.173)

Koshan (1997) points out that there have been no empirical studies to date of how state responses to violence against women (for example, 'zero tolerance' and mandatory arrest policies) affect different groups of women.

Nevertheless, it is clear that, while Canadian non-Aboriginal women have made gains in terms of a more committed legal response to male violence, it has been harder for Aboriginal women to find effective help (Koshan, 1997).

For many, the private sphere might not be safe but the public sphere is equally,

if not more, oppressive. Aboriginal women protect themselves and their families, including a violent spouse, from state intrusion because of their history of being targeted by the legal and child welfare systems (Monture-Angus, 1996; Koshan, 1997; Boyd, 1997; Razack, 1998). They might risk ostracism by their community and loss of their main source of support if they report the violence to the police (LaRocque, 1993; Koshan, 1997; Razack, 1998): 'The aboriginal victims must deal with the offender or be subject to exile outside the community, from their home, far from close relatives' (CCSD and NWAC, 1991, p.25). They may be seen as betraying their people as well as fuelling the racist assumptions of the dominant culture (Razack, 1998). There is, in any case, no assurance that the criminal justice system will work for them, given lenient sentencing, lack of effective and ethnic sensitive perpetrator programmes, and nowhere else for the perpetrator to go but back to the community (LaRocque, 1993; Koshan, 1997; Razack, 1998).

Even now, sometimes the women are able to stick to their charge. They don't drop them. And the guys get put in jail. But they come back from jail. The same thing goes on. (CCSD and NWAC, 1991, p.18)

On the one hand, many victims, Aboriginal included, do want offenders charged (Silman, 1987; CCSD and NWAC, 1991; Hooper, 1992). On the other, Aboriginal women need to be able to trust legal and social interventions (Sugar and Fox, 1990; CCSD and NWAC, 1991; LaRocque, 1993; Sparling,

1999). The majority of all Canadian women are not reporting physical or sexual violence to the police (Johnson, 1998). Because many First Nations communities are isolated or remote, by the time police get there (sometimes the following day), there may be no possibility of laying charges as there might not be enough evidence to present in court. Some Aboriginal women do not trust the police because they may have also been sexual predators (LaRocque, 1993). Aboriginal communities are said to be over-policed for minor property offences, illicit drugs and cigarette smuggling, and under-policed when it comes to violence against women (RCAP, 1996b, p.38). There is a need for some kind of community response to help women and girls feel safe in coming forward (LaRocque, 1993) and to deal effectively with perpetrators. At the same time, Aboriginal people, men women and children, have a different relationship with Canada than do other ethnic minorities. This relationship is entrenched in economic domination and deprivation as legislatively controlled by the State and administered through it's health, legal and social services institutions (Armitage, 1993; O'Neil, 1993; RCAP, 1996). For this reason, Aboriginal adults and children continue to be over-represented in child welfare and correctional institutions across Canada – despite their limited numbers in many locations (Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996; Razack, 1998).

Women exercise resistance, they are not passive (Kelly and Radford, 1998; Green, 1999). For one thing, women leave:

You've got to want to get out of it yourself. If you really want to get out of it, you will find a way to get help. (CCSD and NWAC, 1991, p.18)

If they cannot leave, they read the signs, make their own safety plans, protect their children, find allies, or keep silent (Fine, 1993; Kelly and Radford, 1998; Green, 1999). What might not look like resistance to the outsider may be quite active and strategic in the face of not being believed and not being safe (Green, 1999). It depends on the woman and the context. Women may be killed for 'getting out of hand' (Munalula, 1998, p.251). Joining a women's group may result in murder (Rowlands, 1997). A woman's economic independence may pose a threat to an unemployed spouse (Johnson, 1998, p.45). Batliwala (1997) says that women's collective organising and increased critical consciousness do not affect men until they feel their right to control women in the private sphere being threatened. Hence Fiske (1995), points out that First Nations women often hold key administrative positions which they use for political leverage and in support of family interests while at the same time being victims of male violence in their homes.

Women may choose to stay, not because they accept the violence but because there are limited or no options (Koshan, 1997; Pryke and Thomas, 1998); material and social security depend on living in that community, and, there is

no other place to go (Monture-Angus; 1996). Aboriginal women earned \$6000 less on average than Aboriginal males in 1991 (RCAP, 1996, 4[2]). It is hard to find help in a non-Aboriginal community when you do not know where to go, whom to trust, or whether or not you will be welcome (CCSD and NWAC, 1991). Even in women's shelters, racism may be encountered when all women's needs are viewed as the same, despite different experiences of exclusion (Match, 1990; Fine, 1993):

Victimized inside their own communities and victimized outside of it, even in shelters, such Aboriginal women do indeed find themselves between a rock and a hard place: between either continued violence or double victimisation and the harsh reality of being without community and family. (Razack, 1998, p.66)

It may be hard to leave someone on whom you are economically dependent or who is dependent on you, with many women being the breadwinners in communities of little employment opportunity (Fine, 1993; Fiske, 1995; Kelly and Radford, 1996). It is also hard to leave with children because the options available may result in no familial support and increased poverty (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a; Johnson, 1998). Aboriginal mothers are also often afraid, given their history, of losing their children should they report violence (Koshan, 1997):

Mothers may be charged and convicted of 'failure to protect' for continuing to live with an abusive partner, even when he is the father of the children... Through child welfare legislation, children are explicitly, if often only theoretically, protected from violence in their homes; women are not. (Swift, 1995a, p.121)

Few small Aboriginal communities have a 'safe house' for women and children which, in any case, may not be 'safe' given the size of the community (LaRocque, 1993; Monture-Angus, 1996). In such circumstances, it makes more sense for the offender to leave or be removed (CCSD and NWAC, 1991; LaRocque, 1993; McKenzie et al., 1995), particularly as housing is a problem on reserves and, controlled by male-dominated band councils and male ownership, may not be forthcoming to a woman trying to leave a violent man (Silman, 1987; Gray-Withers, 1997).

The closer the relationship with the abuser, the harder it is to report violence/abuse such as marital rape (Kelly and Radford, 1996) and the harder it can be to overcome its effects (Kelly and Radford, 1998). By naming the abuser, the woman is having to own the abuse and to say that 'something really did happen' (Kelly and Radford, 1996, p.30). As Monture-Angus (1996) says, disclosure of child or woman abuse by a male relative can impact everyone in a small inter-related Aboriginal community (see also McKenzie et al., 1997). It is also someone you know who has no place to go because he too

is on the fringes of non-Aboriginal society. Change must often be taken slowly, as illustrated in Fine (1993) where rural women struggling with poverty, sexism and classism had different criteria for 'success' and 'empowerment' than did women shelter staff. For women it might be a few days respite as opposed, at that point, to leaving completely and starting over. Women in their diversity mainly need an accessible place to go: accessible in terms of location, safety and availability, and in terms of cultural and racial acceptance (Match International, 1990, p.15; Fine, 1993; Dominelli, 1997). Within that, women seek respect and non-judgemental support – a place to talk – and the ability to do what they can and need to do for themselves in their own time (Pryke and Thomas, 1998).

The effects of sexual abuse and violence can take a long time to heal, if they are ever 'healed', and therefore appropriate long-term therapeutic support is also needed (LaRocque, 1993; Pryke and Thomas, 1998). Within this, there are dangers. The prevalent Western psychological expertise tends to define for others their experience of trauma and therefore their health and mental health service needs (Brown, 1995; Davis, 1999). Too often, the focus becomes one of diagnosing and treating 'sick' women, as opposed to tackling the ideological underpinnings and ever-prevalent pathologising discourses that support male violence against women (Brown, 1995; Pryke and Thomas, 1995; Swift, 1995a; Batliwala, 1997). The focus for the victim, then, becomes proving that trauma occurred and getting help for the pathological after-effects

(Brown, 1995; Kelly and Radford, 1998). Women's knowledge, their protection strategies, their ways of coping are not of interest, other than to gauge their functioning ability (Brown, 1995; Kelly and Radford, 1998).

Women are very often not believed, including about the fear of being killed, and new labels keep appearing to explain their victimisation (Bishop, 1994; Brown, 1995).

At issue here is the creation of a climate in which the testimony and experience of women and girls is accorded credibility and importance (Kelly and Radford, 1998, p.71).

Many Aboriginal women seek culturally relevant therapeutic support, preferably with Aboriginal counsellors; help that supports their empowerment rather than the self-destructive anger of disempowerment (Sparling, 1999):

'helping' services... are delivered in ways that are culturally inappropriate to us as women and as Aboriginal people. Physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists are typically white and male. How can we be healed by those who symbolize the worst experiences of our past? We cannot trust these so-called care givers, and all too often in the views of those interviewed, we again experience direct hostility from the very people who are supposedly there to help. (Sugar and Fox, 1990, p.11)

Healing lodges, for example, are a more traditional way for women to take part in traditional spiritual and emotional healing approaches (Sparling, 1999). Aboriginal women have to heal in their own ways: 'Given the time and space, Aboriginal women are capable of implementing support networks which address their specific needs' (Sparling, 1999, p.117). As O'Neil (1993) says, no one knows better than Aboriginal people their own mental health needs because they see and live with the pain daily. Monture-Angus (1996, p.73) compares the magnitude of pain to a 'cyclone'.

Female authors in the international development field have spoken of the economic costs of violence against women, hoping the 'efficiency' argument would elicit a more proactive response from development agencies and national governments.

An efficiency argument focusing on violence considers that violated women are a wasted resource, particularly because their participation [in the] labour force is constrained, or that the economic costs of violence against women are unacceptable. (Sen, 1998, p.10)

The health and mental health costs of psychological, physical and sexual violence result in women being able to do less and participate less in improving living conditions (Bradley, 1994; Eade, 1997; Heyzer, 1998; Sen,

1998; Sweetman, 1998; Green, 1999). Yet participation in the public sphere may result in violent male reprisals (Sen, 1998; Green, 1999).

A related argument is that mothers are expected by the state to protect their children from male sexual abuse, which Krane (1997) identifies as the state's way of saving money by not providing services and protection. Mothers often are expected to sacrifice whatever it takes, including paid work, to play an omnipotent protector role, without adequate material support or institutional back-up. The mother herself might not be protected, ironically adding costs to the state when she can no longer physically and emotionally do her job in the home, the community or the workplace (Swift, 1995a).

Responding to perpetrators

A clear message is needed that no violence against women and children in white or Aboriginal society will be tolerated, together with a commitment on the part of leaders in both to eradicate it (LaRocque, 1993). Giving offenders light sentences in the name of being 'culturally sensitive', according to LaRocque (1993) and Razack, (1998), is a form of racism and sexism that makes both the victim's experience and male power invisible. It is not because of poverty, colonisation, racism or culture that men choose violence (LaRocque, 1993; Narayan, 1997; Maitse, 1998; Sen, 1998). Women are often forced to leave their community when the latter chooses to protect offenders and not victims and when the criminal justice system sends offenders back there (CCSD and NWAC, 1991; LaRocque, 1993).

Community and culturally-based 'diversion' programmes to deal with male violence against women can be about maintaining the status quo so that male power over women is lost sight of (Kelly and Radford, 1996). Men who know how to use psychological control can manipulate service providers in their own direction (Kelly and Radford, 1996; Taylor et al., 1996). For example, mediation in child custody disputes is not recommended where there is a history of male violence because of the psychological control a man can exert on the process (Taylor et al., 1996). Johnson (1998) and Dobash and Dobash (1998) indicate that violence, for men, is mainly about maintaining control over women. It may be exacerbated or encouraged by context and culture,

unemployment and alcohol, by growing up with violence, and so on, but, ultimately, it is about men's socially endorsed need to control women.

Violence against women and children is often portrayed in discourses on healing and Aboriginal peoples as part of a cycle of violence perpetuated by historic social, economic and political oppression (Sugar and Fox, 1990; CCSD and NWAC, 1991; Mussell, 1993; Swift, 1995a; Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996b). 'Children are at risk... because a heritage of colonialism forces the rape of a sister by a brother who was himself raped as a child by a white authority figure' (Razack, 1998, p.79), although LaRocque (1993) is adamant that one's own victimisation is not an excuse to victimise others. According to the dominant theory, the need is to break the pattern by openly addressing the issue. This is endorsed in the community holistic circle healing (CHCH) programme of the Hollow Water First Nation in Manitoba, combining community healing and a 'diversion' program for offenders, particularly concerning sexual abuse (RCAP, 1996b). Instead of a jail sentence, the offender is given three years' probation. He must admit his guilt and must be willing to take part in a community-based treatment programme which can take up to five years because his actions affect the well-being of the entire community. Of importance here is that the offender be held completely accountable for his/her actions, that this should be made public, and that he/she be prepared to go through a healing process that eventually results in some form of reconciliation and community deliberated restitution. The

adversarial approach of the Canadian legal system, ending in incarceration, is seen as not supporting personal and interpersonal healing or reconciliation between victim, offender, family members and the community at large. In fact, it can make the personal rifts wider and harder to bridge in a small community where people live with each other every day.

There are concerns about 'diversion' programmes, such as CHCH, and whether the needs of the individual offender in counselling take precedence over the support and safety needs of the victim, for whom this programme makes no provision (LaRocque, 1993; Razack, 1998). Is it again about silencing women's experience of male violence and abuse, this time in order to help men 'heal'? The 'cycle of abuse' theory can rationalise a man's choice possibly to destroy another person's life through his actions while, as LaRocque (1993) points out, neutralised words such as 'domestic violence' obscure the intent of male rape of children and assault of women. LaRocque (1993) wonders whether victims really feel sufficiently safe and adequately prepared to decide for themselves if circle sentencing and the man's healing journey are things they want to take part in or if they are submitting to community pressure. The people at Hollow Water do specify the importance of first ensuring the victim's safety but there is no indication of how the victim is affected by the experience (RCAP, 1996b). The normalisation of 'healing' can take attention away from the complexity, sensitivity and individuality of this process (LaRocque, 1993). 'Diversion' programmes are becoming

popular with the male-dominated Canadian justice system because they promote community control of the process and are cheaper than incarceration (RCAP, 1996b; Razack, 1998). Yet these 'culturally-sensitive' justice interventions may fail to tackle either the institutionalised racism and sexism of dominant white society (Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996b; Razack, 1998). They may also deny the responsibility of Aboriginal leadership to look at how violence against women and girls affects the entire community and its functioning (RCAP, 1996, 4(2)).

Mothering

Despite changes brought about through industrial capitalism, the expectations on women as mothers in Western society, according to Silva (1996), have not changed since the 1840s: the tasks and energy involved in mothering still remain invisible in a male-dominated and market-driven society, fathers are not taking over the care of children, and women are still evaluated against an impossible motherhood ideal (Finch, 1996; Lawler, 1996; Silva, 1996; Boyd, 1997). Gardiner (1997) remarks how odd it is that in the West, compared to other cultures, one person – the mother – is held responsible for all aspects of a child's growth which, over time, has increased into understanding a child's psychological and educational requirements at any given age. Yet women often get little material and emotional support in order to carry out these impossible demands (Gordon, 1986; Hooper, 1992; Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a). The supremacy of professional expertise has too often resulted in the

colonisation of women's intimate and everyday knowledge of their bodies, their needs and their children (Oakley, 1986; Alldred, 1996; Marshall, 1996).

Aboriginal women have experienced this for decades. Their mothering has been made invisible by institutionalised interventions at the hands of patriarchal white Canadian society (Swift, 1995a; Timpson, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996). Silenced in generalised notions of 'Aboriginal people' have been the voices of Aboriginal mothers: their child care practices and the effects of the loss of children on mothers and grandmothers (Dulwich, 1995). The significance of this immense power over women goes to the core of who they are, threatening their own authenticity and belief in what it is they know (Oakley, 1986; Ribbens, 1998). Fear results from mothers being profoundly scrutinised as to their 'fitness' by Western medical, psychological/social work and educational professionals, through the law and legislative mandates (Swift, 1995a; Taylor et al., 1996; Boyd, 1997; Mosoff, 1997; Callahan et al., 1998).

For mothers who fail, the ultimate fear and punishment is to lose one's children (Swift, 1995a; Callahan, et al., 1998). This fear is exacerbated in Western society by racism and poverty (Callahan, 1993). A disproportionate number of children coming into care in Canada are children from poor families and of Aboriginal background (Armitage, 1993; Callahan, 1993; Callahan et al., 1998). A large percentage of lone mothers live in poverty

(Finch, 1996; Boyd, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997) and are highly susceptible to the professional gaze of child welfare social workers (Callahan, 1993). Mostly, they risk losing their children to state care for reasons of 'neglect' (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a). Cast and presented as 'clients', women are often presented as needy and dependent rather than people who engage in a 24-hour-a-day job of caring for children:

As [social] workers know, many of these women demonstrate superior strength, resiliency and resourcefulness in their efforts to survive and to rear their children... These mothers are caregivers. To recast them in this way, as providers of labour as well as affection, could help to make them, their lives, and their efforts visible in a new and different way (Swift, 1995b, p.495).

Feminist social workers do not seem to make themselves visible or heard in the child protection field in Canada, even though most frontline workers and most service users are female (Callahan and Lumb, 1995; Swift, 1995b). Problems that have structural roots easily become individualised into women's personal problems, while their audacity and resilience against unpredictability and structural constraints are not recognised as strengths (Weedon, 1987; Swift, 1995b). A feminist perspective would include women's experience as a primary source of knowledge (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995b; Dominelli, 2002)

and would embed an understanding of women's oppression in social work practice aimed at action for change (Dominelli 1992, 1996, 2002).

From a feminist perspective, child welfare, according to Swift (1995b, p.498) can become 'less hierarchical, less divisive, less competitive, more participatory, and vastly more preventive in its directions'. This may enable mothers who are service users and mothers who are social workers to sit down 'as fellow human beings struggling together' in order to talk about their different positions and how it affects their relationship (Swift, 1995a, p.186; see also Featherstone, 1997). A critical perspective would not separate the personal from the social by placing the problem within the service user, denying the context of inequality in which problems occur (Swift, 1995a, p.187).

The social worker and mother can use their relationship to educate others on aspects of this woman and her child's lives. Information can accumulate to produce a 'database' that speaks to inequality, injustice and human agency, rather than files that repetitively capture the 'facts' on maternal failure (Swift, 1995a, p.188). Social work 'best practice' can include individual social workers who go outside the limiting perceptions and mandates of their work in order to expand the options. They develop knowledge of the community and broader structural issues that impinge on daily lives and opportunities (Callahan et al., 1998). A critical and more global perspective offers a

different worldview (Collier, 1993; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000; Graham, 2000). It is about building trust and having an attitude of needing to be 'taught' (Chambers, 1995, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Keough, 1998; McNicoll, 1999).

Were data to be made available about the process of conscientization of social workers who are open to learn from service users, a picture would no doubt emerge of lifelong learning in unexpected ways.

(Humphries, 1999, p.128)

Mothering, marginality and child development

Allred (1996) and Alderson (1999) refer to the selective use of psychological research findings in supporting social control functions, both in relation to mothering and child development. Non-traditional families, such as a lone mother and lesbian mother families, may be presented as posing a risk to the healthy development of a child, thus inviting closer scrutiny by professionals as to parenting ability (Allred, 1996). Similarly, psychological labelling of children as 'emotionally and behaviourally disturbed' – often moralistically and ethnocentrically associated with poor parenting, poverty and ethnicity – constructs children as damaged from a young age (Alderson, 1999):

Motherhood is increasingly defined in terms of psychological discourses of children's needs and potential. In particular, this leads to

the production of the notion that certain kinds of women are 'fit to parent'. (Alldred, 1996, p.152)

Aboriginal motherhood is likely to be negatively and deterministically circumscribed by 'cycle' theory, through which poor mothering has been passed down, mother to child (Hooper, 1992; Swift, 1995a). The effects of colonialism, residential schooling, violence, abuse, alcohol and drug misuse on previous generations of Aboriginal women mean they are perceived as doomed to be potentially neglectful and abusive mothers (Armitage, 1993) and as likely to go on being abused themselves:

Workers may see male violence as a normal feature of clients' lives, explained as 'the way this family operates'. (Swift, 1995a, p.121)

Complexity and difference become silenced and the power of psychological discourse to define what is 'normal' and what is 'abnormal' is reinforced (Alldred, 1996; Alderson, 1999). Women's individual agency is not recognised, nor are the multiple influences that form their own identities and therefore their diversity one from the other.

A feminist standpoint perspective could assist in situating women's experiences in the present in relation to the past, without categorising, stigmatising or prophesying (Harding, 1993). Alderson (1999) argues for a

critical research perspective that challenges the power of dominant forms of social inquiry over critical findings that draw attention to socio-economic inequalities (p.58). Alldred suggests feminists should build 'temporary alliances' with other women that do not demand a 'suppression of difference' but that support women misrepresented by prevailing male-dominated, middle-class and professionalised discourses (1996, p.158; also relevant to how single-parent women on welfare are represented: Phoenix, 1996; Roseneil and Mann, 1996). This is important to my research in that Aboriginal women have inordinately been the target of state-controlled child welfare interventions (Monture-Angus, 1996; Boyd, 1997). Also, a large percentage are lone parents (Fiske, 1995) or live in common-law relationships and are poor, all of which combines in a 'working-up' of a case of child neglect (Callahan, 1993, p.183; see also Swift, 1995a). It is important to expose the dominant child welfare discourse as the idealised image of the white, middle-class, nuclear family against which Aboriginal women are measured. Yet, across Canada, the majority of women with pre-schoolers work outside the home, female-headed families form a significant minority of 'nuclear families' and the 'traditional' family may soon not be 'normal' (Boyd, 1997).

Women over the decades have often had little choice but to turn to child welfare social workers for material support and protection from male violence, thus paradoxically inviting into the private sphere professional scrutiny that ends up being directed at the mother (Gordon, 1986). 'The control role was

not always unwelcome to mothers, but they wanted it used to back up their own efforts rather than turned against them' (Hooper, 1992, p.72). Mothers, with the medicalisation and professionalisation of childbirth and rearing, have been the recipients of moralistic teaching bent on improving their health, minds, spirit and parenting (Oakley, 1986; Lewis, 1992). Even today, in order to obtain necessary social support, children have to be in need of protection and mothers have to be in need of professional guidance (Swift, 1995a):

The discrimination and victim-blaming which women encountered at the hands of professionals was destructive, the more so because they were proffered by those defined as 'helping'. (Gordon, 1986, p.83).

Featherstone (1997) looks more closely at the relationship between mothers and social workers. An artificially constructed and seemingly unbridgeable rift exists between children's needs and the support and identity needs of mothers as women (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a). Mothers and social workers consequently find themselves in socially constructed, adversarial positions within which the mother becomes a potential risk to her prescribed care-giving role and therefore her children. Mothers must be kept in line:

We fear her taste of freedom, for she might find that life has other opportunities for her. (Swift, 1995a, p.117)

Featherstone (1997) points out that female and feminist social workers themselves are in male-dominated institutions where they are often not given value. They can get burnt-out trying to care for others too much, when it is not their place to 'care' (Marks, 1996). Validating the knowledge and experience of clientised mothers might help social workers deconstruct their own caring roles including how 'caring' is paternalistic and controlling (Marks, 1996; Featherstone, 1997; Rossiter, 2000). This suggests the possibility of mothers and social workers sitting down in dialogue, as Swift (1995a) suggests, in order to place their experiences within the apparatus of child welfare in a patriarchal society (Featherstone, 1997, p.183). Women who are allowed to say the unsayable in terms of mothering may give freedom to other women, such as social workers, also to acknowledge their own 'polarised' and 'ambivalent' feelings (ibid., p.188). For example, women cannot ask for help when they need to because of 'shame', not having the right kinds of feelings for their children, or not finding child-rearing easy or particularly fulfilling. To admit to these is to admit to one's failures as a mother and to be judged as a result (Coward, 1997; Parker, 1997; Featherstone, 1997).

Dominant discourses shape our world, determining what can be 'thought and said' (Escobar, 1997, p.85) in which meanings are truths, silencing other explanations and alternative ways of seeing, naming and practising – and webbed throughout the normalised functioning of human relations at the

personal and institutional levels (Howe, 1994; Swift, 1995a; Everitt and Hardiker, 1996; Pease and Fook, 1999; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000; Rossiter, 2000). Dominant discourses attach idealised standards to mothering that 'no human being could attain' (Lawler, 1996, p.155). Through a dialogic process which unveils the 'oppressive mechanisms that influence the understandings of all involved' (Everitt and Hardiker, 1996, p.98), women may be able to reclaim their own motherhood in their own words (Lawler, 1996), speaking to the realm of experience and knowledge that is made even more invisible because it is defined by those outside of it (Du Bois, 1983; Oakley, 1986).

Psychology developed out of a white, male and Euro-American perspective (Hansen and Gorman, 1996; Russell, 1999). Those who differ might find their 'normal' responses abnormal, or even be diagnosed as mentally unfit (Jaggar, 1997; Mosoff, 1997; Ribbens, 1998). If, as a mother, they disagree with psychological help they are supposed to receive, they may also be defined as uncooperative if not deviant or anti-social (Chesler, 1986; Marks, 1996; Mosoff, 1997). Women learn to put a lid on authentic emotions for fear they be professionally misjudged (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Brown et al., 1995; Jaggar, 1997; Ribbens, 1998). Jaggar (1997, p.399-400) suggests that critical theory can support a deconstruction of our 'outlaw' emotions as women in order to claim their authenticity. Within a supportive group context, Butler and Wintram (1991) suggest that women can be reawakened to who they

really are, underneath what they have tried to be in order to please others, which has included the repression of how they really feel. Burkey (1993) and Smith (1997) also speak of awakening within the potential of participatory research through which those participating also become more authentically involved in their own lives and more critically conscious of what holds them back.

Putting feminist participatory research and social work practice together can result in empowering investigation into women's emotions, actions and identities in order to claim them as a source of knowledge and action. Such was the basis of my research.

Childcare

Lack of publicly funded childcare paradoxically inhibits women's ability to provide, in an economy that increasingly demands that they do so (Boyd, 1997; Silva, 1997). Social policy still favours the 'unencumbered' male and women's free labour in the home, while paradoxically victimising lone parent women on welfare (Roseneil and Mann, 1996; Boyd, 1997, p.13). Women's freedom to work – the freedom that comes from affordable and high-quality child care – is ultimately beneficial to the economy and to reducing child poverty (Friendly and Rothman, 1995; Hay, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997). Yet childcare spaces have not increased to match demand in Canada or the UK (Friendly and Rothman, 1995; Silva, 1996; Gardiner,

1997). Canadian childcare subjects mothers, especially poor mothers, to a number of contradictions. The premise behind it is that it is a privilege rather than a service (Swift, 1995a; Prentice and Ferguson, 1997). Prentice and Ferguson (1997) found that women who received financial subsidies in order to have their children in a childcare facility while they worked or went to college were more guilt-ridden about it than those who could pay as consumers. As single mothers under the professional gaze of childcare staff, they were likely to log more volunteer hours than they could afford as to compensate for not being a two-parent family. Adding to existing pressure is the message that poverty contributes to bad parenting and vice versa:

Throughout the 1960s 'war on poverty,' expert assumptions of inadequate parenting found expression in (mostly American) 'HeadStart-style' childcare programs, which made the hollow promise that better parenting could alleviate poverty and other family distresses. (Prentice and Ferguson, 1997, p.190)

All of this is relevant to the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) programme, the underlining philosophy of which is built on mother's participation in their pre-schoolers' education, health and psychological well-being through the auspices of the pre-school (Canada, 1998). A pre-school involvement of three to four hours a day discourages mothers from working or going into full-time education, which of course is contradictory to women getting off welfare

(Friendly and Rothman, 1995; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997). They either end up in poverty or working very long hours (ibid.).

Seventy percent of all mothers with pre-schoolers were in the Canadian workforce in 1995, yet childcare spaces had not met the need (250,000 regulated spaces for 1.4 million children: Friendly and Rothman, 1995). One result is that many families, particularly those on a low income, rely on unlicensed childcare lacking trained staff (Friendly and Rothman, 1995).

Childcare in Canada has been directed at the necessity of poor women, particularly single parents, going out to work. Rather than being what society provides for its children, it is more or less a welfare resource with a social control flavour (Prentice and Ferguson, 1997). Yet, in the 1990s, inequitable tax relief and inadequate subsidies for low income families greatly reduced women's incomes (Friendly and Rothman, 1995, p.517; Boyd, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997). It hardly supports 'women's equality' or poverty eradication when working costs more than staying home (Kitchen, 1995; Boyd, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997).

Numbers of female lone parents have risen in the West because of women's increased control over their reproduction, labour force participation and experience of divorce (Boyd, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997; Phoenix, 1996; Roseneil and Mann, 1997). These are global trends, as gender roles change in response to economic reality (Kabeer, 1994; Elson, 1995;

Koopman, 1997; Kimane and Ntimo-Makara, 1998; Green, 1999). Yet, dominant discourses based on the nuclear family with a bread-winning male head of household continue to deny the reality of many women's lives who must financially support their children while providing primary parenting (Elson, 1995; Gardiner, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997). Without what should be quality nonjudgemental childcare support (Swift, 1995a), lone-parent women cannot work nor access training while relying on state welfare may result in punishment:

There has also been some interest in Britain in the New Jersey (USA) policy of refusing Aid to Families with Dependent Children to those who have a second child while single and dependent on state provision. (Phoenix, 1996, p.176)

Aboriginal childcare

Childcare is seen as essential to Aboriginal 'economic development', supporting 'an individual's road to self-reliance' and benefiting men, women and the community (Armitage, 1993, p.165; see also RCAP, 4(2), 1996). The Assembly of First Nations, which negotiates status Indians' interests with the Federal government, has been lobbying for 'native controlled child-care' since 1988 (Armitage, 1993, p.163). Yet Aboriginal groups running childcare centres are met with government standards they may not be able to meet because they lack the necessary financial support (RCAP, 1996, 4[2]).

A lot of women ... are going through hardships and a lot of times we tried to keep the daycare centre open but, according to the law, it was impossible...because it has to look nice and it has to meet government standards ... We started one and the women's group ended up losing money, and that money we have raised, which never came from the government, we spent on a daycare centre. (RCAP, 1996 4(2), p.87)

The Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) *Principles and Guidelines* speaks of 'exceeding' required provincial and territorial childcare standards. (Health Canada, 1998, p.1)

AHS comes under the Medical Services Branch of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development². Early childhood education is inclusive in childcare programs in a number of countries (Friendly and Rothman, 1995). Quality childcare could be the focus, thus integrating it with other childcare initiatives (e.g. the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society) and making it open to all children. 'Head start' programmes, as developed in the United States, are specifically directed at children from poor (often minority) groups who are seen to be lacking in healthy child development and school

² 'DIAND' as it is acronymed, or 'DIA', Department of Indian Affairs, in everyday talk in my research community.

readiness and likely to grow up unable to function as healthy adults (Friendly and Rothman, 1995; Health Canada, 1999):

It [Aboriginal Head Start] sets out to provide opportunities for First Nations pre-school children to develop a positive sense of themselves and to encourage a desire for learning, as well as to give them opportunities to develop fully and successfully throughout their lives. (Health Canada, 1999, p.1)

The poor are often blamed, not only for their poverty but also for its impact on their children's psychological and intellectual development (see, e.g., Hay, 1997; Health Canada, 1997). This diverts attention from the lack of adequate financial and social support, and from increased joblessness (Kitchen, 1995; Hay, 1997; Health Canada, 1999). AHS is portrayed as an avenue not only to the educational, health, social and psychological needs of the 'whole child' but also of the whole family (Canada, 1998, p.2). Parents are integral to its development in each community, in order to be assisted in caring for their children's health, psychological and cultural needs (Health Canada, 1998). The 'special needs' of children are to be assessed with parents, including 'developmental, physical, behavioural, intellectual, communicational, emotional' (Health Canada, 1998, p.17). In communities where family support services have been mostly non-existent (Armitage, 1993; Gray-Withers, 1997) and childcare is an important need if both parents are going to

work (Friendly and Rothman, 1995; RCAP, 1996 4[2]; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997), the focus of the Head Start continues to be on psychologised social and health intervention into Aboriginal lives rather than on providing what is required.

There is no reference in the guidelines to 'empowerment', of childcare supporting women in their own self-determination. Yet, if the concerns of First Nations women are going to be heard, then women have to be free to participate politically and economically (RCAP, 1996, 4(2)). Nor is there any reference to why Aboriginal women in particular live in poverty or, therefore, why their children do also. The focus is not on alleviating mothers' concerns for quality childcare while they seek education and employment, but about providing half-time intervention so that pre-schoolers can fit better into the regular school system when that time comes (Health Canada, 1998). All of these issues were to crop up in my own research.

Probably what comes through most strongly in issues women face as mothers in the West, and specifically poor and Aboriginal mothers, are the contradictions that are directly related to social work mandates. What is construed as a helping role is actually often about social control (Swift, 1995a; Humphries, 1999; Rossiter, 2000). Other than what happens between individual social workers and individual women (Callahan et al., 1998), historically and structurally the focus has been on changing women into better

parents. Men continue not to be the focus of social work interventions and may even become heroes for taking over more of the primary parenting (Swift, 1995a; Marks, 1996; Smart, 1996; Gardiner, 1997). Within this 'helping' relationship with a social worker, women are to comply without being given support that makes sense. Such paternalistic control, although discursively directed at the 'best interests of the child', is historically inherent in the social abuse and violence that Aboriginal women have experienced through historical and contemporary child welfare practices the effects of which have been predominantly silenced:

A number of Aboriginal women spoke of how difficult is it to convince child-welfare authorities that they are fit mothers when many injustices, such as poverty and homelessness, contribute to their being labelled 'unfit'. They felt that, by taking their children away, the state is cheating them of what is most important to them in their lives – their relationship with their children. One woman spoke of this as 'mother-death'. (Dulwich, 1995, p.11)

Conclusion

Aboriginal peoples need to find their own answers in their own way (Weaver, 2000). Accounts in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, 4[2]) speak of the general need of Aboriginal women to be heard. Certainly, Native women's 'emancipation' will not be facilitated by non-Native and Native

women coming together around the common 'oppression' of patriarchy and women's sexual exploitation by men because of their different experiences of white male power, in police, judiciary and legislature (Emberley, 1995; Razack, 1998). Yet diversity within First Nations is also important. For example, women without Indian status have experienced themselves as 'outcast' (Silman, 1987). Fiske (1995) points out that, post-Bill C-31, First Nations women's positions in relation to each other can result in increased inequality and competition, given the potential economic and political threat of women who have regained status and therefore access to a band's limited resources. This is the legacy of the earlier legislation that divided Aboriginal people from one another (Mercredi, 1993; RCAP, 1996, 4[2]). This is relevant to my own research in that women's positionality within the community because of historical factors had a bearing on participation in community life (research notes).

Razack (1998) alludes to the denial of white supremacism in Canada that institutionally hides the racism and sexism combination under the guise of cultural sensitivity. White women cannot deny their complicity with male controlled Euro-Canadian colonialism nor, because of it, their different positionality in relation to white men as well as Native women (Bishop, 1994; Emberley, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996). Neither can social workers (Armitage, 1993; Weaver, 2000). Non-Native feminists, as professionals and researchers, have to get used to the idea that First Nations women will come

up with their own answers and will decide their own 'empowerment' needs and directions (Brown et al., 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996).

A deeply entrenched paternalism in Canadian society and in social work practice means that we often have a hard time differentiating between domination and help. The need to protect children is not in question but the best means of doing it is full of value judgements, propagated by the weight of expert discourse in non-Aboriginal society (Swift, 1995a). My own research, in later chapters, will show how little we as non-Aboriginal professionals are conscious of our limited knowledge and yet, as social workers, we have assisted in destructively impacting lives and future generations by our decisions, based on our limited perceptions. As Weaver remarks in relation to Native Americans:

I cannot recollect ever hearing a story of a social worker who came in during a time of need and used advocacy or activism to make a positive difference (Weaver, 2000, p.14).

Plainly evident in my study is the struggle to find out how to be a non-threatening ally while also being caught within domineering professional discourses that seek to provide answers before people have gone through the process of finding their own. I shall explore this further in the next chapter, in relation to what social work practice has been and how it might move on.

CHAPTER THREE:

EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE

The previous chapter indicates the need for a new relationship between professionals and service users. White female social workers, in particular, face challenges in working with Aboriginal women in Aboriginal communities, even if they work from a feminist and anti-racist perspective. Middle-class Western feminism is not necessarily congruent with the needs or aspirations of women in different cultural and economic locations (see e.g. Mohanty, 1991; Brown et al., 1995; Maynard, 1996; Narayan, 1997; Dominelli, 2002). Although 'women in most societies lack institutional and decision-making power' (Walters, 1996, p.23, writing from a South African perspective), their relationships with men differ (Kabeer, 1994; Sachs, 1996). Aboriginal women speak of the need for balanced, complementary but 'equal' male–female relationships that mutually respect and support one another (Monture-Angus, 1996; RCAP, 1996, 4[2]).

From a participatory and empowerment perspective in practice, then, we need to be taught and led by local people, and particularly by local women, themselves. This chapter will explore both mainstream and feminist literature, from the global North and South, in search of clarification about what hinders this endeavour and moves it forward.

A critique of Northern social work practice with women

Women's knowledge as mothers has not been integral to child welfare policy development and practice (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995b). Women who did participatory research on women's empowerment and child welfare said their knowledge should be equal to that of social work professionals, that children benefited when their mothers felt valued and were receiving the support they needed, and that an emphasis on individualised casework meant that women were not linking with other women in mutual support and advocacy (Callahan et. al., 1998).

In some ways, things have got worse rather than better. Post-modern accounts attest to: increased fragmentation of services and user needs; a greater emphasis on personal culpability as if everyone has similar access to opportunities and resources; a focus on difference rather than on linking people who could support one other; increased exclusion and economic inequality; a focus on individualised, psychological solutions to human problems, while ignoring their continued structural roots; and a dilution or neutralisation of experiences of oppression that continue to circumscribe people's lives and human rights (Maynard, 1994b; Nzomo, 1995; Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Williams, 1999; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000; Dominelli, 2002). This leaves an important space, if the issues of marginalisation are to be taken seriously, for group formation for action and change with the

assistance of critical social workers who are conscious of their own power, and of difference and diversity, but anxious to learn how to engage with others in partnership (Bishop, 1994; Brotman and Pollack, 1997; McNicoll, 1999; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000). Certainly, this can be a way forward in work with women.

Individual and groupwork

Individualised casework tends to place the power in the hands of the professional to define and treat people's problems, and assess their service needs, much in line with the medical model (see e.g. Payne, 1991; Collier, 1993; Jones and Joss, 1995; Bar-On, 1999). This pathologising, as indicated in the previous chapter, is directed particularly at women (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Butler and Wintram, 1991) yet is grounded in gender-neutral explanations of social problems, such as substance misuse (Ettorre, 1995). For women, substance use is often integrally connected to their gender positioning and subordination, to lack of choice and autonomy, and to the tensions and burdens of their lives as wives and carers (Weedon, 1987; Ettorre, 1994; Graham, 1994). It may also be encouraged or coerced by a partner. This is not to deny the potentially destructive effects of alcohol or drugs, but it is to say that fresh ways of seeing things, particularly the connections between the personal and the social, might go further to free women than standard interventions.

Groupwork, too, frequently focuses on remedial goals aimed at individual change. A purely individualised focus decontextualises political issues into personal problems (Mohanty, 1995) and can serve to inhibit people from believing that, collectively, they can make change happen (Cohen and Mullender, 2000; Dominelli, 2002). Unlike casework, though, the primary purpose of a group can be social change. The aim of Mullender and Ward's (1991) self-directed groupwork, for example, is to challenge all forms of oppression by critically naming, analysing and taking action in support of change. The approach is not necessarily opposed to personal growth (Cohen and Mullender, 2000), since the need to name one's vulnerability is important in recognising the subjective effects of oppression in our lives (Lorde, 1984; Freire, 1993; Bishop, 1994; Gorelick, 1996). Time may enable a mutual support group to move into social action (Cohen and Mullender, 2000). People living with HIV/AIDS in Victoria, Canada, for example, who actively engaged in participatory research into their health and lifestyle needs, began to pose a threat to professional control (Hiebert and Swan, 1999).

Feminist practice

Butler and Wintram (1991), Callahan (1993), Callahan and Lumb (1995), Swift (1995a and b) and Featherstone (1997) all bring out the need for feminist social workers to engage non-judgementally with women. Butler and Wintram (1991) found themselves painfully compromised when the intensity of feminist groupwork opened up intimacy and trust yet, as social workers,

they remained outside of women's more authentic sharing. This dividing line between 'professional' and 'service user' is maintained in accounts of more participatory practice, not uncommonly on the user side of the 'equal' relationship (Whitmore, 1994; Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Healy, 1998). In feminist terms, this need for connection becomes a point of tension as social workers divide their feminism from their practice and as practice, particularly in the child welfare field, develops overtones of controlling mothers, delivering ultimata and closing 'cases' cost-effectively (Dominelli, 1996; Parton, 1998). Yet relationship and trust are important to participatory and feminist research and practice (Maguire 1996; George, 1996; McNicoll, 1999; Dominelli, 2002).

Feminist social workers often find themselves emotionally disembodied in order to protect themselves from not being able to provide service users with the emotional and material support they need, particularly where investigative child protection predominates (Stanford, 1995; Swift 1995a; Pithouse, 1996; Krane, 1997; Callahan et al., 1998). Increased monitoring of work performance and outcomes also adds to worker tensions as both social workers and parents feel increasingly 'watched' for fear of making a mistake and putting a child at risk (Callahan et al., 1998, p. 27) . Social workers, especially female workers in relation to female users, may choose to detach from the caring parts of themselves and also from what they know about

themselves as women in order to cope with workplace pressures (Stanford, 1995; Featherstone, 1997):

Mothers are put through so much more than the alleged offender and I want to deal with her feelings but I push past them because there are concerns about the risk and protection of the child. (Krane, 1997, p.69)

The modernist habit of oppositionalising women's and children's needs results in artificial divisions that do not cohere with real life, and in animosity and alienation that do not allow for the creative, sensitive and clever planning through which women take more control over their lives, including their mothering role (Callahan, 1993; Stanford, 1995; Swift, 1995a; Lawler, 1996).

Anti-racist practice

Racism is a key practice issue both in Canada and the UK, where Black and Aboriginal people are often the recipients of social work interventions (Dominelli, 1988, 2002; Ahmad, 1992; Wharf, 1993; Swift, 1995a; Timpson, 1995; Callahan et al., 1998). People are easily racially homogenised and their diversity made invisible (Dominelli, 2002, p.73). Paradoxically, social work tends to ignore ethnicity as an issue in relation to marginalisation and decreased opportunities (Swift, 1995a). The oppositionalised separation in child welfare of the needs of parents and children, for example, highlights 'rescuing' children from inadequate parents rather than the part ethnicity and

class play in assessments and interventions. Mothers' neglect rather than racialised scrutiny is then blamed for the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal children continuing to be brought into care (Swift, 1995a):

Race is simultaneously obvious to white workers, and yet it is made to disappear from talk and writing, and possibly from much conscious thought as workers strive to treat the family as any other. In this process, racism as a social form also disappears as an issue for white workers, while for Native and other non-white clients it remains an everyday experience. (Swift 1995a, p.147)

Aboriginal history and experience in white-controlled Canadian society are denied. 'Multiculturalism' can serve to hide how groups are positioned differently, as well as the intersections of ethnicity, class, culture and gender which can affect equal access to opportunities and community resources including non-discriminatory legal and social support (Swift, 1995a; Razack, 1998). Post-modernism supports multiculturalism by emphasising 'voice' and 'difference' (Maynard, 1996, p.17). Identity and voice are good to have but they can also deny structural inequalities that shape identities and silence voices (ibid.). 'Multiculturalism' and 'ethnic sensitivity', that celebrate difference and tolerance, deny the hegemonic and economic control of the dominant group over the access and privileges of the culturally 'other' (Maynard, 1996; Razack, 1998). How power is gained and exercised is not

permitted to be the issue so much as the psychological reasons why a person feels silenced and oppressed (Moghissi, 1994; Mohanty, 1995).

Anti-racist social work practice is now replaced by anti-oppressive practice, which Williams (1999) suggests is a dilution and neutralisation of the qualitatively different experience of being racialised. Oppressions risk being simplistically lumped together thereby reducing what are overlapping and complex experiences. Social work can remain apolitical and non-radical and, again by omission, can categorise racism with all other forms of exclusion while, for those who experience it, it is a daily reality and often central to getting the help to which they have a right. Katz (1995, p.123) shows how modernist 'anti-racism' can be as homogenising as 'racism'. 'Racism', says Katz, is not a unitary or generalised experience; it is affected by time, place and coping strategies. Similarly, anti-racism can portray a totalising view of 'race' that becomes the essential ingredient of a person's identity, denying all other aspects of their life (ibid.)

These versions of reality play into dominant group interests and perceptions to maintain the relationships of domination and subjugation that are institutionally and socially normalised (Maynard, 1994b). Maynard (1996), in looking at Women's Studies programmes, illustrates this by the monopoly of First World scholarship over feminist publishing (also Mohanty, 1991; Razack, 2000). Western social workers may go into Third World locations on

a rescue mission to 'help' disadvantaged people (also Wilson and Whitmore, 1995) while failing to examine their privileged economic and intellectual position in a world of unequal resources and power (Razack, 2000).

Empowerment practice

We may not perceive how we continue to colonise through superior assumptions and attitudes. This particularly affects any attempt at a participatory 'partnership' (Wilson and Whitmore, 1995). Mohanty (1991), Maynard (1996), Narayan (1997) and Razack (2000) all refer to generalised notions of Third World women and reality, held by Western feminists and social workers who do not recognise their own lack of knowledge, especially when it comes to living the particular experiences of certain forms of marginalisation. Yet we as professional and academic women may not want to name our own disempowerment – in our personal relationships and in hierarchical workplace relations (Stanford, 1995; Swift, 1995b; Marks, 1996; Featherstone, 1997). The academics in the account by Townsend et al. (1999), for example, felt less empowered than the rural women with whom they were working. This makes it even less appropriate to assume that we can set standards for others. We need to be dealing with our own oppression if we are going to understand the effects of powerlessness in other people's lives (Bishop, 1994) while also acknowledging our own vulnerability (Gorelick, 1996).

Bishop (1994) links healing - the need to overcome the effects of childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse - with increased critical consciousness of the dynamics of oppression, including an awareness of our own ability to oppress as adults. This self-awareness is important if we are going to be an ally with others in their own liberation processes without consciously or unconsciously controlling them. Therefore, interaction with women as facilitators of participatory change means that we must be continuously self-reflective of our positions and perceptions, and be prepared to be personally challenged (Gorelick, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Walters, 1996).

Parker et al. (1999) speak of the 'professional colonisation' of 'empowerment' in the West through which 'empowerment' may become a strategy, a mode of intervention possibly manipulating users towards preferred options including independence from social services, rather than an unpredictable process that has to be led by users themselves if it is to be effective (p.151; also Payne, 1991; Parsloe, 1996). A purely individualistic and psychologised approach ignores structural constraints that continue to face an individual post-empowerment intervention. (Brotman and Pollack, 1997). The focus may tend to move from networking and sustainability to one-off and individualised professionally-driven empowerment (Payne, 1991).

Ways forward

The roots of social work in the European tradition have denied alternative ways of seeing and doing (McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; Graham, 2000; Razack, 2000). Now, social work is questioning itself more, in light of post-modern critiques of its power to know and to define the reality of others (Fook, 2000; Rossiter, 2000). Graham (2000), for example, suggests an African-centred approach through which people of African descent living in the North can claim their own knowledge, including about racial oppression in the UK. There is also movement towards 'centring' the user's narrative rather than the social worker's (Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Rossiter, 2000). The problem with such a stance is that, structurally, users are not equal to social workers and, although social workers might visualise the 'choices' users should make, users might not see them as 'choices' but as having to 'jump through hoops' (Callahan and Lumb, 1995, p.804). Similarly, 'participatory' case planning between social workers and users cannot easily happen as long as users are in resistance mode and social workers do not want to share power (Healy, 1998). This need for resistance is quite obvious given the power of a social worker to change a woman's life forever by taking her children away from her (Dulwich, 1995; Callahan et. al., 1998). Service users might not want an 'equal' relationship with a social worker even if it is possible given the structural positioning of social work practice (Whitmore, 1994; Healy, 1998).

The next section draws on the experience of participatory practice and women's 'empowerment' in Third World locations where lack of resources and professional expertise results in grassroots initiatives.

Ideas from the South

A key influence: the work of Freire

An important influence in all forms of participatory practice, including in community work and social action groupwork, has been the work of Brazilian adult educator, Paulo Freire (Maguire, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Wright and Nelson, 1995; de Koning and Martin, 1996; Eade, 1997; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Cohen and Mullender, 2000). Freire linked adult literacy with empowerment, critical understanding and action (Blackburn, 2000). In other words, critical education encourages people to use their knowledge to address oppression by deconstructing these experiences with others in order to understand them and overcoming their power through action (Freire, 1993; Shor, 1993). People hear themselves and each other, in cycles of investigation, action and reflection leading to critical consciousness. From this results an increased self- and group confidence and a strong belief that 'ordinary' people can change not only their circumstances, but also unjust social reality (Maguire, 1987, p.33; Eade, 1997, p.11).

Freire is criticised from a post-modern/post-structuralist perspective (Giroux, 1993; Healy, 2001) for homogenising people as 'oppressed' and 'oppressors' overlooking how people within groups experience oppression differently, for example in relation to 'race' and gender (hooks, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; de Koning and Martin, 1996). A feminist critique has identified the invisibility of women in participatory endeavours and in critical theory that primarily

addressed social class (Maguire, 1987; Harding, 1993; Kabeer, 1994). Freire's work is, of course, no longer as radical as when it energised and mobilised post-colonial popular resistance and informed revolutions (Plunkett, 1995; Eade, 1997) and it needs to be seen in that historical context (Giroux, 1993). Now, a more diluted Freirian influence can be recognised throughout the literature on 'user participation' and 'empowerment' as these concepts have become mainstreamed in professional human service discourse, colonised, in some hands, in the name of cost-effectiveness and, ironically, then de-politicised, and, for the most part, less radical in intent (e.g. Payne, 1991; Constantino-David, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Rahman, 1995; Stringer, 1996, Craig, 1998; Healy, 2001).

There is still applicability in Freire's work, however, and it can be combined with feminist practice, provided the focus is on unveiling women's oppression in order to critically situate it in patriarchal human relations (Walters, 1996, p.28). While recognising the limitations of Freire in addressing specific oppressions, for example, hooks (1993) says she grasped the liberating potential of education and used his ideas in developing a feminist and black pedagogy. It is crucial that women be integrally involved in developing their own education process through dialogue, realising their accumulated knowledge on which to base increased critical understanding, developing and learning new skills, while being actively engaged in change, both individually and collectively (Bhasin, 1996; Walters, 1996). Gorelick (1996) points out

that women become oblivious to their own oppression because it is normalised and hidden even from themselves. Feminist participatory research (see Chapter Six), 'empowerment' accounts influenced by a gender and development perspective, and self-directed groupwork (Maguire, 1987, 1996; Everitt et al., 1992; George, 1996; Rowlands, 1997; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Humble, 1998; Cohen and Mullender, 2000) all include critical and dialogic processes incorporating women's daily lives as the beginning point of revealing how the subordination of women is constructed.

Gender and rural development

The development field is more familiar with participatory practice than is Western social work (Sarri and Sarri, 1992; Hall, 1993; Kondrat and Julia, 1997; Healy, 2001). Gender and Development (GAD) emerges out of an empowerment agenda, following the previous 'efficiency phase' of Women in Development (WID) which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in response to women's near invisibility in male-dominated technocratic development agendas (Moser, 1991; Rathgeber, 1995). WID perspectives fit into development directions more than challenge them, while also potentially reflecting what many Western women and development agencies tend to see as universal answers for Third World women, based on decontextualised notions of need, equality and progress (Mohanty, 1991; Kabeer, 1994; Parpart, 1995; Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997; Visvanathan, 1997). The GAD approach recognises that women have always been part of development but that their

knowledge and contributions have not been taken seriously enough (Humble, 1998). In order for this to happen, women need to become empowered so they can push forward their knowledge, needs and interests for the benefit of their families and to achieve long-term structural change. Women's modes of resistance are important to learn about as they strategize in their everyday lives around power relations and material restrictions (Villarrael, 1992; Sachs, 1996). Gender and development supports a dialogic process that includes iterative cycles of planning, action and critical reflection (Humble, 1998). Women often prefer women-only groups where they can talk about their strategic interests and practical needs (Moser, 1991; Humble, 1998): strategic interests come out of women's subordination and the need to transform unequal social relations and access opportunities and decision-making (Moser, 1991) while practical activities can increase awareness of gender-related obstacles (Townsend et al., 1999).

Wieringa (1994) questions this dichotomization of the 'practical' and 'strategic' because they intersect in daily survival. She is not impressed with planners who portray 'empowerment' as yet another development strategy. Women's needs and interests are not universal, nor can they be defined by others. Sexual violence, for one thing, can have devastating and long-term effects on women's lives which may neither be seen nor understood by outsiders (ibid.). There are no instant solutions and 'empowerment' cannot be mechanistically applied since it involves changing deeply familiar but

constricting self-concepts and beliefs (Batliwala, 1997). Simplistic technological solutions, highlighting 'things' rather than 'people', have tended to be prioritised in development (Chambers, 1997) by influential economists who are unlikely to understand the holistic and different needs of poor women (Wieringa, 1994; Kaufmann, 1997). Rowlands' (1997) study is an effort to teach development planners about the unplanned change processes of women's empowerment. Furthermore, 'gender' is often shorthand for 'women', which fails to emphasise men's need to change also (; ; Rowlands, 1997; ; Humble, 1998; Townsend et al., 1998).

A GAD perspective, although it too can become institutionalised (Crawley, 1998), can bring local women's practical needs together with critical scrutiny of the obstacles they face. The participatory approach highlights what women need to do, how, and why . It is important that they define the process themselves (; Rowlands, 1997; Humble, 1998;), since imposed planning cannot cope with the ambivalences and contradictory interests with which women contend. Furthermore, it takes time and effort to expose underlying gender, class and racial tensions (Swanepoel and de Beer, 1995; ; Cousins, 1998) and to involve the more vulnerable groups (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Sarin, 1998) and individuals (Khanna, 1996; Cornwall, 1998).

Women writing in the participatory development field warn of the risk of uninformed facilitators making women vulnerable by seeking their issues in a

public, mixed-gender forum (Guijt and Shah, 1998; Sarin, 1998). Small, informal women-only groups can provide the space needed for women to speak more openly about themselves and their preoccupations (Mosse, 1994; George, 1996; Sarin, 1998). Cousins' (1998) account from South Africa tells of how women were discretely relieved to break into single-sex groups where they could speak freely about gender oppression when male-dominated forums focused predominantly on 'race'. Otherwise, women speak selectively and facilitate men's learning at their own expense (Mosse, 1994). Without homogenising 'women', it is important that they have the spaces to define and share their own issues in their own terms (Cornwall, 1998; Humble, 1998).

Models of power

Townsend et al. (1999) fit 'empowerment' into the contributions of different forms of power: 'power over', 'power from within', 'power with' others and 'power to do' (see also Bishops, 1994; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Rowlands, 1997; Smith, 1997; Dominelli, 2002).

- 'Power over' is what is generally operative in hierarchical, patriarchal societies, resulting in domination and subordination between people and groups of people (Bishop, 1994; Townsend et al., 1999). It is particularly frightening to women who are often afraid of their own power and the power of others (Alberti, 1999). There are circumstances where 'power over' is necessary, but how it gets used

and the intentions behind it affect the ability to transform it into shared power (Bishop, 1994; Alberti, 1999).

- ‘Power from within’ connects with self-worth and self-respect, personal strengths and agency (Rowlands, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999). It arises from the recognition that a person is creative, capable, knowing, and not responsible for other people’s domination, including violence, nor for structural powers that support privileged interests. It is a power that must be self-generated and that can happen with increased acts in favour of more positive control over one’s life (Townsend et al., 1999).
- ‘Power with’ is sharing that power with others, as well as being empowered through others (Smith, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999). In feminist and participatory terms, empowerment would involve moving more in this direction, in order to overcome isolation and move towards active change (Bishop, 1994; Smith, 1997; Rowlands, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999).
- ‘Power to’ or ‘power to do’ is the energy that comes from engaging with others in putting change into action and, therefore, creating opportunities we could not imagine on our own (Townsend et al., 1999).

The literature illustrates the operation of these forms of power. In terms of 'power over', organisational support must be conducive to women's control, women's time and priorities. If organisations themselves operate oppressively, they are not in a good position to support empowerment (Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997). Rather, they need to be allies, shifting into a 'power with' model by being willing to share power and support women's active participation. 'Empowerment' is about women taking control and not about outsiders 'allowing' or even 'enabling' them to do so, because then others would still see ourselves as the ultimate arbiters and judges. Too often, outsiders come with pre-packaged plans and funding schedules that do not fit a change process guided by empowerment goals (Maclure, 1990; Chambers, 1995):

Participants have not taken on a sense of full 'ownership' of the programme as theirs to use and develop. They have followed a line of study and action identified by others as relevant to their needs or the needs of the community. (Rowlands, 1997, p.62)

Rather, through 'power to do', and with the help of 'power from within', women need to reconstruct and recreate themselves, overcoming the fear of the unknown and becoming agents in their own lives (ibid.). Increased choices in turn support personal empowerment or 'power from within' and

build on 'power with' others, resulting in greater consciousness about how power is constructed on the many levels that constitute social reality in a person's life. Support for rural women's own income generation efforts in Mexico, for example, opened up opportunities for self-awareness (Kabeer, 1998; Mercado, 1999; Townsend et al., 1999; Zapata, 1999). Academic women, in the project studied, would have preferred local women to focus on understanding the dynamics of their own oppression rather than jumping into micro-credit. For rural women, however, this active doing with others, from which there were tangible returns, was a vehicle to 'self-empowerment' (Mercado, 1999, p.110). Their first priority was feeding their families. In answer to outside empowerment experts, Zapata (1999) agrees that we do need to look at gender inequality but, first, women want to put their energy into practical concerns. Access to credit training, organisational support, and the support of other women made rural women feel like a new trend was happening, a 'revolution' that was about their own empowerment (Townsend, 1999, p.71). Kabeer (1998) explores similar developments in Bangladesh. For some women, access to credit gave them more room to manoeuvre in marriages they could not otherwise leave (Kabeer, 1998). Income provided women with a 'fall-back' position so that, if things went wrong, they were not destitute. Managing the loans and increasing their returns enhanced their own sense of independence and elicited a new respect from husbands.

For families marginalised because of poverty and status, women's increased bargaining power affects the feeling of power within the family as a whole: 'We don't have to stretch our hands to the wealthy or the moneylenders anymore' (Kabeer, 1998, p.59). Women's empowerment encompasses being seen differently by others and being accorded respect (Rowlands, 1997). Women know their own context and the impediments to change. They manoeuvre around the restrictions within their own culture and environment, use them to their own advantage, or make trade-offs in order to benefit in other areas (Villarrael, 1992; Jackson, 1997; Kabeer, 1998), such as staying in a violent relationship because leaving amounts to poverty, social exclusion and loss of children (Kabeer, 1998). Rural women can be energised by being in groups that they feel they have control over and by working with other women. Rowlands' (1997) study of how a group of Honduran women saw their own empowerment shows that it is local women and not professionals from elsewhere who facilitate the process. Rowlands seeks to convince overseas development agencies that local people are knowledgeable and capable and should be given as much scope as they need in order to undertake economic and social development activities that fit the local context and the needs of those involved.

The Western need to consult experts is a reflection of 'power over' and takes power away from local people to believe in their own knowledge and in what they can do for themselves (Gaventa, 1993; McKnight, 1995; Parpart, 1995).

Rowlands (1997) found that outsiders could best support the self-empowerment initiatives of local women by offering the right kind of help at the right time. 'Power from within' then resulted from women feeling more self-confident about themselves and their lives. It included a sense of agency, of being able to 'cause things to happen' (Rowlands, 1997, p.111). Women sustained their groups economically through small income-generating projects and, if these failed, they tried something else. There may not have been highly visible and measurable gains but the importance was in building the inner and collective capacity to develop manageable directions:

Given the often intangible and nebulous psychological and social processes involved, it can be easy, too, to miss the significance of particular events or inputs. Sometimes the impact of an activity will not be felt for quite some time. (Rowlands, 1997, p.140)

Unlike in the North, where women are typically seen in terms of their deficits and 'empowerment' is primarily an individualised psychological process (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Townsend et. al., 1999, p.41), the women in Rowlands' account embraced their strengths and developed a sense of personal and collective agency (Rowlands, 1997). Going deeper into the issues of their lives developed awareness of the causes of their oppression and its internalisation. It was important for women in Honduras and Mexico that they named their needs for themselves, analysed the 'why' of those needs and

through trial and error branched out from seemingly meagre beginnings into other projects and into other functions as a group. Rowlands (1997) considers that groups started by outside professionals who do not have the same commitment to the area and the women as a local resident does, and who follow a structured format, do not result in the same self-sustaining possibilities as groups initiated locally, that go with the flow of what women bring to the group:

In Urraco, the programme design was based on a two-year course of study, and this structure limited the programme's capacity to encourage empowerment. The role that the co-ordinating team played in the functioning of the study circles also restricted empowerment, by fostering, however unintentionally, a sense of dependence. This is in sharp contrast to the PAEM structure, where animators were chosen by the groups from among their own members, so that various women filled the role at different times, and an open-ended programme gave scope for activities to develop in a very flexible way at the group's own pace. (Rowlands, 1997, p.135)

When we talk about 'empowerment', then, we need to look at who is actually in control of the process and whose knowledge is important (Cohen and Mullender, 2000):

By bringing health professionals into communities, to learn from rather than to teach people, participatory methods open up spaces for dialogue. This experience can be humbling for health workers.

Realizing that people are not only knowledgeable but also capable of generating their own solutions has, for many, been a revelation.

Working together with local people, as counterparts, challenges deeply held prejudices about the poor. (Cornwall, 1996, p.104)

Capacity-building

The concepts of power explored above are echoed throughout colonised communities. 'Capacity-building', for example, like 'empowerment', has become a buzzword, applied as First Nations assume administrative control of formerly state-run programmes and develop accountability structures (Canada, 1997). It is focused primarily on off-loading economic and organisational development and political responsibility (Cassidy, 1991; Canada, 1997). Yet a 'capacity-building' that truly enhances people's control over their own lives and direction would have to begin at the grassroots (Eade, 1997). Mussell (1993) emphasises community development and local knowledge claims as sources of strength from which to change the negative self- and community-images resulting from social and economic oppression. People are alienated by government and community leadership styles that are top-down and one-sided. For Mussell, capacity-building involves learning from past experience of what has not worked as a result of paternalistic external control and

resulting internal divisions. Like Mussell, LaRocque draws on Freirian concepts, this time in relation to violence against women:

Raising the consciousness of the Aboriginal grassroots is one of the important tasks in moving toward wholeness and can be seen as 'service' to victims of violence... they need to know they can act and make changes and that by acting on issues they are empowering themselves. (LaRocque, 1993, p.83)

As well as needing to look vertically, at power dynamics, communities also need to look across. Eade (1997) says that, in order for a community or group to increase its capacity to run its own affairs, it really needs to look first at its own power dynamics and the inequalities that exist and maintain divisions. Capacity cannot develop if the benefits of any change only serve the interests of a few. For example, participatory research was used during the 1970s and 1980s in First Nations community-based land-use studies but, according to Jackson (1993), this did not result in an equal distribution of benefits to the majority who are permanently unemployed nor to women who, he says, 'are the most oppressed' (ibid., p.63).

Buckland's (1998) application of the notion of 'social capital' is relevant here. The effects of colonisation, of competition over scarce resources, serve to divide people and undermine their earlier forms of co-operation and shared

life. Where there is little shared life, it is hard for community members to come together to plan a joint project that will benefit more than the privileged few. Therefore, 'social capital' involves the extent to which community members engage in reciprocity. Building social capital, like capacity-building, is about finding ways of linking people in mutual support. It might amount to pockets of a different dynamic that can influence other community relationships. Buckland (1998) gives the example of a development agency supporting poorer community members in a way that demands the support of the better off.

First Nations in Canada have been primarily seen in terms of 'social problems' as defined by outsiders and not in terms of who they really are, the complexity of their lives, the structurally pervasive context within which they continue to struggle, or the strengths that inform the struggle (Helin, 1993; Mussell, 1993; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999). O'Neil (1993) speaks about how epidemiological positivist research, for example, has developed an army of outside expertise on Aboriginal health problems. These 'experts' have controlled how knowledge is collected and what it is used for. Accumulated data serves the 'disciplinary' and 'surveillant' functions of public health through which Aboriginal peoples are persistently being statistically monitored and presented as 'sick' and 'disorganised', thus confirming the need for paternalistic control (O'Neil, 1993, p.34). Yet the contextualised knowledge and lived experience of

people within the community are important in order to find answers to their own problems as well as develop programmes that suit their needs (Mussell, 1993; O'Neil, 1993; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999).

Non-Aboriginal outsiders, if invited, have to learn how to participate *with* Aboriginal people in their own self-determining directions in non-interfering ways while using their political leverage as white professionals in white society (Weaver, 2000). Hampton et al. (1995) discovered that they, as academics, had to enter as active participants in order to learn about the healing processes of Alaskan First Nations 'spirit camps'. Chrisjohn and Young (1993), in their background paper on residential schooling for the RCAP, bring research into this frame of community-building and healing. The need is for First Nations to control their own research and, through owning the knowledge produced, subsequent use of the findings in developing policy and practice to counter white control of defining Indian reality from a narrow decontextualised perspective (Chrisjohn and Young, 1993; O'Neil, 1993; Borg et al., 1995; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995).

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter and the last informed the substantive themes of my research study. Key areas included: Aboriginal women's social and material support needs; the differences between Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal women as affected by history, culture, ethnicity and class; the distance between professional knowing and local reality and therefore the outsider-ness of a professional stance; the effects of paternalistic control, including in current social work practice; the need to find other ways of participating with Aboriginal women and, therefore, the lessons that come from participatory practice, guided by alternative models of power. The need appeared to me to be to explore: what local women do for themselves; whether participatory research (see Chapter Five) can be of assistance, how and why; where and when, as an outsider and member of the dominant group, I would be welcome; the effects of violence and abuse on women's will and ability to participate in efforts directed at change. I also hoped to realise the need for sufficient time to sort through the complexities of participatory engagement as an outsider in a small, isolated and low-income community, and I planned to conceptualise 'empowerment' in broader terms than being directed at psychological change, while not losing sight of women's emotional support needs.

In the next three chapters, I review the literature on research methodology, outlining the strands that influenced me in seeking an appropriate approach to encompass the substantive themes outlined above.

SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR: BACKGROUND INFLUENCES

My chosen research methodology was feminist participatory research, which I will explore in depth in the following two chapters (first, participatory research and then the feminist version of it). In this chapter, I outline the range of influences that interplayed with this choice. The reason for outlining these in detail is because of the importance of the methodology itself in supporting the change efforts of local participants. Substantive themes inform what can occur as well as obstacles to participatory engagement as peculiar to this particular context and to those involved. But it is how people come together, why they come together and what occurs as a result that forms the basis of my research and analysis.

Critique of the positivist inheritance

Western social research, including in social work, has been dominated by positivism (Nielsen, 1990; Neuman, 1991). Originally directed at the physical world and controlled by quantitative analysis, positivism's focus has been on discovering facts that link cause and effects in order to develop universal truths that can ultimately be used to predict and control phenomena (Neuman, 1991; Code, 1993). Positivism relies on rationalism and empiricism: logical method and systematic observation verifiable through the senses, not through

subjective experience, cultural knowledge, values and motivations, emotions or intuition (Nielsen, 1990; Neuman, 1991). People become objects to be observed and studied (Nielsen, 1990; Neuman, 1992; Park, 1993; Smith, 1997) by an objective gatherer of information (Nielsen, 1992; Silverman, 2000). This demands a clear separation between the researcher and the researched (Park, 1993) – between those who know and those who do not. This has tended to disempower people from being subjects in their own lives and struggles (Everitt et al., 1992; Dominelli, 1996; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000; Rossiter, 2000). In international development it has been harnessed by a modernist concentration on primarily Northern expert and capital-driven technological solutions interested more in ‘things’ and tangible results than in people and complex processes of change (Kabeer, 1994; Parpart, 1995; Chambers, 1997; Escobar, 1997). The result can be a misfit between what people know subjectively - their own agency and capabilities - and services and interventions that silence their knowledge and stem their ability to act (Sarri and Sarri, 1992; Chambers, 1997; Kondrat and Julia, 1997).

The qualitative challenge and the rise of subjectivity

Qualitative research is associated more with critical and interpretivist approaches than is quantitative (Neuman, 1991; Padgett, 1998), seeking a deeper understanding of social life than measurement and statistics can present (Maclure, 1990; Padgett, 1998). Qualitative research encompasses attitudes, perceptions, practices, discourses, livelihoods, and so on (Mason, 1996).

Inductive theoretical formulation is 'grounded' in the lives of those being researched, rather than deductively fitting lives into theory (Neuman, 1991; Padgett, 1998). Methods should fit the context and can be flexible accordingly (Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2000). Theory, too, can change as new information develops. Rather than the linear direction of positivist research, qualitative studies tend to follow a more trial-and-error cyclical path through which information informs research and vice versa (Neuman, 1991).

Feminists have been drawn towards, indeed have developed many aspects of, qualitative research in a quest to equalise the research relationship and explore women's experiences and lives more thoroughly (Maynard, 1994a; Oakley, 1996). Oakley (1990), challenged conventional interviewing that treated respondents merely as data sources, seeing the need to be led by interviewees in a more dialogic approach through which a deeper and more reciprocal relationship could develop. Thus feminist researchers attempted to avoid studying phenomena 'out there' in a detached and controlled relationship with the researched (Stanley and Wise, 1993). 'Interviewee-led' research may assist women in developing trust on their own terms and being able to tell their stories (Reinharz, 1992, p.24).

Validity in qualitative research is enhanced by prolonged engagement in the field. (Padgett, 1998, p.102). Lying, for example, which would invalidate positivist research findings (ibid., p.92), from a feminist perspective may

provide important information about how women 'fake' in order to survive and/or about women's position in relation to the researcher (Klein, 1983, p.91).

Critique of qualitative research

Quantitative and qualitative research tend to be dichotomised when, in fact, they do not have to be (Oakley, 1996; Silverman, 2000). In studying violence against women, for example, statistical research is needed to measure prevalence and incidence but it cannot tell us why a woman does or does not leave (Johnson, 1998).

There remain ethical questions about qualitative research. Qualitative research methods can be used in emotionally dispassionate researcher-led research (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Even where this is not the case, the research is still controlled by the researcher and therefore subject to her 'conceptual blinkers' as to what gets studied, how, and for whom (Maclure, 1990; Caplan, 1992). The focus and the research question(s) are still decided beforehand and the methods selected by researchers in line with their own questions; respondents remain the 'researched' (Hick, 1997; Silverman, 2000). The primary concern can often be the creation of new knowledge for scholarly gain rather than for social change. Ensuring 'informed consent' is important as people reveal intimate details about their lives to an often total stranger (Kelly et. al., 1994; Mason, 1996). The amount of data generated means it is

up to the researcher how it is interpreted and what conclusions are drawn (Caplan, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Oakley, 1996). Outcomes might not be reliable: 'Different perspectives, interests and informants produced highly discrepant descriptions of exactly the same culture' (Oakley, 1996, p.164). Oakley (loc. cit.) concludes that 'precisely because of the features of the qualitative paradigm, researchers who use these methods are in a position of more power over the researched and the research "product" than is often acknowledged'. They may interpret data from the perspective of their own worldview; research is often by the more privileged on the less privileged; 'friendship' in research can be exploitative; and highly intrusive data about people's lives may be placed in the public domain (Reinharz, 1992; Oakley, 1996; Powell, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Standing, 1998).

Where participant observation is used, immersion into another culture means a person becomes intimately present and so obviously affects the context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1993).). Gaining entry, establishing trust over time, the ups and downs of spending a lot of time in the often private spaces of others (Wax, 1971; Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991), are seldom revealed in research accounts even though they illuminate the context of the research, the relationships between the researcher and those within the context and the situationality, particularly relevant to a feminist and participatory perspective of 'outside' researcher and 'inside' participants (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Silverman, 2000). Therefore,

because there are inequalities between researcher and researched exacerbated by class and ethnicity, there is a greater need to be explicit about what actually occurs between them including 'what is done to whom and how' (Oakley, 1996, p.165).

Influences within qualitative research

The interpretivist school

Interpretivism in the qualitative paradigm involves observing people and social phenomena in order to understand meaning – how people interpret their world and how they act within it (Nielsen, 1990; Neuman, 1991). It is therefore concerned with people's subjective experience as a way of understanding a social phenomena. Such potentially expanded a purely intellectual focus to include human emotion, experiences and action which are integral to bringing knowledge and practice together in participatory research (Tandon, 1996, p.21). Participant observation and long-term fieldwork are common ingredients of interpretivism (Neuman, 1991). Participatory research, like interpretivism, also includes getting to know the local context well through fieldwork of which observation is a necessary part. Participant observation on its own is exploitative and objectifying if the purpose is not to understand local reality in order to participate with local people in critical action (Rahman, 1993; Wright and Nelson, 1995). For example, Spittal et al., 1997 used ethnographic research in order to find out how participatory research could develop. In this sense, interpretive and quantitative research

can be useful to participatory research if they assist in understanding the issues under study; but participatory researchers would want to know to what extent research involves local people as active subjects and therefore, who ultimately benefits from the knowledge produced. (Smith, 1997, p. 183; Wright and Nelson, 1995). An interpretive approach can support participatory research by placing greater emphasis on individual differences and multiple meanings, and inter-subjective processes including power dynamics that can inhibit participation (Wright and Nelson, 1995, p.59). On the other hand, participatory research pushes interpretivism towards critical involvement, dialogue and action that combine to support participant-led change which is not the mandate of participant observation and interpretive research (ibid.). Interpretivism underlies an actor-oriented perspective which became useful in this research in order to understand individual agency in relation to participatory research. Similarly, ethnography can be emotionally and personally involving for a critical ethnographer, moving more towards participatory research and active, politicised change (Caplan, 1992; Thomas, 1993; Wolf, 1996).

Feminist Ethnography

Feminist ethnography is an example of critical ethnography that is not detached and can merge opportunely with participatory research (Wolf, 1996). Participant observation from a feminist perspective means being open to what occurs with women in the local context (Reinharz, 1992). Westwood (1984),

as a critical ethnographer, became actively involved with female factory-workers in order to understand their use of power and resistance (in Harvey, 1990). Non-structured interviews support dialogue and developing rapport with local women so as to understand their reality and preoccupations from their point of view and potentially bridge the researcher-researched divide (Reinharz, 1992). Feminist ethnographers are often frank about the risks they encounter as lone female researchers in foreign locations (e.g. Ackers, 1993), the risks to their safety, and having to lie about their marital status or religious background (Reinharz, 1992; Katz, 1996). Local women may not trust, and may even be hostile to, a female outsider, especially one from a different class, ethnicity and educational background. Being women does not mean we all have the same aspirations, nor that we all see our lives as 'oppressed' (Reinharz, 1992; Gorelick, 1996; Wolf, 1996). Hence valuing difference is important, at the same time as finding ways of connecting and supporting one another (Flax, 1992; Anderson and Hill Collins, 1998). The aim is genuine connection and reciprocal relationships, not superficial friendliness, with a 'transformative' mandate through which both parties are somehow changed in the research encounter (Reinharz, 1992; p.68). Yet, this amount of connection might not be what local women want with a researcher, even if she is female (Reinharz, 1992). Such might be seen as colonising and intrusive. (Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996). Nor is it appropriate to impose feminist ideas on other women or be ignorant of one's own ethnocentric tendencies and assumptions (Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996). Local women observe the researcher as much

as she observes them. Mirrored back to us is our own external positioning to the lives of the women we wish to connect with through research into their lives (Gorelick, 1996). Since First World women have mainly done research *on* women of other cultures, it may be more useful to support 'other' women in doing their own research (Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996).

Since this research included 17 months of living in the community, it helped to read ethnographic accounts and to realise that discomfort, awkwardness, value conflicts were not unusual (e.g. Wax, 1971; Posner, 1980; Caplan, 1992; Ackers, 1993; May, 1993; Wolf, 1996). Fieldwork is one of the 'stranger' forms of research: often embarrassing and seldom without tension (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991). Both insiders and outsiders 'research' each other and respond accordingly (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991; Van Maanen, 1991; Caplan, 1992; Villarrael, 1992). and maintaining a distant, non-emotional, observational stance may not elicit trust and may be seen as quite peculiar and inhuman (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Yet being too 'nice' could result in the researcher giving more of herself than is healthy for the research (Wolf, 1996, p.24). Researchers were expected to be confidants in situations where there was no one else to talk to (Posner, 1980; Asher and Fine, 1991). Feminist researchers found themselves angry with women who accepted their subordinate status and men who ignored female researchers (Gurney, 1991; Kleinman, 1991). Similarly, critical ethnographers have often found themselves caught between people with power in the context and those

in lesser positions (Kleinman, 1991; Wajcman in Reinharz, 1992, p.71; Vera-Sanso, 1993). The researcher's presence creates occurrences and circumstances that would not otherwise have been there; her lifestyle, ethnicity and gender all provide both access and restrictions (Ackers, 1993; Wolf, 1996).

Actor-oriented research

An actor-oriented perspective recognises the individual within the group and therefore individual agency and networking in order to make certain gains. Important become the 'microdynamics' of what occurs in the context of researcher/insider relations and of relations between various community and external 'actors' (Long, 1992). In this sense, Foucault's view of the diffusion of power among various actors, routines, practices makes sense as people move around each other and institutional control in order to get some of what they need (Foucault, 1986; Deleuze, 1988). Important becomes what happens between people in every day interactions and how these maintain the social order while also chipping away at subjugation (Long, 1992, p.20). Agency is what people do to change their situations – even if those situations are highly constrained. They interact and negotiate, manoeuvre and strategise, use 'subtle defiance', consent and adapt, struggle and resist (Long, 1992; Villarrael, 1992, p.258). People will use the outside intervenor in order to get some of what they need – even if that representative is also practicing control over them (Arce and Long, 1992). For example – women will use whatever

help they can get from a social worker even if that social worker is also scrutinising their maternal abilities (Oakley, 1986; Hooper, 1992). It's not how much power a person has as what they do with what they have (Villarrael, 1992, p.256).

People then are not homogenised within groups – nor are they necessarily disempowered. They might join with others to make change – but they won't necessarily buy into the entire cause (Long, 1992, p.23). The over-arching term 'gender' masks differences within genders; the interactions that are always happening and changing people; what individual men and women do and how this influences knowledge creation and power-sharing – particularly to get certain interests met.

Systematic change imposed by 'intervenors' – no matter how well planned are consistently reshaped and renegotiated by what occurs between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the field (Villarrael, 1992, p.263; Arce and Long, 1992).

Challenged is a purely structural perspective that doesn't take into account the small-scale change and power processes going on at the local level and how these feed into and out of institutional and global influences (Foucault, 1986; Long, 1992). What is going on in everyday interactions – informs us of the preoccupations of people's lives despite external and internal political agendas for homogenising community change:

We as aboriginal women working in the field of aboriginal women's rights talk to our women, and when we ask, 'What do you think about aboriginal self-government?' the answer invariably is, 'I want to know how I am going to feed my children today' (McIvor in Cassidy, 1991, p.83)

'Interface situations' Villarrael describes as 'moments of encounter' (p.254) – between outsiders and insiders when people may or may not connect – and where certain information is verbally and non-verbally sent back and forth. It is at the interface of insider/outsider encounters that new knowledge can be created and dominant perceptions and discourses put into question (Villarrael, 1992, p.264). For example, in Pottier's (1997) analysis of Tanzanian rural development, the weight of 'official' discourse served to silence the knowledge of the farmers. Conversely, the agriculturist in Arce and Long (1992) had to strategise between the real world of the farmers and the surreal world of government officials, to retain the support of both. Turning to women, in Villarrael's account they had internalised labels of subordination from male kin and/or government functionaries to a variable extent, sometimes consciously using their 'subordinate' status to lose the immediate argument and win the eventual battle (op.cit., p.261). Thus they manoeuvred their way around village men in order to get land for their projects and downplayed their knowledge for government officials so they could get the training they wanted. They were neither passive or powerless. Women's

'empowerment' may manifest itself less in terms of major gains and more like 'small flashes' that might be barely perceptible (ibid., p.258).

An actor oriented perspective is not participatory or action research (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994, p.82) but a source of information in order to understand processes that are happening within the context that might inhibit or lend themselves to participatory change. Outsiders often fail to understand local people, what they do and why they do it and therefore miss what can be 'entry points' to engagement with others (Villarrael, 1992, p.266; de Koning and Martin, 1996, p.16). Rather than coming in with a professional mandate to 'empower' women, for example, the need is to see what women are already doing for themselves (op. cit., p.266).

Women's trust of outsiders will not be forthcoming and it is they who decide who they will allow beyond their own demarcated inter-personal 'boundaries' (Villarrael, 1992, p.256). Outsiders are in the awkward position of trying to find these things out – and of being confused, rejected, welcomed – but only to a point, controlled and/or ignored – making fieldwork at times feel like 'losing a grip' (Villarrael, 1992, p.263).

An outsider would need to get in tune with the fluctuations of people's lives, their allegiances and alliances. Women in Maguire's (1987) study came together to talk about their abuse but didn't see themselves as continuing as a

group. For that short period, in accordance with their own individual agency and reasons, they met together.

Often, from a social work perspective, and acknowledging that there are no simple solutions in the most complex child welfare cases, the statutory pattern is to decide what people need and what they are expected to carry through if they want to secure certain benefits, be regarded as 'healthy' and 'normal', and keep their children (Swift, 1995a; Callahan et al., 1998). Service users are seldom seen as having agency in the situation and, if they are, this can as often as not become a threat to the plans and knowledge of the professional who may feel he/she is losing control over the individual concerned (Schon, 1983; Jones and Joss, 1995; Featherstone, 1997). The service user may then strategically acquiesce, even though it is dehumanising to have to do so (Solomon, 1994; Everitt and Hardiker, 1996). 'Thus, mothers must appear incompetent in order to qualify for the resources they need' (Swift, 1995a, p.125).

Critical Social Research

A critical epistemic view of social research believes that people are self-reflective beings who are capable of change (Fay, 1987). Critical theory, along with feminist standpoint theory, underlies the participatory research methodology of this account (cf. Maguire, 1987; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995).

The critical researcher conducts research to reveal the underlying mechanisms that account for social relations and to empower people, especially less powerful people (Neuman, 1991, p.56).

Subjective meaning, as in interpretive research, is important, but it is situated in a dialectical relationship with objective reality (Neuman, 1991).

Critical theorists argue that there are social patterns, structures which shape our subjective understandings of the world. We can understand the meanings of different people's subjectivities by relating them to social structures such as class, race and gender. (Everitt et al., 1992, p.7)

Critical social research wants to know what lies behind the façade of 'normal' and 'taken for granted' in order to reveal inconsistencies and contradictions that imbue the subjective experience of objective social reality (Swift, 1995a). Rather than simply understanding social reality – it seeks to change it. Critical research does not pretend to be value-free nor politically neutral (Nielsen, 1990; Neuman, 1991; Harvey, 1990):

The critical researcher asks embarrassing questions, exposes hypocrisy, and investigates conditions in order to encourage

dramatic social change from the grassroots level. (Neuman, 1991, p.56).

In practice the researcher aims to be 'anti-hierarchical' and 'anti-oppressive' (Harvey, 1990, p.11).

Critical theory stemmed from a Marxist analysis and the standpoint of the proletariat as the starting point of an undistorted view of social reality (Harvey, 1990; Neuman, 1991; Everitt et al., 1992; Harding, 1993).

Knowledge production is andro- and ethno-centrally controlled in the West by a credible few (Neuman, 1991; Code, 1993; Rahman, 1993). Within this privileging 'lesser' knowledges – or 'subjugated knowledges', such as 'popular knowledge' - have been historically 'disqualified and ignored' (Foucault, 1994, p.44). Participatory research combines popular knowledge and scientific inquiry (Fals-Borda, 1991). Yet, even today, critical social inquiry, including participatory research, that challenges the uncritical knowledge claims of dominant social science research continues to have a hard time getting funding and being published (O'Neil, 1993; Alldred, 1996; Cancian, 1996; Katz, 1996; Alderson, 1999).

In critical social research, people become the 'subjects' in naming and understanding their own reality rather than the objects of other people's interpretations (Fay, 1977, p.210). The critical researcher plays a 'catalytic'

role in bringing people together and/or challenging their resistance to change; in other words, people have to want to change in order for research to be 'emancipatory' (ibid., p.218). Individuals coming together, collectively and in dialogue can help each other overcome the myths and illusions that have been 'reified' and therefore accepted as 'givens' and over which people feel they have no control (Fay, 1977; Neuman, 1991). In this way, they can 'strip ideology of its power' (Fay, 1987, p.100).

Critical social research, then, aims to demystify control by others and the omnipotence of structural control through 'critical conscientisation', in the wake of what people do for themselves and are capable of doing, either individually or together. In this sense, 'deconstruction' occurs of what are presented as truths and as 'normal' (Harvey, 1990, p. 29; Swift, 1995a). For example, the abstract concept called 'child neglect', reified as given, when critically examined reveals its social construction (Swift, 1995a, p.22). How do the perceptions of the dominant income and cultural group shape how 'child neglect' is discursively and dominantly defined beyond what all would agree as common standards?

People may not see themselves as needing to be 'conscientised' about their own oppression by a critical researcher including a feminist one (Gorelick, 1996; Wolf, 1996). As Maguire (1987) notes, even and especially in participatory practice – conscientising rhetoric can come across as 'preaching.'

(p. 190). For women, it is often a matter of getting the support they need, how and when they need it and preferably without strings attached (Fine, 1993; Callahan and Lumb, 1995). Women in less privileged locations have other issues to worry about, often revolving around material survival (Nzomo, 1995; Maynard, 1996; Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997).

From a critical perspective, internalised oppression and false consciousness result when people have internalised how others have defined and negated them (Fay, 1977; Freire, 1993; Gorelick, 1996). Ideologies permeate human relationships and, institutionally supported, they shape women's subordination and objectification, for example, within the idealised institutions of motherhood and marriage (Weedon, 1987; Swift, 1995a; Batliwala, 1997).

The more people accept the answers of those with ascribed or assumed authority, the more they are controlled by them and the less they are able to believe in their own experience and in what they have learned from it (Freire, 1993). In order for First Nations people to 'empower' themselves, according to Mussell (1993, p.110), they must understand the 'false beliefs' and 'myths' that have controlled their lives and kept them in 'dependent' positions as 'objects' of other people's plans, actions and knowledge. The problem with the idea of false consciousness, as feminists point out, is the insinuation that there is a 'true consciousness' that needs to be found or bestowed on deluded others (Yuval-Davis, 1994; Gorelick, 1996). Another problem is that it can hide what people do for themselves despite overwhelming oppression. By

people connecting with their own agency, and the truth of their history, they can see their acts of resistance as a group and as individuals, therefore countering categorisations and generalisations that have also become normalised and internalised as truths (Villarrael, 1992). This is also a facet of the counter-knowledge generation of participatory research (Fals-Borda, 1991).

In this sense, post-modernism can inform a critical engagement particularly in relation to the disciplinary function of 'governmentality' by which social control operates in daily human relations reinforced by routinised institutional mandates covering human interactions (Foucault, 1986; Howe, 1994; Rossiter, 2000). Here, power becomes more complex and harder to identify because of its normalisation in normal practices. The language used in prevailing discourses to explain social interactions are sites for critically deconstructing the definitions and categorisations of others (Swift, 1995a). This is coherent with feminist and Freirian emphasis on 'naming' (Du Bois, 1983; Freire, 1993) in that one's own words, developed through critical dialogue, present alternative meanings to what have become acceptable and dominating explanations that obscure inequalities (Swift, 1995a, p. 26; Pease and Fook, 1999, p. 13).

Critical research is not only about studying social reality in order to understand it, it is also about using research for change. 'The activity of

engagement is at the root of further development of knowledge' (Harvey, 1990, p.23). Praxis or 'practical reflective activity' is an important element of critical social research (1990, p.22). Women coming together in small 'consciousness raising' groups in order to overcome isolation and critically name and deconstruct their oppression, is not new to critical and feminist research practice (Fay, 1977; Kelly et. al., 1994; Gorelick, 1996; Dominelli, 2002). Freire's (1993) critical methodology includes problem-posing 'conscientising' small-group dialogue in order to identify and plan emancipatory actions (also Wallerstein, 1993). Theory and practice in action dialectically inform each other (Payne, 1991; also Fook, 2000) and through so doing create different understandings. This is integral to participatory research (Smith, 1997).

Conclusion

From a critical perspective that is also informed by post-modernism, subjective and objective reality come together in order to situate women's subjective experience as well as connect it to how and why women continue to be subordinated in patriarchal society (Weedon, 1987). Rather than view 'participatory' change from a narrow view of collective social action, an actor-oriented perspective draws attention to what people individually do, the choices they make and why they make them. The challenge for the researcher (as for the social worker) is to support the exploration of power and resistance in women's lives as a source of information and strength. The process must

be their own (Rowlands, 1991) and the external researcher an 'ally' or person who accompanies the process, lending her skills and access to resources as needed (Bishop, 1994; Wilson and Whitmore, 1995). A critical approach to practice values dialogue, assists in linking local people with others, while recognising difference and linking micro-practice with wider social change (Batsleer and Humphries, 2000). This leads us then, to a review of participatory methodology in the next two chapters.

3

CHAPTER FIVE:

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Mainstream social science research, like practice (as we saw in Chapter Three), has primarily served the needs and interests of the North, objectifying and categorising a range of 'others' (Braidotti et al., 1994; Seidman, 1994; Escobar, 1997). Burkey (1993, p.55) talks of the 'intellectual arrogance' of so-called experts who have believed in their superior ability to know the answers for others. The 'poor' and marginalised, in answer to social exclusion and the demands of survival, develop alternative skills that are also about knowledge and ingenuity: an experiential knowledge that most professionals and academics do not share (Burkey, 1993; Rahman, 1995).

Participatory research/participatory action research (PR/PAR) challenges positivism by politically aligning itself with those without credible power, bringing theory and practice together with the aim of exposing contradictions and incongruities in how society is organised, and proposing a transformational mandate (Maguire, 1987; Brydon-Miller, 1993; Park, 1993; Edwards, 1994; Smith, 1997). People who have been the objects of other people's research and interventions on and into their lives have not benefited from that research (Rahman, 1993; Edwards, 1994; Stringer, 1996) nor have they been considered expert knowers (Gaventa, 1993; Hick, 1997). Local knowledge and experience from everyday lives, from culture, history and

spirituality can join with theoretical knowledge to develop a more holistic picture of social reality (Fals-Borda, 1991; Agrawal, 1995; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995).

PAR is a form of 'liberatory inquiry' through which 'people are active subjects of the world [and] their needs are the point of departure for knowledge production and justification' (Smith, 1997, p.181). Kondrat and Julia (1997, p.40) say that the 'implicit' epistemological basis of PAR is *constructivist* in that 'what one knows and how one knows it are a function of social context and social and cultural position'. It is an 'alternative' form of research, concerned with emancipation from oppression, thereby linking research with social change (Maguire, 1987; Tandon, 1996). The approach is informed by critical theory and a focus on power relations in the research process as well as in society (Maguire, 1987; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995).

There has been little focus on PR/PAR as a relevant tool for addressing social issues in the North and in social work research (Hall, 1993; Kondrat and Julia, 1997). The participatory research and participatory action research¹ in much of relevant literature developed in the South in a post-colonial context and in response to immense economic inequalities (Hall, 1993; Wright and Nelson,

¹ I am using participatory research (PR) and participatory action research (PAR) interchangeably, and often in the one term 'PR/PAR', in accordance with Fals-Borda's (1991) view that there is not much difference other than to emphasise the 'action' component (p.10). Maguire (1987) refers to the same as 'participatory research.' Whether participatory research

1995; Kondrat and Julia, 1997). Freire's ideas have informed participatory research (see Chapter Three) bringing together theory and practice through iterative sequences of investigation, analysis, action and reflection in a mutually educative and dialogic process for both the outside researcher and community co-researchers (Burkey, 1993; Park, 1993; Wright and Nelson, 1995; Rahman, 1995; Tandon, 1996; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Blackburn, 2000). These cycles, as in all action research, are a distinctive feature.

'How to do' PR/PAR

There is not one definition of PR/PAR nor one generalisable methodological model (Maclure, 1990; Hick, 1997). Primarily, its purpose is to support people's freedom from oppression, recognising that people have knowledge and skills, are active, creative and capable and can bring about change (Anyanwu, 1988; Park, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Wallerstein, 1993; Hick, 1997).

In chapters on how to do it, PR/PAR is depicted in terms of stages (Maguire, 1987; Maclure, 1990; Smith, 1997). Most accounts begin with a phase of familiarisation with the context; next, bringing people together and identifying a research problem or question; then gathering data and analysing it, followed by taking action to implement the results. There is then evaluation and reflection before the next cycle begins. In practice, PR/PAR is not usually

or participatory action research, it refers in this account to an entire process of participatory involvement and not simply the application of participatory methods (Khanna, 1996, p. 69).

linear (Park, 1993, p.15). It develops in accordance with the context in which it is conceived (Maclure, 1990; Fals-Borda, 1991; Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996). Actions can occur at any time and new questions may arise, as well as new information and therefore new analysis (Burkey, 1993; Smith, 1997). It is usually not about leading up to one big action, as a step-by-step approach would indicate, but a series of smaller actions that Rahman (1991) suggests build self-confidence and group process.

The methods used in PAR are often the same as in quantitative and qualitative research; it is how and to what ends they are used that makes the difference (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Martin, 1996). Notably, the aim is for local people to learn how to use the methods themselves (Feuerstein, 1988). Lone mothers on welfare learned interview skills and performed much of the research in Whitmore's account (1994), gathering valuable information from other women who had an inbuilt mistrust of professionals. In order to fit the lives and interests of those involved, the research has to be relevant, flexible and manageable (Feuerstein, 1988; Edwards, 1994; Khanna, 1996; McNicoll, 1999). In other words, it has to make sense and people have to be interested (Park, 1993; Altpeter et. al., 1999). People can learn to decipher the political, professional or academic jargon that conceals important facts affecting their lives (Gaventa, 1991). They can assess their own needs, analyse and plan action, and monitor and evaluate outcomes (Feuerstein, 1988; Chambers,

1997). Armed with this self-developed knowledge, they are able to 'confront the experts' (Gaventa, 1993, p.36).

Besides conventional methods such as interviews, questionnaires and focus groups, participatory research uses unconventional techniques that access information in less threatening ways, such as: story-telling, drawing, dancing, writing, singing, drama, role-playing and/or popular theatre; listening, silence and reflection; field trips; visualisations such as mapping, charting and listing; brainstorming and of course, consistent conversation, problem-solving and clarification (Fals-Borda, 1991; Mies, 1991; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Cornwall, 1996; Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996; Hick, 1997; Unnithan and Srivastava, 1997). What counts as information is whatever people see as important (Hope and Timmel, 1984; Burkey, 1993; Bydon-Miller, 1993; Nyamwaya, 1997; Hiebert and Swan, 1999). This can include recognising values and emotions in relation to the oppression people deal with in their lives, as well as facts and figures (Maguire, 1987; Park, 1993; Smith, 1997). Indeed, the subjective is an important source of knowledge in understanding local people's priorities and ability to participate (Tandon, 1996; Smith, 1997).

Data collection depends on the focus of the research. The participants themselves may generate the data required in order to understand an issue and how and what actions they wish to take or, through various activities, they may develop more 'data' through cycles of action and reflection. Again, the

process is not compartmentalised and it can take time to fathom: 'I found it tremendously hard initially to not know where things would go or what would happen' (Law, 1997, p.55). However, as everyone is learning as they go, process cannot be prescribed but involves constant change:

Activities can get people up and moving or they can create quiet space, a period of no agenda or of silent reflection... The challenge for the facilitator and the group is to match the moment with the right means.
(Smith, 1997, p.230)

Whatever methods are employed should draw out local knowledge in unthreatening ways, stimulating active participation and building self-confidence in what people have learned for themselves (Cornwall, 1996). Meulenburg-Buskens (1996) believes that a focus on 'how to do it', on procedures and techniques, can serve to alienate community participants. A mechanistic approach may not support a fluid process that accommodates a multiplicity of viewpoints and understandings (Schrijvers, 1995; Smith, 1997; Altpeter et al., 1999). Congruency and appropriateness in interactions with local people require critical reflection and mutual learning (op. cit.). Khanna (1996, p.69) reiterates that PR/PAR is much more than the 'application of methods'; it is an entire process that includes 'education, pain and struggle that results in empowerment'.

Core concerns for participatory research are 'agency', 'representation' and 'power' (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p.1668).

Agency

In PR/PAR, people are no longer the objects of other people's inquiry but can use research to develop their own understandings and to fashion relevant change (Freire, 1993; Maguire, 1987; Park, 1993; Smith, 1997). Questions are asked as to whose needs the research ultimately serves, who decides what is worth investigating and why, and how knowledge can be a source of power and change for people with relatively little power (Mies, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Brydon-Miller, 1993; Schrijvers, 1995; Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Chambers, 1997).

The NGO that funded Khanna (1998, p.68) accommodated local women's process in order to support 'sustainable development'. This contrasts with other community organisations that are not prepared to allow people, especially service users, to develop their own programmes nor to integrate their input into how things are run (Maguire, 1987; Hiebert and Swan, 1999). Yet, as Maguire (1996) says, PR/PAR is not only for others; it is also about addressing oppressive practices and attitudes in our own lives, professions and workplaces. Agency operates in the wider world, not just in people's backyard.

Representation

Participatory research in a Frierien sense primarily aligns itself with less powerful individuals and groups (Hall, 1993). This participatory research is directed at specific women in a community who do not have as much influence or privilege as other women. Mainstreamed PR/PAR is more interested in participation as a means to an already decided end and usually involves a select few in order to get a project approved or off the ground (Lane, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Hick, 1997). This PR/PAR is more concerned with participation by community women in directions they see as important and with a process of engagement that fosters personal 'power from within' and collective 'power with' and 'power to do.' This *processual* focus challenges top-down initiated interventions even of a 'community consultative' manner (Sadan and Churchman, 1997).

Power

Bridging the researcher/researched power gap is integral to the process of PR/PAR (Maguire, 1987; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Wright and Nelson, 1995; Cancian, 1996; Martin, 1996; McNicoll, 1999). Schrijvers (1995, pp.22-24) highlights a 'dialogic' process between researcher and participants, through which knowledge is shared equally and all voices are heard, so that local people can ultimately 'own' the knowledge produced and how it is used (Maguire, 1987; Maclure, 1990; Chambers, 1995; Wright and Nelson, 1995; Wolf, 1996). Cornwall and Jewkes (1995, p.1674) say that equalising the

research relationship demands 'political and personal transformations' for the external researcher, which can be hard if they are used to being in control of the research process (see section on 'Researcher attitudes and commitment' below; see also Brydon-Miller, 1993; Wolf, 1996; Law, 1997). The outside researcher should want to overcome any dominating tendencies so that others are free to put themselves and their knowledge forward (Burkey, 1993; Gaventa, 1993; Mukherjee, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997).

How power is conceptualised and applied, then, is crucial to the interactions in participatory research (de Koning and Martin, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Martin, 1996). The models of power explored in Chapter Three become relevant here, particularly 'power from within', 'power with' and 'power to do'. Evaluating participatory research includes how power was shared throughout and if the outside researcher became 'disempowered' so others could assume more power (Maguire, 1996).

The power relationships that can influence participatory research are explored by Martin (1996) in her evaluation of a women's wellness centre in the UK. For example, people in more powerful positions within the community may have a vested interest in how the research progresses. Martin does not see power as vested in one group within a community, or in one 'oppressor', but as instrumental to how research transpires, how people inter-relate, what can

be learned about difference, and how the interplay of power and resistance can subvert cohesive efforts at participatory research and action. Participatory processes can be frustrating if power processes between individuals are not taken into account. Conflict is inevitable, especially where gender, 'race' and class are issues (Walters, 1996; Cousins, 1998; Guijt and Shah, 1998). What is also at issue here, suggests Martin (1996), is that the outside researcher is as much implicated as are local people, though this does not come through in most accounts.

Stages of the research process

Bearing in mind what has been said about fluidity and flexibility, I will now explore the literature on the stages of participatory research.

Engagement

To begin with, the outside researcher must become familiar with the potential research context, whether a community or an already existing group, by both participating and observing (Park, 1993; Arratia and de la Maza, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Smith, 1997). Wax (1971) says that familiarisation for ethnographers with a new and culturally different environment can take at least five months. It took Maguire (1987) a year of volunteering at a woman's shelter to move into participatory research with former residents about their support needs. Debbink and Ornelas (1997, p.17) talk about living and working with local people in order to learn 'the context

of their lives'. People do not automatically open themselves to an outside stranger, especially where trust is an issue as a result of previous exploitation (Wax, 1971; Reinharz, 1992; Mukherjee, 1993; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997).

Reciprocity can assist in building trust (Arratia and de la Maza, 1997; Pottier, 1997). Seeing the researcher as willing to give reassures local people that his/her primary purpose is not simply to take, as in extracting research data (Wolf, 1996; Arratia and de la Maza, 1997). Berardi and Donnelly (1999), while conducting participatory research in an Alaskan Aboriginal community, found that local people 'were frustrated with what seemed to them to be endless studies asking the same questions with no apparent benefit to the community' (p.175). Participatory research aims to benefit those involved and to give something back that makes participation worth their while (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Green, 1998; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000). Pottier (1997) says one thing participatory research can give is analytical tools, although some people in his own account did not want to learn how to do research – that was what the researchers were there for.

Getting to know the people and the community includes gauging whether participatory research is going to be possible, where, how and with whom (Maguire, 1987; Feuerstein, 1988; Maclure, 1990; Tilikaratna, 1991; Mosse, 1994; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997). Although participatory action research is often started by outsiders (Tilikaratna, 1991; Park, 1993; Healy, 2001),

fieldwork can enable a more organic process to occur through which preoccupying concerns become evident and people interested in exploring issues become apparent over time (Smith, 1997). Some communities pose particular challenges. Lithman (1983) carried out ethnographic research in Manitoba and worked hard to gain trust in the context of white-First Nations relations. He found that an outsider must mind his place and respect his hosts:

The community itself does not provide a framework for easy field research. It is divided into a number of power groups, and an outsider's opportunities to get caught up in disputes, leading to impossible situations, had been demonstrated a couple of years earlier by a community development worker. Finally, and most fundamental to this discussion, there is a widespread dislike of 'White men' (Lithman, 1983, p.17).

Lithman saw being from Sweden as an asset because he was not the stereotypical Canadian white researcher with a 'hefty' government grant, and he was not taken for a 'welfare spy' (p.18). How outside researchers interpret Aboriginal reality and how Aboriginal people interpret it for themselves are two different things, so white researchers are not generally all that welcome and are closely watched (Lithman, 1983; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999). Lithman gave what he could back to the community by taking on various tasks. He was honest, and his research

approach was to 'not bother people' but to hang-out in everyday life without being a 'nuisance' (Lithman, 1983, p.22).

The key challenge for outside-initiated PR/PAR is to bring people together and maintain their interest so that a group can form, supporting on-going local-initiated change (Park, 1993; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Wright and Nelson, 1995). People will come together if the issues are relevant and pertinent to them and they want to do something (Hope and Timmel, 1984; Park, 1993; Green, 1998; Altpeter et al., 1999). The outside PR/PAR researcher can act as a 'catalyst' (Tilikaratna, 1991; Burkey, 1993; Park, 1993). As McNicoll (1999) suggests, the less social distance between researcher and participants, the easier it is to connect, while Smith (1997, p.200) talks about 'chance encounters' developing into participatory research. Information from such things as community meetings (Brydon-Miller, 1993), focus groups (McKenzie et al., 1995), interviews (Maguire, 1987; Law, 1997), observation (Spittal et. al., 1997) are ways of finding out what people are most concerned about and potential ways of coming together to investigate these concerns.

This one word, 'legal', was clearly what Freire (1973) would call a 'generative theme' – a term generating discussions about the political powers that control various kinds of everyday interactions. (Arratia and de la Maza, 1997, p.124).

Defining a research question

After people have come together, the need is to clarify what they want to research: to name the research problem for themselves (Maclure, 1990; Smith, 1997; McNicoll, 1999). This 'naming' has often been usurped by more knowing others who define for local people the parameters of their world (Howe, 1994; Anderson, 1996; Everitt and Hardiker, 1996; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000). Now it must be reclaimed.

Smith (1997) says this stage of the research does not necessarily take the shape of a formal exercise, although in some groups the research questions and purpose may be very succinct (for example, Martin, 1996; Law, 1997). For others, especially where there are many issues, what people do in their daily life may reveal more of what is important. For example, the health of their children was not as much an issue for Kenyan women as was access to water and raising goats for meat (Nyamwaya, 1997). It might take a while to decide what to focus on (McNicoll, 1999). Similarly, in the open-ended and flexible process of PR/PAR, questions might change as time and understandings move on (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996), obviously a problem for pre-defined research plans (Farrow, 1995; Shaw, 1995; George, 1996; Seymour, 1997). Therefore, dialogue is best integrated into a 'participatory' engagement from the outset so that an exchange of ideas ensues and participants begin to think where it is they want to go (Meulenberg-Buskens,

1996). Thus they become active 'subjects' in the research process, developing a familiar relationship with the external researcher and learning from others as co-researchers, while also increasing critical understandings of topics and events in the course of research (Park, 1993; Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996; Smith, 1997).

Participation in investigation and action

Rather like social work, participatory research must begin where people are (Arratia and de la Maza, 1997) and move along with them at their pace and within their ways of doing things (Feuerstein, 1988; Keough, 1998). Actions are not necessarily monumental and may begin with small steps, connecting theory and practice in *praxis* through self-determining individual and collective agency, and, as the group develops cohesion, moving onto larger projects (Rahman, 1991; Khanna, 1996; Smith, 1997; Rowlands, 1997).

Whatever the methods of research and subsequent actions taken, they should be manageable for the group (Feuerstein, 1988; Park, 1993). Indeed, communities and groups are not homogeneous and individuals will participate differently (Guijt and Shah, 1998). Participants may be more involved at some points than at others, depending on time constraints, power dynamics and interest (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Smith, 1997; Guijt and Shah, 1998).

'Participation' can mean many things, depending on whose needs are being met: the funder's, the researcher's or the community's. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) and also Hick (1997) categorise different forms of participation:

Contractual: The researcher sets the agenda as in a traditional approach to research; local people are primarily objects in the researcher's study and the researcher remains in control of the study (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p.1669). Hick (1997, p.70) calls this the 'question and answer approach'.

Consultative: Opinions are sought before the research is undertaken and decisions are made accordingly (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p.1669). Hick (1997) calls this the 'hired researcher approach' because the expert study is often in response to government wanting a needs assessment done or a programme evaluated before disbursing funds. Focus groups, surveys, case studies and interviews are often used and the resultant data are analysed by the researcher. People seldom argue with the results as they mostly do not understand them. Consequently, they again remain objects of the research. An example of this is McKenzie et al. (1995)'s focus groups with members of First Nations which they call 'participatory research', thus illustrating the over-ready use of the term.

Collaborative: Here, the researcher still maintains control but people are included in carrying out the research (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p.1669).

Hick's (1997) term is 'agents or representative approach', by which community or group representatives are included in the research. They may be service providers or key members of 'target groups'. However, those involved tend to be community representatives who speak on behalf of others. They may be involved in limited ways, as determined by the researcher.

Collegial: In Cornwall and Jewke's (1995, p.1669) final category, the external researcher works *with* others as co-researchers and thus as 'colleagues' in 'mutual learning'. Control is in the hands of community participants. Hick (1997, p.72) calls this 'ideal participatory research'. 'Ordinary' people or 'grassroots' people are integrally involved as partners in all aspects of the research: identification of the topic, planning, data-collection, analysis, dissemination of findings and implementation (Hick, 1997, p.70-73).

PAR seldom reaches this 'collegiate' ideal; rather, the researcher tends to retain some degree of control, most often over the writing-up (Whitmore, 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Wolf, 1996). Where PR/PAR remains the domain of the external researcher:

people are 'participated' in a process which lies outside their ultimate control. Researchers continue to set the agendas and take responsibility for analysis and representation (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p.1669).

Precisely as with user involvement in social work (see Hague et al., forthcoming, for a summary), the danger is that rhetoric and good intentions can mask social control and the manipulation of participants into pre-determined programmes, claiming 'empowerment' and 'participation' when the impetus is a top-down concern with cost effectiveness or political expediency (Rahman, 1995; Lane, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Keough, 1998; Smith, 1998; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000; Altpeter et al., 1999).

Participatory research is seldom fully devolved to community participants (Maclure, 1990; Whitmore, 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Wright and Nelson, 1995; Cancian, 1996; Hick, 1997, p.75; Healy, 2001). Whitmore (1994) assumed control of writing the final research report because she didn't think the community women involved had the education or language skills in order to do so. Illiterate women in Feuerstein (1988), devised their own evaluatory reports using pictures and oral presentation. It helps if funding and research institutions accommodate different modes of presentation.

Furthermore, people may not want to assume control of the research process (Maguire, 1993; Martin, 1996). Their participation, especially that of women, may be spasmodic, depending on demands, interests and group dynamics (Maguire, 1987; Mosse, 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Sarin, 1998). Finally, time and commitment is needed to devolve control, taking the capacities of the group into account and allowing scope for

personal and collective empowerment and organising to occur (Cancian, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Khanna, 1996). Law (1997, p.45) speaks of 'intentional nudging' as a way of getting participants who have seen 'research' as the domain of academics to assume direction. Maguire (1993) found it frustrating when women kept passing control back to her. But women had different preoccupations that pulled on their time, energy and therefore level of participation.

Not everyone wants to do participatory research, nor is every situation conducive to it (Klein, 1983; Maguire, 1996; Martin, 1996; Pottier, 1997). The timing of the research might not be amenable to other demands on people's lives (de Koning and Martin, 1996; Martin, 1996; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Sarin, 1998). The effects of community divisions and factionalism may inhibit people coming together (Foley and Flowers, 1992; Burkey, 1993; Anderson, 1996; Buckland, 1998). As governments off-load social and health services to the local community, and as former 'grassroots' organisations become disbursers of government services and funding therefore competing with others over limited pots of money, participatory research may be more about adjusting people to inequality than challenging it (Constantino-David, 1995; Rahman, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Craig, 1998).

It is typically not easy to encourage people to participate. Often, local people are not used to being asked for their opinions by professionals or academic

researchers (Rahman, 1993; Cornwall, 1996). People who have been on the receiving end of professional knowledge watch the professionals closely and astutely, as Whitmore (1994) found when some women confessed to having said only the things they thought she wanted to hear in initial interviews. Fear of not being heard, being judged, being punished, being wrong, losing what is important to them, may deter people from participating (Whitmore, 1994; Mosse, 1994; Maguire, 1993; Townsend et. al., 1999), particularly when the 'professional gaze' is scrutinising their poverty and their parenting (Anderson, 1996; Everitt and Hardiker, 1996; Marks, 1996; Novak, 1996). Power differences within the community also affect who will talk and who will be heard (e.g. Mosse, 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Martin, 1996; Pottier, 1997; Cousins, 1998; Crawley, 1998; Sarin, 1998). Even seemingly homogeneous 'focus groups', brought together in a First Nations setting (McKkenzie et al., 1995), are not necessarily on a common wavelength owing to differences of age, gender and so on (Cornwall, 1996). Silencing nuances between community participants may not be clued into by outsiders (Villarrael, 1992; Pottier, 1997). Sarin (1998) talks about how male facilitators mainly spoke to male community members thus excluding half the audience. If the researcher is too aligned with community leaders, others may not trust him or her (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). Similarly, people in power positions may be threatened if an outsider is aligning themselves primarily with less powerful members (Burkey, 1993; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995).

Therefore, participation in participatory research by local people is not a straightforward process and may amount to only certain people coming together – and then again – not all the time. Being able to fluctuate with participation; to learn how to participate as a co-researcher with local people; to visualise ‘participation’ in multiple ways assists in making participatory research creative as well as custom made to local exigencies.

Researcher attitude and commitment

The attitude of the researcher is just as crucial to getting participatory research going as are the attitudes and circumstances of local people (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Chambers, 1997; Rowlands 1997). If the outsider comes across as superior, then local people may not feel comfortable sharing their knowledge (Mukherjee, 1993; Keough, 1998). Respect and humility - approaching the research as a person needing to be taught, helping in the often mundane tasks of daily existence - may assist in becoming an approachable human being (Arratia & de la Maza, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Keough, 1998). Arratia and de la Maza (1997) see PAR as a ‘philosophy of life’ that is not just about implementing another set of techniques but ‘a way of being in the world’. (p.131). Debbink and Ornelas (1997, p.18) talk about needing to enter the community as an ‘ignorant’, not to teach but to listen.

It is as hard for researchers to share power (Maclure, 1990; Brydon-Miller, 1993; Cancian, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Law, 1997) as it is for

social workers (Everitt and Hardiker, 1996; McNicoll, 1999; Rossiter, 2000). Both fear loss of credibility and influence (Hall, 1993; Heaney, 1993; Jones and Joss, 1995; Cancian, 1996; Katz, 1996; Brydon-Miller, 1993; Townsend et al., 1999). There might be discomfort in participating with service users as equals (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Whitmore, 1994; Healy, 1998; Altpeter et al., 1999). Dialogue helps to explore differences in positionality and privilege and how these can interfere with a mutually shared process (Brydon-Miller, 1993; Schrijvers, 1995; Gorelick, 1996; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000).

Whatever the research context precipitates for the outside researcher role, the fundamental task is not: 'to produce knowledge but to facilitate the construction of knowledge by the community itself' (Feuerstein, 1988, p.23). For this to happen, the researcher acts as a 'catalyst', 'facilitator', 'partner', 'co-learner', 'mentor', 'informal outsider', 'participatory social actor', 'change agent' (Anyanwu, 1988; Fals-Borda, 1991; Burkey, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Hick, 1997; Pottier, 1997; Green, 1998; McNicoll, 1999). A source of conflict and ambiguity for the outside researcher is the number of roles she/he might take on (Wright and Nelson, 1997; Altpeter et al., 1999).

Maguire (1987) consistently questioned her own 'facilitation' skills and Seymour (1997) looked on, horrified, at the chaos of the first group meeting

she had arranged. As Maguire found, the human tasks of providing transportation and child care needs, trips to welfare and doctors' offices, supporting women in court all became part of her practical support to women so *they* could participate. They were also ways of building trust. These efforts were frowned upon by the women's support agency she worked for, however, which, in familiar professionalised and masculinised discourse, said she was making these women 'dependent' (Maguire, 1987, p.166).

PR/PAR can be a tall order for the external researcher, especially if they think it is all up to them and they want to do it 'right'. On the other hand, if it is truly about community participants as 'co-researchers' then possibly the main issue for the outside researcher is to leave go of control and relax.

For most of this I stayed out of the communication, planning, and follow-up loop. I felt that if the group's independence and relationship with BFS were to grow, I had to get out of the way (Maguire, 1993, p.172).

Brydon-Miller struggled with control over the research from an academic perspective as well as from a need to see 'everything turn out all right', before realising:

My tasks as researcher are to listen, to explore ideas and concerns with participants, to provide resources and references, to contribute to a shared educational process, and to assist in making opportunities for communication and action available to participants...I am responsible for these tasks; I am not responsible for the actions and decisions of the participants (Brydon-Miller, 1993, p.138).

Dialogue as essential to a participatory engagement can assist in learning *how* to work with others (Arratia and de la Maza, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Smith, 1997). Outside researchers need to be willing to make a conscious effort to see themselves clearly and to have a relationship with others through which they can be challenged (Whitmore, 1994; Gorelick, 1996; Maguire, 1996). An outsider can then become an ally, lending support when asked and as needed (Bishop, 1994; Wilson and Whitmore, 1995).

Commitment – of time and of self - is essential because PR/PAR processes involve many dimensions and unpredictabilities. The process is often ambiguous, confused, conflictual and time-consuming (Maguire, 1993; Smith, 1997): ‘Engage in a PAR process *only* if you have seriously considered the inevitable commitment of purpose, time, and energy’ (Smith, 1997, p.236).

Cycles of education, analysis, reflection and action may not be easily identifiable. ‘Actions’ may be more of a personal change nature and therefore hard to identify (Khanna, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996;

Smith, 1997) or may consist in individual agency, outside of the group, even though they have resulted from group process and feed back into group strength.

An habitual potential of outside intervention is to parachute in and disrupt what is already happening (Villarrael, 1992; Collier, 1993; Nyamwaya, 1997). Seymour realised on reflection that spending at least a year beforehand getting to know the context would have helped (1997). George (1996) worked hard at developing trust in small focus groups and the women responded through in-depth and emotional sharing. Had they been included in planning a research topic more relevant to what was already happening, the participatory research might have developed into something more sustainable. The question, here again, is not so much about doing participatory research 'right' but about honesty and self-awareness regarding the main impetus for engaging in participatory research in the first place. Whose needs are really being served (i.e. Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996, p.44; Schrijvers, 1995, p.20)?

Verification, validity and evaluation

Critics tend to see PR/PAR in an all or nothing way, based on its early formulations within a structuralist theoretical paradigm (Maclure, 1990; Hall, 1993; Wright and Nelson, 1995). If a project does not result in radical social change, then it has not worked (Wolf, 1996; Healy, 2001). This is rather simplistic given the complexities of each new context and what happens

between the external researcher and local peoples. Accounts from many parts of the world attest to long-term processes that are not 'revolutionary' in the sense of upsetting social orders, but that do involve gradual, personal, collective and structural change (for example: Rahman, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999; Unnithan and Srivastava, 1997).

Often, too, the critique is from a First World perspective, omitting the economic positioning of Third World countries, the diversities within and between them, and the historical and political times that spawned PR/PAR (Giroux, 1993). In Nicaragua, they have much more experience with PAR than we have in Canada because it is an accepted mode of research and included in social work training (Wilson and Whitmore, 1995). The West places greater reliance on professional solutions and expert-controlled research (Sarri and Sarri, 1992; Heaney, 1993; Kondrat and Julia, 1997; Hiebert and Swan, 1999). Thus we lack experience of effective PR/PAR from which to learn, certainly within feminist research and social work (Sarri and Sarri, 1992; Kelly et al., 1994; Hick, 1997; Kondrat and Julia, 1997; McNicoll, 1999).

Where change is not immediately apparent, the outcome is often for the academic or professional implicitly or explicitly to blame local people for not co-operating (Villarreal, 1992; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000). Yet, many

accounts of academic initiated PR/PAR attest to researchers not knowing the context well, imposing a pre-set 'participatory' agenda that does not fit local exigencies, having insufficient time for a sustainable process to develop, and not being prepared for the complexities manifested in power relations that impede effective work (for example, Maguire, 1987; Farrow, 1995; Shaw, 1995; George, 1996; Martin, 1996; Seymour, 1997; Spittal et al., 1997). Others, like Hiebert and Swan (1999), find an apparently effective participatory research project being derailed by threatened professionals.

For the outside observer, change might not be visible or it may occur in seemingly insignificant yet strategic steps (Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997).

The change becomes significant when 'power-over' is transformed into 'power-with' and 'power from within' (Bishop, 1994; Townsend et al., 1999).

Park (1993) speaks of evaluation encompassing the development of instrumental, interactive and critical knowledge. Thus, instrumentally, participatory research can be looked at in terms of tangible results; from an interactive point of view, it can be looked at in terms of the group-forming process and how people worked together; finally, in terms of critical knowledge, it can be evaluated in terms of its 'emancipatory' and 'transformative' mandate (ibid., p.16). All these of course, form together in a whole thus identifying PR/PAR as a holistic research approach where the emotional, political and practical come together (Smith, 1997).

Given that PR/PAR and empowerment are closely aligned and intertwined, the question, according to Kondrat and Julia (1997, p.44) may not be 'Is it rigorous?' but 'Is it empowering?'. Nevertheless, one way of approaching 'rigour' in qualitative research is through 'prolonged engagement in the field' (Padgett, 1998, p.94). An open-ended timescale and process assist in validating the research process, overcoming the fluctuations of participation and enabling the outside researcher to understand what people are *really* saying, who is saying what, and who isn't saying anything (Pottier, 1997; Altpeter et al., 1999). Given that: '[a] subject population does not tell the truth to those in power' (Gorelick, 1996, p.24), longer-term involvement assists in developing trust and authenticity (Maguire, 1996; Arratia and de la Maza, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997).

Through a participatory evaluation process, participants develop their own 'verification' system and by so doing, identify, reflect upon, retain and utilise the knowledge produced (Feuerstein, 1988; Rahman, 1991). Their input not only assists in thoroughly understanding the focus of research but also in analysing the process itself (Park, 1993; Rahman, 1993; Smith, 1997).

A participatory study is verified when the grassroots people are satisfied with the process, the level of participation, the program actions or policy decisions and changes resulting. (Hick, 1997, p.76)

'Dialogue', as a 'basic tool' of PR/PAR, makes the perceptions of the 'poor' more important than that of the external researcher. Therefore, another aspect of research verification is the extent to which collectively-decided and planned action has resulted. Burkey (1993) sees the validation of participatory research as specific to whether or not the poor acquire more control of development directions and, through so doing, develop their own organisational structures in order to overcome the control of those with more power.

Aspects that can be measured, often in process more than concrete results, include changes in: how power is shared in the research; levels of participation over time; and how participants see themselves, their potential and their options (Cornwall, 1996; Khanna, 1996; Maguire, 1996). Participatory engagement can also support measurable personal changes in participants such as leaving a violent relationship (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Maguire, 1996; Townsend et al., 1999). Similarly, changes in the outside researcher should include to what extent we are able to let go of control so that others can find their own answers (Hick, 1997). Through their participation with others, were their values, pre-judgements and perceptions challenged and changed (Cornwall, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Hick, 1997)? Verification of a participatory process can also include how conflicts are overcome, and what they reveal about the research itself as well as about the positionings of those in the group (Schrijvers, 1995; Martin, 1996; Cousins, 1998).

Local people's experiences will very often, depending on social location, be different from that of the outside PR/PAR researcher and therefore the effects of participation and of actions taken will also be gauged differently (Rahman, 1993). From a standpoint perspective, it may, then, seem contradictory to speak of verifiability when the view from the top is not what people would say about themselves (Harding 1993; Mies, 1993; Swigonski, 1993). PR/PAR outcomes should serve the needs of the people involved and those in positions of authority should ultimately listen (Maclure, 1990; Chambers, 1997; Hick, 1997; Pandey, 1998; Hiebert and Swan, 1999). In the process of evaluation and verification, participants are continuing to do participatory research by analysing for themselves what has been learned, the changes that have occurred and what more needs to be done (Feuerstein, 1988). The 'flexibility, openness, and permeable boundaries of interacting and knowing' (Smith, 1997, p.245) mean that the only people who can really verify the authenticity of PR/PAR are those who participate, through the knowledge they gain, the changes that occur and their usefulness to local people's needs (Feuerstein, 1988). 'It is now argued that it is better to have less perfect but more useable data' (Feuerstein, 1988, p.16).

The threat, according to Heaney (1993), of mainstreaming participatory research within the academy and teaching courses on how to do it, is not only

that it becomes a specialist field but also that knowledge will not remain under the control of those who produce it and that a critical questioning of power will be limited (Heaney, 1993). On the other hand, PR/PAR offers the possibility of social work students and practitioners making a direct connection between research and practice (Everitt et al., 1992; McNicoll, 1999).

Conclusion

After all the struggles, the reward comes, according to PR/PAR practitioners, when people do gain increased awareness through dialogue and interactions. 'Awakening' or 'transformation' can result from participatory engagement in how people *want* to be, do and act differently (Smith, 1997, p.218). As outsiders, we need to accept the limits of what we know, the uncertainty of the research process, the ways people with various concerns and priorities participate, the time it takes, and the inter-subjective power dynamics that are always present (Farrow, 1995; Shaw, 1995; Schrijvers, 1995; Maguire, 1996; Martin, 1996; Smith, 1997; Keough, 1998; McNicoll, 1999). Participatory research seldom works out the way it was initially anticipated by well-meaning researchers (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Seymour, 1997). As repeatedly emphasised, more important is what is learned along the way. The more published accounts, the more this pool of experience is shared and developed (Guijt and Shah, 1998).

The following chapter specifically focuses on a feminist perspective of participatory research that is primarily concerned with addressing women's experiences of oppression by actively assuming more control over their lives and environment through participation with others in change.

CHAPTER SIX: FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Feminist research – and diversity

Feminists acknowledge emotions and therefore the subjective, both on the part of the researcher and of those participating, because they are integral to women's lived experience, especially of subordination (Du Bois, 1983; Klein, 1983; Nielsen, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Jaggar, 1997):

An important contribution of feminism to knowledge creation has been the way feminists have explored feeling and experience as sources of knowledge and as guides to analysis and social action. (Martin, 1996, p.84)

Patriarchy, according to the Compact Oxford English Dictionary, besides following male lineage, 'is a system in society in which men hold some or most of the power' (Soanes, 2000, p. 828). There is 'no image of a non-patriarchal, non-masculine modernity available' (Code, 1993, p. 116). A modernist patriarchal perspective favours rational thought and its binaristic separation from emotions (Hekman, 1996; Jaggar, 1997; Seidler, 1998). Value-free, apolitical and emotionless human 'science' is recognised as a myth by feminists, who approach research from the standpoint of understanding women's oppression and of support for positive change in

women's lives and in society (Du Bois, 1983; Maguire, 1987, 1996; Harding, 1989; Reinharz, 1992; Mies, 1993; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Kelly et al., 1994; Wolf, 1996). Feminist researchers also want to be as non-exploitative as possible, reciprocally giving something back to respondents through empathetic listening, emotional and even practical support (Maguire, 1987; Oakley, 1990; Acker et al., 1996; Wolf, 1996).

Epistemologically, feminist standpoint starts out from the everyday, often invisible lives of women (Harding, 1989, 1993; Nielsen, 1990; Sachs, 1996). Women's 'double consciousness' results from living and manoeuvring in the public sphere of male-dominated society while also living another, unseen life in the private sphere (Nielsen, 1990; Harding, 1989; Swigonski, 1993; Boyd, 1997). There are, however, many standpoints and many feminisms, influenced by women's different locations in a stratified society (Harding, 1993). All knowledge production is socially situated but not all is legitimated (Code, 1993; Harding, 1993; Foucault, 1994). Other ways of knowing, as derived from lived experience, emotions, intuition or culture are marginalised (Klein, 1983; Braidotti et al., 1994; Foucault, 1994; Alldred, 1996; Jaggar, 1997; Seidler, 1998). Canadian Aboriginal women's roles as primary producers and as joint decision-makers were permanently displaced under European patriarchal mechanisms of subjugation (Bourgeault, 1991; RCAP, 1996, 4(2)). They must now find their own solutions to their own problems

within the contours of their history, their losses, their culture and their own feminisms (Emberley, 1995; Montour-Angus, 1996).

Modernist patriarchy reflects the binary divisions between mind and body, thoughts and feelings, male and female, white and black, North and South; the second category in all these dyads being accorded a lesser status than the first in a relationship of opposition and unwitting collusion (Seidman, 1994; Coole, 1998). People who are marginalised are often researched 'on', yet have a different view of social reality from those in the dominant group (Nielsen, 1990; Harding, 1993; Mies, 1993). What has been claimed as universal knowledge derived from rigorous scientific efforts has, in fact, been limited, androcentric and controlled by an ethnocentric, Euro-American perspective (Code, 1993). Feminism has too often followed this modernist path by universalising women's experience within the parameters of First World, white, middle-class women's standpoints. We are in a more privileged position to study 'other' women and we have failed to examine our own power, privilege and claims to knowing (Mohanty, 1991; Gorelick, 1996; Maynard, 1996; Monture-Angus, 1996; Wolf, 1996). The problem with a standpoint perspective, then, is that it has tended to assume an experience of subordination common to women across diverse lives and locations and that feminists, mainly Western and white, should be conscientising diverse groups of women about their subordination (Sachs, 1996).

The complexity of women's experience and their subjective responses to it are important to understand (Walters, 1996). Haraway (1991 in Sachs, 1996) situates 'knowing' in women's lives in their own social locations, which means that even the feminist researcher can have only partial knowledge and must learn from different women's different 'situated' experiences of oppression and therefore their multiple standpoints: 'Standpoint theory argues that each of these groups of women's lives is a good place to start in order to explain certain aspects of the social order' (Harding, 1993, p.60).

Concomitantly, central to a post-modern critique of universalised and elite knowledge is the privileging of the local, the indigenous and the diverse (Corbridge, 1994; Seidman, 1994). Women's knowledge is important if change strategies are to be relevant and inclusive but that knowledge is mediated by the many facets of a woman's life and her relationships with others (Wieringa, 1994; Sachs, 1996; Kimane and Ntimo-Makara, 1998). Aboriginal women's experiences and knowledge cannot be separated from being Aboriginal in Canadian society (Emberley, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; Razack, 1998). Ethnicity, class and gender are part of the mix, not separated one from the other (Hill Collins, 1990 in Harding, 1993) and research processes must acknowledge this.

Feminist participatory research

The focus of feminist participatory research (FPR) is the inclusion of women in the research process as knowledge producers and active subjects (Maguire,

1987; Mies, 1993). Research becomes for all involved a conscientising process through which women critically and dialogically examine their lives, their subordination, and how power operates in society (Mies, 1993; Schrijvers, 1995; Maguire, 1996; Martin, 1996).

Women resist their subordination (Sachs, 1996); they are not passive, as in generalised First World feminist notions of Third World women (Mohanty, 1991). Political change happens for women in the context of the power relations in their daily lives and their ability to push at boundaries and change ways of doing things, often in seemingly inconsequential and invisible ways:

Rather than seeing women as helpless victims of an all-powerful patriarchal ideology, we must account for women's potential for creativity and agency within a context of limited options. (Sachs, 1996, p.25)

As Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) says, her mother in the Cameroon was not a 'feminist' but was always having to strategise around patriarchal obstacles in order to survive. The point of Villarrael's (1992) account, from an actor-oriented perspective, is that women are not waiting for outsiders to come and tell them what to do. *They simply 'do'*. Feminist participatory research enables a reflection on that 'doing' and on the holistic needs of women in their different locations (Khanna, 1996; Maguire, 1996).

Most feminist research focuses 'on', 'for' and 'by' women rather than 'with' them (Maguire, 1987; Wolf, 1996; Humphries, 1999). FPR differs from feminist research by moving the discussion of women's oppression into action. Actions might not be monumental as change happens sporadically over time (Maguire, 1996; Rowlands, 1997; Guijt and Shah, 1998). However, the benefits women may accrue through participation cannot be underestimated (Wolf, 1996). Where women come together to find answers, accounts indicate increased self-confidence, women participating more in the public sphere, women realising they no longer have to take the violence, women exercising more autonomy within and/or despite cultural constraints, and women publicly challenging inequality (Maguire, 1987; Nzomo, 1995; Khanna, 1996; Jackson, 1997; Rowlands, 1997; Kabeer, 1998; Tlakula, 1998; Kabeer, 1998; Townsend et al., 1999). FPR can contribute to women's empowerment but does not equate with women's empowerment (Maguire, 1996; Crawley, 1998). Women must do that for themselves (Rowlands, 1997; Kabeer, 1998; Townsend et al., 1999). Such changes are grounded in process and can take years (Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997; Unnithan & Srivastava, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999). Burkey (1993) in terms of 'development' and PR/PAR speaks of twenty year plus projects – a little more than a twelve week women's 'empowerment' course in the UK (Butler and Wintram, 1991).

As well as relevance, engagement, complexity and practical change, feminist participatory research seeks a more genuinely non-hierarchical way of working alongside other women. All feminist studies seek to equalise the research relationship, relying on extensive and intensive unstructured interviews shaped more by dialogue than questions and contained within the presumed advantage of a feminist consciousness (Acker et al., 1996).

However, feminist research typically retains control of the research process, so that, although we seek to work 'for' other women, a project typically remains *our* research *on* them. Also, although feminist researchers do not artificially compartmentalise their emotions when other women are sharing often deeply personal aspects of their lives, we cannot assume closeness (Reinharz, 1992) nor an ability to bridge economic, geographic and historical locations in order to understand other women's experiences (Gorelick, 1996; Wolf, 1996).

A critique of FPR

Realising in retrospect that we know little about how change happens, and less about what women need to do for their own empowerment, researchers such as Farrow (1995), Shaw (1995), de Koning and Martin (1996), Maguire (1996), Cancian (1996) and Martin (1996) recognise the complexity of engaging in FPR, of which there is no pure form. There are many questions we need to ask, including the following.

Will women want to engage?

A major challenge in participatory research, especially in communities where people seldom work together, is seeing whether people will even come together in a group (Park, 1993). Outsiders expect participation in developing projects the community has not asked for and may not want (Nyamwaya, 1997). Ideally, we should be participating with community members in their agendas, and not the other way around (Khanna, 1996; Nyamwaya, 1997). Hoping to learn more about popular theatre in Namibia and South Africa, Farrow (1995) was surprised to find herself not necessarily welcomed and that her contacts had very little time for her. Her forward style of approaching people turned them off. She soon learned the necessity of listening and 'backing-off' (ibid., p.78). Acker et al. (1996), reflecting on their 1983 research, question whether a feminist approach can precipitate emancipatory outcomes, whether consciousness-raising should be part of its intent, whether female subjects actually benefit. Phoenix (1994) wonders whether women are ever asked what they really want from the research. What would have happened, Maguire (1987, p.103) asks, if the respondents in the Acker et al. study had been encouraged to get together by themselves and share notes? Similarly, what would have happened had some of the women come together to decide what it was *they* wanted to research at that point in their lives (cf. Seymour, 1997)? 'Who frames the question'? (Maguire, 1996, p. 34).

At least PAR with women does present the opportunity to local women to assume a more active part in the research and its outcomes (Wolf, 1996) but this will mainly happen if women feel comfortable and if spaces are opened up for them that are conducive to their lives and interests. The literature confirms consistently that 'empowering' change, including through participatory research, can happen, altering how women see themselves and increasing their belief in their ability to influence and take action (Wieringa, 1994; Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999). But women must decide priorities by themselves, learning by doing, developing their own momentum as they go along (Zapata, 2000). The need is to start where the possibilities for connection and change exist (de Koning and Martin, 1996).

Not surprisingly, one of the women's groups was more interested in knowing more about us and whether we could help increase food security from their rainfed agriculture. (Sarin, 1998, p.126)

Women will participate differently. This is important to be aware of because women's non-participation does not mean they are not eager to participate. External researchers and other female participants need to work at how we can accommodate those who cannot participate for one reason or another. For one thing, it is mostly women who are taking care of the more vulnerable while others participate (Maguire, 1996). If a child is sick – who worries or stays home? (Rowlands, 1997). For women in violent relationships or

recently out of one – there might not be a lot of energy to be organised and/or to ask for help especially if that help is going to be judgmental (Fine, 1993; Maguire, 1987). It takes time and sensitivity to figure out what works so women *can* participate (Shaw, 1995; Sarin, 1998; Guijt and Shah, 1998).

Will the researcher stay long enough?

It is important to a participatory engagement, as we saw in the last chapter, not only that women want to do it but that the external researcher has the time and commitment to see it through (Park, 1993; Altpeter et al., 1999). Yet, it might be that our role subsides anyway, as the initiative takes momentum (Rowlands, 1997). Similarly, once the novelty has worn off, and if there are no returns, community members may cease to come (Cornwall, 1995; Guijt and Shah, 1998). That is why Rowlands (1997, p.94) knew women were benefiting in PAEM – because they continued to come. Short-term FPR can raise false hopes especially when that limited engagement is intense (George, 1996; Shaw, 1995). The question is whether outsiders who hardly know the context should even be thinking of doing feminist participatory research *with* women unless the parameters are clearly spelled out to begin with (Shaw, 1995; George, 1996). For example, George wished there had been room in their research planning to collaborate with a local NGO. As it was – they were constrained by their research sponsors to pre-defined, time-limited involvement which she felt ‘opened up old emotional wounds which the women had spent much time healing’ (1996, p. 127). All too generally,

marginalised people experience outsiders mysteriously coming and going – leaving little if nothing behind (Chambers, 1983; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; Farrow, 1995; Shaw, 1995; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999; McNicoll, 1999).

Time is not only needed, as in PR/PAR, to become familiar with the context, but also, if directed by local women, to proceed at the pace of what *they* can commit to (Rowlands, 1997; Humble, 1998) and to also, within the flexibility that participatory research demands, be prepared to view participation differently e.g. in familiar locations where women are relaxed and present (Sarin, 1998). Khanna (1996) notes that as women became more comfortable ‘some’ did more things together e.g. supporting other women in accessing services. This feeds into a holistic process which includes individuals and women together who interactively and intersubjectively shape their time together (Yuval-Davis, 1994).

Being usually of a short-term nature, in reality, it is inconceivable that FPR will normally result in dramatic outcomes (Cancian, 1996; Katz, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Healy 2001). We need to be happy with small and unexpected happenings (Maguire, 1993).

These projects appear to empower women temporarily, or at least in the ‘medium run,’ but due to their necessarily small scale, they do not

seem to create political or economic change that would truly transform poor women's difficult lives (Wolf, 1996, p.31).

I doubt this is for an outside researcher, who is usually only there for a comparatively short period of time, to hope for. We could actually do more harm than good by setting women up for failure (Rowlands, 1997). Also, as outsiders with our idealistic agendas, we can disrupt and fail to see what is already happening within the context (Khanna, 1996; Villarrael, 1992). A stronger Southern influence of women's participatory experience and knowledge in the realms of Northern academia, including social work education, could teach us about change processes in immensely uncertain conditions (e.g. Wilson and Whitmore, 1995; Bhasin, 1996; Khanna, 1996; Unnithan and Srivastava, 1997; Pandey, 1998; Razack, 2000).

Can we overcome difference between researcher and 'researched'?

Moss (1995) became a domestic worker for a few months in order to understand this experience for women who did it all the time. She was disillusioned to find that she could in only limited ways overcome differences based on economic positionality between herself and those she worked with. It is one thing, she says, to know intellectually about marginalisation but another to know it from experience. Acker et al. (1996), looking back on 1970s research, realised the social distance between researchers and informants that they minimised or missed at the time. They wonder how two 'active subjects'

(p.83) in a feminist interview can emerge out of profound differences such as class, race and ethnicity. Moss (1995) suggests one can still seek to equalise the conventional researcher-researched relationship while respecting the effects of positionality, but sees the ultimate role for feminist academics as that of directing their post-research knowledge and energies at structural change, especially where they have more influence than those involved in the research. Personalities, values, structural influences and privileged social positions influence our ability to participate as 'equals' in participatory research (Martin, 1996, p.91; Wolf, 1996). Similarly – women are different in the local context (Cornwall, 1998). Some may be more willing and able to participate than others (Guijt and Shah, 1998). A problem can ensue in terms of power relations *between* women that may exclude other women (Martin, 1996; Unnithan and Srivastava, 1997; Cornwall, 1998). As in PR/PAR, the external researcher might identify or be identified with more powerful women than with others thus causing her own exclusions (Mosse, 1994). Some may not see themselves as 'oppressed' but may align themselves more with patriarchal values (Powell, 1996). Certain women might feel more 'equal' to the researcher than other women – and this has to do with different positionalities *within* the community.

Viewing all local people as insiders clearly perpetuates a simplification of intra-communal differences, and hides the reality of

high levels of participation by some groups and none by others (Guijt and Shah, 1998, p.10).

This isn't to say that women you want to participate with – *want* to participate with you (Reinharz, 1992; Guijt and Shah, 1998) or that they seek 'equality' with an outside researcher who may not be important enough given the preoccupations of their daily lives. Both Whitmore (1994) and Moss (1995) attest to the gulf between well-meaning social work and feminist researchers and women they want to be 'equal' to. The idea of 'respect' (Keough, 1998) then, in participatory practice has to do with accepting difference and learning from it in terms of where connection can be and where it cannot be (Schrijvers, 1995; Gorelick, 1996; Anderson and Hill Collins, 1998).

How does this relate to entrenched dynamics of power?

Research is a relationship and in it are the 'hidden relations of oppression' (Gorelick, 1996, p.25). It is not good enough, from a feminist and interpretivist perspective, simply to collect descriptive data when the effects of oppression are going to affect the research relationship and when those dynamics need to be exposed if a 'relationship', particularly a non-hierarchical one, is to develop (Gorelick, 1996). The dynamics of oppression may help to understand, for example, what women will not talk about (ibid.). The researcher has to look at herself and at what comes between her and the women with whom she engages. Theory and practice, then, do have the

potential to come together in dialogue, but only in learning from each other and being prepared to be changed by the encounter (op.cit.).

Women do exercise power in whatever way they can, under seemingly oppressive conditions:

to be told that women are powerless, does not fit the experiences of working-class women who feel they have control of their own part of the world, separate from men. (Westwood (1984) in Harvey 1990, p.139)

Villarreal (1992), from an actor-oriented perspective, identifies different women's local and inter-personal use of power and it fits, too, with Martin's (1996) FPR account in which she draws on Foucault to explain how power and resistance in the relationships between the outside researcher and local people affect what happens in the course of the research. The one paid female staff member was able to manipulate what could occur, especially as other volunteer members of the group deferred to her knowledge and control (ibid.). This put Martin in an awkward position and subjectively affected her and therefore her ability to find a way of changing the situation. Maguire did not problematise power dynamics between herself and participating women other than the power they had to steer the research in certain directions:

The group declined the offer; a small piece of evidence that a participatory researcher cannot make people do anything they are not ready for (1987, p.164).

Nor, she admits, did participating women critically look at the effects of 'race' and culture on their interactions or the sustainability of the group (ibid., p.205). Nor do we know how 'class' affected interaction between women whose common experience was male violence. 'Power' in Maguire (1987), then, is primarily seen in terms of influencing local and structural change.

As mentioned earlier (Chapter Four), feminist ethnography, because of extended fieldwork, has problematised power differentials specifically between women, more typically than other research approaches (Reinharz, 1992; Gorelick, 1996; Wolf, 1996) and can inform participatory research about the complexity of difference and of power relations (Wright and Nelson, 1995). A paternalistic predisposition can affect our egalitarian intentions and reciprocal aims, and this can be hard to see because of how deeply it is embodied in how we relate to supposedly 'disadvantaged' others (Razack, 2000; Rossiter, 2000). This is particularly volatile as women in relation to 'other' women who we assume to, at least in some ways, be like us and to be in need of our 'help' if not 'guidance' (Reinharz, 1992; Marks, 1996; Featherstone, 1997). Hence a self-critical stance is beneficial to female participatory researchers and social workers alike in order to look at our

positionality, our 'politics of location' and our benevolent intentions particularly as influenced by an ethnocentric and/or professional sense of knowing (Harding, 1993; Wolf, 1996; Razack, 2000; Rossiter, 2000).

Can we ever really know other people?

Given that we are working with difference and within power differentials, Mies (1983) introduced the idea of 'conscious partiality' into FPR: that feminist researchers can only ever identify partially with the researched. Such a stance is not simply empathy or inter-subjectivity but a recognition of one's partial knowledge and therefore a desire to ally with other women in order to gain a clearer picture of their lives. This enables a less distorted view than that in conventional, hierarchical research that relies solely on the researcher's interpretations. Mies speaks of a co-learning relationship between academic and community women. This facilitates a dialogic process through which multiple viewpoints can be heard and differences and power conflicts worked through (Schrijvers, 1995). Schrijvers adds a dimension whereby the external researcher consciously chooses to ally herself with a certain group in the community, possibly based on their need for advocacy and the likelihood of their benefiting from the research. Mies (1993) sees feminist research as an active and therefore activist involvement with marginalised women which attempts to bridge the knowledge distance between them and the researcher and to bring theory and practice more explicitly together. Similarly, it must involve conscientisation (referring to Freire) through which the 'researched'

become the subjects of their own research and decide their own research problems. Mies is seen by many to have contributed significantly to feminist participatory research (Guijt and Shah, 1998; Wolf, 1996; Maguire, 1987). She speaks of how 'ruptures' in a woman's life - for example, male sexual and physical abuse and violence – challenge what has been presented as 'normal' and provide entry points for critical analysis and change (Mies, 1993; see also Gorelick, 1996).

Criticised though by feminist researchers is Mies' unproblematised notion of being able to present a 'view from below' when researchers are most often far 'above' (at least in class) those with whom they participate (Wolf, 1996, p.28). Mies (1993) is saying that feminist researchers need to be more identified with ordinary women rather than with the academy in order to learn from them. But her account of her relatively short-term FPR with women in India is remarkably smooth-sailing despite vast positional differences including language differences (Mies, 1991; Wolf, *op.cit*). Similarly questioned is her contention that feminists in a foreign location can act as 'catalysts' of change since this could actually amount to another form of colonial intrusion (Wolf, 1996, p.28). This reflects a wider criticism of unproblematic accounts of participatory research (Healy, 2001) when most of what people, especially feminists, end up experiencing is far from smooth, not to mention full of personal angst (e.g. Maguire, 1987; Farrow, 1995; Shaw, 1995; George, 1996; Martin, 1996; Seymour, 1997).

Does feminist participatory research make women more vulnerable?

Participatory rural appraisal is criticised for fitting something as complex and difficult as gender relations and 'empowerment' into short-term, possibly mechanistic 'community' participatory exercises (Crawley, 1998; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Humble, 1998). These can serve to make women more vulnerable in mixed groups when conscientious thought has not been put into power dynamics and risk (Cousins, 1998; Humble, 1998; Sarin, 1998).

Outside researchers may be quite naïve about how their agendas can affect those participating in communities they hardly know, comprising differences in power and the right to speak (Mosse, 1994; Martin, 1996; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Sarin, 1998). Women may be reticent with outsiders and with community members, male or female, to talk about what they see as important priorities for change, especially if the hidden issues of male violence and psychological control consume their energy and preoccupations (Mosse, 1994; Jackson, 1997; Crawley, 1998; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Humble, 1998; Sen, 1998). Violence in the domestic sphere is usually reinforced as a private issue (Kelly and Radford, 1996; Narayan, 1997; Kabeer, 1998; Munalula, 1998; Green, 1999):

Talking about rape, domestic violence or other abuse often brings shame, disapproval, dishonour, or blame on women, and interventions must avoid further victimisation of women whose secrets become known. (Sen, 1998, p.13)

Given its pandemic proportions the world over (Heyzer, 1998), it is amazing that participatory research accounts do not make violence against women a major issue for change or even a key concern in relation to women's ability to participate outside the home (Sen, 1998; Bradley, 1994): 'The struggle is so big ... the power that the husband has over the woman' (Rowlands, 1997, p.82). FPR has to start where women are, realising that they must name issues for themselves, in their own way and own time – allowing them to discern risk factors (Humble, 1998).

Can we move from the personal to the political?

Empowerment through coming together – women claiming their own knowledge as valid, asking their own questions and identifying their own needs – *can* inform a feminist participatory process (Wieringa, 1994; Cornwall, 1996; Khanna, 1996), but this is not inevitable. There is always the possibility of confining change primarily to individuals and their psychological and emotional well-being, rather than taking political and social action (Walters, 1996; Cohen and Mullender, 2001). On the other hand, there is also the possibility of highlighting practical or organisational concerns while ignoring the effects of psychological well-being and concomitantly, the politics of the private sphere on women's ability and desire to participate (Guijt and Shah, 1998; Welbourn, 1998; Townsend et. al., 1999). As

'empowerment' literature reveals, enough time and an aware facilitator supports women in moving back and forth between the personal and political, the private and the public (Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997).

Subjective experience is important as a source of information both on substance and process (Schrijvers, 1995; George, 1996; Khanna, 1996; Martin, 1996). It encompasses women's individual agency within the broader context of social relations that shape and are shaped by structural reality (Weedon, 1987; Villarrael, 1992; Jackson, 1997). Emotions are important sources of information to women in realising the impacts of oppression and the repression of authentic responses such as anger and rage (Jaggar, 1997). Emotions can propel action (Martin, 1996, p.84; Jaggar, 1997, p.397).

Relevance of feminist research approaches to social work

Can social workers engage as 'equals' with women over whom we statutorily have a great deal of power (Swift, 1995a)? In fact, an emphasis on the social monitoring and control of lower-class women (Gordon, 1986; Lewis, 1992) has resulted in a focus on home management and parenting skills rather than on politically siding with marginalised women in support of social change (Swift, 1995a). Even up to the present, social work has not typically been amenable to embracing participatory research *with* women in order to learn *with* them, favouring instead expert-led conventional research (Kondrat and Julia, 1997; McNicoll, 1999). This has excluded the knowledge of different

groups of women, including Aboriginal women (McDonald and Brownlee, 1995). Not often emphasised, then, within mainstream social work, are the feminist possibilities of women coming together in order to act on their own knowledge. Callahan (1993), Callahan et al. (1998) and Swift (1995a) provide some of the few exceptions. So this, too, must be contextualised within the flexibilities of agency and social work practice and how individual feminist social workers are able to manoeuvre in favour of the women they work with (ibid.).

Swigonski (1993) does bring in the idea of using feminist standpoint in social work research in order to: be guided by women who directly experience the issues; involve women in developing and undertaking the research; and bring research closer together with practice. Not included is social workers and service users doing research in order to act on findings, although change can occur in their relationship and in social work practices. Similarly, Fook (2000) from a situated perspective, speaks of contextualising theory and practice development in the interactions of the social worker and (primarily female) service user and in the social location. Social workers often don't go in with a 'plan' but are directed by what occurs in practice and within dialogue with service users. The need is to come up with a new way of defining the social work professional which suggests a door is open to more participatory practices.

Social work, in so far as it has been influenced by feminist post-modern perspectives, has come to talk more about dialogue and a more 'egalitarian' practice in light of the need to question expert knowledge and to centre users' narratives (Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000; Rossiter, 2000). In a dialogic approach we can work to avoid the 'hierarchy within ourselves' (Gorelick, 1996, p.33). Unfortunately, there is little discussion of the applicability of [feminist] participatory research in post-modern social work discourse of social workers actually engaging *with* 'clients' in action around what they struggle against (e.g. Humphries, 1999; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000; Fook, 2000; Rossiter, 2000). Such might make social work more relevant to marginalised groups (Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Callahan et. al., 1998; Hiebert and Swan, 1999; McNicoll, 1999; Weaver, 2000). Healy does critically examine participatory action research from a post-structuralist perspective – wondering if it is a proper fit with child welfare practice (1998) and if it is really what it is cooked up to be by Latin American proponents (2001). She presents 'PAR' and participation from their idealised modernist vantage points which of course, have greatly changed as time, experience, difference, power issues and contextualisation have informed participatory practice from around the world. Possibly what is missing in most accounts is what those who participated say (Hiebert and Swan, 1999).

Pozfit made me understand my discomfort with being a client of an agency or a program. With Pozfit I was a part of the process of creating and running services (Ibid., p.358).

Conclusion

Most feminist research does not share the actual planning and doing of research with those being 'researched' and does not move research into action (Maguire, 1987; Wolf, 1996); it therefore continues to have a problem with bringing theory and practice together so that research directly benefits the women who take part (Acker et al., 1996; Schrijvers, 1995). Feminist participatory research is about women guiding a process of change –important because they have so often been excluded, even when 'change' is about *their* lives, their survival needs, their bodies, their children and their safety – and is most effective if the experience of women whose knowledge has been subjugated is included. The participatory process is limited and complicated by a context of Western individualised and psychologised solutions to political issues in which 'expertise' is controlled, there are long-standing divisions resulting from social and structural control and limited resources, and families and individuals are set against one another by these wider issues and by sexual and physical violence, primarily of men against women and children. In such a situation, people are not necessarily going to want to come together and the researcher will need to find the right entry points at the right time. There is a need to support what individuals do in their own lives and to

allow this to feed into a group process of mutual support, to look at activities that directly meet concrete and immediate needs, and to focus on long-term process with no immediate sense of where one is going but with the knowledge that it must grow organically. FPR, by focusing on dialogue, can develop increased understandings between external researchers and local women's reality in a given context, as well as inform the outsider how best to be an 'ally' (Bishop, 1994).

Feminist participatory researchers need to remain self-questioning in all the ways outlined in this chapter and, certainly, I attempted to do so in my own project. Despite the criticisms, when it works well FPR can create spaces where women can be heard, share knowledge that often remains hidden from public view, believe in themselves, and act on the basis of their own conclusions (Maguire, 1987; Khanna, 1996; Wolf, 1996). In the next section, I shall explore how I attempted to do this with First Nations women in Canada.

SECTION THREE

CHAPTER SEVEN:

PROCESS OF MY RESEARCH

My research took place in the two communities of Jade Creek and Crystal Creek that make up Jade Creek Band in interior British Columbia, Canada¹. I spent seventeen months in the community, living at Crystal Creek but dividing my time equally between there and Jade Creek. These communities are designated 'semi-remote' by the Department of Indian Affairs. The nearest towns are, respectively, 90 and 125 kilometres of mainly gravel road away. In contextualising the research in this chapter, I want particularly to draw attention to the viability of participatory research in this particular First Nation and the constraints upon it.

Obtaining Access

I had written to the Chief of Jade Creek Band before leaving the UK as I had worked there previously as a mental health counsellor. It was important that people should want me in their community and that my being there and the research should serve a purpose relevant to their needs. It seemed a good sign

¹ Indian 'Bands' are the legal designations of reserve communities within 'tribes' under the 1876 *Indian Act*. Pre-*Indian Act* (1876), tribes carried out their own relations with other tribes, had their own forms of communities within tribes and may have had different community alliances than those formed into reserves (Shuswap Nations Tribal Council [SNTC], 1989;

when the secretary tracked me down on my return to Canada and asked me to a meeting with Chief and Council. I told them about participatory research, that it was important the research serve their needs and that they participate in developing the research itself. There was not much response around the table. In fact, I was not sure they understood. Their main preoccupation was an upcoming Chief and Council election as the former female Chief who I had known from before, was stepping down. And so they could not give me a definite answer until the new Chief and Council decided. I also made it known that I was looking for a paying job. In August, I was approached to work for another Band I had never worked for before, so I called the new Chief at Jade Creek and he said they would be happy to have me and could I write grant proposals. I wanted to stay with Jade Creek Band because of already knowing the community and therefore not starting out from scratch. Proposal writing seemed like a good idea as it might even open up an opportunity for PR/PAR. Community members could be involved right from the beginning in identifying issues and planning a project around them, for which funding would be sought and from which participation might flow. Also, I could pay my way by bringing in money to the Band, thus alleviating the guilt of asking for a paying job. Thus was taken the decision to be based at Jade Creek, for a combination of pragmatic and research-based reasons.

p.22; Cassidy, 1991, p.266; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996, 2[2], p.250).

My Previous Role

I had been a mental health counsellor for Jade Creek Band from 1993 to 1995. The Federal Government, through its Medical Services Branch, had contracted with a private agency in a city 350 kilometres north of the community (from which I lived a further 150 kilometres), to provide two days of counselling every other week to Jade Creek Band residents. Having a 'counsellor' coming in every other week for a mandated one day in each community, as per the government contract, had been ridiculously ineffective, given the lack of support services within the community and the distance for community members to access such services elsewhere, but they had not had control over their own health services. Nevertheless, during that time I had developed a counselling relationship particularly with women at Jade Creek and had obtained funding to spend an additional day there whenever I visited. The women had experienced a tremendous amount of trauma in their lives, from early childhood on, including through male sexual and physical violence. The second time round (September 1998 to February 2000), I hoped that participatory research could assist once again, perhaps in identifying ways of protecting women and children from violence. But I went in open-minded because I did not know what had changed since I had been there previously or what services had developed, and, in light of the research proposal, wanted to take the lead from community members on issues to pursue. Thus, although I went in with 'baggage' from the past, I did not consider that it would hamper the research process because there had been many positives and because my

new role, like the research, was completely open-ended. I had also been honest with all parties that I wanted to conduct research while also undertaking paid work.

Nevertheless, I did come into the community with an idealised version of PR/PAR in my head: that there would be a place for it and it would organically develop in response to expressed need while benefiting those who participated. My questions throughout the research increasingly became whether or not PR/PAR could happen at that point in time in that community *and*, not asked very often by participatory researchers, whether or not *I* was the right person to facilitate it.

Sources of Data

The research drew on my active participation in community life, on-going dialogue with Band staff and community members, unstructured interviews, and information-gathering in preparation for writing proposals. Throughout the life of the participatory research, there were: 13 formal childcare meetings with 'parents' (all mothers except that, at one meeting, one father came); childcare staff and Band office staff; 30 informal meetings with childcare staff and parents; 38 informal or *ad hoc* meetings with Band staff in relation to the childcare initiative and 15 women's sharing circles. Proposal-writing complemented PR/PAR as I gathered information through visiting community members, including elders, youth, men, treaty staff, children, mothers and

teachers; and through attending community functions such as justice workshops, treaty workshops, health and social development meetings, language classes, a staff retreat, funerals, Band meetings, training workshops, community dinners and celebrations. I did all this not only so as to get to know the community but in order to write proposals and therefore have a better understanding of relevant needs. There were also visits outside the community to treaty 'roundtables', the Tribal Council, funding seminars, a funding conference, and to another group setting up a similar pre-school programme. Ways of soliciting information also included sending out a questionnaire in relation to residential schooling, interviewing people about community mental health needs, and drawing on a previous youth questionnaire undertaken by the family support worker, Donna. All of the above was recorded by myself either during meetings or afterwards, usually the same evening.

Interviews

Ten in-depth and unstructured interviews of two to three hours each were carried out with the support of a tape recorder and were transcribed by myself as soon as possible afterwards. These included (all names have been changed):

- Donna (interviewed July 6, 1999): Crystal Creek resident although originally from Jade Creek area. Family Support Worker, a position

funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Child and Family Services to assist parents and children.

- Barbara (July 8, 1999): Jade Creek resident, a single mother and member of Spruce Society, a non-profit forest-conservation training and employment initiative in the Jade Creek community.
- Estelle (July 29, 1999): Jade Creek resident, a single mother, Band councillor with the education portfolio, hired as community researcher for the Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) programme and then as manager of the childcare/AHS.
- Trevor (September 15, 1999): Crystal Creek resident from another Tribe and Band who had married into the community and who was seriously working on his own personal growth.
- Brian (September 15, 1999): from Crystal Creek and hired as youthworker.
- Marianne (September 15, 1999): Band Manager, therefore supervises staff and daily running of Band office. Is married into another First Nations community and has lived 'off-reserve' for a number of years.
- Joan (September 29, 1999): an elder who lives with her husband at Jade Creek and who married into the Band.
- Mark (November 22, 1999): lives at Crystal Creek. Was Self-government Co-ordinator; birth family from Jade Creek area.

- Brett (December 29, 1999): non-Native and, at the time, employed as administrator for the Tribal Council based in the nearest town.
- Alice (January 24, 2000): lives at Jade Creek, works as a Community Health Representative (CHR) and has three young children.

A further four unstructured, unrecorded interviews of approximately an hour each in duration also occurred including:

- Lorraine (August 10, 1999): at Jade Creek, a single mother of four (two pre-schoolers) and employed as manager for the childcare/AHS.
- Joanne (September 28, 1999 and October 25, 1999): lives in the nearest town but is from Crystal Creek. Was Band alcohol and drug counsellor at the time and also had training in early childhood education.
- John (November 24, 1999): lives at Jade Creek. Works for Spruce Society and drives Jade Creek school bus. In the past he was an alcohol and drug counsellor and is very close to his traditions and the land.

These interviews were conducted after almost a year in the communities and primarily to supplement the participatory research element of my involvement. By then, we had been meeting to plan the childcare and pre-school projects (see Chapter Eight) for almost the whole of that time. The sharing circle had not yet begun. Unlike Maguire (1987) and Law (1997), the focus of interviews was not on whether people would join a group to do participatory research into a specific need. Instead, they resulted from engaging in

participatory methodology, working for and living in a community that, by then, had revealed obvious obstacles to engaging in PR/PAR. My approach to PR/PAR was that of Smith (1997): I depended on 'chance encounters' as a close approximation of people coming together because they wanted to. The interviews were intended to increase my understanding of people's priorities and preoccupations, community history and relations, and, after having made some pretty volatile mistakes myself, what people saw as the role of non-Native outsiders. On a personal level, in each intense one-to-one interview situation, there was an openness and honesty that often astounded me. Interviews were dialogic, as Maguire (1987) found in her interviews with women who had experienced violence:

The value of dialogue instead of a standard interview format became apparent. Through dialogue, women began, however tentatively, to examine and analyse issues they thought themselves unable to understand. (Maguire, 1987, p.147)

In some ways, it was also a venting session as Oakley (1990) found in unstructured interviewing with women.

I often asked about turning off the tape but no one minded it staying on. Even, later, when I asked Estelle whether she still felt okay about her July interview (about the relationship of Band staff with community members), she said she

did (January 6, 2000). This is a similar experience to Kaufmann (1997) who found that poor women in Brazil were not afraid of revealing their identity and personal aspects of their lives for foreign people to read about, whereas development bureaucrats based in London would not be interviewed unless they remained anonymous. She asks whether these two very different types of people, the professional development worker and the shanty-town woman, could ever hope to understand each other and to come together as 'equals' (ibid., p.112). I have used very little of the more intimate sharing either from the interview or the sharing circle, because that to me remains anonymously with them.

I did not get signed consent from those interviewed although that would have been easy to do (refer to Appendix). But signing something would probably have been seen as more of a threat than verbal agreements. I was clear about why I needed the interviews and also about their voluntary involvement. No one ever said they did not want to be interviewed. I also asked permission to use the voice recorder which was always granted. Interviews were all transcribed by myself and transcripts given to the interviewee for review and change. Trevor did clarify his responses in the margins. And so those interviewed could veto their involvement. Instead – they talked a very long time in my unstructured format. The only time 'veto' was implicitly implied was when Liz didn't come for a scheduled interview because she was busy doing childcare stuff.

Situating the research: analysis of data

This section analyses the research data into key themes that affected my ability to undertake participatory research. Data I have drawn on here include what people said through interviews and casual conversation, what I recorded in fieldnotes (I filled four, eight by ten, 240-page general notebooks and four single-subject notebooks) and my own reflections throughout. All this material was recorded, long hand, either at the time or later the same day, and later transcribed by myself. What was in the notebooks was divided under three main headings: 'Community Context', 'Proposal Writing', and 'Childcare and Aboriginal Head Start'. 'Community Context' presents aspects of life in the community, talks with elders, participation in community activities, everyday happenings, and crises and unusual events in the lives going on around me - all of which, from a participatory research point of view, support the outsider in getting to know the community and its main preoccupations. The 'Proposal-Writing' section recorded activities and interactions around writing proposals, which also added to my community knowledge, indicating people's preoccupations as well as the opportunities for, and obstacles to, engaging in participatory research. 'Childcare and Aboriginal Head Start (AHS)' presented the participatory research process that developed this particular programme. These topics all combined to provide a holistic picture of what occurred, culminating in the women's sharing circles that were set up to focus primarily on women's support needs (see Chapter Nine).

What follows gives some of the highlights of 165, single-spaced, 10-point font, word-processed pages emphasising the main themes affecting engagement in participatory research/participatory action research (PR/PAR): the predominance of a top-down and non-inclusive approach to community decision-making and planning, particularly in the 'DIA' effect (see below) and in treaty matters; the division between Jade Creek and Crystal Creek; the lack of community development work; the focus on healing and particularly on outside healing consultants; issues of racism; roles and expectations; and my own intrusion as an outsider who was not only white but who was in and out of the Band office and therefore administrative territory. These themes surfaced through daily interactions, learning the context by visiting community people including elders and participating in community life, through what was said in interviews, at meetings, in interactions with Band staff, through the writing of grant proposals in which I needed community member input in order to identify priorities, and throughout the process of dialogic engagement in participatory research. The names of the Band and of the two communities have been changed, as have the names of all involved. Besides those interviewed, listed above, the following people are also important to the presentation of findings and analysis:

- Liz: mother of seven (two pre-schoolers). Lives at Jade Creek.
- Elaine: mother of eight (three pre-schoolers). Lives at Jade.

- Paul: Elaine's partner. Lives at Jade.
- Doreen: young mother of three pre-schoolers. Lives at Jade.
- Carla: trained in early childhood education (ECE). Lives at Jade.
- Faith: from Crystal Creek and ECE trainee.
- Ann: drives school bus to high-school in nearest town. Lives at Jade.
- Rita: from Crystal. Band Social Development Co-ordinator.
- Laurie: lives in town. From Crystal. Band Health-Co-ordinator.
- Caroline: from Crystal. Band Education Co-ordinator.
- Jack: from Crystal. Band Housing Co-ordinator.
- Rachel: from Crystal. Band Financial Co-ordinator.
- Martha: an elder at Crystal Creek

The following sections reflect some of the key themes that emerged from my interviews and note-taking over the period of my stay and that underpinned my whole research project and the ability to do participatory research.

Participatory research did not only include the development of the childcare (Chapter Eight) and later the women's sharing circle (Chapter Nine), but also what was going on behind the scenes as well as the historical, geographical, economic and political context within which it took place.

Effects of 'DIA'

The paternalistic control of the Federal government through its Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) has meant that First Nations have not been in control of their own direction:

K: What is the DIA syndrome?

Mark: Paternalistic view that DIA has – taking care of us Indians – I think that kind of sums [up] some of the stuff that has to do with the way things are run.

K: What do you as a community want?

Mark: I guess, overall, we want to be self-sustaining – being able to make our own decisions as a community ... that we don't have to be bowing down for a few measly dollars. That's the tough part of being in this DIA system.

First Nations have not been permitted to do their own community planning:

From years of living in the DIA system – they solved the problems. Everybody accepted that kind of lifestyle where all they had to do was phone the Chief and Council who would phone DIA. If the answer was 'yes' they'd get back to the people and say 'yes', if the answer was 'no', they'd tell the people 'no'. If the people said 'why', all they would say was

'DIA said' and the people would say 'okay'. (interview with Alice)

Alice went on to say that the Band office no longer even bothered to answer to 'why' because they knew people would not persist with questions. Marianne, the Band manager, also said people expected from staff what they had always expected from DIA:

People think the Band should do something for them as if they owe them something. DIA made everyone dependent. Now they [community members] expect the Band staff to fulfil the same function. (8/16/1999).

Other Bands, though, functioned differently:

He tells me how he went to visit a friend's Band in Manitoba and how the youth themselves decided their own school policies, and how all the [Band] money was put into one pot and everyone decided how it would be spent. 'And everyone has a say' he says. 'Here, it's just all done for us. We have no say.' (5/31/1999).

An outcome, according to the Health Co-ordinator, Laurie, was that people did not have experience in planning their own direction:

Laurie saying 'planning' is not familiar to First Nations communities – because of having to respond to crises, to be in crisis mode, and because of having others do the planning for them ... gives examples of having no statistics as staff have never kept track of the number of issues, etc., that could help them now as they negotiate health transfer [from federal to Band jurisdiction]. It would help them in proposal-writing, having information all there in one file. (10/4/1999).

Treaty

British Columbia (BC) did not make treaties with the various Indian tribes when white settlers took their land from them. In other words, title in this province had never been surrendered.

Douglas' [Governor of Vancouver Island from 1851] policy in 1859 was to compensate the Indians for surrender of their land and to establish reserves in areas where the settlers were moving in. (SNTC, 1989, p.10).

But, then, the BC government decided it no longer had money to compensate for land and 'reserves were established without treaty to extinguish Indian land title' (ibid., p.10). Now, in the late 1990s and in the new millennium, treaties are finally being negotiated between the federal and provincial

governments and respective First Nations. This comes in the wake of legal challenges which have confirmed Aboriginal title to land (e.g. the *Delgamuukw v. The Queen* decision, December 11, 1997).

The case is a victory for Aboriginal people as it requires governments to recognize and respect Aboriginal title, Aboriginal law, and oral histories. (Pinder, 1998, p.1)

Yet Jade Creek community members were not showing much interest in the treaty process while I was there. (Interviews with Brian and Mark; notes on Marianne, 9/16/1999)

Like, nobody's really taking treaty that serious. Well, you go to a meeting, you know, it's only staff there and sometimes only treaty staff, you know, and sometimes they bring the elders. I guess the elders are being told but a lot of community members don't give two sticks in a haystack and, I don't know why, but it's pretty serious stuff.

(Interview with Brian)

Brett, former administrator of the Tribal Council, indicated that getting community members to participate in the treaty process was a problem for which treaty staff had not found the right techniques. Mainly, they had relied on public meetings and written documents when what people really needed

was face-to-face contact. At a staff workshop, Caroline (the Education Coordinator) said that some people were not comfortable with coming to an office and that they might not be able to understand or read written material due to literacy levels and jargon (2/8/1999). Brett also pointed out that people *will* participate if the issue is important to them. The treaty process is bureaucratically detailed:

People aren't interested in that stuff. So a lot of people basically get tired with the process and frustrated with it ... I think leadership has a responsibility to design a participatory process that can accommodate different people's interests and needs, and so on. And that means we have to communicate to a whole range of different levels. (Interview with Brett)

Brett also said that the best way to bring out the views of people who seldom get heard is through sitting down over coffee: 'communities are not homogeneous and we've got to find ways in all our processes to reflect that and be open to it'.

Brett's ideas ring true for participatory research in that people will participate differently and what they participate in has to be important to them (e.g. Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Altpeter et. al., 1999). It is also up to the researcher or community leader to go to them, on their terms. For women

with small children, for example, it was much easier for me to visit them – to help out somehow with washing dishes or holding a child and so on - than to expect them to come to see me at an office, unless they had childcare and wanted to. What Brett talked about was also an example of participation as a means to an end (Lane, 1995; Nelson and Wright, 1995), drawing people into an already agreed upon process. The end result had been decided, that of signing a treaty with two levels of government, and this might not be a good starting point for people who were not accustomed to being listened to. It was too big and too distant from their own lives.

Thus Mark, the self-government co-ordinator for Jade Creek Band, saw people's fear getting in the way of participation in the treaty process:

fear of change: 'Are we going to be able to handle it' is one of the questions that's asked quite often, and the other one 'Are we ready? Are we ready to be going on our own?'

A concern might be that life could get even worse unless there was more accountability at the community level (Cassidy, 1991; RCAP, 1996; Gray-Withers, 1997; also interviews with Donna and Brian).

I don't know about self-government. I was off reserve for 29 years. I know what it was like to have to pay for everything. Soon, there's

going to be no money, no DIA, and no more monies. There's the welfare system, but how many can *they* fund?... People who are not self-sufficient are going to have a really hard time, especially if there are no jobs, no Band office. (Interview with Donna)

Donna's fears were supported by other sources. Cassidy (1991) says that disparities will widen economically between Canadian and Aboriginal communities over the next decade and that those communities that have least land and resources will suffer most. A treaty meeting in June 1999 made it clear that forests in the area were depleted and that there might not be much left to support a forest industry by the time treaty was signed. Laurie, the Health Co-ordinator, said it was new for staff to be thinking ahead, as most decisions had been made for them by DIA or the Federal Medical Services Branch. Consequently, staff were not realising the implications of treaty or the need to get further training, especially at the university level, to prepare to take over community affairs (6/16/1999).

Differences between Jade Creek and Crystal Creek

The two communities, Jade Creek and Crystal Creek, are separated by a mountain and by about thirty kilometres of steep and often treacherous road. They often felt worlds apart in terms of their priorities. I asked Brett from the Tribal Council to explain some of the history:

They were separate communities - they were a separate Band initially... I haven't heard [about what] led to the amalgamation so I can only conclude from what some of the elders have said, basically, that DIA lumped them together without a whole lot of consultation or anything. Just decided, 'You guys are one Band because it's easier for us to work with' ... It's [Jade Creek] quite a viable community now - there's a school and community hall, and a gym and so on. But, even more than that, just the sense of community. [But over time] it has been, in a lot of ways, sort of the poorer cousin in the relationship.

That the original 'Band' was at Jade Creek and was more populous than the original Crystal Creek was confirmed by others in the community, as well as by the name 'Jade Creek Band'.

At first, just a few houses at Crystal Creek. Come to Jade for Christmas, more people this side than at Crystal Creek. Different areas - they were apart when they were put together... Doesn't feel like one community. (Interview with Joan)

A key issue consistently expressed by staff and community members about Jade Creek was that people there needed jobs:

K: What do you see as the main issues here at Jade Creek?

Donna: I worry about drugs and alcohol, no work, particularly for men, no support for people in creating their own jobs, only one Band office... [people at Jade Creek] feel lower than Crystal Creek; made to feel like they're nothing. (Interview with Donna)

Estelle alleged unfairness in the allocation of work between the two communities:

There are Crystal Creek members who are working year round in the forestry business but all we can give to the guys over at Jade Creek is a block [land designated for logging]... loggers in Crystal Creek are working year round... and it [forestry contracts] comes through at the Band office, I know it does. (Interview with Estelle)

Thus, Jade Creek was the poorer community. Joanne said more people at Jade were on social assistance which was 'depressing', especially when it meant an inability to 'do for your kids'. As a result, Elaine said Jade Creek men working on the construction of the new school would not accept the help of Crystal Creek workers because they needed the jobs themselves (09/22/1998). Joanne pointed out that people at Crystal Creek had cars and could take their children to town while Jade Creek had to fund-raise to provide trips for the children. She didn't think it was good to speak in terms of two

separate communities (Interview with Joanne, 9/25/1999; also interview with Brett). When John facilitated regular community meetings at Jade Creek, for some reason he was told by Band staff to stop (interview with Joan; notes: 9/28/1999; 12/15/1999):

John built a lot of people up – had a lot of things going. Somewhere along the way, someone from Crystal Creek knocked him down. John doesn't want to work any more for the Band [but] he was a voice. He is really strong. I wish he could come back. (Interview with Donna)

A positive feeling was communicated about these community meetings when they were happening. Ann saw them as 'building people up' but they submitted and stopped meeting when told to (12/15/1999). Similarly, Ken was angry that Jade Creek people did not trust themselves and speak up (05/4/1999). A silencing feature was the fear that people would be punished through their social assistance cheques or being denied work opportunities (notes: May to December, 1999; interview with Estelle). Alice said Jade Creek people tended to 'clam up' when there were staff present.

One of my tasks as proposal writer was to get employment training funds. A short course in forestry was organised in June 1999 that was attended by eighteen men from Jade and only one from Crystal, suggesting that the former needed it far more. This is in contrast to a familiar view that community

people would rather be on welfare than work (Interview with Alice). The facilitator would have been quite prepared to provide more, so that this group of men could become a unit [forest fire-fighting] crew available to the Ministry of Forests. But it seemed the need was first to get Band staff approval. In the process, Band staff took over the proposal and looked into setting up their own unit crew without Jade Creek involvement (notes: 12/18/1999). Lack of information-sharing, working in isolation, and the need of a few to control limited resources were all clearly evident in these events, a legacy of the effects of economic marginalisation and the divisive policies of federal government control (Foley and Flowers, 1992; Buckland, 1998).

I was telling Liz today.... It's like everybody's doing economic development in their own corner, no one's working together. Liz likened it to isolated cells that won't join into a whole. (07/8/1999).

The result was lack of collaboration. Joan saw the separation also perpetuated in a lack of communication and in related differences between the two communities:

Feel there's a closeness here [Jade Creek], as a community. When you go to Crystal Creek, try to get someone to stop to talk – they're always on the run. No time to communicate – not just talk, *communicate*. Try

to say something – the hell with it – not going to say something to people who are running another direction.

There were certain ‘over-the-mountain’ judgements of people at Jade Creek that weren’t entirely true (interview with Alice).

if they can’t curb their drug and alcohol addictions, then a job isn’t going to better them. It can make it worse. (Interview with Brian)

Differences in class, locations and priorities were also apparent in the respective school openings, one for the new school in Jade Creek and the other for a school extension in Crystal Creek:

Busy day at Jade – opening of the new school. Went to Liz’s in a.m.

Worried re: balloons had all fallen down in the gym – over to the gym for the rescue. Enjoyed being there, helping out... Opening went really well, lots of kids. Not a lot of control. (04/16/1999)

Went to Crystal Creek school opening – it was an eye-opener. It is a district school, while Jade Creek is Band-run. The district school board is all white. There were many accolades to the [white rancher] who donated the land. They own most of the land in the area anyway.

The white people of importance all sat at the front. The Indians all sat in the back. (05/14/1999)

The Band Office at Crystal was often seen as a little world unto itself, out of touch with community reality (interview with Estelle):

When you enter the Band office, just like you're wearing a costume that's scaring everybody. Like you have a contagious sickness. Staff don't want to stop to say anything. It's like they don't really know you. Feels like being a family member who's a black sheep – not really wanted. (Interview with Joan)

Joan wished staff would come over to Jade Creek more often for home-visits as it was harder for elders to get to the Band office at Crystal. Then staff would know their needs better:

Nobody can read minds over the mountain. Sure must be good if people can read minds over the mountain.

John from Jade Creek said he did not think the Crystal and Jade Creek communities would ever have the same vision. Crystal Creek had followed the DIA way whereas Jade had had to survive by its own wits.

The 'DIA way' meant that jobs didn't fit local reality:

I'm supposed to do a work-plan and... there's no guidance. When I started work, they said you have to do up a work-plan from now 'til March. 'Work-plan?' 'Yeah, you know, make this community healthy.' 'Oh, my god! I can do it.' [Laughter] I need a challenge and that's my challenge. (Interview with Alice).

Alice then talked about how she did it her own way: that first she had to ask people what they wanted, go door to door. Otherwise: 'And now I'm sitting in the sexual abuse workshop wondering why the hell nobody came?'

I could not fail to notice, either, that staff were often hired, not for their skills but for their family connections:

I told her I didn't think it was wise that A. be on the hiring committee because it being his sister and daughter. That ultimately he made the decision to hire his sister – even though his daughter had youthworker experience. But I did say it was a tough position to be in because it was their relatives and, when there are so few jobs, people want their relatives to benefit. (01/25/1999)

Another relevant point was that there was a long history between community members, good and bad, memories that would not go away. The level of subjective material going back and forth between community members was pretty high:

It's hard working with my mom. Like, all those years she wanted me to take care of her. She still does that in her job. (Interview with Alice)

Similarly, Donna, the Family Support Worker, got into a fight with a 17-year-old teenager who had insulted her mother. Donna was subsequently suspended, pending a child abuse investigation. Non-aboriginal standards were then used for a situation that was much more complex, given the history of social relations. A year later, Donna and this girl had 'crossed that bridge a long time ago, put it all behind us', as she knew they would (01/3/2000).

Frustrating was that there was no place to dialogue about what was really happening and certainly not on the community's terms (02/03/1999). Instead, the silencing discourse came down to people being 'professional' in their job, as a white funder and white court system would see it, ignoring all the historical, cultural, personal, family and community overlay on people's daily lives. This was clearly unrealistic:

Talk with Marianne... some other crisis that is now taking up time.

People who begin to take the lid off of sexual abuse – emotional pain –

yet need to be able to work as 'professionals'. Marianne expects that division in the workplace between emotions (lack of trust, feelings of betrayal, hate) and the perpetrator. In other words, if you're working with your offender [abuser] don't show it! I said 'this might be hard'.
(09/23/1999)

On the other hand I observed:

The one main family [in the Band office] treat each other very independently – 'professionally' – better than people who don't know each other. (12/8/1999)

I asked Donna how she thought things could work better between the two communities, given self-government directions:

Donna: Someone in that Band office who's a social worker, who is working for both Crystal Creek and Jade Creek and who can bring the communities together, build up the men's and women's self-esteem... We need to create jobs. We need to create a school system that can work. Like, the day-care is one thing – have that open, have all-day school for the moms and dads if they want it. Create jobs for them.

For my part, I preferred to be at Jade Creek and wished I had been based there:

I could easily live in Jade Creek. They want a counsellor present. I could easily provide that service. It would be convenient in that I could help with youth night, help with the childcare centre. In fact, in terms of community development, this is where it's 'naturally' happening. There are places and spaces to step into. (01/51999)

Estelle also wished that I had been based at Jade Creek (09/18/1998). And there were positive community-based initiatives happening at Jade Creek that were so tempting to plug into, as Barbara explained:

Good things happening at Jade Creek? Mainly Spruce Society, a non-profit organisation. Started three years ago... can get funding from different places for employment/trainings, in wildlife and log-house building, involvement in Parks [provincial] and wildlife conservation... Five from Jade are doing Parks training, won't have to live off welfare... I think, with Spruce Society, we're starting to stand on our own two feet.

There had been some animosity from Crystal Creek but the Chief had supported them.

Yeah, I think it's just they probably feel that we're trying to take over. It does seem like we are to some people, but it's not what we're trying to do. We're standing up for what we believe in. And, in this community, and in other communities and out of town, when people stand up for what they believe in, the other people don't like it. They see it as a threat. (Interview with Barbara)

Lack of Community Development

Marianne, the Band Manager, consistently brought up the theme of communication between staff, Chief and Council, and community members in our numerous discussions (interview and notes: 11/1998 to 12/1999).

Today I had an intensive talk with Marianne: her feelings of being overwhelmed by how staff treat each other, feeling like 'packing it in'. Therefore, the need to build communication between staff. Noted she said that being in the office was not the same as being out in the community – the need to be 'out there'. Wants staff/Chief and Council retreat – need to build a 'team' approach, then go out into the community. (01/25/1999)

Marianne saw a need for community development:

Beginning of talking to Marianne about community development, need for ideas to come from the community. She agreed. She said there needed to be a way for people to voice concerns to Chief and Council who shouldn't get upset with people's complaints but engage them somehow... need to bring people together for 'community-building' (a PR/PAR opportunity?) (11/15/1998).

This linked with the division between the communities and the position of Jade Creek:

And, after much discussion, Marianne was telling me that we need more talking – YES! I was so discouraged by Xmas because it felt like there were so few doors open through which to encourage dialogue/communication for people like me to hear what people are saying, to understand the context. And I said to Marianne that, after listening to Jade Creek people this week, there is a pattern of giving up because they haven't been heard. She agreed. (01/9/1999)

Marianne also identified the need for communication in relation to the treaty process:

Marianne's issues with treaty: not feeling it's a community-driven process, not going out to the community, people not interested because don't know what's happening... she said the Chief and treaty staff are away from the community too much. (01/25/1999)

There had been a previous initiative in 1994, with the assistance of an outside consultant, through which community members, including staff, had come up with a 'community plan' identifying issues that needed to be tackled and an action plan of when and how to do it. Nothing had come of this Jade/Crystal

Creek community plan. Trevor, from Crystal Creek, saw the reason as needing to 'put someone in place who can empower people' (10/13/ 1998). A first 'community development' meeting under Marianne's aegis was held at Jade Creek on September 9, 1999. Before the meeting, I had talked to some of the women connected with the childcare initiative (see Chapter Eight). Clearly, there was a hope that this 'community development' meeting would open some doors to communication.

Lorraine pointed out issues with adult education that she wants raised at the meeting tonight. Have a feeling this meeting could be long. Lots of issues people want to talk about. Clearly, the main ones are information-sharing, communication, and community support for what they are doing for this day-care. Also, listening to community members, the desire there is for an adequate adult education program. Everyone has good ideas and this is frustrating. No one's listening – seems like a big wall between here and the Band office. (09/9/1999)

In the event, only four people came from Crystal Creek to the community development meeting and they were all staff members. All six from Jade Creek were women. It took some time to get into more substantial issues:

Laurie and Marianne bring up the 'community plan' they did with a consultant in 1994. They talk about having to work harder in order to

make the community plan happen; take each task one at a time – soon they'll get it all done... As talk is focusing on this 'community plan', which no one has questioned the relevance of and is mostly seen as a 'downer' as nothing was done about it, I pipe up about people trusting in their own knowledge about their own community, their own skills and talents. I'm looking for something authentic here, something that comes from them. Talk focuses around the need for fences, fence posts [the first item in the 'community plan'], who does what, who buys materials, who puts them up... Marianne suggests staff take some time, one/two days to help make fences... Lorraine was great. She did put the day-care front and centre, thus getting staff to see the concerns, the need for financial help, getting started, the adult education need. (09/9/1999)

Even so, the meeting was not going very deeply below the surface into some of the more substantial concerns of community members.

Healing and the Aboriginal Head Start Programme

Two major Federal government funding packages were announced while I was with the Band, one for the Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve pre-school initiative (AHS) and the other under the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), directed at healing the effects of enforced residential schooling:

We need to work together on a healing strategy to assist individuals and communities in dealing with the consequences of this sad era of our history (Minister of Indian and Northern Development, Canada, 1997).

In order to put the residential school proposal together, Joanne assisted by arranging two successful meetings at Crystal Creek. There was also a meeting at Jade Creek and a number of discussions with individuals, as well as a questionnaire I sent round. People seemed willing to talk if given the right space to do so. Chrisjohn and Young (1993) say that First Nations community members should learn to do their own research and to research the particular issue of residential schooling in their own way, knowing they will know how to. This also came through in one of the discussions at Crystal Creek. People should be trained to listen, and to support others in their pain, in order to research where to begin (03/26/1999). In fact, people said the effects of residential schooling should not be tackled lightly; also, that sexual offending, predominantly linked with residential schooling, needed to be dealt with by the community so that offenders faced the impact of their actions and were made subject to community-imposed consequences. The legal system, they reported, did not work because of its adversarial approach and its inability to stop offending behaviour (02/26/1999).

Self-esteem and self-confidence, loving one's self and over-coming shame; being able to believe in one's own ability and no longer being dictated to (as a result of residential schooling and DIA control); feeling secure within family relationships; building as a community; educating children and young people about sexual abuse; training local people to do counselling; having First Nations counsellors from outside; reclaiming culture and language; overcoming alcohol/drug abuse; overcoming the effects of abandonment and loss etc. – these were all identified as issues resulting from residential schooling.
(11/19/1999; 01/4/1999; 02/26/1999)

In six responses to the anonymous questionnaire, people spoke about their own pain and the impact on the community:

I learned [from residential schooling] to hate just about everything around me, including myself.

Some people won't, can't talk about sexual abuse.

Made Native people ashamed: their culture, colour, spiritual beliefs.

There is no community spirit to help each other.

Away from my mom. Not learning my culture. No family.

Band members wanted to see healing circles, support groups and a reclamation of traditional ways of doing things (12/1998 to 09/1999) and for trained people within the community to carry them out:

Upgrading my education level with the hope we will get more better jobs here. We can use our people instead of hiring outsiders to do it for us. Training for the positions needed. (Residential school questionnaire respondent, December 1998)

Joanne, as Alcohol and Drug Counsellor, identified the need for a number of relevant services, including psychological assessments.

Racism

Racism was taken for granted by people at Jade and Crystal Creek in their dealings with white people in nearby towns. Everyone handled racism differently. Some, including youth, refused to let it bother them (01/27/1999; 09/9/1999; 10/4/1999). For others, it kept them from participating outside the community (11/19/1998; 09/9/1999). Brian said it was a 'cop-out' if it was used as an excuse but Brett thought that teachers' low expectations of Native students was racist:

Well, you know, this is the best you can do... To me, that's racism.

Racist assumptions affected women as mothers in particularly hurtful ways.

When Estelle's son jammed his jaw on a bicycle handle-bar, the doctor made the point of announcing in front of a waiting-room of non-Native people 'Who's the mother of the boy who got punched in the jaw?' The implication was that she had done it (05/28/1999). Older women also suffered. Martha, an elder, told me she had broken three ribs in a car accident:

She went to the doctor and he told her she had gallstones. She said 'No, I had an accident'. He said she had gallstones. She told him to go to hell. Then he started prodding her – and it hurt – and so she told him to get the hell away... She and her sister had to walk up to the hospital. The nurse there saw her pain and got her in right away.

(11/23/1999)

'Racism' included: being treated with impatience by bank tellers or watched in stores (11/25/1999; 01/3/2000), 'the changed facial expression when a car salesman looks from me to Ann' (03/15/1999), and an elder with her husband who was stopped by an RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer) because he thought she was drunk as she was driving too slow (10/11/1998). It was being made to say you were 'Chinese' rather than Native or not being

believed when you said you weren't Italian (11/19/1998; 10/4/1999). In Canada, when we take off the 'tinted glasses', we can't deny our racism (Bishop, 1994, p.39).

High school kids attending the school in the nearest white town often kept to themselves, not participating in after school sports with other kids (interview: Brian; notes: 09/9/1999). Lithman (1983) speaks, also, to this separation:

From an analysis of interviews and casual statements, one finds that white students' ideas concerning Indian students are rooted in the conviction that Indian students are somehow 'different'... They like to live on reserve and they are well looked after by Indian Affairs.

'We're not prejudiced, but people are different, and what's wrong with that?' (Lithman, 1983, p.73)

Lithman goes on to say that Indian and white students seldom interact outside the classroom other than in sports where it is Indian versus white and names are called back and forth. Brian confirmed that, even though his sons had been involved in hockey in town for almost six years:

There's a lot of parents there won't even look you in the eye. They'll talk to you if they want your money [but] you meet them on the street

and they won't even look at you, you know, it's quite a thing. It doesn't even bother me. That's your problem, not mine.

Brian was convinced that, through sports, Indian young people could build self-confidence and excel, and show white people they were just as good if not better (October 4, 1999). This message came through, too from Rachel who was a member of the women's floor-hockey team at Crystal Creek. She said racist remarks spurred them on to sticking together as a team, and to winning. She experienced where she went to high school as a 'really racist town.' In fact, out of fifty Aboriginal students who started with her, they were down to ten when she graduated. She attributed her own ability to 'take it' to having positive self-esteem. White students thought all Indians lived on the same reserve and all Indians were on social assistance. When she bought herself lunch one day someone asked her if she could afford it on social assistance. She did not even know what SA [social assistance] was (11/19/1998). Thus, racism was part of the fabric of everyday life, and part of the historical and cultural context. There were ways to ignore or overcome it on a daily basis but it was insidious, with the power to be not only hurtful but positively damaging. It denied people adequate educational, health and life opportunities.

Roles and Expectations

A real problem in this research, as often in participatory research (e.g. Smith, 1997), was where I belonged and what I was in the community:

So Marianne mentioned that I might be needed to do some counselling... It is the lack of clear guidelines that I find hard – expectations... Do they realise, as I have told them, that some of these proposals are going to take extra work to organise and build on?

(12/3/1998)

I was putting a lot of work into proposals but finding that staff, and Chief and Council, were not interested in what they were about and mostly not around to develop them (09/1998 to 11/1999).

I said the hardest thing is because staff are always going. This was in response to her [Marianne] saying she feels overwhelmed – more crisis management – not enough time to do her work. I said there's no time to process [discuss] things, although staff might, but I pointed at the mental health work – that it would be good to go through it, understand it together. (10/21/1999)

Yet staff, Chief and Council had so much on their plates and the information overload, meetings, and increased responsibilities for limited staff were insurmountable. Driben and Trudeau (1983) refer to these unrealistic expectations and the lack of staff to carry them out as having already existed pre-DIA devolution to local communities:

Because of the competition for programs, Fort Hope administrators must spend a great deal of time away from home. They must also be able to deal with political pressure... 'In the end I was working twelve hour days just to keep up, and that was every day of the week'. (Driben and Trudeau, 1983, p.43)

Part of the pressure was being caught between the demands of government departments and community members. There was no time for reflection - to see what was happening or where it was leading. Estelle, as Band Counsellor from Jade Creek and later manager of the childcare programme, offered this analysis of the devolution of government administrative control of most services and of treaty-talks intended to lead towards self-government:

I think in order for any of it – health transfer... treaty, self-government, any of that – the community has to be involved and, right now, it's doing the surface stuff. We're not even getting into digging down into the middle of who the community really is. So we're building this big surface area – everywhere. In treaty – we have all these maps, and maps, and stories... The treaty will be a big book, signed at the end, not even bringing in the trail it's left behind of people that built the treaty. My grandfather, people that passed away.

There was little time for the process of change because the federal government 'throws' a programme at you and 'tells you to run with it' (Estelle: 05/13/1999). This also reflects Gray-Withers' (1997) suggestion that the Federal government is anxious to wash its fiscal hands of First Nations' responsibility, despite the economic and infrastructural deficits of many communities.

It seemed a waste of my time not to be writing relevant proposals:

Band staff tend to unilaterally decide things – no information-sharing on what it is they are deciding or how it fits in. I guess the problem is that it all becomes overwhelming. Everyone's doing things on their own, in pockets of control, and there's such a need to keep it covered – not to share, or even include someone in the discussion. But I guess, for me, it's the same old feeling – I have to put a proposal together but it's almost irrelevant. Yet, without this proposal, they don't get funding. So, if you don't tell me what's going on and what you've decided the priorities are, then staff are going one way and me and parents [of children in the Head Start programme] are going another.

(08/12/1999)

Proposals were a chore that had to be gone through: a fact of life for First Nations whose DIA budgets only ever covered minimal staffing and services,

and certainly not long-term preventive programming (Driben and Trudeau, 1983; Gray-Withers, 1997; McKenzie, 1997). Mark mentioned as much, saying self-sufficiency was getting away from always having to beg for money. I had hoped proposals would actively involve relevant local people in planning projects from the beginning, because this would encourage participation and build 'capacity' (Eade, 1997; Sadan and Churchman, 1997). Without staff support, however, such an assumption risked looking like my wanting to control projects. In reality, proposals were mainly about creating short-term employment (Driben and Trudeau, 1983).

'Counselling' could have become a problem area after their regular counsellor left as Marianne asked me to fill in. I was worried about taking on too much (11/26/1998) although people were not necessarily comfortable accessing 'counselling.' (09/23/1999). As John and Joanne both found as successive alcohol and drug counsellors, trust is an issue and it was less threatening to spontaneously meet up with people in their daily activities than expect them to come to an office (respective interviews).

In most cases and predominantly with other women, I simply provided emotional support and was there as another woman and as someone from outside the community. Often, talking about things was enough:

My guess is there's so much more. My guess is his unfaithfulness, more than anything. Yet, after she talks, she will go back. I can hear the relief in her voice. She will not leave. (10/25/1999)

Now, I respect her talking to me as a way to get through the pain... that it's okay for her to be vulnerable with me. That is a great respect for me and I must leave it at that. (01/4/2000)

Liz said she was confused about my role and whether or not I was a counsellor or a part of Band staff – the former possibly eliciting more trust than the latter (where I might be reporting back to the Band office) (12/8/1999). A 'researcher' or 'academic' was not familiar and I was trying to bridge the divides between past and present identities. A further role problem developed when I confronted Lorraine about her drinking and was automatically cast as a snooping social worker (07/22/1999) (see Chapter Eight, section headed 'Too easy to drink here'. I did not want to be perceived in that way, nor did I want to take on that role, given the implications around trust. Yet we talked honestly with each other and she confronted me quite easily after that, as well as talking about some of the issues in her life (see following section).

Outsiders

First Nations are mainly suspicious of white people: their motives and what they might be gaining financially and knowledge-wise by being there

(interview with John; also Lithman, 1983; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999; Weaver, 2000). Rita and Marianne spoke of outsiders coming in to learn the language and culture, and then claiming it as their own knowledge when they went to write about it (05/3/1999). Another issue for them was that white people never did anything; they came in and talked lots but left nothing behind:

And I keep hearing: 'Oh, they had great plans, those white people that were in here consulting for us. What the hell good did it do us?'

(Interview with Marianne)

Proposal-writing put me at the Band office and made me party to community affairs I would otherwise not have been involved in as an outsider. Both Weaver (2000) and Lithman (1983) speak of the need to maintain a distance and not get caught up in Band politics. Consequently, my relationship with staff and the subsequent power dynamics were significant. Mark reiterated this: that outsiders were not part of decision-making in the community and that they had to have patience:

to get some work done in this community, they're just going to realise that it's going to take a little longer than they expect... there's some that are willing to help and then there's a lot who don't want to help.

Women of one family occupied the key positions of social development, health and education. I was an outsider and female and was not necessarily wanted at the Band office (12/8/1999). It didn't help that I started out entirely wrong when, after a couple of months in the community and during a conversation with the Band manager, Marianne, I asked about this family monopoly. She pointed out that they were her mother-in-law and nieces. 'I asked for it!' (11/26/1998). This was in response to, the day before, talking about the level of poverty and unemployment at Jade Creek. Such comments inevitably got back to Rita and her daughters, Joy, Caroline and Laurie:

Rita said she did not think I needed to be there [at a health transfer meeting]. Joy [Rita's daughter] was there. Her coldness seemed to say and 'we don't want you here'. (12/9/1999)

My relationship with 'the family' never seemed to get any better, with some pretty uncomfortable non-verbal and verbal messages, for example:

Helped with school cleaning. Really enjoyed 'doing' with other women, other than Caroline who must give me a bad look, like 'What are you doing here?' (04/14/1999)

Joy did go from pleasant to scowling. Do I bring this on? (01/4/2000)

When I say 'Happy New Year' to Laurie, she is most unfriendly as usual. Was not happy to see me. Maybe I was supposed to be moved out. She asked me: 'So, what are your plans? I was told you were leaving in January'. (01/4/2000)

This family had had its own share of hardship:

Rita spoke of issues with her own family. She presents a tough moral exterior... There is an 'uprightness' and deep sense of 'family', despite husband's drinking, sons' drinking, daughters' painful relationships... She acknowledged others' jealousy of their family. Feels others resent them because of their ability to move forward. 'If you do do well, others turn against you because they don't want you to'. (09/23/1998)

I was often reminded that I was an outsider:

Certainly it was an occasion to pull me down a few pegs – Marianne saying in front of Rita that I had not wanted to come [to a staff retreat] as I did not think I'd learn anything. Marianne saying at the end that Karen needs help with proposal-writing because she knows nothing about our people. (02/ 26/ 1999)

I saw myself as the problem: as intruding, as coming across wrong, as not listening:

Then talk to Laurie... I want to know if I can be of help with health research. But I think she wants to do it herself. All the info. she needs to get, the info. staff need to gather. Where to start? So much to do. I offer help – she becomes defensive. Maybe I don't explain it right... that I just want to learn *with* them. Discussion with Laurie never goes right. (04/30/1999)

The theme for me this entire week – step back and listen. ... When I talk too much, I'm like every other 'knowing' white person. This I could see in Rita's eyes when we were talking about the residential school proposal. (01/9/1999)

I also had my own perceptions, from a white middle-class and social work perspective. For example, issues around confidentiality bothered me. Yet, in small communities where everyone knows each other's business anyway, and in different cultural contexts, this Western, urban-based, social work concept is bound to be approached differently (Collier, 1993; Silavwe, 1995; Bar-On, 1999).

Confidentiality - as everyone is told [at a social development meeting] about someone [a named person] wanting to go to A& D [alcohol and drug] treatment. I don't want to hear. (12/8/1999)

I am angry that that worker told someone who is not associated with child protection but who's full of judgement against Jade Creek families. (12/14/1999)

I also came from a certain bias in terms of protecting victims of sexual abuse, which was challenged by the community's desire for community sentencing:

So I commented [at a Justice Committee meeting] on risks of bringing victim and offender together, when Marianne, Band manager, added that this was the traditional way and forced the offender to admit to consequences of his actions in front of the community. This scary, and I (squirming in my seat), having tried to make the point of revictimising the victim (which the legal system is already good at) realised this was far from being understood. What was being stressed was the offender's position: that incarceration doesn't work, that community consequences are relevant. (10/3/1998)

Similarly, my own view on alcohol and drugs, and my 'expert' way of getting it across, silenced those around me:

They were talking about drinking - not allowed to have a private life [as staff], always being a 'role model'. I said I think people are entitled to a private life and all things in moderation; the need to be honest with one's self if they have a problem, break out of denial, but one drink is not being drunk. There was silence. No one talked afterwards. I should have shut up! (02/22/1999)

Over time, I began to clue in – but there were some other intersubjective dynamics going on also:

I am now listening. I must listen. I must shut up. I see how hard it is as she [Marianne] draws me into things I know about, or think I do: interpersonal conflicts, pain, etc. I need to stop giving comment, I think, as it is said for a reason – her reasons – not for me to respond to. Is there a response? (09/17/1999)

I may also have been perceived as stirring Jade Creek people up against Crystal Creek, although I had been quite open with Marianne about wanting to do participatory research with the women at Jade. Alice, though, told me at a sharing circle (see Chapter 9):

‘What it is is that you’re helping Jade, and Crystal Creek people don’t want you helping us’. She said staff has always told them what to do. ‘You’re here making us feel like we have power – they’re afraid’. I say: ‘Well, that’s the DIA way’. She [Alice] says: ‘That’s the only way they know how to do things’. (12/8/1999)

A problem with voicing my own frustrations at a sharing circle was that it probably would not have been considered confidential. Staff would hear about it, especially as Alice was Marianne’s niece. Also Joanne warned that, no matter how intimate the sharing circle, someone was bound to talk (10/25/1999). Donna similarly said that she watched what she said in the Band office, knowing it became table talk in ‘a particular family’s kitchen’ (10/20/1999).

I wondered whether staying in the community was a good idea and whether people trusted me less because of it (10/23/1999). I felt I was seeing too much close up – as if I was in the living-room when I should have stayed on the front steps – and that I was over-reacting:

And so I have to distance myself. I jumped in with both feet, now I have to take one out. I am too personally involved – I’m taking too much personally. I’m constantly being pulled down... I must not respond. I must keep a distance. (12/10/1998)

I could not figure out how much was white-Indian power dynamics:

Rita noted [at a staff meeting] that the old relationship between Indians and whites in the area was changing. Talking about a recently published memoir of a former white resident, she says it used to be Indians would go to whites for help. Now they no longer need to. Laurie says afterwards: 'We don't want some white person coming and telling us what to do'. (05/31/1999)

There was also the female-female interaction, as it played out within the cultural context:

Estelle talked about being a 'bully' – how terribly she treated a girl while at residential school, a girl she now calls her 'best friend'. She says she was a 'bully' in order to survive. 'We all were.' (10/8/1999)

Estelle: I know none of the women over at Crystal Creek would vote for me now, today; wouldn't want me in the position today. Because I can't even go over there and have a conversation with them, where, like a month ago, I did, because I had a husband. It's not the same with Caroline. It's not the same with Rachel. Because now, today, I don't have a husband.

K: A husband who beat you up...

Estelle: But I had someone to keep an eye on me. Now I don't,
so... [tears] (07/29/1999)

I wondered what white outsiders should do; what is their role? John said that directions could only come from the community: 'We've got to do it ourselves'. Should we even be involved? Spruce Society does have someone at the Tribal Council office writing proposals for them. People talked about wanting outsiders to give direction. Donna liked 'Bill' because of his direct approach to women's empowerment and telling women to 'do something' (07/6/1999). Laurie wanted the recently hired white male social policy consultant to be more directive as they planned for health services' transfer (12/17/1999). Barbara spoke in her interview of a white woman, who worked as Band Manager, whom she really liked because she encouraged people at Jade Creek to form the Spruce Society. She was good because she treated people equally. Mark said white people needed to know their place and become sensitive to the effects of personal and collective oppression.

The tendency to prefer outside 'experts' over the skills and knowledge present in the community was frustrating:

And she [Estelle] says, 'You know, this stuff that [the Mexican-American psychologist] had in his workshop, I could have taught the

exact same stuff. But who would have showed up? Do you have to pay me \$5000 for people to come and listen?' (Interview with Marianne)

Similarly:

Estelle's comment yesterday when I asked her how their learning on crisis intervention can be utilised. She said, if she was a whole lot paler and from outside the community, then maybe she'd be worth hiring for crisis intervention. (04/21/1999)

Marianne saw it as important to start utilising all the training staff had had:

we've been workshopped to death, we've been conferenced to death -- if we haven't learnt! Some of our staff have been in their jobs for nine years or more. If they haven't learnt in nine years some good training techniques or some good teaching techniques from all the workshops they've gone to, then, sorry, you must not be in the position you're suited for... Like, I bet I can tell you that, in the last fiscal year, I bet we've spent close to \$30,000, if not more, for running off to workshops, to conferences, to this or that or whatever. What do we get out of it?

Nor was I 'needed' to write proposals, although money is always required. It had actually been the Chief, before Marianne came on the scene, who had decided that I could help out in this way. But it was not until the end of my time in the community that I was told by Marianne that it was the Band Manager's job:

I said I had felt right from the beginning there really was no need for me. Not in the sense of 'Yes we need you, help us' but in the sense of me joining with them on something and being an asset, somehow. She [Marianne] said it had always been part of the administrator's role to write proposals... So it had been a surprise to her to find that someone had been hired to do proposal-writing, although she did say she thought I had done a good job at bringing more money into the Band. (And she wrote proposals too. I wish I had said 'It didn't have to be "my" job.') (01/4/2000)

I did do some research, as requested, on what people in the community identified as mental health issues and these were utilised as statistics (by the consultant) in support of their health transfer needs.

I clearly though unconsciously overstepped boundaries when I wrote a letter to Marianne based on our numerous conversations about staff communication.

My sense is, the only action I can help with for the community - and this is in response to her [Marianne] saying outsiders don't do anything, they leave having done nothing – is to get dialogue going, to get some talking happening. (08/20/1999)

I should teach some 'PR principles and techniques', start being concrete with what I've learned. Begin with a focus 'on the process of creating dialogue': listening to what each other is saying, identifying primary community development concerns, identifying barriers, working towards overcoming these. (07/28/1999)

But the letter I sent to Marianne with this plan in mind did not come across this way. In fact, the wording made it sound superior, judgmental and arrogant. I wrote it after a few days of honest dialogue with Marianne around issues of control – who controlled the childcare, how could mothers control it, how could the Band support them (08/16-20/1999)? Possibly, I thought, an outsider facilitating some kind of dialogue might open some lines of communication. I cannot believe the opportunity that was missed simply as a result of the wording that I used. It seemed to reflect everything I did not want to be as a white person. The only way I can explain it is that the tone followed on from the bluntness with which Marianne and I had been talking immediately before. In feeding back to her in writing some of the issues we had raised, it looked as if I was making staff appear completely ineffective and

dishonest. I felt sick inside when all the implications hit home. It was like shooting myself in the foot. I waited for a reply and began to feel anxious about why I was not getting one. I began to do some damage limitation with key people:

I ask her [Marianne] about the letter. I explain: I don't want to do what it says [as in 'work with staff'], that I don't see it as my place. She seems surprised: 'You mean you don't want to facilitate something'. I said I would if my involvement was really wanted. I don't want to intrude where I'm not wanted... We get into a two-hour discussion... She talks about wanting to quit... the frustration level can get so high: 'You don't feel like you're doing anything'. (08/31/1999)

I said I did not want to overstep boundaries, to interfere with what staff were already doing. She [Estelle] said she would like to do more – sees a lot that can be done – but doesn't think they'd listen to her... I said I remembered her words: 'If you're not the right colour'. She laughed. Point is, *she sees herself as helping her own people*, not a white person helping. Many people see themselves as capable – more capable than I am. I can't seem to offer anything tangible other than proposal-writing, but even that can be done by others. (09/3/1999)

I was searching for a door opening where people could begin to dialogue. It was obvious to me that, any time I got together with others in a group, people wanted to talk and they felt safe being able to. 'People need to talk and only through talking do issues begin to come clear or links begin to be made' (01/4/1999). I realised I was definitely outcast at the September community development meeting, yet, in the end, some good came of it:

Finally, noting the coldness - even Donna did not want to talk to me - and, putting two and two together, I say I am sorry for the letter I wrote. It would have been good to have been able to discuss it with Marianne before others saw it, I said, but it had made the rounds and I was sorry for interfering. It wasn't my place as an outsider. I thought it was important that I apologise (even though that was a painful thing to do).

Marianne then talked about how, yes, there'd been an angry reaction, and that (in an authoritarian voice) I would be hearing from Chief and Council, but she felt it was good in that it had forced things. It made people react. And she'd also been frustrated and often wondered what she was doing there - (voice breaking). She wanted to help her community but didn't know if it was worth it...

Brian as youth co-ordinator, wondered how to involve men as parents in the youth programme. Lorraine says men are really hurting, they've had their self-esteem pushed down a lot. There's no jobs at Jade, for one thing. Alice agrees that men 'have lost their spirit'. Liz brings up the ... training that the Jade Creek men all came out for – that the desire is there to work. What the women were saying to Brian was that their men couldn't take care of their kids because they didn't feel good about themselves, and they needed jobs in order to feel that. Jade Creek women talked about the discrimination their children experienced at the high school they attend in the nearest white town. Laurie and Brian [from Crystal Creek] both say you can't accept racism – can't let it hurt you. Brian thinks building confidence through sports [would help]. Getting someone good enough to get a scholarship, to beat the whites at their own game. Laurie talks about having to overcome her own 'addictions', being 'down there' too - having low self-esteem... Brian does say, in regards to racism, 'It's not our problem'. I say 'No, it isn't – it's a white problem. It's *our* problem'. Alice pats me on the shoulder. (09/9/1999)

My apology for the letter I had written seemingly opened the door for a more intense and subjective dialogue in what had been a very boring and orchestrated community development meeting. Elaine heard that the meeting had been good and wished she had been there. I asked her if she thought such

meetings were a good idea. She said, 'Yes. It's what we used to have, our own community meetings'. She felt they should continue (09/ 28/1999).

Conclusion

Clearly evident in the above account are communication issues. This must also be situated in a worldview where listening and observing are valued (McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; interviews: Trevor; Joanne; John). On the other hand, other community members, especially those at Jade, were also frustrated due to not being able to get answers from the Band office and to their desire for community meetings. There is also the divisive effects of a previous 130 years of pervasive and invasive Indian Affairs control (RCAP, 1996 1(8)); of limited economic development; and, since the 1970s, the strategic positioning in relation to the regional Department of Indian Affairs (interview with Brett; notes: 12/18/1999) of the Band office at Crystal Creek through which Crystal Creek community members were in a better position to benefit from subsequent (though limited) employment and training opportunities (also Fiske, 1995). Also evident is my position as an outsider especially in terms of being employed out of the Band office to write proposals. There was a profound intersubjective dynamics going on between this particular family of female staff and myself that only seemed to get worse. I had to learn how to say things so that I did not meet with defensiveness. A facial expression, coming across as an academic, interrupting or interpreting, could easily end a conversation, especially with women on staff. This affected

the ability to engage in participatory research with women at Jade with whom I had a different, less anxious relationship. This is described more fully in the next chapter which tells the story of developing the childcare/AHS programme.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE CHILDCARE PROJECT

This is the story of how the childcare developed and how Jade Creek women participated (see diagram at end of chapter illustrating the research process). Smith (1997) speaks of the ambivalence, ambiguity and confusion that are more often present in participatory research engagement than clear direction and smooth process. It was the first time we did something like this together which in itself, was exciting and unique. Data, arranged into similar themes, comes from fieldnotes, interviews and active participation. These themes developed through my own reflections as the process of participatory research emerged. They had less to do with chronological events than with what happened, how and why, i.e. they relate to process as much as content.

The childcare need

On September 22nd, less than a week after my arrival, the Community Health Committee (including Laurie, Rita, Joy, Estelle and Joanne) talked of the need for a childcare centre. Concerns were raised by Jade Creek mothers with young children about the lack of appropriate childcare so that they could take jobs or attend meetings outside the community. Apparently, there was funding through the British Columbia Aboriginal Childcare Society (BCACCS), so I called them during the meeting to see what was available. As it happened, they had funds they needed to use up by December to cover

renovation costs, training and equipment needs. We had until September 30th to get in a proposal. The rest of the meeting was spent tossing around ideas for a day-care centre and a possible location. Also, there were already two trained early childhood educators (ECE) in the community, which was a real plus. I was not sure at that point whether or not this would develop into participatory research. The BCACCS wanted a parent advisory committee to oversee the project, but we could not plan a meeting before the deadline. I had no idea what was entailed and mainly relied on the Alcohol and Drug Counsellor, who was also a trained early childhood educator (ECE).

Did get proposal off. Put it together with Joanne's help. She advised indoor activities/learning needs. No excuses: getting the proposal in is simply to get the money and, having primarily talked to the funding body (BCACCS), I've tried to fashion it to *their* requirements, especially the budget so that it looks like we know what we are talking about. But, I do not know whether Jade Creek *wants* a 'parent advisory Council'. I do not know if parents, mostly mothers, will want to or have time to be involved. (October 3, 1998)

The need of mothers themselves quickly became more apparent:

Visit with Elaine who looked tired – in need of support and probably adult company. She does a lot of childcare right now, for free... Then

Liz, also struggling (two sick babies), told me she's honestly thinking of quitting [as community health representative (CHR)] as she honestly feels she needs to be home with her younger kids. She's feeling the pressure on all sides – to do a good job, be there for her kids - and no spousal support.

As both Elaine and Liz agreed, meetings at [the Tribal Council in the nearest town about 100 kilometres away] or at the Band office [over the mountain about 30-45 minutes away] don't take into account distances that need to be travelled or childcare arrangements that need to be made in order to make an early meeting. Mothers' realities aren't taken into account. (10/3/1998)

As Liz remarked afterwards, not having a car, no longer working at the Band office, not having a 'phone – you soon realise how cut off you are. You really need someone else to come by, drop in, to reach out. And, with small children, you are really tied down. (11/27/1998)

'Childcare' and 'pre-school' were seen at a staff retreat as important social development directions, as were the support of parents with children and workshops on family violence, along with accessibility to adult education, university and early childhood training courses (02/26/1999). This was all relevant to my research aspirations to work with women, in that some

community members were linking child welfare with good childcare that offered early childhood education as well as the freedom and ability for parents to continue with further education (Friendly and Rothman, 1995).

Familiar discourses

As in dominant society, there was plenty of criticism of mothers (Alldred, 1996; Roseneil and Mann, 1996; Coward, 1997) replicating dominant discursive 'truths' (Foucault, 1986; Swift, 1995a).

'Rita' [the Social Development Co-ordinator] remarks about mothers who complain it's too hard, blaming mothers for what they can't cope with, since she, in her day, raised eight children on her own [admitting bitterly that her spouse was 'useless'] ... although she admits the youngest two 'suffered' when she got busy with Band business. (She was Chief for a while.) (9/27/1998)

Liz's remark about a mother walking with her three kids, hitching a ride to town: 'She just got those kids back [from social services]. You'd think she'd know better'. (09/27/1999)

Crystal Creek Band staff judging Jade Creek 'parenting' [read 'mothering'], and talking about it publicly, when two mothers with

large families are sitting there and who don't say anything, which I find odd. (10/21/1999)

Today at the childcare meeting, how some have to point their fingers at other mothers who don't prepare their children for school.

(11/27/1998)

There was criticism, too, of workers for not pulling mothers into line:

it's her responsibility to step in, tell these parents... how to take care of their children and clean their houses. (12/14/1998)

Helping out

I helped out with childcare so mothers could attend various things happening in the community and found this a way into learning more about women and their own needs:

Helping baby-sit at Liz's while mothers go to parenting workshop. Part of me wants to stay away from childcare, 'parenting' issues, and focus more on empowerment of mothers in particular, although baby-sitting is a means to an end. Ride to Jade Creek with Donna. Get 'feel' of prospective childcare [project]. (10/20/1998)

Went to Jade with Donna to help look after kids while women went to 'Slug' [nickname of a Native counsellor]... Their workshop was positive, brought five women together. Donna thinks of 'warrior women' [strong Indian women], wanting her drum... [I] Realise the spiritual thirst, need for cultural reconnection, power of the spirit in their healing. Me needing to be only supportive. The joy of knowing women are getting together, talking about their pain, finding a way to support each other. It's worth looking after their kids so they can go. (01/29/1999)

Childcare meetings begin

We finally had a first childcare meeting on October 8, 1998, at Jade, and there were eight mothers who all had things to say. I was not too organised. Estelle did the co-ordinating – I was told I had forgotten a flipchart to write on. Their main concerns were: times it would operate, would it include after-school care, the number of children, and having to get subsidies – how and from whom. I wrote: 'These are things they must decide as it is *their* childcare and they can develop their own policies. And I am in the dark as to what goes into developing a childcare.' In other words, we were learning together. And Liz stressed: 'This is *our* childcare, not Karen's or Crystal Creek's, so we all have to be involved' (10/8/1998). But there were other, wider concerns, too, which suggested the need for meetings with Band staff:

Jade Creek's struggling with water problems: no water for three days. Will there be good water for a childcare centre?, Alice asks. Alice upset as no services, no garbage removal... wants to see a social development meeting. I asked what she'd want to happen there? She said to talk about 'counselling', 'housing' [basic needs – shelter and water]. Sounds to me Alice has long-standing issues with how the Band Council services Jade Creek. (10/8/ 1998)

A women's support group?

As I got to know more about where some women were at, I wondered whether getting a women's support group together would be a good idea:

Yet, yesterday, learned that Liz quit and realise again the lack of community support for the most vulnerable which, in my view, are women (single parent) with young children. Even talking to Alice, who is thinking of moving off reserve as not enough supports: 'Too easy to drink here'. Am wondering if should begin with a women's support group, or if should go through the right channels, or if should wait. (10/24/1998)

I tried to counter the seeming negativity I was hearing at Crystal Creek about mothers at Jade by talking about their support needs, for example, with the

Band manager, Marianne, in the context of the support all women needed to 'make it through':

And so we talked more about support for women. Me alluding to the strong women at Jade who, despite great odds, try to contribute to the Band... The need for women to recognise their own worth and to get where they want to go, not for their kids but for themselves. As Marianne said, she went back to school for herself. She needed to put herself first. (11/15/1998)

Possibly, this would have been the right time to start a women's sharing circle (see next chapter), if it was going to be a way of women identifying their needs and what they could do about them, in conjunction with developing the childcare as a resource. That way, by the time I left, support to mothers might have become more of a community issue and actuality than, in fact, was the case. But, at the time, I felt I needed to know where the women were 'at', as well as how busy they were with all the various workshops, in and outside the community, including parenting, empowerment, personal growth, employment-related, crisis intervention, treaty-related, health-related, education-related, and so on. Also, there was a female counsellor coming into the community on whose toes I did not want to tread (12/8/1999).

Early Childhood Educator and Community Researcher

Carla, a young Jade Creek woman trained in ECE, is really anxious to work with the childcare and it was evident to me that she knew what was needed to get it going. (10/12/1999). On October 26th, we had our second childcare meeting, at which Sue from provincial licensing came to tell us what was needed in order to get licensed under provincial standards.

Meeting with parents (mothers only) went well. Usually mothers just trickle in when they can (10/26/1998).

There was funding available to do the groundwork needed to put a proposal together for Aboriginal Head Start (AHS) funding. It seemed a good opportunity to hire someone from the community to help with the research needed for the proposal who, along with myself, could become familiar with the programme. It also answered the proposal-writing need to create job positions when possible.

At the next meeting, on January 19th 1999, there were eleven present including four Band staff, mothers, the probable ECE and myself. I went over the published 'Philosophy and Principles' of the AHS programme to give people an idea of what it was about. Liz wrote everything down on a flipchart and I kept notes which got typed up and sent around. The meeting was logistical in nature, centring on planning to hire a community researcher to develop the

proposal. At this point, talk was of developing two Head Start programmes, one at Crystal Creek and one at Jade. The problem was that there were far more children at Jade and that a trailer was available as a facility, the renovation plans of which had already been approved by the BC Aboriginal Childcare Society. But there were concerns from women at Crystal that the focus was on Jade. To assess interest at Crystal Creek, one of the women agreed to try and get a meeting of parents together over there. At least with the plans to hire a community researcher, it seemed that something concrete was happening (01/19/1999).

Staff were concerned at this meeting, as to why the focus was on Jade and not Crystal Creek for the childcare. This was because it was what staff had decided at the September 22nd meeting: to get funding to renovate a location at Jade Creek and that women there were more in need of the service.

Nevertheless, a mother of pre-schoolers from Crystal Creek volunteered to assess the need there.

Estelle was hired as the community researcher.

Estelle was clear about the need to involve parents and the efforts she'd make to do so, as well as the reasons why parents don't get involved. She felt no need to be politically correct by saying Jade Creek and Crystal Creek should work together, rather pointed out their

differences. She seemed to have a good rapport with Caroline
[Education Co-ordinator]. (02/2/1999)

Getting focused

Estelle got busy and organised a planned trip to Vancouver for herself and five women to an information session on how to put the proposal together. This was followed by a meeting on March 9th, with fourteen women present including four Band staff and eight mothers, the ECE and myself. A good thing about the Vancouver trip was that women began to get enthused and, after hearing the same theme repeated in the 'big city', they began to recognise the importance of their own participation:

Trip to Vancouver really got things going – very fruitful meeting.

Those who went and told us about it are understanding the need for community ownership/parent involvement. The meeting covered what was needed for the Head Start proposal, written on a flip chart by Liz as we went along. Their philosophy and mission statement included: the right to develop traditionally, socially, intellectually, emotionally, physically, spiritually, in a safe, caring environment with pride and confidence. (03/9/1999)

After the March 9th meeting, I put on a video which included a woman from a nearby First Nation talking about how non-Native education does not work for

many Aboriginal children. No one was the least bit interested, possibly because they were inundated with educational information – about their health, their parenting, their healing, their treaty and so on:

As a mother said, all she [the parenting course facilitator] does is talk and leave. She had a ‘big headache’ from all the information being ‘crammed in’. (10/28/1998)

The video attempt illustrated that my need from a participatory research perspective, to include some educational input in order to promote dialogue, was not a need of the mothers involved. Maguire (1987) also struggled with thinking she should take on a more educative and conscientising role at their PR/PAR meetings. But in reality, women were not interested: ‘No one in the group asked to explore structural analyses of racism, sexism, or classism’ (p.189).

Child welfare and parental support

Of our May 13th meeting, I wrote:

I had wanted to get a discussion going on culturally-appropriate child protection but did not know if there’d be much interest. How to get a spontaneous discussion going, because *I* wanted it? But a woman came whose first words were about almost losing her kids last week if

she had not agreed to attend a healing conference over the weekend.

‘And where was the community support?’, she asked. The healing conference was ‘good’ for this couple [she said]. This is the first time she’s come to a childcare meeting and opened up. Another woman asked that child protection be put on the agenda. Although there wasn’t enough time to discuss it thoroughly, it was a start.

Women present said that workers from the Native child welfare agency that served this and two other Bands needed to come out and explain what it did, its policies, and what services were available. This agency was controlled by provincial standards and legislation. Estelle brought up that she was not allowed to be a foster carer for kids on reserve because her own family was too big (according to provincial standards). Yet, she took care of her sister’s seven children all the time. ‘What’s the difference?’, she asked. In other words, reserve reality was vastly different from white middle-class reality. Mostly, discussion focused on the need for support from within the community, for example, support for parents before Native Child Welfare was called. Possibly, a non-judgemental ‘parent care group’ would be useful, they thought. Also identified was the need for ‘approved’ foster care in order to keep children in the community and for Band financial support of childcare as well as a safe house for women and children. Parents, women thought, need to be able to discuss their problems – to ask for help – and maybe this would assist others to ask too. ‘We haven’t been taught to ask’.

Obviously, the need was for support and for the ability to ask for it before things got worse:

The woman who talked about going to the healing conference or risk losing her kids shared a lot, smiled more, but she was on the verge [of tears], her voice shaking... Need for on-going support. Recognising she can go to other women in the community for support (but will she?). (05/13/1999)

There are a few other references to the development of child protection services and this community in the research data. Mark said that child welfare was a priority in terms of self-government direction right now. Ever since the Native Child Welfare agency had been set up at the tribal level, they had been moving in the direction of taking over [provincial] ministerial responsibilities.

'And we do have people', said Mark, 'a bunch of people who have taken those courses in social work'. Use my wife for an example: she's partial delegation now... and next year she'll go for her exam to get full delegation [as a child protection social worker under provincial standards]' (interview with Mark).

This agency [Native Child Welfare] held delegated authority to take children into care within its own communities. Contrary to the provincial ministry, though, workers tried to avoid the court route as much as possible, preferring

to make agreements with parents in order to bring children who were in need of protection into care voluntarily. Interestingly, they relied a lot on non-Native foster care (11/16/1998), which runs contrary to what mothers were saying at the above meeting (and to McKenzie et al., 1995). Interestingly, Estelle later told me that Native Child Welfare had asked her to be a safe house for women and children. She thought it was ironic that they wouldn't allow her to be a foster home but still suggested that she be a safe house.

(11/25/1999)

Staff made a difference to how far issues could be pursued. Having started a discussion on child welfare, I was hoping the dialogue would continue at the following meeting (05/21/1999), in order perhaps to shape ideas from women on how they could get the support they need. But with Caroline, the Education Co-ordinator, frank discussion about women's concerns could only go so far because her mother was Social Development Co-ordinator and therefore responsible for child welfare matters, including contacting the Child Welfare agency about child protection concerns:

Estelle said the Native Child Welfare society did not come out when called. I asked if there was someone in the Band office they called first, for example, Rita (Social Development Worker). At the November 16th justice workshop, the Executive Director said she would liase with Rita. Caroline denied that this was so, saying she

[Rita] only signed cheques. So I asked if they wanted workers to come out more often? Not, they replied, if they came out to intimidate parents or judge them but it would be okay to present options or, as Estelle said, help 'clear up all the crap going on in my head first'. What about some kind of community group, non-judgemental, where people could go before a crisis occurred? Caroline said 'Well aren't we *having* a women's group?' And that was the end of the conversation – everyone was happy it had been solved. (05/21/1999)

Band social workers (like Rita) are caught between having to call Child Welfare and not wanting to 'rat' on Band members to outside authorities (Mastronardi, 1991). If a child is involved in legal proceedings, then the chances are that the Band social worker will have to appear in court also. Monture-Angus (1996) speaks to the adversarial practices of the Canadian system that does not fit First Nations reality and can often make things worse. This is also relevant to violence against women in that First Nations do not necessarily want involvement with the Canadian legal system (Boyd, 1997; Koshan, 1997).

Donna had earlier talked to me about how she uses discretion and her own knowledge when deciding whether or not to telephone the Ministry of Child and Family Services if children are left home alone because she remembered,

as a child, being dragged around by parents who were drinking and about wanting to be home where she felt safer and where at least there was food:

So, I figure, as long as I know the kids are all right, why bother phoning the Ministry because it could be just as bad out there, where they get taken to [e.g. foster care], than where they're at now.

(Interview with Donna)

Getting the renovations done soon....

At the May meeting, women also wanted clear answers about the renovation costs for the childcare centre from the Housing Co-ordinator who stopped by briefly. He assured us that renovations would soon be complete, albeit delayed, and were within budget, although \$400 worth of plywood had disappeared. The mothers did not like the idea of a carpet in the play area, saying linoleum was better for keeping clean. These were indications of them taking control of their own centre and its design.

A couple of months later....

As it was, Lorraine stopped Jack as we were going up to the Band office, to ask him when the renovations would be finished. He said everyone was going on holidays and there were more important priorities. This was not what he had said at the day-care meeting in May. Lorraine had not been impressed at

how Estelle had let Jack off the hook at that meeting. He had only had to stay ten minutes and she herself had had a lot of questions to ask (07/14/1999).

Developing staff positions

Through employment funding we were able to develop a manager's position and a job specification for that was prepared at the May 13th, meeting. When planning the community researcher position on an earlier occasion, the job specification, put forward mainly by Band staff, had seemed to me to demand attributes that excluded a number of women:

I had asked if a person had to have all these qualifications. The answer was that these were 'assets'. (01/19/1999)

This time questions were asked by mothers themselves about the criteria:

Was grade twelve [of High School] really needed? How many have it?
How many are shut down by the criteria? (05/13/1999)

In conversation with the Education Co-ordinator in June 1999, I learned that a decision had been made by staff on who to hire as Manager, even though she had yet to be interviewed. Lorraine was the only applicant, which seemed odd given the knowledge and involvement of other mothers and the fact that they

needed jobs. We agreed that Carla, who was available and who was from Jade Creek would be hired as ECE.

...At that point, Liz came in and I wrote 'good timing – a parent'. Caroline asked her if Carla would be okay as ECE. Liz said Joanne wanted the job too. Joanne was more experienced, but she was the alcohol and drug counsellor, lived in a town 100 kilometres away, and is from Crystal Creek, not Jade. My bias was that it would be good to give Carla the experience, knowing how eager she was, with the added benefit that she was from Jade and lived there. But, for some reason, there was reluctance to hire Carla. I said that with the training-on-the-job funding we had applied for, we could hire a manager and ECE, and get things rolling. We needed someone who could start right away, as well as someone who needed training (because it was funded to create an employment opportunity). Joanne was perhaps too experienced. And so everyone agreed, saying that there would probably be the need for two ECEs in the future in any case. We talked about the urgency of getting the Housing Co-ordinator moving on the renovations. Liz thought there could be an August opening. I said Jack did not think the renovations would take long. I also wondered out loud if he was dependable. Liz hopes 'they won't do a sloppy job' (06/16/1999)

Field-trips

Caroline also made decisions to take parents to visit childcares in other areas, so she could get an idea of what was needed. This was a great idea although, again, it was being decided for mothers by a staff member with no room for dialogue (notes: 05/21/1999).

Caroline also said she wanted people to go to a city farther north, to visit the AHS already going there. She wondered if parents should go. I said a good reason for involving parents was in order to keep them involved, so the burden of responsibility for running the day-care did not fall only on staff. She agreed, as she knows this is so from the experience of parent advisory committees in local schools.

(06/16/1999)

These outside field trips, as well as trips to Victoria and Vancouver for conferences, were undertaken by women and staff and, therefore, were important to their own knowledge production about how to run a childcare and Head Start programme.

Women's knowledge and agency

Later: Liz did not come to my research interview with her because she was busy doing day-care stuff – on her own. She'd gone up to the day-care trailer and found that nothing's been done. She wrote an excellent

letter of disgust... both of us are upset about the day-care renovations... She remembered everything that was in the place: where it was located, where the sockets were. Jack has no idea what he's renovating! Liz *does*. It was easy to see her in a managerial role. I'd feel good if she'd applied for the position. (July 7, 1999)

Liz told me how she budgets for her seven children and manages to make a monthly car payment on welfare. She thinks others cannot survive on welfare because of the amount they spend on addictions. I suggested she give a community workshop on budgeting [as workshops were a normal part of life], instead of hiring people to give 'budgeting workshops.' She said she could not: 'They'd call me a know it all' (02/4/1999).

I did not lead meetings as I found myself inept at doing so:

These women have gone to more workshops than I have and they know better how to interpret what people are saying. No meeting have I led. (07/8/1999).

I found myself in a heated discussion (07/14/1999) with Estelle about Chief and Council's response to Liz' letter. She was in her role as a Band Councillor, rather than a childcare/Head Start advocate.

‘Chief and Council are not responsible for Liz’s education’, Estelle told me. ‘If she wants to change her life, she can do it. The day-care is not a priority right now.’ Nor was Jack, the Housing Co-ordinator, or his crew held accountable. I tried to make the point that people need to be listened to. She said letter-writing wasn’t the way. I ask what is? ‘Liz should have gone to Jack’. I asked, ‘What if Jack doesn’t listen? Lots of people ask for things and never get heard’. She said she doesn’t get heard either. In other words, there’s nowhere to go with this. I said, ‘Then no one’s accountable, but they’re being paid to be accountable’. Then it ended up Marianne’s responsibility. But I know it’s not important enough for Marianne, either. I asked why, if Chief and Council didn’t want to deal with it [the letter], they did not go to Jack and tell him it’s his responsibility. Instead, it all got dumped on Liz for having written the letter, for having finally spoken out as a parent – finally taken action – which is where I was coming from.

(07/14/1999)

Not getting AHS funding

The July 8th meeting was to plan how the Manager and ECE needed to start in their new jobs:

A lot of going off in tangents about running the day-care. All we needed today was to decide what Lorraine and Carla would do.

Liz read the letter she'd written to Chief and Council complaining about the state of renovations and saying she needed the childcare both to further her education and better herself. Two staff, Caroline and Joanne, arrived late:

Because Caroline was late, [we] did not know the Head Start funding had not been successful. I was given the letter after she'd been there awhile and when the meeting was in full swing. Interesting that the letter was addressed to me, yet Caroline produced a copy. (07/8/1999)

I was surprised that no one was as concerned as I was about this disappointment. I told the group it was up to them to make this work as I was afraid that writing proposals made me responsible. However, they began working with figures and Joanne said it could be done on subsidies. Hiring Carla and Lorraine through training funds would get things going, would build momentum and participation:

Maybe not having that funding assured is a blessing – it will demand commitment from the community to make it happen - and some who had not been clear before were saying 'I want this to be a go'. The need is to push for renovations to be done, for meetings with parents to get subsidies in place, and Lorraine sounded quite clear that she could do it... (07/8/1999)

Estelle had also told me that the Chief wanted me to write to the people in charge of the Aboriginal Head Start programme because the guidelines had been changed without us knowing.

I asked her if she had learned different in Vancouver than what we actually put into the proposal. She said 'No', that we followed the six components as laid out in the manual. My reaction was that the demands of the proposal were suited to groups that had resources and expertise beyond the capacity of most First Nations, especially isolated ones. Again, it was constructed from a white, middle-class perspective. Estelle thought it was a case of provincial pressure because they were afraid of losing First Nations clientèle to a federally-funded pre-school programme and so funding was capped accordingly and exclusively. I wondered if it was also to ensure that provinces did not start asking for the same funding for non-Native pre-school programmes (07/14/1999).

'Too easy to drink here'

On July 19th 1999, I met with Carla and Lorraine to get their positions going and to establish a picture of what was needed for the Head Start proposal, the deadline now being September 1st. I was impressed that Lorraine had been talking with parents, had a list of names, was getting subsidy forms, and so on. The problem was that she kept skipping out to neighbours across the road. It

was soon obvious she was losing focus and coherency, and smelling of alcohol:

Am I supposed to ignore it? She's going to be a childcare manager. So I had to bring it up – they will have to monitor themselves – set expectations they would expect of all staff – including no drinking on the job. But I get upset inside. She's got lots of good ideas. Is she going to sabotage herself?... But if it's [the drinking] that bad (she never went through an interview process) – then maybe she's too fragile for the job – this could be stressful. This may not have been a good idea. Maybe I better find a way to talk to her about it.

(07/19/1999)

Lorraine, on a supervision order¹, has her children with her and is hoping the order will be lifted in August. The job will probably help in proving herself a 'fit' parent.

I tried to follow up the next day, but could not get hold of Lorraine so I asked around. One elder had her kids for the weekend. She did not think a full-time job was good for Lorraine right now; another agreed that she had been drinking all weekend. I was not sure whether she would be back in time for a

¹ A 'supervision order' means that she is being monitored as to her ability to care for her children - by a social worker from the Native child welfare agency that serves this tribal area.

meeting with the Housing Co-ordinator so I cancelled it. The next day, Lorraine called me, very angry and accusing me of:

intruding in her life – spying – that I just don't want to work with her. I should have told her that I wanted to be in control... I kept saying: 'Look, you progressively began to smell of alcohol at the meeting on Monday. You were no longer "there".' She vowed she was not drinking and told me to ask [the neighbours]... She told me to come and get the day-care file and hung up. (07/20/1999)

I said nothing to staff who could all hear me, anyway, through the paper-thin walls of the Band office. When I got to Jade, she did not slam the door in my face, so I was happy and we talked. She was really angry I had cancelled out on Jack and I apologised, saying it really had not been any of my business as she had arranged the meeting in the first place.

We talk a long time. I don't know what to believe... by the end, she's alluding to a 'lifestyle change' that includes alcohol. She's half admitting she's drinking. I don't pursue it. I don't want to know.

(07/20/1999)

A week later, I write:

Lorraine's not sure she wants the job. Says there's too many people watching her – needs to wait until August court date... Then, Marianne (Band Manager) and Caroline (Education Co-ordinator) show up the next day at where I stay at Jade, and soon Rita, the Social Development Worker. They want to know the story of Lorraine. I say nothing, other than we had sorted things out with each other and she wanted to think about the job over the weekend. I suggested she go part-time (thinking maybe full-time was too much stress right now with her kids and child welfare). They agreed, and Rita went to talk to her. (07/27/1999)

I went over to Liz's and did her dishes for her... Estelle came by and asked why Marianne and Caroline had been here. I said nothing. I realised people were pushed into positions. It had been decided at the Band office who would do the job. This is possibly why no one applies if... it has not been suggested to them. ... When I get home, Lorraine has been convinced by Rita to stay on. I reflect on the 'sinking awful feeling that I'm way off-base, even in how I handle things. I have assumed control where I shouldn't have'. (07/27/1999)

Lorraine tells me never to go to her house again unannounced, that I had been there twice checking up on her kids and had got [a teenager] to go over and take care of them (none of which was true). The

insinuations hurt as I thought we had talked it out and reconciled the precipitating issue (08/4/1999).

I later learned from Estelle that Lorraine was given the manager position because of a Band commitment to the child welfare agency to support her so she could keep her children. I wrote in my notes, ultimately relevant to the formation of the women's sharing circle (see Chapter Nine):

Yet, intuitively, I felt Lorraine is not ready. Again, possibly the wrong kind of support, putting her in a job with a lot of demands/uncertainty. What she needed was not there for her in the Band and that is what needed to be looked at – the reality – also my sense that something in Lorraine was not ready. (01/12/2000)

Lorraine reflects on how hard it is, trying to change one's lifestyle – without support:

'When you fall, people want to see you right back down there. You're not allowed to make mistakes. It's so easy to go back [to drinking] when there's stress in your life. So many incidents in an alcoholic's life – people won't let you forget. Don't know how strongly what people say affects your life. Some people will not try again, will go back to the street... [Post-treatment] there's no one there when they

come back into the community, no one there [as a support person] in the community. Some Bands won't help you when you finish treatment'. Lorraine goes on to tell me she had no support once she left the treatment centre. A few days before Christmas she found herself in a motel room with her four kids. 'It was really hard on me. We had to get out of the hotel room, with the children. Treatment makes you aware – open. But there's no after-support, no closure. [You're] left on your own afterwards, with open wounds.' She says she wasn't ready to come back to the community. There were people in town she could go to for support. She'd never lived on the reserve but she had to stay on reserve if she was to get her kids back from the child welfare because the Band built a house for her. (interview: 08/10/1999)

Communication, conflict and emotional support

I am surprised, the day after all's been settled with Lorraine, to get back to the Band office with Liz to see that four staff - Caroline (Education Co-ordinator), Rita (Social Development Co-ordinator), Joanne (Alcohol and Drug Counsellor and also an ECE) and Marianne (Band Manager) are meeting with Carla and Lorraine, a meeting to which neither Liz, nor I, nor any other parents have been invited. Caroline automatically tells me to sit in [but not Liz] but I'd planned lunch with Liz and her children (07/28/1999). At that meeting, it was decided to put the childcare into the old school for the time

being, also that Faith would be the second ECE and would need to be trained.

I still needed to get information for our second bid on the AHS funding:

I am trying to get what I need for the proposal (there's seven of us – Carla rolled her truck but is all right). Lorraine's on the phone arranging trips for mothers to the AHS programme up north and a trip to the childcare resource and referral agency in the nearest town. Also Elliot, from Band maintenance, is up at the day-care trailer and says it's going to take a lot more money to finish. Did manage to go over what I had written as a proposal outline to see how they wanted it presented. There were a number of criticisms: that my distances between towns weren't right and that the road wasn't as bad as that. I told them I needed to stress the isolation and lack of access to other pre-schools, and so on. My English needed to be corrected (possibly too academic). I leave people copies, asking them to write further comments for next time so I can get as much information as I can.

(08/4/1999)

At the August 12th meeting, it was evident that the trips had not worked out well due to poor organisation and lack of communication. Laurie had taken some mothers up north, to a health transfer meeting, but they had not been welcomed as there was not enough food and, by the time the meeting was over, there was insufficient time to visit the AHS programme up there. It was

made worse for Lorraine because Alice talked non-stop the whole way there about violent relationships, tacitly lecturing Lorraine about living with a man known for his violence. Lorraine was not impressed and saw it as a wasted trip. Liz, who was particularly upset about a trip to a childcare resource centre in the nearest town, said she would not go again. There had been no petrol in the van, they had a flat tyre up the road and there was 'only half a jack', and they had returned very late which had posed a childcare problem for her. She talked about missing 'steps' in planning and organisation, basically that there needed to be more communication (08/12/1999). Lorraine did tend to be controlling and this got in the way of others' input (08/12/1999). At the July 8th meeting, she had told Liz not to keep interrupting her. Liz later apologised for talking too much. Similarly, before this meeting I had asked Lorraine if I could have a substantial amount of time to work on the proposal with the group. She was angry, saying she had important things to talk about. I suggested she go first. Liz told Lorraine that the town trip was a fiasco and that she would not go again. Lorraine did apologise. I did get more information for the proposal including what children's needs were in the community, as well as how mothers saw their own needs. They wanted the childcare to 'relieve some of the stress', as well as to be able to seek employment and further their education, knowing that their children would be in a safe environment and that there would be no favouritism. It was important to them that all the children at the childcare be treated the same.

All weekend working on the proposal, 'my' Head Start proposal for the community. Very little sleep, feeling it's my obligation. (08/31/1999)

At the next meeting:

Lorraine talked about policies. Parents were asked to fill in a worksheet she had devised to develop policy ideas, and come back together to discuss. Also, we discussed Faith's training. I had been told by the Employment Training Agency that there were no more funds for the Band. Faith wondered why the Band Manager had not told us. I asked whether there were issues with the proposal now that it had been submitted. People said they had to leave. I always wondered why my concerns were not theirs! We did spend some time on it.

Language is a problem in parts: the ECEs pointed out that I used the term 'discipline' instead of 'guidance'. Lorraine was not pleased I had not put in an amount to hire a 'home-based' pre-school teacher for Crystal Creek. The problem had been fitting everything in within budget. There would, in any case, be enough manoeuvrability within the funds to create additional positions at a later date. Also, it would have demanded more work, including writing a job description I would not have wanted to decide on my own. Anyway, it looked as if I was controlling things when all I was doing was trying to get a proposal in on time (09/7/1999).

A 'community development meeting', planned by the Band Manager, was held on September 9, 1999, at Jade. The only people who came from Crystal Creek were staff members. But it was a chance for Jade Creek people to bring up concerns with staff. There never seemed to be any opportunity to do this. As Lorraine said at the meeting, 'A lot needs to be said that doesn't get said because you don't know who to say it to'. She said she had no phone, no car, and when she gets to the Band office people were either not there or too busy. So, even if the community development meeting was not the place, she needed to get some answers. For example, she wanted to find out about the adult education programme at Jade as women were not attending because they were uncomfortable with the way the male instructor came across. Also, Faith needed to get paid and she wanted to know whether there would be any training funds for this (09/9/1999).

I asked Lorraine, shortly afterwards, how things were going for her in the Manager position. She said Carla was not talking to her. I tended to find Lorraine controlling; for example, every time I tried to get Carla's input on ECE matters, Lorraine would interfere. I noted: 'Lorraine, like many women here needs to take over. It becomes 'theirs', and there's a lack of sharing/co-operation', (09/9/1999). I suggested going to get Carla so we could discuss it together, but Carla was not home. Then Lorraine started going into her

personal life, making me feel overwhelmed. People were dealing with immense issues, and 'control' in other areas of their lives was so fragile:

This is when you get to thinking 'healing' is most important, trying to make other things happen is not. I am so scared that I am an instrument in steering people away from what they need to do. Yet Lorraine is doing a good job, she has good skills. She needs support/affirmation, and so does Carla! (09/9/1999)

When I dropped in on Carla later that month, at the childcare she was preparing to open in the 'old school' the following Monday. Lorraine had not been in all week. Carla said the parents should have a say in the times the childcare will be open but Lorraine had unilaterally decided the times. She wanted to meet with parents, but Lorraine was not around. I would have liked her to go and do it, but I knew that Lorraine would be really angry if I interfered and that staff might change it all anyway (notes: 09/30/1999). As I wrote that day, 'The magnitude of issues overwhelm me. Worst is the lack of communication with anyone about anything!'. Again, Carla said the Chief did not think it a priority to get the childcare finished, though she herself thought it *was* a priority for the children, who were excited about it (09/28/1999). Carla could not get into the office as Lorraine had made it 'out of bounds'. I was surprised.(09/30/1999).

Band staff had made Lorraine Carla's supervisor, again without parent input and setting up an unnecessary hierarchical relationship. Carla pointed out that she had ECE training which should have counted for something (09/28/1999). My problem was not knowing who should be dealing with these issues and feeling increasingly that, no matter what parents decided, Band staff would make their own decisions. Carla spoke about how she wanted to serve her community. She had previously planned to work a year in town but, when her grandfather and mother died, within a short time of one another, she had been happy to be able to stay in the community. I wondered whether staff could see her commitment. She had all her learning materials ready and registration forms for parents. I asked her, too, a little about mental health issues as I was still doing the research for the mental health proposal. Speaking mainly in relation to youth, she saw alcohol as the main issue and also marijuana. Rather than one-off workshops directed at changing the ways of the young, she said a youth centre would help alleviate the boredom and provide something consistent. It always baffled and frustrated me that I was continually hearing good advice at Jade Creek that, for some reason, could not reach the hearing of Band office staff (09/28/1999).

Trying to ensure women's participation

Given the problem with staff making unilateral decisions, ignoring in particular what women were saying or what was being decided at meetings where we thought we were planning the childcare (08/12/1999), I tried to find

out, in conversations in August 1999 with Marianne, to what extent the Band office was willing to allow Jade Creek women to run their own childcare programme. I clarified that participatory research was about 'empowering' women at Jade to develop their own childcare according to their own needs and to learn about the Head Start programme (08/20/1999). Marianne actually said things like the women needed to 'own' the programme, that it was 'their' day-care (08/20/1999). I was trying to gauge just what this meant, and thereby to clarify roles and responsibilities, since everyone doing their own thing seemed the way things normally operated. I wondered what the role of the Band office and staff would be? According to the Head Start criteria, one role staff *could* play was that of providing health, educational and social support (Health Canada, 1998). But who ultimately made the decisions and took responsibility for the money? Was it possible for the pre-school/childcare to control their own funding. The answer was a direct 'No', that it had to go through the Band. A few days later, Marianne acknowledged that each 'department' should have control of their own funding. I suggest the possibility of a Board of Directors, which Marianne agreed with as there would be clear lines of communication between the Band and the childcare. The possibility of establishing a non-profit society was not appreciated at this point (although 'Spruce Society' over at Jade had become their own non-profit society). This would allow the Head Start to have a wider choice of funding options. I also casually mentioned that Carla was good, that she knew

what she was doing and just needed support and encouragement. Marianne said reluctantly, 'That's good' (08/20/1999).

A neighbouring community had started with a Board of Directors of community service providers and had then worked 'down' to the parents. We had started the other way around but I could see how fragile the parent group was, and was not sure whether or not they saw themselves as actually running the programme. This I could not push, because I could not be sure whether that was what the women wanted. So it seemed to me the need was to continue to support the women in their own 'empowerment', pointing out their knowledge and skills as important to their community. The other was to dialogue with staff, because a constant theme was the wish not to create dependency like the DIA did. Marianne did say she wanted to support the initiatives of community members. (08/16/1999).

Two different approaches

Women from the other community about 50 kilometres away came to one of our meetings, organised by Lorraine. The communities are inter-related, the Co-ordinator of their Head Start programme was Lorraine's half-sister. Four women came, but the Co-ordinator and ECE did most of the talking. Their focus was on teaching mothers how to parent and to be better role-models for their children.

Six of us were present, although Carla and Faith sat quietly reading over 'our' already submitted proposal. Liz took notes while Lorraine talked about the importance of parental involvement, joint decision-making - pointing to the policies that they had put together - and about 'empowerment' and the need to find out what parenting meant to them because of the effects of residential schooling. For her, she said, her job as Manager had been a 'healing' experience. The Co-ordinator from the other community changed her stance somewhat, talking more about the importance of parents as 'teachers' of their children. This struck me as the type of discourse in the AHS manual, so I brought up how professional knowledge had taken away a great deal of our self-confidence as mothers, telling us we were bad parents. I said that First Nations had had to cope with far more, because of residential schools, but that they had survived this in many ways and that their knowledge as parents was what we saw as important in building the childcare. Lorraine took up this theme, with her struggle in raising children on her own and how the Head Start/childcare would help her. She talked about how much they have all learned, going to see different programmes and going to Victoria for a conference. She admitted to not having had training but, from the way she talked, it was obvious she knew what she was talking about. The other community sounded more 'professional' and ours more 'grassroots'. (09/7/1999).

Whose responsible for what?

A week or so later, I was surprised by Marianne's invitation to a Head Start meeting. I thought it would all be very friendly but, when I arrived, the three Band staff were not happy about the budget submitted for the Head Start proposal:

Why hadn't they told me ahead of time? Why is Elliot now saying it will cost an extra \$15,000 to complete the renovations. Why did Jack only go for another \$5,500? Now, they want me to send in an addendum. I'm not sure an amendment would look good – might lose the funding completely. I get upset because of the lack of any joint ownership. It's all blame... I don't know how to get beyond the underlying accusations and anger to discuss why – to hear a number of opinions, including mine because I am writing the proposal. What is wrong with discussing, why do I automatically feel defensive?

(09/17/1999)

Anyway, renovations were costing more and more as the electricians had now gone over cost, and I had not asked for enough money, according to Marianne (10/13/1999). She wondered why I had not put this in the original budget. I said I had done what I was told; the estimates had been given to me by the Housing Co-ordinator. I said, 'I trusted Jack's assessment'. He had stood by those estimates all along but my notes say:

He did it all by memory from his office. He did not go to the trailer to see for himself, he just whipped up an estimate from his head. His constant reply had been 'It won't take much' or 'Not a problem'. Yet I can not say anything about Jack's ineptitude to Marianne as there are some people who are protected and he is one of them. (10/13/1999)

I think it was always easier to blame me (09/17/1999 and 12/8/1999) – although as I explained to Marianne (10/13/1999), we needed to itemise our costs while making our request reasonable - and this I could only do with proper staff input (10/13/1999).

Marianne said (10/13/1999) that she did not want to become too involved with the childcare as it really should be controlled by parents. The problem was, staff were controlling it. I was trying to reiterate that they needed Band support, but not control. How could that be worked out so that everyone understood who did what?

I wish I could take some role here, before I give up completely, where I can have some leverage – get planning going between Band staff, childcare staff, parents. Get them listening. (10/13/1999)

Lorraine never did show up – this was only a week before the grand opening (in the old school) – and she was subsequently dismissed, but by staff, not by the parents meeting and deciding what to do.(10/13/1999)

Marianne preferred Joanne as the candidate to be ECE because she was more experienced. Next to her, she favoured her sister (who was actually the primary school teacher and Principal over at Jade. I could not figure out why they would want to take her out of her job and put her in a pre-school (10/13/1999). I wondered how Carla could gain some credibility as she certainly had the training and, from what I could see, she knew what she was doing as a pre-school teacher.

People refuse to believe there is a process, a learning process. Lorraine got dismissed so it's a failure. 'No', I said, 'it's only about a person with some problems. There isn't a problem with the programme'.
(10/13/1999)

Also, Marianne thought that, if no one from Jade or Crystal Creek applied for the Manager position, then they would have to hire off-reserve. Again, this struck me as odd. Possibly what she was saying was that Band staff had not decided who to hire. There were certainly enough potential candidates at Jade.

Final formal parent meetings

Six of us, including one father (everyone remarked that this was a first – he said his wife had ordered him to come) met on October 13 and had a short but productive meeting to plan a budget discussion with Band staff. Carla and Faith planned a ‘Name the Pre-school/Childcare’ contest and gave us a tour of all the new equipment and play things. We talked toilets: should they both be ‘kiddie size’ in the day-care? A new manager was to be hired on October 18th.

On October 16th, we had a budget meeting with Marianne, Caroline, Elaine, Liz, Carla, Faith and me. We had to revise a budget of \$65,000 to fit over five months, as AHS had only given us until the end of their financial year. But it meant that we were up and running with more than enough to work with. My suggestion (made continuously) was to pay childcare staff according to experience and qualifications. Marianne unilaterally decided that staff would have to be on probation for a period. Carla called a couple of AHS programmes and found out that they were paying their ECE workers from \$13 to \$17 an hour, depending on experience. Yet Crystal Creek (despite a \$65,000 budget over 4.5 months) was paying \$9 an hour to everyone.

Band admin will find ways of covering the added costs of renovations... Liz said how odd it was to them that the AHS in [the community down the road] was completely controlled by the Band, not

by the parents, whereas we have gone the opposite way. Elaine agreed. Here it's been parents who've been mostly involved 'which is the way it should be', Liz says. I agreed wholeheartedly, but I did say that lines of communication would have to be decided: who answered to whom. This was after Carla had said they needed to form a Board of Directors, and then we went on to talk about non-profit societies. I asked Marianne what the Band involvement would be if this project became a non-profit society. She said, 'None. Just collect the rent.' But she was seeing the benefit of non-profits – that there would be more funding available. (10/16/1999)

An evaluation would help

I dropped into the childcare on October 26th. Carla and Faith wanted to get some policies in place: child pick-up and drop-off; getting a lunch break as staff; someone to teach culture and language. Carla also needed to get her infant/toddler correspondence training under way. Estelle was finally hired as the Manager and Marianne told me it was because she was from Jade and had been involved from the beginning.

Atmosphere in childcare so neat. Xmas music playing. Estelle in the office with the door wide open. People in and out. Seven-eight children making snowflakes with popsicle sticks. Some of the kids in garbage bags for paint shirts. Three-year old Meg's birthday – she

seemed embarrassed, shy, as we all sang her happy birthday and she blew out the candles on her cake, one at a time. Estelle planning parent meeting next week re: policies. We went up together to look at the renovations. Little has been done, although it will be a nice facility. (11/25/1999)

We needed to do an evaluation – or they needed to – before applying for more funding, which they would need to do for the new AHS financial year. I suggested to Estelle the idea of doing a ‘participatory evaluation’. But I really wanted a reason to involve childcare staff and parents in intensive dialogue as to what we had done together: what it all meant to them and where they wanted to go. Mainly, I was concerned that it would be determined by Band staff from another community (Crystal Creek) who did not know what was happening on a day-to-day basis at the childcare. Again, Jade, and in this case Jade women, would be robbed of what they knew and what they were capable of. ‘We continually come back to evaluation after yakking about everything else’, I noted. I was surprised that Estelle was writing things down. This was the first time anyone had ever written down anything I said.

Estelle showed me an example of staff performance criteria [for the evaluation] – good/bad type stuff rather than ‘What would you like to change and why?’ ... I was wanting to ‘sell’ her on a participatory approach and on doing an evaluation before I leave so we can go

through it together. I did suggest the current staff evaluation was from a 'business management' approach. Depending on where a person is coming from, there'll be a different approach. Marianne's from a management background, whereas childcare is also about children, mothers, emotions etc. She agreed heartily. I said they could develop their own approach. (11/25/1999)

Donna, the Family Support Worker, was helping out at the childcare so that workers could take a break. I brought up that there was an amount in the budget for an orientation for workers and volunteers, to be led by the community teachers and ECEs. That way, they could be hired as the 'consultants' and could work out a 'guidance' policy that everyone agreed with to help deal with, currently, one difficult child. Marianne wanted childcare staff to go to a conference in Vancouver that month. Estelle said there was too much to do. She wanted to be home for her kids in December, especially as she had already done too much travelling in November. 'I promised my kids I'd stay home this month', she said, fighting back tears. She would rather go to the same conference in January in Calgary. Marianne said that would cost too much and seemed to be applying pressure, issuing an ultimatum. Marianne was out of touch with the rhythm of the childcare, where they were only just getting themselves into a routine. Estelle had only been in the job two weeks. Also, as Estelle mentioned, Christmas was coming and there were all the preparations to do with the kids. She added, first it was

Marianne and then it was Caroline, telling her what to do. I said it would be good for them to decide who decided what. It seemed to be like this is in every programme, no one knew who was in charge – who was actually running it. She agreed with needing to decide lines of communication. (11/25/1999). This extended to the way the Band managed money:

Yesterday, Estelle said, Caroline gave her a requisition check to buy supplies for Christmas crafts, but they ran out of money. Then she needed petty cash, something on hand for emergencies. She asked me to drive her to get rocks for rock-painting... On the way, she told me her wage was supplemented with social assistance. It seemed odd given a more than adequate budget, although it's one way to stretch dollars. I told her I'd make a copy of the AHS proposal (how many I've made that all seem to just disappear!) then she'd know how much was in the budget. I went on about how the problem with writing proposals was no one knew what was in them or why. Then, noticing her lack of interest, I said it didn't matter anyway as the Band would use the funds the way it wanted (12/1/1999).

I help Carla bleach toys in the childcare. She wants to see policies set, also a language/culture person employed. There are issues with one child who is not behaving, wants parent to keep him home for a while. Carla looks tired but says she is okay. She is nervous about the

children's performance tonight at the school Christmas concert: 'We should have started practising a month ago, not this week.' The main concern is getting them to stand in a straight line and face the audience. I tell her, such is the plight of an ECE teacher. The Christmas concert goes well. The childcare children are all dressed 'special'; they stand in a line and mostly look at the audience. A few say their ABC's, sing 'Twinkle, twinkle little star', and count to ten in Secwepemc (12/15/1999).

In January, I let Marianne know that I would be leaving in February. I asked her about doing the Head Start proposal before I left. She wondered if it needed to be extensive. I said 'No', but an evaluation would be good, so everyone could see where things were going. I decided to talk to Estelle about it the next day (01/4/2000).

Visit Estelle.... What she is saying excites me: that she needs to know what questions to ask mothers so she doesn't alienate them, so that they don't get defensive. She'd had a long talk the night before, trapped at another woman's house because her truck wouldn't start, so they had to talk. What they found out about each other, she said, changed a lot of things in their relationship (01/5/2000).

This has made her think more about how mothers are placed. Estelle and I meet the next day to talk about an evaluation before planning the next proposal for AHS funding. We brainstorm some of the issues that might come up, especially how staff and mothers can do this together, as a constructive process rather than pointing the finger at who is doing what wrong. It turns out, though, that Estelle is off to training and the childcare staff will have their hands full after that, with extra children while mothers are on a fourteen-week employment training course. I'm not seeing any possibility before I leave of childcare staff, parents and myself coming together to do an evaluation (01/14/2000).

Bureaucratic ways of doing things

On December 16, 1999, Estelle and I were to meet with a representative of the BC Aboriginal Childcare Society. Estelle told me she'd thought about how to approach the mother whose son was wreaking havoc at the childcare: not to confront her but to get her to come, spend time at the childcare, see what's happening, build trust. Estelle said she wanted a break over Christmas (tears in her eyes again), talking about the number of kids at her house the night before. She just wanted her own kids and no one else's over Christmas.

I ask Lynne (the representative) how much the AHS (a separate programme from BC Aboriginal Child Care Society [BCACCS]) had affected them. She said, 'Big time': that they spent the last year trying to keep afloat, wondering whether they would get their funding and

that AHS had even called on them to assist them with information. She said the federal Medical Services Branch (MSB) did things like that ... I said it seemed strange when BCACCS was already in place, to develop another delivery system. She said there were three: themselves, AHS and the BC provincial Ministry of Child and Family Services. She says the Assembly of First Nations is conducting a review, there's an opening for a researcher. I tell Estelle later that the whole AHS schemozzle is worth a study in itself. She says she knows similar stories about MSB (the health counterpart of the DIA)... For example, dollars for elder homecare. If she told them that the community juggles other funds in order to provide homecare, MSB would write that down as a policy and say it 'comes from the community'. Then they would get no new dollars for homecare. So she says nothing. If she told them how the community does it, they'd use it against them(12/16/1999).

Not a priority

Anyway – Lynne was wondering why the facility was not completed [the BCACCS funding we had received a year earlier]. Estelle says that the housing co-ordinator says he's just waiting for hydro (the electricity supply). That it's always hydro – they had to wait for hydro for the new health centre too. Later, when Lynne's gone, I ask about the new facility – when it will be finished. She says she talked to Jack

the other day – he said he was waiting for hydro – then he says ‘Oh, I better phone them.’ In other words, he had not even phoned them yet. She says this with a smile (12/15/1999).

A month later, Carla and Faith brought up the need for the childcare building to be finished. They were waiting for the electricity but said there was still a great deal needing to be done up there. They also needed a temporary dividing wall in the old school, meanwhile, to separate sleeping infants from rowdy toddlers. But they were getting no response from the Band office, that continued to control the budget from its end. Carla said the Housing Co-ordinator did not see it as important. He kept saying workers would get over to Jade when they could. I said I thought they had other priorities. Faith wanted to write a letter to Chief and Council as nothing had been done on the childcare. I told her to do so, voicing how important this was to the community and how it symbolised how important women and children are to the community. Faith said she didn't think they were important at all. I wondered whether such a letter would get the same response as Liz's letter had done back in July. (01/19/2000 **Longing for communication**)

We needed an oath of confidentiality and policy on release of information established for the childcare and for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation funds. I had mentioned this to people a number of times. Donna decided to go ahead and make up her own policy in relation to sexual abuse. Since her daughter had disclosed abuse, she had been anxious to find out whether any other child

had been abused by the same offender. So she was making parents aware but wanted them to be assured of confidentiality. She was doing this on her own because she did not think that Rita, her boss and the Social Development Worker, understood why it was needed. I wrote that this followed on from:

what Estelle and I just talked about with Marianne: the need for training on how to deal with sexual abuse disclosures (me suggesting that such training could be covered by the Head Start budget) and need for an oath of confidentiality/release of information. It's been frustrating over this year, having this training already myself (as a social worker), knowing the above needs and not being able to share this information. Not being able to do such training while being here and available to do it. Again, how I've had to remain on the periphery but feel I'm pulled into it because of what I can offer (01/6/2000).

For example, Carla wanted to go to an elder's funeral but the childcare had decided to stay open for funerals. I pointed out that there was enough money in the budget that had to be used by March to hire all the help needed to cover during such eventualities. Once again, I was giving them information from the proposal that I thought they should have, but I also noted: 'No one can talk about their frustrations because it's being controlled elsewhere' (01/13/2000).

Carla and Faith were both frustrated that they could not get money for much needed supplies and had to beg for what they needed. I again pointed out how odd this was as the money was there, in a budget that needed to be used up by March or AHS would take it back – and give them less next time around. Besides, if they wanted to run a good programme, they needed the supplies in order to do it. Carla said she'd been questioned about a few art supplies she had bought and workers had been questioned about their food budget. I told them I had suggested to Marianne a number of times to give them their own bank account. I commented that sometimes the Band office felt a million miles away and its priorities were not what was really happening. Faith and Carla also wanted to know about the training in the budget. Again, I let it be known that money was there for trained people in the community, teachers and ECEs, to present an orientation workshop to staff and volunteers on coping with the more difficult children and so on. I suggested they could pay people in the community who had training 'as consultants' (and stop thinking someone from outside and for more money is better). Faith and Carla also brought up that there had not been a parent meeting since October. They would like a parent meeting to plan for the upcoming employment training. Throughout this, I wanted to assure them that they knew what they were talking about. People who were not here in the childcare would not know what was needed (01/19/2000).

My own assumptions

I did not push things in a direction as I wasn't sure how much women wanted to run the child care. It seemed to me that there was a normal way of doing things in the Band – that everyone was certainly more accepting of than I was. It also seemed that it was up to women and staff – to make the moves – take the lead on the sensitive matters that are being raised e.g. who controls the budget, who controls decision-making, who is accountable to whom.

Postscript

When I went back to visit Jade Creek in December, 2000, almost a year later, they had finally moved into the childcare trailer but there were still many things not done. Liz blamed the poor workmanship on Jack having little interest in overseeing it. It did not sound as if there was much parent participation as only she and Elaine helped with bleaching toys on weekends. Estelle said the new Chief had been full of his own importance when he had come to the childcare to make a list of 'safety issues', when what they really needed was the childcare finally finished with windows that fitted and proper heating. Both Liz and Elaine felt hopeless about its ever being completed as the Band office seemed to show little interest in it. Although, when I visited it the next day, it looked like a very real childcare. Carla was there, but Faith had left for no apparent reason. They thought she was 'bad-mouthing' the childcare over at Crystal Creek. Estelle said she was so happy with the children's progress over the year. Some would be very well prepared for school, already know their colours, numbers and letters. She wanted to go

into ECE training and was quite happy to get out of the Band Councillor position. Carla was pregnant and due on January 1st. I was pleased to see that she had not been pushed out and that, according to Estelle, the kids were extremely fond of her, both in and out of childcare hours.

Childcare Participatory Research process: responding to Jade Creek's women practical needs

<p>Permission from Chief and Council</p> <p>→ →</p>	<p>Childcare Process:</p> <p>Community identified need for childcare/pre-school a week → after I came into the community.</p>	<p>Regular meetings with mothers and staff.</p> <p>→ →</p>	<p>Background visiting with Jade Creek women; liaising with staff.</p> <p>→ →</p>	<p>Hiring Estelle as community researcher for AHS proposal.</p> <p>→ →</p>	<p>Group goes to Vancouver meeting on AHS proposal. Put first women's/staff input.</p> <p>→ →</p>	<p>Lorraine and Carla hired as manager and ECE respectively.</p> <p>↓ ↓</p>
<p>No time for an evaluation re: - running of childcare; role clarification/ Communication and parent involvement.</p>	<p>Meeting with staff re: budget; becoming a non-profit society within the Band.</p> <p>← ←</p>	<p>Estelle replaces Lorraine as manager.</p> <p>← ←</p>	<p>Get AHS funding. Childcare in old school as renovations still not completed.</p> <p>← ←</p>	<p>Lorraine consulting women on policies; arranges meeting with neighbouring AHS programme. Women visit various resources with help of staff. We work together on new AHS proposal</p>	<p>Didn't get AHS funds - women & staff brainstorm alternative funding.</p> <p>← ←</p>	<p>Renovations behind. Liz sends letter to Chief and Council.</p> <p>← ←</p>

CHAPTER NINE: THE WOMEN'S SHARING CIRCLES

It seemed important to make the women's circle a place of refuge, a safe place - not a teaching or led place, not an orchestrated place, but a place where women could simply talk and be heard. (Notes: January 22, 2000)

It seemed to me that, in order for women to engage in research for change, they first needed to identify for themselves what those changes could be (see diagram at end of chapter for an illustration of the research process). Support in identifying their own needs would be a process in and of itself for people who had learned, in their lives and histories, to say nothing. Throughout the feminist participatory research literature (see Chapter 6) it is evident that women's preoccupations and the uncertainties in their lives affect their ability to participate. These include the effects and/or fear of male perpetrated physical, sexual, psychological abuse and violence (Bradley, 1994; Sen, 1998; Townsend et al., 1999). The effects of past and present trauma and the internalisation of feelings of not being worthwhile (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Rowlands, 1997) need also to be contextualised in a history of patriarchal structural control (Monture-Angus, 1996; Razack, 1998):

that to me is the most maddening thing of DIA, the Indian Act. Like, who gave the Government, who gave the white man that right to make such an Act... You read some of that shit in there, it makes us seem like cattle. We weren't allowed to leave the reserve until we had permission from the Indian Agent... it was like you were born bloody slaves or something... [and]...when a Native woman married a non-Native man... You were removed from the Band list and you were basically supposed to be a white person. You no longer had [Indian] status, you were non-status... You were more or less booted out.

(Interview with Marianne)

The effects of trauma, according to Mark, affected the ability of community members to get involved in the rational world of self-government planning and decision-making: 'I guess, some days, they feel gung-ho and, other days, something triggers them to just wanna lay down and die'. This internalisation of structurally oppressive factors was felt strongly by women:

because some can't even walk out of the door each day. That's how deep you can get into the hurt, the anger. Everything that goes into your life is the uselessness. (Interview with Estelle)

Participatory research accounts seldom mention the effects of trauma or, more specifically, of sexual and physical violence on women's ability to participate,

to plan, to take control. Maria Esther, in Rowlands' (1997) 'empowerment' account, recognised that:

the way in which women are oppressed gets right into their souls, right into their lack of self-esteem, the fact that they don't think of themselves as having human rights, let alone civil, political, or social rights of any kind. (Eade, in Rowlands, 1997, p.92)

In my own research, I did not feel I could ignore the trauma women had experienced in their lives. This brought out the subjective dimensions of both a feminist and participatory engagement (Klein, 1983; Maguire, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Smith, 1997). My own sensitivity was highlighted because I had been in a previous counselling relationship with these women and had also been counselling other women for a number of years, within which physical and sexual violence were prevalent experiences. Trust is a big issue in Native communities, as identified in the mental health research, and by Joanne in her experience as Alcohol and Drug Counsellor and can be an obstacle for community members seeking help. It is vital to create a way for people to meet you on their own terms (notes: 09/28/1999; Mental Health study, 10/21/1999). Therefore, I valued highly the trust the women placed in me and did not distance myself, like a dispassionate researcher, from providing emotional support, although I tempered the intensity of my involvement.

Recovering from sexual abuse and violence can be a long process (LaRocque, 1993; Brown, 1995; Davis, 1999) and there are all sorts of problems that women typically encounter along the way. The effects of trauma have been psychologically labelled a 'disorder' (post-traumatic stress disorder), which is said to include a cluster of responses, or non-responses, affecting a person's ability to function in daily life as well as to plan for the future (Davis, 1999). The power of professionals to categorise the effects of what a person has experienced and their resultant needs means that the majority of people are objects of expert definitions, according to sometimes narrow discourses, rather than subjects and active participants in their own lives (Waldegrave, 1991; Dulwich Centre, 1995; Davis, 1999). Also, by concentrating on diagnosing effects, practitioners may fail to see what different women in different cultures do to make sense of their experiences and cope with them (Hansen and Gorman, 1996; Kelly and Radford, 1998; Green, 1999). Nor do they typically allow, in models of individual pathology, for the compounding effects of other forms of oppression (Hansen and Gorman, 1996; Monture-Angus, 1996; Green, 1999):

The problems experienced by Aboriginal people in their personal lives are overwhelmingly due to the context of oppression and injustice within which they live, and the systematic destruction and denial of their stories, knowledges and strengths. (Dulwich Centre, 1995, p.19)

Furthermore, a predominant focus on pathologising women and their responses to sexual and physical violence - instead of seeing what women do to protect themselves, to find help and to survive (Kelly and Radford, 1998; Green, 1999) – retains attention on the victim rather than the perpetrator (LaRocque, 1993; Kelly and Radford, 1998). ‘The limited, and frequently behavioural, focus has led to conceptualization of such responses as ‘dysfunctions’, which intervention is designed to correct’ (Kelly and Radford, 1998, p.69). This reflects the social control function of professionalised dominant discourses and, therefore, patterns and practices of power directed at controlling discursively designated individuals (Foucault, 1986; Swift, 1995a; Rossiter, 2000). At the same time, it protects those who have the social position to avoid being so labelled: ‘The whole judicial process reflects privileged, white male definitions and experience’ (LaRocque, 1993, p.78).

The sharing circle provided a space for women’s words and experiences to be believed and recognised as a source of knowledge (Kelly and Radford, 1998, p.71). The focus, according to LaRocque (1993), must be on the support needs of the victims of sexual violence. It was important for the sharing circles to concentrate on how women defined things for themselves, in their own words, on what women did for themselves in order to take control, and on the support they continued to need (Fine, 1993). This involved breaking silence and recognising that something really did happen (AFN, 1994; Kelly and Radford, 1996):

A woman comes over and tells me how she and her sister and brother would hide in the closet while her father raped her mother...how her aunt allowed men to rape and beat her as to protect her mom and the kids – and how she ended up in a ‘mental institute’ because of it...(notes: 05/24/1999).

Lots blocked out... Remembers older sister (about 10 or 11) being sexually abused in this foster home. She said she was told not to tell or he'd do it to her sister. (Notes: 12/1/1999)

It also involved according responsibility to those who had perpetrated the abuse against women and children and to the system that had tolerated it (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Kelly and Radford, 1998; Maitse, 1998).

A critical and feminist perspective prevailed. Women's reality was the starting point of discussion and analysis. This analysis refocused attention from self-blame to: lack of protection and the need for societal support for women; a society that does not deconstruct male power; and the lack of support for women as mothers, including dominant discourses that make mothers feel they are never good enough (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Hooper, 1992; LaRocque, 1993; Kelly and Radford, 1996, 1998; Krane, 1997; Dominelli, 2002).

Meeting in the evening: five women, intense sharing. Three speaking about how much they needed this group. All agreed it's a good number. Issues: grief (recent loss of two close friends by one woman); another 'walking on eggshells' with spouse, but energised by being asked to help at school - her need to get out, to be creative/active; [another's] effects of trauma and shock, 'Sometimes it seems I'm not there' - sharing with group has helped; [another's] recent birth of daughter, realising her need to take care of self in order to make it through and leaving more to husband, 'I was too tired to say anything, I let him decide' - coming to meeting, staying late, enjoying the time out. [Main themes] overcoming guilt, doing things for selves... taking power back, e.g. over sexual assault, 'No, he cannot take it away from me', meaning her 'serenity'. Allowing the tears to come. (Notes: 11/25/1999)

One woman said she liked an 'all women's group' where she felt 'able to say things' and that, even with one man in the group, she would clam up - afraid she would be criticised or that, afterwards, he would go and talk to others. Here, she felt safe, she felt it was confidential (notes: 01/5/2000). It was important, in my view, to affirm their knowledge as women and to get away from the predominant community and societal theme of calling in the experts who knew what was best for them. From comments the women made, it did

not seem that the experts had much control over their lives because, when women acted, they did it on their own. Examples of this included: Liz heading off to the non-Aboriginal women's shelter in the nearest town a couple of times - and feeling quite at home with the feminist counsellors there. The last time I saw her (December 2000), her partner was again in jail and she was hoping for family counselling. Similarly, a young woman had had her partner imprisoned; both Estelle and Barbara had 'kicked out' their men; sisters in another family, now adults, had laid charges of sexual abuse against a step-father, and Donna had acted on the abuse of her daughter. Less was being allowed to stay hidden than in the past and community dynamics were being challenged in the process.

There were other stressors in women's lives that made it hard to participate in the community and therefore to put forward their own needs. These included: being primary caregivers, having young children, getting work whenever they could, being on welfare, living in an isolated community with barely any support services, and not having things like cars and telephones. Despite all this, women did what they could and needed to do, including coming over to talk when they needed to unload. 'The truth is that every time Estelle and I got together to discuss the proposal, it became a counselling session' (notes: 07/8/1999).

The circles were open to whichever women wanted to come. The women who came really needed to focus on themselves because they were getting very little support from anywhere else. The circles became a place of: affirmation and listening; expressing pain, fear, anger and shame; disclosing abuse, talking about the everyday, and about good things that were happening. In terms of 'empowerment', the focus was on the individual and the support of other women and not so much on taking action, although actions were being taken all the time as women acted in their own lives. But they did this in their own way, in their own time, for their own reasons. The sharing circles were about affirming that. In other words, there was no intent to 'change' women. Rather, the aim was to nurture and to acknowledge the agency women already demonstrated. 'Action' included a woman's ability to talk about a sexual assault she had thought she would never be able to: 'My stomach hurts from holding it in for so long' (notes: 11/25/1999).

Right from the beginning, the circles at Jade Creek were 'hot and heavy' (notes: 10/ 15/1999). We met in the 'priest's house' at Jade Creek, an empty but furnished house used by the Catholic priest when he visited which was not very often. So I stayed there when I was at Jade and we held our meetings there. Each person talked about anything they wanted to, in no particular order but as they felt they wanted to. We came to that agreement at the first meeting but that people should say if they wanted things changed. That was the only logistical issue we talked about, other than stressing the confidential

safety of the group and, when the time seemed right (usually after a great deal of sharing, when a quiet lull happened), to write down what it is we wanted to say but could not, or anything we wanted to release, or our hopes and our offerings to the future. Then we put our writings in a cooking pot, burnt them and threw them in the wood stove.

Ann kidded: 'Boy, I didn't think I'd have so much to write'. I said we'd have a bonfire in the living room. We burned our thoughts, unsaid words, longings, fears, pain. Ann, when she burns, says the serenity prayer over and over again. It's become a comforting ritual.

(Notes: 12/15/1999)

The main focus was on the women themselves and on what they wanted to talk about, what they felt comfortable sharing. Women wept, and we were allowed to weep. If it became too much, someone would put a hand on their shoulder for support but not to inhibit the tears or to intrude into their space.

The other sister was quietly crying - sitting almost worn out, giving me the sense she just wanted to curl up somewhere, retreat somehow...

The weight was very heavy in the room and so I suggested we release it somehow, write it down, burn it, let go of that over which we have no control. And there was a long period of writing. And we burned our pain. (Notes: 01/5/2000)

We discussed how women can be protected on reserve:

We talked more about that – how to protect women – is on-reserve safe house a good idea? Maybe at Crystal Creek. Another woman recounted male relatives helping her escape her violent partner at Crystal Creek - that men here wouldn't protect you – couldn't go to a man for help. She didn't think a safe house on-reserve would work. She's always gone to the one in town. Also, fact that police don't come out when called. She says it's because, when they get here, no one tells them anything – everyone covers up. See no point in coming. So, if a woman calls, by the time they get here she's retracted.... A community meeting will happen about community safety – possibly a 'community watch.' I ask how it is to talk about these issues at community meetings – about male violence against women? One said it was okay as long as a person didn't say it was 'all men' – that 'all' men at Jade Creek are violent. (Notes: 12/8/ 1999)

Women's knowledge helped me understand the dynamics of violence and abuse:

So, it enlightened me that she compared it to sexual abuse because I have often felt it was like that but have not felt that others (e.g.

‘professionals’, ‘experts’), agree... Then another woman brought up emotional abuse, again in relation to having a feeling that there’s something wrong with you. (Notes: 12/1/1999)

The same feelings of shame and self-blame appeared to be attributable to sexual and emotional abuse, resulting from the internalisation of ‘something being wrong with you’. There were links, too, with feeling ‘other’ as a First Nations person: ‘Racism and colonialism are psychological violence with the same effects as overt physical violence’ (Monture-Angus, 1996, p.170). One woman brought up the contradictions of being different as a First Nations mother:

Funny to be raising kids on a reserve, kind of strange. [I] see reserves [as depicted] on T.V.: lots of broken-down cars, dogs everywhere, just like here. All the stereotypes – yet it’s true... Then she said ‘Even the fact of being Native, that I’m “Native”’. (Notes: 12/15/1999)

Women talked about what they did, the good things happening, when they felt energised:

One so enjoyed the teaching she was doing with another parent at the primary school. How ‘empowering’ it was for her not to have a ‘professional’, someone with lots of diplomas or degrees, ‘over them’;

that they needed to use their own initiative and how 'I learned a lot; I learned a lot about my anger', and how to respond to a non-co-operative student... Another so enjoyed the three hours each morning she worked at the school, how it goes by so fast. (Notes: 01/19/2000)

These meetings went on one evening a week for three hours, from October 1999 to January 2000. They could have continued far longer, supporting a process that might have led to these women becoming more organised as a group. This was also Maguire's (1987) problem. The women she met with named the support they had received as the most important outcome for them of the group, even though Maguire had primarily focused on identifying and acting on women's post-shelter support needs through participatory research, hoping that this would filter into the parent agency. Women in both groups primarily needed support. I was seen more in a listening role than as an active participant, although I did 'put my two cents in' and saw myself as part of the group, also needing the support of other women. But these women needed a sense of talking to someone and being heard, so I accepted that role.

What was hard was realising how much the women valued the group, and primarily my involvement, when I let them know a month ahead of time that I was planning to leave:

The problem is that losing people they've trusted has been so prevalent in these women's lives. But her pain was so hard to take, her tears – I was crying too. (Notes: 01/13/2000)

I explain that, if I could stay and just support Jade Creek women, it would be good but the relationship between staff and myself had always been strained and it was time to move on.

But I did talk about knowing the pain will not destroy them. Losing me was compared to a death, to the loss of a loved one and one of the women read what she'd written about me, and sobbed as she did: how much she'd miss me and that I was a 'great person'. I said they have made it through to the other side so often in their lives, also how their strength - their ability to make it through - has taught me. But my words were not coming much and it seemed all cliché, and I wasn't finding the 'how to solve this' or 'how to manage this' answers or techniques... And all are relieved we've got a few weeks yet to come to terms with things... and the mother I walked home talked about getting a first communion class together – again, it seemed to me, showing how things get done. Women do things, organise, plan, despite the turmoil inside. (Notes: 01/13/2000)

One of the women said that she believed that they would move on, that that was what she had been thinking (notes: 01/19/2000).

Nevertheless, I worried about having opened up this vulnerability. Why could I not have started this a year ago - why did I wait? Possibly because it had taken time to realise that this was one thing I could do without threatening staff. Indeed, staff had been quite pleased when I had suggested it at a social development meeting in October. 'All we need is a facilitator', Rita said (notes, 10/7/1999). I did also try a sharing circle in Crystal Creek but no one ever came, illustrating again the differences between the two communities. I also had not known, with the amount of workshops going on, whether there would be any interest. I would have preferred the women to say 'This is what we want' but, given communication difficulties, I doubt this would have happened or, if it had, whether it would have been followed through. 'Asking for help', as women expressed on May 13 1999, was a hard thing to do. It seemed that the best way to 'plan' things was not to plan them and to see what happened. I did mention the idea to Donna - who told me just to do it: 'Do it over at Jade' - and to Joan who said: 'Yes, it is a good idea but start slow as there's a lot of trust issues' (notes: 10/7/1999). For something so intense, it would have been good, I realised, to have begun seventeen months earlier so that a clearer direction could have developed. Yet, I concluded (01/14/2000), having seen the need of these particular women for a place of safety with someone they could trust in order to release their pain, that it seemed the

programme and project development [going on in the community] was not really where these women's hearts were, nor where the emotion was.

Ann had said that the group could continue. I encouraged her to facilitate it. Elaine wanted it to continue also. The final meeting was actually the only 'structured' meeting. I had devised a questionnaire that I asked them to fill out then and there – discussing each question – so they understood what and why I was asking. I wanted them to articulate in words what they do to keep going: their strengths, their coping strategies, who they talk to, who they trust. In other words, getting them to see what they do daily through their own intuition, knowledge and preferences, and that, with or without outsiders to help, they do – they act. Of the four women there that night – all said they wanted someone who listened, who allowed them to say whatever they needed to say. They felt safer with a woman:

Because I just want someone to listen - not tell me what I should think or feel.

I can't sit down and tell my problems to someone I don't know as a friend first and build the trust from there.

Someone with ears – to sit and listen.

They want to change your feelings from bad to good right now. I want to say what's on my mind - to be able to talk my feeling come out in full.

There was also the realisation that they needed to let the Band office know what their support needs were – as well as when a support service wasn't working. Alongside that was the recognition that they had different needs at different times:

Realising that we all have different needs in a counsellor and workshops.

This exercise was also about the women present recognising what they do for themselves when there are no counsellors. All of them had something they did to get through 'when the depression gets too deep': from talking to family, phoning a friend, driving for miles, getting together with a grandchild, writing or reading, 'hollering', hiding in their room, or cleaning.

When I visited a year later, the women had not continued meeting but there had been many changes in their lives: not putting up with violence, calling the police, laying charges, saying things at Band meetings they'd never said before (notes: 12/16/2000).

Conclusion

The sharing circle claimed women's reality in that small community. It was important to those who came. Obvious is the depth of pain and the 'power from within' and 'with others' that flows as a result of naming and releasing it. Emotional support might be the paramount need within or as part of feminist participatory research, depending on the women involved. The ability to talk about one's self without shame can free women to see themselves, what has occurred, and what can be done, more clearly. The effects of trauma make it hard for women to believe they can get 'over the wall to the other side' as Liz describes it (07/6/1999) in order to believe in themselves. The next two chapters concluding this study analyse what occurred during this time at Jade Creek and how it informs feminist participatory research.

Sharing Circle Participatory Process: Responding to Jade Creek Women's Emotional Needs.

<p>Participatory research as a way to further explore service needs in response to level of violence/abuse women had experienced and as spoken about in a previous one-to-one counselling relationship, particularly by Jade Creek women. But I need to be open to what participatively comes together in the community.</p>	<p>There are many 'healing' services coming into the community as well as a weekly female counsellor— From what women are saying and their desire to talk to someone, — there is an obvious need to explore women's emotional support needs within the community.</p>	<p>I hold back on a women's support group because, from my reading, it might not be academically seen as 'research.' (e.g. Maguire, 1987; Cancian, 1996). Also, I am afraid of getting too emotionally involved and therefore overwhelmed by what women are going through in the face of proposal-writing and research demands. Had the sharing circle started earlier though, a more sustainable process may have developed over a longer-term engagement.</p>	<p>Women at Jade have a lot of knowledge from being in the 'other' community — especially in terms of services needs. This comes out as we brainstorm around the childcare. Women saw the need for a preventative approach to child protection. Liz' letter and renovation delays suggest that women and children's need for support are not as much a community priority as they are for those participating in developing the childcare.</p>	<p>Yet men also need support — and women see this. Thus the childcare can support both male and female interests. Women and men are both affected by who has access to employment and resources in the Band. Previous Jade Creek community meetings as well as the formation of 'Spruce Society' indicate a desire to come up with community-driven solutions.</p>	<p>A community development meeting held by Band staff brings few people out — and is mainly directed by Band staff — although Jade Creek people (all women) do bring forward some deeper concerns.</p>	<p>I suggest women's sharing circles at both Crystal Creek and Jade Creek — to Band staff, after thinking about it and listening for over a year. Staff are quite supportive preferring me in a counselling role than at the Band office. The Jade Creek circle becomes the highlight of the week — and a circle at Crystal Creek doesn't develop. The focus becomes one of allowing women the time, space and safety to talk about themselves and what they're going through, to affirm their knowledge and their actions, and to release pent-up emotions. No one wants it to end and it consequently ends prematurely when I leave after 3-4 months — but a year later, individual women have made substantial changes in their lives.</p>
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SECTION FOUR

CHAPTER TEN:

ANALYSIS

Having outlined in the preceding three chapters the research project that I undertook, I will now offer a theoretical analysis to place it in context.

The post-colonial legacy and its effect on participatory research

The history of Department of Indian Affairs control means that people have been used to 'taking it', that is, to having little say in community direction and to being on the receiving end of government paternalism. This approach was established in the 1876 Indian Act which made First Nations people into 'wards', 'so that actions deemed to be for their benefit could be taken without their consent or their involvement in design or implementation' (RCAP, 1996, 2[2], p.248).

Although the hierarchical system of elected Chief and Council was imposed through the Indian Act, it has become integrated into how things are decided and run at the community level (Cassidy, 1991; Mercredi, 1993; Mussell, 1993; RCAP, 1996 4(2); Gray-Withers, 1997; interviews with Mark and Alice). Mussell (1993) identifies the need for Aboriginal people to realise what they know and to use it in resolving their own problems, in response to a

history of external, hierarchical control prescribing ill-fitting, fragmented programmes. People need to recognise the effects of trauma on their lives and that they require emotional support in order to take on the changes ahead of them (Mussell 1993; also interview with Mark). Mussell encourages a Freirian-based approach through which community members can begin to look at internalised oppression and focus on strengths rather than deficits. Similarly, Mussell sees community development as important in order to 'strengthen the fabric of life that is shared by all families' (p.116) and to counter the norm of top-down, anti-dialogical decision-making. This fits well with participatory research because it moves 'capacity-building' from the political and administrative realms into dealing with inequalities at the community level (Eade, 1997). Aboriginal women are concerned about being taken seriously as 'equals' in male-dominated communities and about the dichotomisation of social and political development (RCAP, 1996, 4(2); Gray-Withers, 1997). All of these elements were to the fore in my involvement in Jade Creek. There *was* movement towards looking at community development in the Band administrator's desire to get people together to start building momentum. The 1994 community plan as developed through community meetings with an external facilitator (10/13/1998) had not been implemented by those involved once the facilitator left – an example of a one-off, mechanistically-applied 'participatory' process (Guijt and Shah, 1998).

Recurrent throughout the literature is the abysmal absence in the history of DIA of preventive health and social services, in particular in response to child protection concerns and violence and abuse against women (from Armitage, 1993 to McKenzie, 1997). In remote areas, the lack of adequate services and the inaccessibility of outside services add to life-threatening situations (Allen, 1993; Ferguson and Trainer, 1995). The fear is that the current off-loading of federal services, through programmes to fund local provision, will amount to less money to provide equivalent services in communities that have not yet been able to develop the necessary infrastructure and/or whose needs already reach way beyond available resources (Brant, 1993; Favel-King, 1993; Gray-Withers, 1997). Communities mainly operate in crisis mode (RCAP, 1993; Monture-Angus, 1996). Outside services often do not fit and can do more harm than good because they are primarily designed for urban Euro-Canadian people and priorities (Armitage, 1993; Brant, 1993; Timpson, 1995). It is essential, then, that communities do develop their own responses which is no easy task. It can be a full-time job writing grant proposals and getting them in before the funding is all gone (Driben and Trudeau, 1983; Monture-Angus, 1996).

Short-term employment and contracted services directed at community health and social needs mean that there is little history of developing a local programme, over the long-term, that actually works (Driben and Trudeau, 1983; Mussell, 1993). Furthermore, the history of top-down control has

simply been transferred to Band administration. So-called 'participation' often happens only at the level of consultation with community representatives, who purport to name and represent community needs to policy-makers (Helin, 1993; Hick, 1997). Those benefiting from the increased administrative control and political responsibilities at local level, and who have the most input into formerly government-run programmes, are a select group (Jackson, 1993). In other words, there is not a 'bottom-up' process happening through which community members, even in a small community, are automatically included in developing community directions. In fact, my data on the childcare programme illustrate how hard it was for local people to get heard. Post-DIA, it is still new for community-based service providers to be controlling their own programmes. 'Community consultation' becomes consultation with them and not with service users (Helin, 1993). Those being trained are those who are now in para-professional positions at the community level (RCAP, 1993; notes: 06/16/1999). It is not, in other words, about developing the 'capacity' of less equal community members whose educational aspirations are seen as their own problem (e.g. Liz's letter, 07/8/1999; also Marianne saying she had no help from the Band to finish her education in her interview of September 15, 1999). Where local people who are outside the hierarchy do get things done, as in establishing the childcare facility, it can be largely through their own efforts with community administration and politics often putting obstacles in the way (Brant, 1993). The impetus to do participatory research came from

my hope that it might help explore some of these dimensions of service need and delivery.

Obstacles to participatory research

A history of exclusive decision-making blocks a grassroots participatory approach. The treaty process, potentially most important for the future, is not participative and does not interest community members. Other issues, such as employment, are voiced as more urgent. With jobs so scarce, the community is divided through privilege-based access to real employment opportunities, particularly when the Band hires staff. Both men and the women involved in setting up the childcare have shown that they want to be working. The provision of childcare is also a practical support to other women seeking jobs. In this sense, the participatory research I undertook did support a practical need for both men and women and saw a follow-on in terms of adult education opportunities in relation to childcare and other training.

First Nations women, according to Fiske (1995), have had to manoeuvre themselves into strategic political and administrative positions in order to ensure benefits to the rest of their family, including unemployed male members. In this sense, they have been contradictorily caught between, on the one hand, exerting their own means of influence and maintaining strategic control while often, on the other, being victims of male violence in the home. The research reported here took these two aspects into account in relation to

these particular women: their need for material support so they could access opportunities, and their need for emotional support so they could live lives free from violence and abuse. Monopolisation of limited resources, competition, jealousy and distrust, resulting from a history of colonialism and continued socio-economic marginalisation, leaves a community without the necessary 'social capital' through which reciprocal relations between people and family groups can assist in taking care of mutual needs and improving the overall quality of life (Buckland, 1998). People may not participate in community development because of animosity between family groups and therefore factionalism (Foley and Flowers, 1992). Women in First Nations communities have the added fear that their needs and interests will not be prioritised in the advent of self-government (RCAP, 1996, 4(2); Gray-Withers, 1997): 'Their lack of control is reflective of the lack of control First Nations people have had over their lives for 125 years' (Gray-Withers, 1997, p.96). Women told the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples that male-female roles must be recreated if self-government is not to perpetuate what has happened as a result of colonialism:

Our roles and responsibilities have been altered. Women have had to take more responsibility, not only for the family but for the community; and [yet] many times, as women we are left out of the decision-making process (Lillian Sanderson, RCAP, 1996 4(2), p.56).

A visible and damaging division fundamental to this research was that, between the two communities, one holds the administrative power-base and therefore the control over the dissemination of jobs and training, money and support services. Jade Creek people do not see themselves as part of 'one' community and therefore as sharing a common 'vision' with Crystal Creek (interviews with Joan and John). The need to establish a voice and a sense of autonomy, and the fact that this *can* be done, with work, comes through in Barbara's description of the 'Spruce Society' and the way it supports those involved in 'standing up and speaking for themselves' (07/8/1999). In terms of capacity building, the Spruce Society is about people taking more control over their own lives and learning the skills to do so. Unfortunately, it was hard to get Band staff to understand the value of community members taking their own initiatives given the history, the power base, and the economic uncertainties they face. John, also a member of the Spruce Society, said they had had to be 'proactive', to take risks and do things for themselves (11/24/1999). People in power have to be willing to share power, certainly for a participatory process to occur (Maguire, 1996). The competitive nature of relations between the two communities means that what people know, what they do, the ingenuity they practise (to make ill-fitting job descriptions, for example, that have been decided elsewhere, amenable to a reality that demands immense flexibility) are unfortunately not seen as strengths or sources of learning to be tapped by all concerned, including Band staff. Rather, staff were blamed for not following these job-descriptions

(08/24/1999). Local knowledge is not capitalised on as a source of information about what works best in the community. The lack of communication between the two communities and between staff was immensely frustrating, as was my struggle to encourage staff to value what community members were saying. This lack of communication, as indicated in the childcare data, is about control. By controlling information, people are left in the dark as to what they're entitled to and how decisions are made. (interviews with Joan and Alice; see also Cohen and Coxall, 1992; Gottlieb, 1992; Gaventa, 1993; Callahan et al., 1998).

An aspect of this that must be recognised is how busy staff, Chief and Councillors are. There is simply no time to process what is happening. Estelle brought this out well when she said that 'who we really are' was not coming out in the push towards treaty (07/29/1999). This busy-ness seems familiar in DIA-First Nations relations (Driben and Trudeau, 1983), but under the control of the former so that the persistent need to apply for a 'few measly dollars', as Mark put it, consumes time needed to 'build capacity'. This is becoming more prevalent as governments off-load human services to community-based agencies that ultimately become overwhelmed with providing ameliorative short-term services and writing proposals rather than actually hearing what their 'service users' are saying (Constantino-David, 1995; Rahman, 1995; Eade, 1997).

The role of the white researcher in post-colonial contexts

Against this backdrop, it was hard to come in as a white person and be taken at face value. 'Trust' became more of an issue between myself and community power brokers than between myself and the women at Jade Creek. Wolf (1996) wonders if many participatory research projects end early because of similar circumstances:

It is possible that the small-scale and short term nature of these projects... is not only related to conflicting interests but results from the wish of non-participants to see the project ended, which becomes easier once the researcher/activist is gone (Wolf, 1996, p.31).

White people are not wanted, as clearly articulated by Laurie who said Indian people no longer want them telling them what to do. This is quite understandable; the women in the Band office did not really need me there, but the money I applied for helped. I was in the nebulous position of not really being wanted by female staff while, at the same time, creating jobs for community people, paying my own way and having a stronger bond with women 'over the mountain'. Also, I was not sure of my motive (given tensions). Feminist researchers and social workers can get caught up in our need to 'rescue' marginalised people (Wolf, 1996; Razack, 2000), when 'marginalised' people do not look at it that way. Estelle told me not to expect to be thanked, no one else does (notes: 03/31/1999).

Clearly, staff and I were not truly collaborating on these proposals and the isolationism meant no one knew what anyone else was doing. Obviously, I was consulting staff about what was needed, usually catching them individually - for example: Rita and Marianne about language training; numerous staff about what was needed for employment training; and the social development committee about the Aboriginal Healing Foundation funding. I obtained letters of support and endorsement and each proposal required a Band Council resolution. The real problem was how funding was ultimately used and who benefited, which was why I did not volunteer to write final reports.

Marianne's continuous need to discuss staff problems, my own proposal-writing frustrations, and the lack of communication and collaboration surrounding the childcare initiative drew me towards wanting to facilitate some form of dialogue between staff about what they would want to change, based on their own experiences. Yet again, subjective reactions and stereotypical assumptions intervened through which my poorly written and consequently misconstrued letter could not be discussed so that we could all learn and build bridges of understanding. Instead, it became oppositionally dichotomised into 'me' and 'them', 'white' and 'Indian'. I felt awful, especially in the face of doing 'anti-oppressive' and 'feminist' participatory

research. That was actually the time I thought I should leave and began making plans to do so.

I consistently worried about my intrusion. As Green (1998) says, any involvement, even 'participatory', is going to upset community balance. Although I took seriously the need to live in the community, not only to get to know it but also to assess the possibilities of engaging in PR/PAR, I was then too close to what was happening and became too emotionally and physically involved. This is plainly warned against, not only in conventional qualitative research but also in social work practice (May, 1993; Stanford, 1995; Pithouse, 1996; Padgett, 1998). On the other hand, I do not know, had I not lived in the community and appreciated its preoccupations and divisions, that anything consistent could have developed. From an ethnographic perspective, living in a First Nations community for Lithman (1983) meant he was able to get a better idea of its complexity:

Only with the passing of time will the fieldworker be allowed to gain a more comprehensive insight, and only then will one's initial observations be put in their proper perspective (ibid., p.29).

Long-term fieldwork also reveals knowledge that is concealed and/or only revealed in fragments to an outsider (Pottier, 1997). Too many major decisions have been made for and about Aboriginal people and their lives on

limited, bureaucratic information derived from one-off or short-term encounters (Lithman, 1983; Collier, 1993; McDonald and Brownlee, 1995; see also Chambers, 1983 and 1993). Staying in the community was based on my hope that participatory research would take root in what community members identified as important (Maguire, 1987). In the event, divisions, power dynamics and hierarchical decision-making made it hard to visualise much by way of participatory endeavours (Buckland, 1998; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000). An organisational desire has to be there for participatory research to build on something that can be sustained at the community level (Khanna, 1996; Eade, 1997). Yet, being in the community did enable me to capitalise on opportunities when participation, no matter if relatively minuscule, could occur. In this sense it had the chance of challenging hierarchical ways of doing things simply by encouraging or opening up dialogue when dialogic moments happened. For example, the discussions about Band members' experiences of residential schools and their impact were all spur of the moment, the proposal-writing seminar turned into a discussion on racism, and the mental health meeting with Estelle and Laurie became a discussion on mothering and was the first time I heard Laurie talk about some of her personal struggles.

Feminist participatory research and subjectivity

A major issue affecting my ability to do participatory research was what was subjectively happening between myself and the female staff who represented the interests of one extended family. It was not until fifteen months after

returning to the community to undertake my research that I was told it was Jade Creek women, and not the Band staff, who had pushed to have me return (12/8/1999). Bishop (1994), in her presentation of what it is to be an 'ally' to 'oppressed' others, suggests that an 'ally' should be wanted:

It is fair for you to ask them to decide: do they want you to leave? Or will they provide you with some support in your efforts to become an ally? (ibid., p.99)

My guess is that the dominant personalities on staff would have wanted me to leave, although Marianne said she'd expected me to stay for two years. (04/30/1999).

Other feminist participatory researchers also speak of conflicts between outsiders and paid staff. Maguire (1987) realised that she and the group she was with posed a threat to the overarching agency. Martin (1996) was in a similar position with the only, and key, staff member of a women's health collective. George's (1996) feminist participatory research was not of interest to the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with the women with whom she engaged. Khanna (1996), working for a volunteer organisation in India, speaks of disruptive researchers who do not know the context and who come in with their own agendas. Shaw (1995) was on a different wavelength from the NGO she connected with in Goa. Seymour (1997) also found herself

ill informed when trying to engage with village women in India. When it takes years for change to happen, even for local or regional facilitators (Burkey, 1993, Rowlands, 1997; Guijt and Shah, 1998; Townsend et al., 1999), it is perhaps bizarre that most outsiders expect to get it 'right' first time round. Feminist researchers at least tend to be more honest about the conflicts because the subjective experience of engaging in research with others, as well as the power issues of such an engagement, are not ignored but are used to reveal deeper understandings of women's reality and how difference informs the research relationship (Kleinman, 1991; Reinhartz, 1992; Martin, 1996; Wolf, 1996).

The structural and subjective control of women at the Band office affected my desire to be in the community as well as what could be done through participatory research. More controlling women can inhibit the participation of other women and therefore the potential of the research (Martin, 1996; Cornwall, 1998). As Martin (1996) experienced with 'Alison', I too found band staff to be 'powerful' women, which also had an effect on the dialogic participation of Jade Creek community women at childcare meetings (01/19,1999; 05/21/1999). Gender, 'race' and education were relevant to how I myself was perceived. The complex dynamics resulting from difference, diversity, hierarchy, subjective experience and consequent distrust all affect a participatory process striving to overcome the effects of inequalities (Whitmore, 1994; Schrijvers, 1995; Wright and Nelson, 1995; Wolf, 1996;

Smith, 1997; Humphries, 1999). As Maguire (1996) says, trust cannot be 'hot-housed' (p.35); it takes time to develop.

Participatory research is not without its own power dynamics (Healy, 2001) and to ignore these is to deny how power operates and how women use it to further their own interests (Foucault, 1986; Villarrael, 1992). It is also to ignore the dynamics between insiders and outsiders, particularly when the former are tired of outsiders telling them what to do (Cornwall, 1996; Arratia and de la Maza, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999). The situation between myself and female staff perpetuated itself because I could not find an effective way to discuss it and lacked the confidence to. When I did try, I encountered defensiveness, for example with Laurie when I was asking her what they expected from non-Natives, with Rita when I asked for information from her, and with Caroline who often looked at me with disdain. As Martin (1996) remarks, these intense complexities are not presented in most PR/PAR accounts. How power is used, and how resistance affects what can transpire to change 'power-over' into something more participatory, depends on each situation and on the personalities involved. I thought I was not listening well and that I consequently came across as domineering:

I think this proposal-writing has put me in a mode of verbal diarrhoea and insensitivity, like many a 'bureaucrat' – got to get the job done...

I keep sabotaging myself, putting my foot in my mouth, 'directing' rather than 'listening', stating my opinion rather than honouring theirs.

I should find out more – be observant (03/24/1999)

Besides the pressure of being paid to write proposals for the Band and therefore to produce successful proposals, I was also dealing with my own lack of security:

It's almost a humorous interplay of oppressions... I come across wrong, I find myself trying ways of saying things to see how they come out. It's new for me to be 'assertive', to ask questions I need to ask, yet it comes across as interfering. I think I come across as a know-it-all sometimes when, actually, I'm only just finding my tongue (04/12/1999).

Participatory and feminist engagements demand that we look at ourselves. However, in looking at ourselves, we may also have to reflect on whether we should really be there at that point in time and whether, by being there, we unduly and possibly negatively affect the people around us as well as the dynamics (see George, 1996). Ackers' (1993) reflection on researchers creating situations by their presence is fundamental to reflexive research, and it becomes part of what we use as data and as analysis, but it can also be worrying and distressing (Silverman, 2000). Kleinman (1991, p.194) notes

that fieldwork is less than 'romantic', demanding that we own where we are at at the time and therefore, how it will influence our reactions. I was in a particularly volatile time in my life which probably was not a good juncture to be in such an emotionally demanding situation. Bishop (1994) advises us to focus on our own oppression rather than think we can effectively help others through theirs. That is something they have to do for themselves, to which we can only be allies in as much as they want us to be. But, within that, we need to be aware of our oppressor attitudes:

Remember that everyone in the oppressor group is part of the oppression. It is ridiculous to claim you are not sexist if you are a man or not racist if you are white, and so on. No matter how much work you have done on that area of yourself, there is more to be done (Bishop, 1994, p.97).

Outsiders with their participatory research aims might not be welcomed as 'help' but, rather, in accordance with previous experiences with outsiders (Mosse, 1994; Arratia and de la Maza, 1997; Debbink and Ornelas, 1997).

One of my reasons for not wanting to attend the staff retreat was because I felt I was too much in the way – hearing, seeing, saying too much – in my ambiguous and nebulous capacity as proposal-writer (02/26/1999).

Nevertheless, I was asked to help facilitate the retreat and I went. As it was, I *was* in the way! When staff were asked to meet in their 'departments' to talk

about policy needs, I joined the two lone school-bus drivers. For some reason, the Education Co-ordinator, Caroline, did not join them. They talked about problems they were having and policies they'd like to change quite openly with me, the empathetic outsider. Interestingly, the facilitator and Band Manager's sister, asked the bus drivers to share what they had talked about with the larger group. I wondered, feeling somewhat paranoid, whether this was because I had sat with them. The bus drivers did share, and I feared, given the result, that they had been emboldened to do so by my being there. The Education Co-ordinator was noticeably livid and publicly chastised them. I wondered if the continued frowning at me by Caroline and Rita long afterwards was because they thought I had instigated this (02/26/1999). Guijt and Shah (1998) and Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) warn not to make vulnerable people more vulnerable, as I fear I did by 'listening'. I wondered how people could voice their concerns without it being taken personally (also interview with Mark) – again reflective of the immense role of the subjective in the 'objective' world of community planning in a small semi-isolated community.

My 'listening' came from a feminist and critical perspective and so it seemed like I oppositionalised by insinuation – by allowing people to talk about their problems. Jade Creek women, and the bus drivers, had an obviously different relationship with Band staff with whom they were also in some way related (see e.g. Guijt and Shah, 1998). For example, after the bus drivers episode,

Ann said Caroline's response had not been unusual and nor had it unduly upset her. Much later, she advised me to take a break – that one needs to in order to keep a perspective (12/18/1999). Others developed other philosophies. Donna took the long-term view, believing that the leading families would one day need the help of people like herself who had had to pick themselves up often enough: 'Lots of elephants in their closets. One day they'll crash and I'll be there to pick them up' (01/4/2000).

PR/PAR has been criticised for causing conflict between the groups it represents, rather than developing opportunities for negotiation (Stringer, 1996; Healy, 2001). This suggests that a PR/PAR facilitator needs to be trained in relevant communication, conflict management and pedagogical skills (Maclure, 1990; Walters, 1996; Cousins, 1998). Social workers are said to have relevant group and community skills (Sarri and Sarri, 1992; Pandey, 1998; Altpeter et al., 1999; McNicoll, 1999). Participatory research could be offered as a specialist course in academic institutions in order to produce competent participatory researchers with the proper credentials (Heaney, 1993; Stringer, 1996; Lane, 1999; Niebanck, 1999). Yet the approach is about relationships. It is about 'accompanying' others in their own search for empowerment and how that transcribes into their own ways of doing things (Wilson and Whitmore, 1995; Rowlands, 1997). It is also about having to go through a change process myself. Professionals and academics can find it difficult to lay aside their expertise, authority and self-protective shields.

I did not know how to close the gap between myself and Band staff members (cf. Moss, 1995). I did try; for example: saying when I felt I had over-stepped the mark; apologising after the letter I wrote and acknowledging my own position in that; facilitating a discussion on racism that told me more about their lived experience; staying more out of the way, doing the mental health research, and not worrying about who decided what about the childcare, while still facilitating what I could in terms of dialogue and information-sharing. But even this felt like orchestrating the situation in the name of participatory research because there was not a two-way desire for connection. Probably what was hardest to face and, even as I write this is still hard to understand, was how strongly it affected me emotionally throughout my time there and since. I think, like Moss (1995) it is realising the distance that is between us. Similarly, what happens subjectively between insiders and outsiders is mostly said in passing in participatory research accounts (Martin, 1996). The subjective effects of oppression, of power-over, of violence and abuse, of social marginalisation, run deep and affect how we relate to each other, how we treat each other and how we interpret what happens between us (Bishop, 1994). For this reason, Bishop talks of the need for women's personal healing along with social and political action. This was also evident in the need for women in Rowlands (1997) to spend a substantial amount of time overcoming the personal effects of oppression before taking on larger community-based projects.

Access and gatekeeping

It is always important to go through Band leadership before entering for research purposes (Lithman, 1983; Berardi and Donnelly, 1999). In fact, some First Nations have placed a moratorium on outsiders coming in to study them unless they have commissioned it themselves (Berardi and Donnelly, 1999). The problem with this channel is that going through community leadership will very likely not be representative of the needs of people in less influential positions or of excluded people, so that 'participatory research' may be manipulated or blocked by the agendas and influence of those in control (Burkey, 1993; Mosse, 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Martin, 1996; Cornwall, 1998). I initially stressed to Chief, Council and staff that I did not know what I was going to research because the impetus had to come from the people themselves so that it could be used to serve their needs. That was about the extent of the talk about 'research'. For one thing, the old Chief was leaving to take up a job as an alcohol and drug counsellor elsewhere, which obviously attests to her focus on wellness. The new Chief was very preoccupied with treaty, natural resources and economic development, and, for the time I was there, was seldom around. That left me in the hands predominantly of staff: a new Band Manager who had not expected me to be there and a family of staff who had not really wanted me to be there. In this sense, looking back, the original 'gatekeepers', the old and new Chiefs, may not have been representative of how other people felt which might not have boded well for participatory research developing over time (Mosse, 1994).

Contradictorily, though, I could have been more of an asset to staff, given the load that was on their plates. I did meet twice with Chief and Council (December 3, 1998; March 22, 1999), mainly trying to pin down an effective role I could play but to no avail. This merely revealed a primary difficulty I seemed to have in communicating with administration on how participatory research could be of benefit, for example, in ironing out communication problems. The reflection below indicates how, after a few months, I was wondering if there was anything I could offer the Band through the research:

Not sure if I 'need' to be here – this in response to perceptions that people are able to do it themselves, push through things on their own, and that they want to control it, that I am often pushed off to the side in relation to these proposals that I have put a lot of time and effort into... But, as each proposal came through, it was always evident people had not taken an interest. Not 'theirs'. Yet, not taking an interest meant they did not know what the proposal was about and were not interested in the potential, e.g. developing it into a long-term programme (01/9/1999).

Often, as mentioned, the mountain symbolically represented the communication barrier. Staff often met behind closed doors, often made decisions without consultation, were often not there to talk things over, often

avoided conversations or providing answers (09/ 1998 to 09/1999; interviews with Joan and Alice).

Why hadn't she [Donna] pushed for two workers? She said, 'easier not to say anything, too much politics'. I smiled – told her I just observe and wonder what she's thinking when she's not saying anything (04/11/1999).

Lack of communication with me, as epitomised by closed meetings, was indicative of my place as an outsider to community business, including the running of the childcare. In retrospect, this was probably good. It reminded me of my place.

There were more layers to the situation than merely the gatekeepers who originally gave me access and the staff with whom I actually had to work. The women at Jade Creek represented another level of interaction for me and were often more welcoming. Staff never stopped my involvement with these women. In fact, they [staff] were represented at most meetings. Estelle, as Band Councillor and later as the childcare manager, provided a conduit to the Band office. Therefore, unlike the agency that regarded Maguire (1987) as giving too much of her time and energy to former residents, I never received any overt message that I should not be involved with Jade Creek women or spending equal time at Jade as at Crystal Creek. Again, this must be situated

in the context: that relations between Jade Creek women and Band staff were interdependent and complex. Whereas the women participating with Maguire only came together for a specific purpose, the women at Jade and Crystal would always be together, one way or another. As Cornwall (1998, p. 51) says: ‘...it is vital to situate individuals within their own social networks’ in order to understand participatory research in the context of community dynamics. In this sense, staff ultimate control from the Band office location of what subsequently happened at the childcare also has to be situated in the relationship between Jade Creek women and Crystal Creek women.

Finding a grassroots issue – the childcare

Women’s need for childcare provision was identified from the outset of the research, particularly for the women at Jade Creek where the majority of pre-schoolers were located. Childcare was needed for community events, including training courses, and also simply because women who were parenting and under pressure needed a break (10/1998 to 01/2000). Childcare was needed if women were to be involved in Aboriginal economic, as well as self-government directions (RCAP, 1996, 4[2], p.87). Jade Creek Band exemplified the split in many First Nations between political/economic and social/health/education interests, characterised as polarised male-female domains (RCAP, 1996 4[2]; Gray-Withers, 1997). The childcare centre was not seen as a priority by Chief and Council nor by the Housing Co-ordinator (07/1998 to 12/2000).

I was not prepared to think of planning the childcare as 'participatory research' until I was sure that women wanted to be involved. Rather than straightforwardly deciding to do participatory research with women (e.g. Maguire, 1987; Cancian, 1996; Martin, 1996; Seymour, 1997), I first wanted to see what evolved while facilitating, as far as I could, a participatory process. This is similar to Khanna's (1996) and Rowlands' (1997) accounts which reflect a gradual process of women being empowered to research their own lives and needs.

An advisory group of parents was expected by funders but, in my view, it had to accord with a sense of what women wanted to do for themselves, otherwise it could become just another prescribed activity (see also Altpeter e. al., 1999, from a social work perspective). If participatory research was to inform an egalitarian social care practice that was not about imposed interventions then, as far as possible, the childcare had to be what women wanted and were prepared to help develop. It was not only about participation but also about the importance of their knowledge as women, mothers and Aboriginal people living in this community and this Band. It wasn't *just* about setting up a childcare program common to many women's lives – but about taking control of it because they *know* and have a right to. A final evaluation would have assisted in finding out if those who had participated in this initial stage – agreed.

In the initial stages of getting to know the community, there seemed a number of possibilities through which participatory research might develop including the youth group, who wanted to explore their own needs; the childcare; the residential schooling issue, and as things surfaced, Band staff communication. In the event, the development of the childcare met a high priority need, was amenable to a feminist perspective, started from women's lived lives as mothers, and re-continued from a previous relationship we had already developed during my earlier stay.

McNicoll (1999) suggests that the less the social distance, the better the chance for trust and participation to develop. Despite profound differences between myself and the women at Jade in our lived experiences, there had been a previous close sharing that had established a certain amount of trust. Considering the history of non-participatory programme development with First Nations, and the frequent silencing of women, beginning from the point of view of the mothers of pre-schoolers probably was something different. Certainly, it was new from a child welfare point of view in this community to be including mothers in programme development as well as to take their needs for childcare and emotional and material support as important in their own right, without forgetting their children's needs (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Hooper, 1992; Callahan, 1993; Krane, 1997; Swift, 1995a and b). While I was not sure women saw their participation as monumental, it might have been

more significant in the community than I then recognised and it might also have been a way of allowing other things to come forward. In other words – we don't know the effects of participation in decision-making by those who've been regularly excluded – even when that decision-making directly affects their lives.

Those involved in the program on a day-to-day basis or affected by a policy usually know a great deal about it. They should be the centre or beginning point in the study (Hick, 1997, p.75).

Furthermore, getting the childcare going was manageable, particularly thanks to already having trained community people. Nor was it alien to what women knew or to their everyday lives, it was a service need identified by Band staff and mothers, and it was something with which I could help in my ascribed proposal-writing role. The sharing circles constituted an additional layer of what I was able to share with local women and met emotional needs that typically remain unspoken yet that reflect a multi-faceted history of colonial and male domination.

It was evident from our first formal meeting in October, 1998, that women needed to talk about a range of concerns affecting their everyday lives. What women had to deal with highlighted the need for emotional support and I wondered if I should facilitate a women's support group, but besides obstacles

mentioned, I was afraid of taking on too much too early in light of already juggling the PhD and proposal-writing.

Capitalising on criteria

The Aboriginal Head Start funding criteria stress the need to include ‘parents’ (in this case, mothers) to learn along with their children (and not to get a break from them) and to ensure that children received proper professional medical and psychological interventions, again as monitored through the childcare centre (Health Canada, 1998). The implications were that mothers and children were both deficient in some way and that mothers were responsible for the lack of learning opportunities their children had previously received. The dearth of employment and of social support for mothers to adequately care for their children in an isolated reserve community was not the issue (Swift, 1995a; Monture-Angus, 1996; Gray-Withers, 1997). Using childcare as a way to teach and monitor especially low-income and single-parent mothers is prevalent in the child-minding institutions of the dominant society (Prentice and Ferguson, 1997) and, as mentioned, Aboriginal AHS was bent on out-doing provincial standards ‘of excellence’ (Health Canada, 1998, p.1).

Yet, through feminist participatory research, central was validating women’s knowledge and their needs along with their children’s. It was knowing that in real life – these are not dichotomised, but obviously different (Dominelli, 2002). Even children need their own space. And it was supporting *these*

women's aspirations and saying 'yes' to them in defiance of oppression in all its forms. So, despite and because of AHS criteria, women's involvement was essential to participatory engagement. Combining AHS funds, the BCACCS funds and provincial subsidies to low income mothers – we could run a full-time programme. Community women then could make the programme work for them – something they were adept at doing given the decades of mismatched externally-defined health and social services.

Staff involvement

Band staff became actively involved in the project from the third formal meeting, notably the Health Co-ordinator (Laurie), Alcohol and Drug Counsellor and trained ECE (Joanne), and Education Co-ordinator (Caroline). This did limit the local women's participation, as I noticed, because staff were more likely to decide things and on the basis of that everyone would agree (01/19/1999; 05/20/1999). Although this is not entirely so as our October 16, 1999 budget meeting shows. Marianne and Caroline's presence did not interfere with Elaine and Liz talking about how positive it was that the childcare began with parent involvement and Carla brought up the thorny issue of staff being paid on a par with other childcares – and had even called other childcares to find out about pay-scales. We also spoke openly of becoming a non-profit organisation – which would result in a certain amount of autonomy from the Band office. And so there was certainly the chance for dialogue – if only more of these opportunities could have developed. Instead

– the Band office staff actually ran the childcare – making all the important decisions; this despite not being part of the on-going dialogue between those of us at Jade and with the childcare licensing people. Staff’s idea for a childcare at Crystal Creek was alien, given where the impetus, need and facility were, and would cause a great deal more work. Similarly, a job specification for a community researcher was primarily determined by staff and excluded many potential candidates, including the women actually involved in the initiative. Elaine’s remark afterwards, that ‘They have jobs, we don’t. We are two different communities. Our needs are different’ (Jan, 19, 1999) reflects the need to hire someone from Jade Creek who understands these things. On the other hand, Band staff did hire Lorraine and Estelle who were both from Jade Creek.

I wanted to support the women at Jade Creek whereas, it seemed to me, staff came from a dominant vantage point of wanting to change them. I reacted because their judgements (e.g. social development meeting, 12/14/1998) reminded me of dominant Canadian society’s child welfare practices that ultimately pit women against women (Swift, 1995 a and b). Adding to this is Brett’s reference to the ‘poorer cousin’ image – that Jade Creek people didn’t have it as together as those at Crystal Creek and their employment situation clearly indicates that (interviews with Alice, Brian, Donna, Joan, John, Joanne). Prevalent community discourses replicate dominant societal values and judgements, for example, directed at good and bad mothering which

contradictorily ignores a history of how these discourses have perpetually robbed Aboriginal woman and communities of their children (Swift, 1995a). As an outsider and counsellor, I could at least provide women the space to say their own unsayables:

She felt guilty getting the tubal [ligation, sterilisation] but, after a few months, knew it was right – that she could not mother more children. I told her it took courage to listen to her own voice when all the other (especially Catholic) voices told her she was wrong (09/9/1999).

Supporting Jade Creek women

It seemed to me that women needed support in order to counter discourses that continuously said they could never do enough and that made them solely responsible for the safety and well-being of their children, at the same time as ignoring the lack of material and emotional support they needed in order to make this possible (Hooper, 1992; Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a; Coward, 1997; Krane, 1997). Government support may create an élite few within a community who then act as mediators between it and outside agencies, while also benefiting from their strategic role (Mercado, 1999; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000). The staff who often made unilateral decisions in relation to other women's lives, were all women:

This behaviour by more dominant groups has often deprived the weaker and more vulnerable social segments of participation in community affairs (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000).

Interesting too is that female staff did not advocate on behalf of the childcare at the political level. Liz took action on her own by writing her letter. Her agency was re-interpreted as a lack of personal responsibility for her own life and choices. This misinterpretation is also prevalent in social work discourse, (see e.g.: Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Dominelli, 1997; Parton, 1998) which does not take into account women's day-to-day reality in either white or Aboriginal societies, or the structural restrictions on women's productive and reproductive roles in patriarchal society, particularly without childcare support (Lopez, 1991; Callahan, 1993; Elson, 1995; Swift, 1995a; Gardiner, 1997). Liz was blamed personally, rather than the focus falling on the lack of socio-economic and political support within the community. It was hard not to see this in gendered terms, with women and children last on the political agenda as Carla and Faith both agreed (09/9/1999; 01/19/2000), ironically reflecting a lack of ownership of child welfare services even though First Nations communities have determinedly struggled for control of these (Armitage, 1993; Helin, 1993; Gray-Withers, 1997; Schmidt, 1997). Problems occur when child protection is more concerned with political control than the well-being and safety of children (Gray-Withers, 1997; Schmidt, 1997). The 'silent pain' or 'mother-death' (Dulwich, 1995, p.11; Monture-Angus, 1996, p.126)

experienced by Aboriginal women as they've had their children taken from them as a matter of course, is not central to discourse on residential schooling and Canadian child welfare. Valuing the knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal mothers (Dulwich Centre, 1995; Myles and Tarrago, 1996) was therefore important to seeing 'childcare' as a resource for women to regain control of their lives, rather than as a child protection service (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a). Women's specific knowledge and experience is seldom separated out from that of 'Aboriginal people' in general. For example, McKenzie et al. (1995) presented a gender neutral account of participatory research into child welfare standards in Manitoba First Nations communities, despite Aboriginal women often being 'multiply jeopardised' because of their gender, 'race,' and class by non-Aboriginal child welfare practices (Callahan, 1993; Swift, 1995a) as well as by the combination of male and structural oppression within their own communities (Fiske, 1995; Koshan, 1997; Razack, 1998).

The thrust of the research with women through the childcare and later the sharing circle was to support women in their own knowledge and agency. 'Power-with' is about 'shared power', and therefore shared responsibility, but it must be up to women leaders to see the benefit of this – for themselves and for other women (Khanna, 1996; Rowlands, 1997; Smith, 1997; Mercado, 1999).

Band staff exercised power-over authority and women seemingly acquiesced, but also manoeuvred and resisted. Female staff seemingly had the best interests of other women at heart, while at the same time being able to control what transpired. Marianne, the Band Manager, made statements about the need for mothers to control the childcare while also making unilateral decisions from the Band office and controlling childcare funds (notes: 10/13/1999). Staff also decided who would be hired, using jobs for favours or as child protection intervention (01/12/2000). Despite Estelle's closeness to certain staff members, her interview was very much about losing favour after she finally kicked out a violent and alcoholic husband (interview: 07/29/1999). The main issue for her on reserve was that she could not trust even those close to her. What subjectively exists between Band staff and other women is complex, hidden in history and the effects of structural, collective and personal oppressions, of which an outsider only gets glimpses of the depth (02/3/1999; 04/13/1999; 12/15/1999; interviews with Marianne, Mark, Alice; also with reference to: Brown et al., 1995; Emberley, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; Koshan, 1997). I was constantly aware that I did not know, and would never be told, the whole story – and I respected the agency in women's choice to protect themselves from me:

she's angry and twists it all around – that I too am intruding on her life, spying ... There's no place to go with this (Notes: July 22, 1999).

Women working on the childcare together could support ‘power to do’, augmenting ‘power from within’, in that women were doing something with other women as well as something for themselves.

Research as practice

I spent a lot of my time over at Jade despite living at Crystal Creek. A participatory research role I played, was simply to support women: to visit, listen, use time between meetings to find out where people were at – what was happening – and to drop into the childcare where I could help out, support the workers, play with the kids and so on. Writing the AHS proposals and others meant I needed people’s input. Women often showed little interest in the AHS proposals possibly because it was one of those obligatory activities like attending meetings. Information-sharing is important from a participatory research point of view, especially in contexts where there is a history of hidden agendas (Arratia and de la Maza, 1997), as well as in social work practice for the same reasons (Callahan et al., 1998). It was also about treating people with respect and dignity believing that they have a right to know and that their input is important to developing services that fit their reality (Callahan et al., 1998). I was trying to influence ‘power to do’ through ‘power-with’ by dropping in on women, helping out, discussing what needs to be done, having informal meetings at the childcare, affirming knowledge,

sharing information, hearing about day-to-day happenings, and simply being a woman supporting other women.

The day-to-day contact assisted in keeping the childcare issue alive – not removed for someone else to handle. It was important to PR/PAR as it built on and continued the dialogue, whereas formal meetings were not necessarily places where people could feel free to express themselves (e.g. community meeting, November 16 and 17, 1998 and February 8, 1999, both facilitated by outsiders; interview with Bret; see also Mosse, 1994; Chambers, 1995; Pottier, 1997 on participatory research agendas that alienate women and ‘weaker voices’). Meeting women spontaneously and in their day-to-day activities seemed to work better than planning a meeting and hoping everyone would show up. Given the uncertainty of demands in women’s lives, things often got in the way of pre-planned activities, e.g.: Liz not attending for a planned research interview (07/7/1999); children being sick and/or women needing to be with their children (11/25/1999; 01/5/2000); also Carla ‘rolling her truck’ (08/4/1999); Lorraine disappearing periodically (09/28/1999); a mother of one of the pre-schoolers being in a serious car accident (12/15/1999); Elaine having her baby, although she did not miss one sharing circle (10/27/1999); and Estelle being away at various other commitments so that, in the end, there was no time for a participatory evaluation of what had happened so far (01/13/2000).

A further background role I tried to play was to support women in speaking their own opinions and encouraging them to make their views known. For instance, Carla and Faith let their views be known about getting the childcare up and running (01/19/2000), Lorraine and Liz each brought up their respective concerns and ideas at the community development meeting (09/9/1999), and I encouraged Liz to voice her perceptions to Lorraine of 'missing steps' in the development of the childcare (08/10/1999). I also supported Liz's letter and then played something of an advocacy role on her behalf with Estelle in her Band Councillor role (07/14/1999). Playing an advocacy role was about supporting local knowledge, for example ECEs and teachers offering expertise on child discipline (01/19/2000), Estelle teaching about crisis intervention (04/21/1999) and Liz teaching about budgeting (02/4/1999).

Was it feminist participatory research?

Women participated as co-researchers, to use PR/PAR terminology, by facilitating their own meetings, participating in discussion, meeting with and quizzing the provincial childcare licensing representatives, making visits to various childcares, having a meeting with staff from another Band, attending two conferences, and therefore networking with people from all over the province who were doing the same things. They brought ideas back with them and had a better sense of the AHS programme. Their knowledge informed the development of the first AHS proposals (03/9/1999 and 09/1/1999), although

it was hard to get them to focus on this aspect. Proposals embodied criteria decided elsewhere and it was hard to muster up an interest in stating aims, objectives, work-plans, and so on. For example, women did not 'own' the questions in the proposal form. They were more concerned about how their children would be treated in the childcare than whether they had any speech problems or how many special needs children there were in the community (AHS proposal, September 1, 1999). An example of a mother's response was Liz saying that children might be slow in their speech but once they were with other children for a time, they would soon get going (08/12/1999). On my visit back to Jade, Estelle talked about how quickly the children had learned over the year since I had been there last, enough to make her enthused about going into ECE training (12/17/2001). This knowledge does not get shared much with psychology experts who usually have the final word as far as children's learning disabilities are concerned (Marks, 1996; Alderson, 1999). Also ignored are different children's different learning styles (Alderson, 1999), something the mothers of the community knew a good deal about as they showed in their planning for the childcare (also in reference to Woollett and Phoenix, 1996).

My approach was to start from women's lived lives and to work participatively with them. Dropping in on them at home, for example, allowed me to hear their preoccupations, to value what they knew, their skills, and what they struggled against:

She showed me the cover-alls she's making Meg – she is so talented. I wish these women would see their abilities. She's making all kinds of things. The sewing group's a great idea (09/9/1999).

Visit with Elaine. At eight months pregnant, still each of her kids gets positive attention. Jamie on her lap, and Nevin. Ashley getting listened to, each getting listened to... (09/17/1999).

With life being lived as each day revealed itself – an opportune ride into town, doctors' appointments, crises, deaths, community activities, unexpected work – meetings happened when everybody seemed to be around:

We joked about when to have the next meeting as one of the women said 'Not Wednesday'. When asked why, she said she did not know. Maybe because she felt more vulnerable on Wednesdays. We all laughed. I said we could have a meeting to decide when to meet (01/5/2000).

Regular childcare meetings usually had a lot to decide, in order to get a funding proposal together, hire a community researcher and then the manager and the ECE, and to organise trips. It became the manager's job to decide on meetings and, with proposals out of the way, I had no reason to. Saying that it

was 'for my research' would not bring women together. In fact, I found myself asking whether there was going to be a meeting and whether I should be there (09/4/1999). Putting paid staff in place meant that mothers were not participating so much. Both Lorraine and Estelle spoke at different times of the need to involve parents but I do not know to what extent managers and staff were serious in this regard and/or who got included. The tendency in the community was for paid staff to run programmes and therefore for others to defer to staff (09/30/1999).

As well as individual knowledge and strengths, there was community knowledge. There were, for example, pockets when critical dialogue ensued about child protection issues. The women's comments echo similar remarks in McKenzie et al. (1995) that child welfare needs to reflect the reality of the community. The approach should be preventive, with support given to parents before the child welfare department is called. The child welfare agency serving this First Nation at the tribal level should, women felt, pay a visit and talk about what was available and how they operated. There was not an agreed-upon community approach to dealing with child protection. People simply called the child welfare agency, which also served to make people suspicious of each other. What women did to protect their children, and the informal support networks in operation at the community level, continued to be invisible to child welfare authorities. For example, Estelle took a young woman's baby so she could get her head together, Martha and Max were

raising their grand-daughter as their own, and so on. We did not get as far as talking about child protection as a group beyond saying that child welfare social workers should come into the community to support women rather than judge them, and to offer them options rather than threaten them with taking their children away (notes: 05/20/1999).

Estelle was also angry at this meeting with the white-imposed, provincially-controlled standards for licensing the childcare, another example of a conflict of values that do not reflect conditions on reserve. For instance, the standards determine physical childcare space per child and the qualifications of personnel, yet these may not be feasible or the most important criteria to local women (RCAP, 1996, 4[2], p.87).

Was it an actor-oriented approach?

Women acted on their own. They wrote letters of support as part of the proposal. Carla looked into wages at other childcares. Lorraine invited the neighbouring community over for a meeting. They engaged in their own research in their own way. Living nearby, they could watch the happenings at the new facility: whether anyone was working there, and who was doing so. Liz did a floorplan in order to get an idea of all that was needed. They knew the facility better than I did, and had made their own assessments on how to use the space. They told the Housing Co-ordinator where to put linoleum and where to put carpet.

Women participate in their own way in their own time and, in a small community, this participation also forms part of everyday goings on. This may be why women took more interest in the childcare than in the treaty negotiations. They were doing what women do everyday anyway: providing volunteer labour in order to develop community services. They are doing more of it as governments and austerity measures decrease support services while at the same time blaming mothers for what could go wrong with their children (Elson, 1995; Boyd, 1997; Krane, 1997; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1997). First Nations women, after all, are aligned and align themselves more with social development than with political and economic change (McIvor, 1991; RCAP, 1996, 4[2]; Gray-Withers, 1997). Women in this community were active in planning activities for their children, for example: soliciting funds to take the entire school on a trip to Vancouver Island; planning the regular community Christmas party; and organising the grand opening of the school (04/16/1999; 01/19/2000).

My bias was to include mothers as a matter of course, as planners, implementers, employees and monitors of the programme. At one level, it is hard to know whether women were doing what they were expected to do by participating in the formation of the childcare. Evidence otherwise was what women did on their own, women's regular attendance at meetings and participation in field trips, Lorraine telling women from the other community

how , as a mother she valued her involvement and found it 'empowering' and Elaine and Liz telling Marianne and Caroline a similar view. Unfortunately, we were never able to evaluate this process as a group, nor did the parents meet again before I left, even though Estelle was eager to include them (11/25/1999). I let go of it to the Band dynamics and to the women themselves. In a community where so much has been prescribed, participation happened most naturally at the level of women influencing and manipulating events in their own direction whenever and wherever they were able without upsetting the overall dynamic and survival pattern of their community (Villarrael, 1992; Jackson, 1997). Frustrating was that the knowledge local women were acquiring as we planned and implemented the childcare could not be shared with community staff so that we were all working in concert. Equally frustrating was that Jade Creek women did not press this need for communication home which I left to them because I didn't know if they wanted to or not. Although it looks like their inclusion in decision-making was not as much a priority as it was for me, such has to be situated in the complex relationships of these women one to another and the 'normal' way of doing things in the Band. This is somewhat reflected in Maguire (1987) where women did not want to press their needs further than a certain point, with agency staff.

Conclusion

Despite many-layered issues, from political (e.g. the post-colonial legacy) to personal (e.g. the attitudes of one powerful family), I did find an issue that grassroots female members of the Jade Creek community wanted to work on, did find a role *with* them, and did assist local women in assuming more control over the direction of their own project than was normally possible in this particular context. Whilst not minimising any of the obstacles created by my being a white outsider, or by mistakes I made along the way, I did carry through a piece of feminist participatory research that stayed true to the spirit of my original intentions. Offering to facilitate the women's sharing circles was an additional level of participation that I was able to share with local women, to which we all gave and from which we all benefited. I found this research project both rewarding and intensely frustrating. I came away from it with many lessons that I will attempt to summarise in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

CONCLUSION

The research study

Much of my previous social work experience had taken place in Canadian First Nations communities and I returned to one in particular to utilise participatory research in investigating and taking action in response to locally identified need. The idea for the research needed to come from the community itself. I wanted to see how PR/PAR could be utilised, knowing that my own learning would occur through engaging in the process. A feminist perspective emerged as important because the research focused on women's childcare and emotional needs in ways that would equally inform feminist social work practice. Using Mies' (1993) idea of 'conscious partiality' and Schrijvers (1995) further interpretation of it, participatory research was pursued towards the benefit of women with young children, large families and sometimes violent partners in the poorer Jade Creek community. The women there and I knew each other through a previous counselling relationship and so a degree of trust and familiarity was in place as an entry point to continued work together.

Theoretical overview

This research drew primarily on a feminist standpoint perspective. Feminist standpoint, as realised through participatory engagement, focuses on women's

experiences of oppression and a commitment to active change.

Intersubjective connection informs feminist interactions where empathetic and mutually transformative closeness enable a more equal research relationship that sometimes concludes in long-term friendships (Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996).

At the same time, I needed to recognise difference and diversity. For Aboriginal women, rejection of generalised white feminism revolves around the attempted universalisation of women's experiences of male subordination across cultures and contexts (Mohanty, 1991; Monture-Angus, 1996; Razack, 1998). As non-Aboriginal women, our 'help' may not be wanted nor can we possibly understand what Aboriginal women must do for themselves given their own histories and current realities (Brown et al., 1995; Emberley, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996; Koshan, 1997). Nevertheless, we can learn from Aboriginal women's experiences (Koshan, 1997) and try to find an 'ally' relationship that, according to Bishop (1994), depends on what Aboriginal women want from the relationship.

Subjectivity was a major issue in this research, both compelling and constraining what could be done. For this reason, an actor-oriented perspective assisted in recognising how individual women cope, act, influence, strategize and manoeuvre around the obstacles of their daily lives. Women are not all the same and there is not one approach to feminist inquiry nor one

feminism (Nielsen, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Harding, 1993; Wolf, 1996; Humphries, 1999). We need to situate women contextually in that some have more power and 'say' than others, and the interests of those 'at the bottom' might not be visible (Jackson, 1997; Cornwall, 1998). External feminist researchers might alienate local women in power positions by aligning themselves with less powerful women (Maguire, 1987; Martin, 1996). Similarly, feminist standpoint and a clearer understanding of 'situated knowledge' from a post-modern perspective recognise the external researcher's partial knowledge resulting from positionality as affected by gender, 'race,' ethnicity, nation, class, education, geography and history (Sachs, 1996; Fawcett and Featherstone, 2000). Yet theorising agency helped me to see how all women find ways to cope, to resist, and to exercise a degree of choice and control in their own daily circumstances and context, however circumscribed these may be.

Feminist participatory research pushes standpoint further by including action as integral to research and practice (Maguire, 1987; Mies, 1993). In this way, the feminist aim of bringing theory and practice together in support of addressing women's subordination is better realised, since the actions taken are not primarily the domain of the external feminist researcher (Maguire, 1987). The 'active' part of this project was the formation of the childcare facility and the sharing circles, both of which were in response to Jade Creek women's support needs. Such an approach challenges the conservatism and

inertia of a feminist post-modern perspective in which Maynard (1994b) wonders if those absorbed in deconstructing differences actually do anything to address the underlying inequalities (see also Dominelli, 2002). Similarly, it challenges an actor-oriented perspective which, within the interpretivist paradigm, stands outside of actively supporting the interests of the less powerful and under-resourced (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994; Wright and Nelson, 1995).

Feminist participatory research also draws on critical theory in order to understand the experiences of oppression in what is normalised social reality. Critical theory is criticised from a post-structuralist perspective for causing division by situating people and ideas oppositionally and unitarily, rather than drawing on negotiation and strategy (Stringer, 1996; Lane, 1999; Healy, 2001). A problem is the obvious inequalities maintained by who has political power and access to resources. Unemployment at Jade could not be ignored as an issue preventing women from having more choices. By supporting Jade Creek women I was invariably challenging the status quo. Critical analysis is instrumental in naming male violence against women within the power men are given in patriarchal society and was therefore important to this research.

I was in a contentious position as an outsider. Proposal-writing meant I was made more aware of band politics and administrative practices. By the same token, I was supporting 'poorer' community women. Outsiders to Aboriginal

communities are warned against becoming too involved in community affairs, and Weaver (2000) sees a better role for non-Aboriginal social workers as politically advocating Aboriginal rights in the larger society. First Nations must work through their own oppression/oppressor problems (Bishop, 1994). On the other hand, different 'actors', me included, came together for this brief time. We had different issues with each other (including personality issues) and part of the dynamics was figuring out where we each stood with one another (Villarrael, 1992). In different interactions (e.g. myself and Marianne) there was give and take. We were women testing each other out. Similarly, communities *are* comprised of multiple and inharmonious interests (Guijt and Shah, 1998). And women too, even within 'powerless' groups have different interests and different agendas (Villarrael, 1992; Martin, 1996; Jackson, 1997) and may get along sometimes and not at others. Participatory research is seldom initiated by the community and Park (1993) says that conscientious outsiders often see the need and want to respond. We can see this *both* as potentially colonising (Wolf, 1996) *and* as an outsider who has made previous connections wanting to continue those connections. What does not come through in simplistic and overly-critical accounts of outsider engagement – is what occurs between individuals or some women that can be and/or is mutually transformative (Gorelick, 1996). Feminist participatory research may, in fact, assist *certain* women in a community to push forward their own interests. It was my sense, in fact, when returning in December, 2000, that

certain women had in fact, benefited – and certainly a number of pre-schoolers!

Overview of research

Concretely, a childcare was established. Women had taken part as much as was possible within community constraints which included control of funds and decision-making by Band office staff. This of course, has to be contextualised in a ‘normal’ way of doing things. Whereas youth saw themselves as a ‘youth group’, women at Jade did not see themselves as a childcare planning group. Although they agreed with the need for childcare, they were also ambivalent given a mother’s place is in the home as well as having others, other than close relatives, ‘hired’ to take care of their children (notes: 10/3/1998). For whatever reasons, women didn’t push forward a desire to control the childcare or even to have regular parent meetings. They seemed just as happy to leave it to staff to control which was again within community norms. It is important again to contextualise this in a history of top-down control as already presented. It is also important to recognise what women struggled against in their personal lives – which is where the sharing circle comes in. Like the women in Maguire, they had an awful lot on their material and emotional plates. Physical and sexual violence leave slow-healing wounds if not permanent damage.

Today, R. died. I had asked her in a counselling session a few days before she went to the hospital, did she think the pain she was experiencing came from the terrible amount of physical and sexual abuse she'd experienced all her life. She said she did (notes: 03/15/1999).

The participation that women exercised with the childcare was their choice. The amount of control they wanted to take was also their choice. Like Brydon-Miller (1993), I was simply a 'facilitator' – willing to learn along with them, and prepared to do my part – but the rest was up to them. Therefore, within this participatory perspective – when and where *participation* did occur was taken for what it was. There were some women who didn't come who I wished had come and there were others who came to meetings sporadically. How and why women participate reveals something about their lives and priorities which, in turn, change with different circumstances and identities (Yuval-Davis, 1994). Similarly – it can reveal something about community dynamics – if women feel welcome – who is participating and who isn't for what reasons. Being able to leave the home in order to participate *with* others – may not be easy for some women (Townsend, 1999). In other words, mothers of pre-schoolers are not all the same and community dynamics as well as what's happening in their private lives affect who will participate, when and why. It also has to do with who women ally themselves with within the community. Some women were not complete 'insiders' (Guijt and Shah,

1998, p.10) being from elsewhere or other reasons. Being an outsider does not mean women will *want* to work with me – and whoever does has to be getting something out of it for themselves (Green, 1998). Trust is an issue – not only between myself and other women – but probably more poignantly, between the women themselves (e.g. the Mental Health study indicated that for 61% of respondents, trust was the main obstacle to seeking help *within* the community: 10/21/1999).

What happens in reality challenges an outside professional/academic's ability to interpret personal change within the duration of a certain prescribed programme (Maguire, 1993; Cancian, 1996; Rowlands, 1997).

'Empowerment' will include a number of inter-personal dynamics, individualised moves, alliances with others, anticipated and unanticipated support (Yuval-Davis, 1994; Callahan and Lumb, 1995; Maguire, 1996; Townsend et. al., 1999). It will not be the same for each woman nor will everyone experience what is meant to be empowering as such. A problem with empowerment accounts (e.g. Butler and Wintram; Rowlands, 1997; Townsend et al., 1999) is that we do not hear about individual women who were not 'empowered' as expected, or whose empowerment may result from resisting what is expected (Jackson, 1997). For example, Alice's 'empowerment' came from *not* apologising to treaty staff for remarks she had made because she knew it would not be sincere. She needed ownership in the treaty process and so she stood by her criticisms.

Overview of process

Feminist participatory research is a process – for all involved. Women in Khanna (1996) and Maguire (1987) did not call what they were doing ‘research’, and nor did we. The ‘research’ involved regular childcare meetings, gathering relevant community information, going through hiring procedures, meeting with various resources, visiting other childcares and hosting another community, talking and planning in and out of meetings. It was a ‘fluid’ process in that how it developed was very much guided by what worked best in *this* community – as became apparent over time – evidenced in how meetings were called, who ran them, how information was best shared (face-to-face/one-on-one). In order to be ‘congruent’ FPR should be guided by how things are done in *that* location by those women (Maguire, 1996; Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996). Smith (1997) suggests that the external researcher needs to find ‘energy points’ that can feed into a PR/PAR process. One such ‘energy point’ was the relationship between myself and certain Jade Creek women, because of connections already established through the personal struggles they had shared with me.

As the process began to take shape and develop momentum so, too, did the sense of developing something and of learning together – something I became aware of after women returned from a conference in Vancouver (03/9/1999). In preparing the Head Start proposal, the knowledge of the mothers involved was valued. Women coming together for any reason can provide opportunities

for naming their needs and why those needs exist (Wieringa, 1994).

Developing a childcare, for example, affirms the practical support women require in order to pursue other parts of their lives. Working on a proposal actually gave us a research framework since information had to be gathered. Different women facilitated the meetings and I was there as a participant, gathering the information I needed. Lorraine was particularly good at holding regular meetings, at going door to door to get the input of mothers on policies and adult education, and at arranging fact-finding trips.

A seemingly uncontentious endeavour involving community women, such as developing a childcare, can reveal issues around power and women's positionality in the community (Tlakula, 1998). Power dynamics can influence what can be done next (Martin, 1996). Band staff making decisions consistently changed our direction and did not allow for adequate reflection on what was happening or why. This kept robbing us of ownership, of having to go through decision-making processes. Staff consulted primarily with the childcare manager (Lorraine, and then Estelle), over at the Band office and not at the childcare where others could be involved. Therefore, Estelle waited on Band staff approval rather than involving parents and teaching staff in planning. This was ultimately the way it ended, with my desire for an evaluation also contingent on Estelle, as manager, facilitating the opportunity. This reveals much about the context and the ability of local people to participate in developing community services. But it was up to Jade Creek

women, within the dynamics of what could happen in their community, to open these issues up to closer scrutiny. In being an ally or 'accompanying' others in undertaking change, which is how I see a participatory engagement, it is important not to intrude or try to control what is others' process to control (Bishop, 1994; Wilson and Whitmore, 1995). As outsiders, we need to recognise our own, often transitional, status and the power dynamics specific to our involvement (Villarrael, 1992; Martin, 1996; Healy, 2001).

Busy as the Band staff were, they were not prepared to negotiate a different organisational arrangement with parents and childcare workers so that responsibilities could be shared. I had on-going discussions with the Band Manager in the hope of obtaining more control for the mothers in particular. Yet, over a year later, Band staff retained control of funding and Liz was wishing parents could see the budget. One way to look at it is that this participatory endeavour, no matter how incomplete, presented another way of doing things. Certainly, this supports Eade's (1997) ideas on community capacity-building that starts from the bottom-up, enhancing the opportunities of people whose needs are often invisible in the larger scheme of things in order then to strengthen the overall organisation. A more reciprocal link of shared responsibility between childcare and Band staff could have developed 'social capital' within a divided community (Buckland, 1998). Fragmentation, on the other hand, means that information and responsibilities are not shared so only certain people benefit from what is learned and from the jobs and

training opportunities created (Jackson, 1993). 'Capacities will not "trickle down" through a power structure unless active steps are taken to ensure that they do' (Eade, 1997, p.25). However, even people coming together, naming an issue, and deciding what to do about it involves processes that can take years rather than months, certainly longer than the few days of a typical participatory community appraisal (Guijt and Shah, 1998), and longer than the seventeen months I spent living in the community.

The sharing circle opened up immense vulnerability that was evident in the way women reacted when I decided to leave the community. Indeed, George (1995, 1996) warns against providing an intimate space for women to share their vulnerabilities and then leaving, and identifies the need for institutional back-up so that the emotional support the research instigates can continue after the researchers leave. On the other hand, women may have capitalised on the focus groups for their own ends - feeling freer to talk, perhaps, with an external researcher - and, if they were coping pre-George, they will probably continue coping post-George. Even if organisational support *is* there – their sharing may have been an effect primarily of the research.

Women developed a trust in me that I could not ignore, given the amount they had been through. Evident in a woman recently sexually assaulted, for example, was her desperate need to reclaim the hard-won 'serenity' she had achieved prior to this incident. As women, we could help each other do that.

There were some things that women could talk about with others in the community, depending on context, but there were other things they obviously could not raise because of who was related to whom and because of shame. In other words, there is a role for someone from outside who is safe and who listens. Conversely, outsiders taking on a participatory approach who are not in tune with women's emotional needs can miss what women most need in order to embrace the very possibilities of change. A purely instrumental and rationalised approach can divide women (and men) from important parts of themselves that need to be integrated if change is to be meaningful (Gottlieb, 1992; Jaggar, 1997; Seidler, 1998). For example, if male violence against women is being denied, then community change continues to protect men from responsibility for their own actions (Gray-Withers, 1997; Crawley, 1998; Kelly and Radford, 1998; Maitse, 1998; Sen, 1998). Participatory processes focusing on sources of oppression that fail to also address how power is exercised are both limited and limiting (Rowlands, 1997; Crawley, 1998). The women Jackson (1997) talks about named that for themselves, through their own actions, when male violence and alcohol abuse and not agriculture as prescribed, were their main concern.

Personal learning

From a social work perspective, we assume that being able to communicate in a certain way is normal and denotes empowerment (Healy, 1998). I was constantly telling myself, throughout the research, to listen more effectively. I

was met with impatient looks when I talked too much. I was also too direct about what needed to be done in other people's communities. What I needed to correct in myself was insinuated, for example in comments about no longer needing help from 'white people'. Joanne told me how one learns from elders: that they teach through doing, not talking, and that you learn through making mistakes not by being chastised. I did make a lot of mistakes and I had to learn that way.

Local people have knowledge and skills that a participatory effort can bring forward (Rahman, 1993; Cornwall, 1996). Jade Creek women had more skills than I did in terms of what works in the community, running meetings, building buildings and negotiating with bureaucrats – something they'd done for decades. A number already had experience with research. Joanne took a legal services proposal and made it into three relevant workshops that involved community participation with outside resource people; because she knew who to contact. This worked very well and ended with an evaluatory questionnaire in clear, readable words – all of which I envied: 'I understand why First Nations have to control their own affairs – not only because of what they know about themselves but of what they know about each other, about what works' (notes: 07/5/1999). It was frustrating that, despite examples like this, local people did not claim the expertise they had or their ability to teach others. To do so would have been to threaten others holding power in the community. It is suggested in PR/PAR and empowerment accounts that

academics or social work professionals have the required skills necessary to facilitate 'empowerment' and group processes (Maclure, 1990; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Rowlands, 1997; Altpeter et. al, 1999; McNicoll, 1999; Parker et. al., 1999). Yet I was not particularly comfortable facilitating a group and had a tendency to make things too complicated. It was easier for me, and them, when other women took over.

Maguire (1987) says having to work part-time interfered with a participatory engagement. Proposal-writing for the Band took a lot of my time and energy, especially as I saw it as a means of reciprocating Chief and Council for allowing me to be in the community for research purposes. Proposal-writing put me in a different position in the community, as a paid employee who had to do her job. In this position, I was needing information in order to write proposals and I worried about ethical issues like why only certain people were benefiting from jobs and about the credentials of healing consultants (as per the funding criteria) - all of whom were male, albeit Aboriginal - to work with women on issues of male violence. Things I commented on or asked questions about were often taken as statements of where I stood and as evidence that, as a white person, I was not listening and saw myself as superior. This was a humbling thought, given my conscientised attitudes about participation, listening, dialogue and anti-racism. I sometimes came across as culturally insensitive, especially in questioning circle sentencing and protection of victims of sexual abuse.

Overview of achievements

Combined, the childcare and sharing circle spoke to women's emotional and practical needs – and within that – their experiences of male violence and abuse. For these women it was hard not to be ambivalent because of the uncertainty of their lives and the need all the time, to be on the alert; to change direction. At a young age, they had been relocated to residential schools or foster care (notes: 01/05/1999). Violence and sexual abuse as children and into adulthood meant that women were dealing with a lot of trauma and were very often getting through one day at a time (Brown, 1995; Davis, 1999).

Women then are not necessarily going to have the energy or desire to commit to participatory research (Maguire, 1987) or to running a childcare. The primary impetus on my part behind finally suggesting a women's sharing circle was because it was apparent that women first needed a place to be emotionally nurtured, listened to and believed. Drawing on Khanna (1996) and Rowlands (1997), before participating women could take on research and/or other activities, they needed space to research their own lives – understand themselves – overcome feelings of worthlessness and confusion. Before at least some women can begin to plan their lives and directions, they need to reclaim a measure of control somewhere, somehow. This became plainly evident at the sharing circle when a woman's voice and demeanour would change because she was working outside the home, and she was feeling creative, energised – and *valued* (cf. Butler and Wintram, 1991).

Both the sharing circle and the childcare – focused on women’s strengths, ingenuity, and how they could take control in their lives, as opposed to buying into dominant discourses that represented them as maladjusted, inadequate or passive, and that prescribed support services in response to homogenised perceived needs (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Callahan and Lumb, 1995; Everitt and Hardiker, 1996; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000). The sharing circle provided a safe place to release the pain, shame and anger resulting from physical and sexual violation, and to look beyond this as well as through it to who they really are as Aboriginal women and why men violate women and children to get what they want.

The sharing circles were completely unstructured and women came if they wanted to. This supported women in guiding the process as well as the content. ‘Empowerment’ in western social work primarily focuses on women’s psychological needs and therefore on the expectation that they improve themselves in order to take better control over their lives, despite material circumstances and gender inequality (Swift, 1995a; Brotman and Pollack, 1997; Dominelli, 2002). Women in Callahan and Lumb (1995) spoke about needing jobs not parenting courses, about being able to take care of their basic needs without having to jump through the surveillant hoops of child welfare social workers, and about needing emotional nurturing so they could keep going, as opposed to being judged and having to beg for help. Childcare

is a pre-requisite to women developing and having options and yet, in terms of child welfare practice, it is not readily offered nor easily attainable for poor women (Callahan et al., 1998). A focus primarily on individual support as well as on generalised and professionalised definitions of legitimate need, can serve to conflate the effects of poverty, 'race' and other oppressions including male physical and sexual violence into an individualised psychological problem (Waldegrave, 1990; Mohanty, 1995; Walters, 1996; Kelly and Radford, 1998).

From a feminist perspective, the sharing circles at least facilitated a space where women could speak from the standpoint of their own experience and, through so doing, claim it. Participatory research relies on the knowledge of local people who also become aware of their own ways of interpreting reality, including their own chosen silences and ways of explaining things (Cornwall, 1996; Khanna, 1996; Meulenberg-Buskins, 1996; Smith, 1997; Crawley, 1998). By putting our own words to our own experiences as women (Du Bois, 1983; Freire, 1993), we were challenging dominant discourses that defined us as 'inferior' (Hekman, 1990, p.206). 'Naming' our own experience is political because it challenges the defining power of more knowing others such as professionals and academics (Du Bois, 1983; Fine, 1993; Hiebert and Swan, 1999; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000), especially as situated in white structural control and colonisation (Emberley, 1995; Monture-Angus, 1996). How would Elaine, who regards it as odd to be raising children on a stereotypical

Indian reserve and to be a 'Native' person, define this ambiguity in her own terms? A woman in the group who was very hesitant to talk and who took a long time to express herself said in the questionnaire that she did not like counsellors who interpreted her feelings before she had had a chance to talk them out. From a rationalised, task-oriented perspective we can 'teach' service users how to communicate, especially those who cannot express themselves articulately, in 'participatory' encounters with social workers (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Healy, 1998), or we can learn to listen to people who must express what they need to say in the way and words they choose and from their own worldview (Collier, 1993; Graham, 2000; Cohen and Mullender, 2001).

There was direct evidence that women benefited from the research. At the meeting with the neighbouring community, Lorraine talked about how the job as childcare manager had been 'empowering' for her and how important it was to include parents and to overcome the effects of residential schooling.

Similarly, Elaine and Liz told Band staff how good it was to have the parents integrally involved right from the beginning. Carla also gained an opportunity to use her skills and it was exciting to see her ideas and her conscientious planning. When I re-visited, in December 2000, I found the childcare in its new premises, although still not completed, Carla still in position, and both she and Estelle excited about the children's progress. Estelle had quit her Band councillor position and was devoting her time to the childcare. Liz and

Doreen were in paid work and both had laid charges against violent male partners. With childcare support and full-time work, these were examples of women taking more control over their lives. Liz also told me how, for the first time, she had been able to talk about the sexual abuse she had experienced during her teens and how she was unblocking the memories of her time at residential school. Elaine said she had been able to stand up at a Band meeting and ask some questions, as well as standing up for herself as a mother when questioned by the social development worker. These developments, that women individually chose to share with me, amounted to a mini-evaluation of our work together the year before. Women had made these moves on their own indicating, perhaps, that, if 'empowerment' is what women do for themselves, the most appropriate kind of support to energise them and open up opportunities for them is non-directive yet practical and facilitative.

Claim for originality

I consider that my contribution to feminist participatory research has been to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of what individual 'actors' do in a specific context in order to get their own needs met. Such an understanding, as drawn from ethnography's actor-oriented perspective, enhances both social work's and participatory research's understanding of change within the complexities of power relations in a community sensitive to 'insider'- 'outsider' relations. In my research, women did do things in their own way throughout, and I was an outsider being fashioned into a context by

them as much as by other pressures or by my own agency. At all times, women in various positions and roles in the community made their own choices, albeit sometimes constrained. Staff developed projects resulting from proposal-writing in accordance with their own priorities. Band staff fashioned the childcare, and childcare staff and mothers acquiesced in tune with the way things were done in the community, but they also resisted in other ways. Local women elected to relate to me primarily as a counsellor, as someone to listen, and not as a researcher. Certainly, according to Band staff and women in the community, I was not instrumental in supporting change in the community and this would have been seen as an intrusion. I felt I was being toned down and placed in a role they found more appropriate – and perhaps useful - that of counsellor. I, in my turn, acquiesced and the sharing circle was acceptable to all. The women primarily steered the circle in the direction they wanted, which was one of intense emotional sharing, while I primarily listened.

I also believe that my research throws further light on the complexities of the outsider's role in participatory research by problematising more clearly the role of the external researcher. In answer to Healy (2001), then, who queries the smooth participatory research accounts written by social work students, mine was anything but straightforward. I was not universally welcome, even under the innocent guise of wanting to support women's empowerment. It would have been better to have started the sharing circle earlier, but for a

number of reasons, including waiting to take my cues from the community and the women themselves, I didn't. The idea of 'asking' for help was not comfortable for most men and women, particularly given the history of having to go to white people for help (notes: 05/13/1999; 05/31/1999; interview with Joanne). Another reason for not starting the circle sooner had been noticing women's own coping strategies and I had spent a lot of time in spontaneous everyday encounters, simply supporting rather than 'counselling'. This was why an actor-oriented perspective made sense to me. Instead of primarily looking at how women participate in collective change, the need was also to see what they already do in their individual lives that filters into community life. At the last sharing circle meeting, we focused on what women do for themselves in order to get the support they need when going through a rough time.

Problematizing my role as an outsider, did I really have control? I assisted others to find their own control by proving my own ignorance and social clumsiness, and by over-stepping staff boundaries in asking too many questions. Staff agency included needing to exercise their control over my involvements which they did in various ways: suggesting I do counselling; making sure they controlled funding; meeting privately with childcare staff; and blaming me for what went wrong with projects because of proposals I had written. Although this was partly about authoritarian 'power-over', it was also about resisting my intrusion as an outsider with my own (social work-

oriented) ideas and about the need to keep me in my place, especially in light of the need for this family of females to amalgamate their jurisdictional control.

Given, then, the many obstacles to a 'participatory' effort, an actor-oriented perspective and a reflexive awareness of one's role as an outsider-researcher can combine to assist in understanding what is happening and why, and in appreciating other forms of participation that are more influenced by what local women, as opposed to the researcher, see as important. It is important to step back, to let go of research and professional expectations, in order to support what women actually do for themselves. The sharing circle came out of this. This challenges a social work perspective that fails to see what people do on their own behalf and that forms negative professional judgements of users who manipulate service providers in order simply to survive. First Nations have always had to manoeuvre projects and services in their own direction in order to circumvent the dictates of the Department of Indian Affairs and serve their own interests. Within that, people are set against one another in individual manoeuvrings to get some of the meagre benefits because there are not enough of these to go round.

An actor-oriented perspective does not deny structural power but nor does it deny what individuals do to challenge and resist power in their own way and in their daily living (Long, 1992). An outsider can have influence, and for me

it was to support women who did not have access to what female Band staff had access to, including allotment of resources, decision-making power, and control over who benefited. I learned, however, that my influence was limited and my own strategies unpractised, especially when compared to people who had had to strategize continuously in order to gain and retain resources.

Within the limits of my influence, especially as a white female, was the need to recognise what was happening, how, and how I could support it. This included supporting individual women who were making moves in their lives away from being violated and controlled.

By bringing an actor-oriented perspective into the picture, we are also bringing an interpretative dimension into feminist participatory research as informed by critical theory. The combination places more emphasis on understanding the context, people's subjective experiences and positionings, how women name their reality and understand and act within it, while also supporting increased understanding of how women are oppressed, how that inhibits change from occurring and a community from benefiting; it offers sufficient complexity to understand how women can come together to gain a little leverage in a constrained and circumscribed context (Villarrael, 1992; Wright and Nelson, 1995; Maguire, 1996; Gorelick, 1996; Dominelli, 2002). For social work, this places in the starkest possible contrast the competing tendencies to pathologise and to empower, and reminds us of the contested nature of our perceptions and our role.

Conclusion

Thus concludes a very contextualised and descriptive account of a participatory process that has challenged unproblematised accounts in a social work field that needs to move away from social control and to deconstruct what 'helping' really means (Callahan and Lumb, 1995; Swift, 1995a; Rossiter, 2000; Healy, 2001; Dominelli, 2002). Feminist standpoint, critical theory and actor-oriented perspectives have assisted me in seeing change more holistically and contextually. In analysing my own research role and its impact, I have reached the view that emotional and practical support need not be dichotomised but can augment one another. Women are not waiting to be empowered but will use opportunities to further their own ends. In both research and practice, by focusing on emotional support and internalised processes, as in the sharing circle, critical analysis can also be helped to happen, through dialogue and increased understanding of what has occurred and why. A focus on emotions and personal growth does not limit the ability of PR/PAR to achieve external change but, rather, suggests that women will present what is a priority for them without losing the potential simultaneously to move forward.

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APPENDIX

Ethical concerns of research:

This is to confirm that from the outset, Chief and Council were in agreement with the research process and were, along with administrative staff, consulted as much as possible in accordance with the participatory research mandate. In all, I met four times with the Chief and the whole Council in order to ensure that they understood the purpose and proposed use of the research and how it could benefit the community. When I conducted interviews and sharing circle meetings, individuals were always assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

I did not ask for written consent, nor was this raised as an issue. Given that signing a document has consistently resulted in loss of control of what happens as a result, e.g. permanent loss of land (SNTC, 1989; RCAP, 1996) and loss of children (Furniss, 1992; Monture-Angus, 1996), written consent would not have translated into a sense of security. Furthermore, the community was preoccupied at the time with the demands of devolution and, whilst expecting to be consulted at all stages of the research, took relatively little interest in the detail of the process. Hence, ethically, it was incumbent on me that I respect community and individual anonymity and use only that material relevant to the process of engaging in participatory research. Community anonymity was similarly requested of Berardi and Donnelly (1999) when they undertook participatory research with an Alaskan First Nation but they were working with a community that had already developed its own research guidelines. I was able to draw on Berardi and Donnelly as a source of general ethical guidance in relation to First Nations communities and participatory research (for example in relation to the importance of anonymity). However, I had to find my own way through with the particular community in which I was researching, and with the particular personalities and dynamics involved, because there were no equivalent guidelines for me to use.

Interviews were largely unstructured, in keeping with the style of communication to which interviewees were accustomed and what they would accept. Interviews thus constituted spontaneous dialogues. Within them, I sought particularly to explore individual's views on the past, current and future direction of the community and what they personally would like to see change. In so far as I intervened or responded, it was always to refocus on their own views and experiences.