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Cultivating Respect for Difference: Exploring the Enactment of Community at HOPE Garden in Parkdale, Toronto

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts
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CULTIVATING RESPECT FOR DIFFERENCE: EXPLORING THE ENACTMENT
OF COMMUNITY AT HOPE GARDEN IN PARKDALE, TORONTO

(Cultivating Respect for Difference at HOPE Community Garden, Toronto)

Monograph

by

Monica J. Kelly

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

The following MA thesis is based on research I conducted in the summer of 2010 at HOPE community garden, located in the gentrifying neighborhood of Parkdale, Toronto. Drawing on the literature on community gardens in North America, as well as anthropological theorizing on the subject of community, I explore how a sense of collective belonging is built around HOPE garden. Through an ethnographic study that focuses on the activities, interactions, and perceptions of gardeners, volunteers and coordinators involved with HOPE, this thesis shows how the differences and interpersonal conflicts that surface in the day to day working of the garden are embraced by those involved as an opportunity for strengthening community cohesion and feelings of belonging. Contrary to the popular and academic literature that tends to reproduce a romantic idea of a harmonious community when discussing group garden projects, the thesis reveals how conflicts and the negotiation of differences, as well as institutional practices premised on inclusion and anti-discrimination, play a significant role in the making of a successful, vibrant, and inclusive community project like HOPE.

Keywords:

Community gardening, urban agriculture, urban anthropology, community belonging, diversity, Toronto.

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Introduction

In recent years, community gardening in North America has grown in popularity due to interrelated social, environmental, and economic factors. Mainstream interest in this activity is in part related to recent critiques of the corporate food system exemplified in film documentaries, such as *Food Inc.* and *Supersize Me*, and in books, such as *The McDonaldization of Society* (Ritzer 2011), *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser 2001), and *The 100 Mile Diet: a Year of Local Eating* (Smith and Mackinnon 2001). This popularity is no doubt also related to the recent economic crisis and the subsequent increase in poverty and food insecurity across North American cities. As well as receiving praise for contributing to food security, here understood as access to healthy and affordable food, community gardens have been variously celebrated for helping regenerate and revitalize urban communities. This thesis approaches the specific dynamics involved in such revitalization through a study focused on a community garden project, known as HOPE, located in a densely populated and heterogeneous urban neighborhood of Toronto, a city where community gardens have multiplied rapidly since the late 1980s. In the span of ten years, from 1987 to 1997, the number of community gardens dramatically increased from fourteen to sixty-nine (Irvine et al. 1999), and that number has continued to rise so that, by 2004, 110 community gardens were reported to exist in the city (Baker 2004).

Despite the air of novelty given to community gardens in recent mainstream media, these spaces have had a long history in North America and Europe, where over the past one hundred and fifty years, community gardens have often been used as a means to fix perceived social, economic, and ecological problems associated with urban life. Many scholars argue that, throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, community

gardens gained widespread popularity during times of economic crisis and/or war (Lawson 2005). These gardens were then often used to solve immediate problems such as hunger and food insecurity (Seto 2009). During the late 19th century, in London and Detroit, for example, as a result of heavy industrialization, gardens were used not only to provide food for marginalized populations, they were also created to help with urban beautification, and, along with public parks, were thought to help ‘civilize’ and ‘fix’ perceived behavioral and moral problems of disadvantaged social groups (Lawson 2005, Thorsheim 2006). During the First and Second World War, ‘victory’ or ‘liberty’ gardens were widely supported by governments not only to supplement the food supply but to promote nationalist and moral agendas (Lawson 2005).

Following the Second World War, the popularity of urban gardens gradually declined; however, in the 1970s, in many American cities, urban gardening experienced a revival. This resurgence was associated with the growth of the environmental movement, and the availability of vacant space as a result of the lagging economy, faulty urban renewal, and suburban flight. At this time, gardens were particularly used in marginalized areas to address social and economic problems by providing healthy and affordable food, a safe space for community gatherings, and by strengthening social relationships and community cohesion (Schmelzkopf 1995). Once the economic crisis was over, however, the popularity of gardens subsided as government support waned and urban lots were sold for lucrative commercial development (Lawson 2005, Schmelzkopf 1995).

In recent years, however, urban community gardening has once again rapidly risen in mainstream popularity. This interest in urban gardens, as mentioned earlier,

appears to be largely related to recent critiques of the corporate food system, as well as to a desire to address problems associated with environmental degradation, and insufficient availability of healthy and affordable food in urban centers. Additionally, recent gardening initiatives aim to strengthen community relationships, reclaim neighborhood green space, and heal bodies and minds in the process.

The social science literature on recent community gardening initiatives in North America and Europe has focused on various dimensions of these sites, which highlight their positive potential. Although varied, this literature is centered on a number of key, sometimes overlapping, themes that address the gardens' perceived social, economic, and ecological benefits.

An important segment of the mentioned literature addresses the ways in which participation in community gardens, and urban cultivation practices in general, help raise awareness about environmental issues and ecological sustainability. For example, some researchers suggest participation in community gardening and related educational initiatives are transformative processes where people develop an intimate connection with their natural surroundings (Donati 2010, Neves 2009). Katja Neves (2009), based on research on a children's garden project at the Botanical Garden in Montreal, insists that such projects contribute to a deeper understanding of "human-environment connectivity" (51) that acknowledges the fusion between the social and natural world. This "deeper understanding," according to Neves, increases the likelihood that people will have environmental sensibilities shaped by ethical concerns and obligations towards non-human life. Veronica Gaylie (2005) and Bethaney Turner (2011) add a new dimension to this argument on ecological learning by suggesting that by reconnecting individuals and

communities to the ecological significance of the land, community gardens encourage critical reflection on the food system. For these authors, this critical perspective is related to greater awareness of the overlapping and embodied relationships that link the 'natural' environment and the community to the food system.

Researchers have also focused on community gardens and the contribution they make to improved physical and mental health, especially for those who live in marginalized areas and are often low-income and/or visible minorities. For instance, studies have indicated that community gardeners have improved access to fresh and nutritious food (Armstrong 2000, Patel 1991, Wakefield et al. 2007). Additionally, others have reported that community gardeners not only experience an increase in the consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits but lower their consumption levels of sweets and processed foods in comparison to non-gardeners (Armstrong 2000). Research has also indicated that participating in community gardening activities helped to keep people, especially seniors, both physically and mentally active (Wakefield et al. 2007). While acting as a recreational activity, gardens are said to positively increase fitness levels and thus improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels (Armstrong 2000). Many studies have shown that community gardeners' often associate cultivation practices with improved mental health because interacting with 'nature' and tending to the plants in the garden are calming and restorative (Hale et al. 2001). Gardens are often seen as spaces where people who live in densely populated urban areas can find a tranquil space to interact with others and/or enjoy a green sanctuary. Finally, community gardens in particular act as focal points for socializing and developing friendships, thus curbing social isolation (Wakefield et al. 2007).

Because of the purported serene and healing effects of community gardens, they are often touted as helpful and therapeutic for those diagnosed with mental health illnesses and/or addictions who live in institutions, social housing, or independently. A wealth of research suggests that connecting with ‘nature’ is especially therapeutic and restorative for those with mental health problems. The argument is that gardens allow them to feel in control, and create a sense of inner peace, which helps to combat social isolation (Barlett 2005, Hale et al. 2011). Hester Parr (2007), who did research on community gardening in England, concurs that some gardens, if organized to do so, open up possibilities for those with enduring mental health problems to overcome barriers often as a result of social stigma and marginalization. Parr states those with mental illnesses are “given opportunities to work with the earth, through which they are re-imagined as active, expert, capable, and productive community workers and members” (558). Community gardens are often regarded as a means for those with mental health issues to build relationships, feel a sense of purpose and belonging, as well as experience the restorative and calming benefits of gardening. Some scholars also contend that community gardens improve the lives of those who have suffered abuse, particularly victims of domestic violence (Stuart 2005).

The sense of inclusion engendered by community gardening is also beneficial for new immigrants and refugees. For example, studies suggest that community gardening helped to alleviate mental health problems related to social isolation that many immigrants and refugees experience post-migration. These mental health problems are often offset as new immigrants and refugees are able to effectively integrate into their community and feel intimately connected with the neighborhood in which they settled

through participation in a community garden (Augustine & Beilin 2012, Beckie & Bogdan 2010, Graham and Connell 2006, Muller 2001). Community gardening also helps these groups maintain and nurture their cultural identity because they have the opportunity to grow culturally appropriate foods and continue cultivation practices brought from the 'homeland' (Baker 2004, Corrllett et al. 2003, Hannah and Oh 2000, Kimber 2004, Muller 2001).

A related and important theme in the literature on community gardening highlights how garden projects assist in community building and the creation of social capital.¹ In many cases, community gardens are seen as spaces where neighborhood residents who might have otherwise never met are given the opportunity to work together cooperatively. These activities contribute to the development of norms and practices that are shaped by reciprocity and trust between members (Kingsley and Townsend 2006), and help to create a space where people are said to move away from individualism and self-interest (Glover et al. 2005a). Some argue that the sharing of resources and space and the necessary joint effort in operating and maintaining a community garden project work to deepen the development of social relationships and friendships (Kingsley and Townsend 2006, Glover et al. 2005a). To be sure, many relationships established during the garden season often extend all year round for those involved, highlighting that these

¹ The majority of the literature on community gardens draws on both Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Robert D. Putnam (1995) to illuminate how social capital is created in these projects. Bourdieu (1986) refers to social capital as participation in social networks that reinforce a sense of shared membership in a group through repeated interactions of exchange and mutual obligations. This form of social networking results in access to possible, or concrete, support systems. Robert D. Putnam (1995) defines social capital as "features of social organizations such, as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate actions of cooperation for mutual benefit" (67). He argues that the accumulation of social capital brings about social and material benefits that enable social mobility.

social bonds extend beyond the garden and the garden season. Some scholars assert that social capital amassed via community garden projects also include opportunities to access resources and support systems, such as services and/or community related projects that stretch beyond the garden project (Glover et al. 2005b).

Much of the research mentioned also deals with questions of social justice pertaining to the fair distribution of healthy and affordable food, as well as access and rights to public space in cities. These topics often lead to a discussion of how community gardens encourage active civic participation, and connect to public policy oriented towards the creation of green and sustainable urban landscapes.

Research projects focused on community gardens in Toronto and New York are particularly useful in articulating how these spaces are important to the development and implementation of food and social justice initiatives that address food insecurity, access to public space, and environmental concerns in the city. In New York, for example, scholars documented how in a context of intense neoliberal re-structuring in gentrifying areas of the city, community gardeners effectively networked with a variety of civic organizations to oppose the municipal government's attempts to close existing gardens down (Schmelzkopf 1995a; 2002b, Smith and Kurtz 2003). These city-wide networks influenced mainstream media sources and effectively mobilized gardeners to attend city council meetings and to participate in protests and sit-ins in order to express their collective dismay with the city government. Although these mobilizations were not always successful, they underscored the potential of community gardens in generating political engagement (Schmelzkopf 1995). In the case of Toronto, likewise, community gardens are said to be part of a larger food justice movement that is spawning "alternative

models that re-localize food systems and delink them from the corporate food system” (Wekerle 2004:378). Wekerle (2004) argues that community gardens are an important part of the efforts of diverse community agencies involved in addressing food security and influencing public policy in Toronto. Lauren Baker (2004) asserts that community gardens encourage a place-based politics that is significantly linked to Toronto’s community food-security and environmental movement. She argues urban gardens are social spaces linking a complex network of alternative food organizations working together to implement green initiatives and food security in the city. For her, these initiatives have led to direct and indirect critiquing of the corporate food system by giving people an opportunity to produce their own food, develop relationships with other community members, and shift from being a consumer of food to being “food citizens.”² Likewise, Charles Levkoe (2006) argues that community garden projects are valuable sites where people have the opportunity to learn about democratic practices and develop critical perspectives on social, environmental, and political issues. Most importantly, he adds that by growing and producing food, people living in marginalized neighborhoods are decreasing their dependence on systems of charity and the corporate food system while making claims to urban space.

In sum, these scholars argue that community garden projects have the potential to realize political, environmental, and social alternatives that are based on the notion of an environmentally sustainable and socially just world. Aside from this literature on community gardens which praises their benefits, there is also a small but important body

²Baker notes that “Food citizenship involves the practice of food-system localization, as well as the embodiment of values of caring for the community and the environment” (322).

of scholarship that offers a more critical perspective on the transformative prospects of these sites (See, for example, Dupuis 2006, Guthman 2008, Pudup 2008). The focus of this approach is largely centered on a critique of neoliberal governmentality³ and moral regeneration discourses that focus on individual transformation while ignoring structural inequalities.

Pudup (2008) argues that community garden projects normally arise during times of economic crisis and are used as buffer zones to deal with marginalized groups adversely affected by neoliberal economic restructuring. She further contends community gardens are often used to moralize and discipline ‘at risk’ populations with the assumption that personal contact with nature lead to transformative processes that heal and bring about self-improvement. In a similar vein, others have focused on the discourses found in community garden projects addressing “food deserts”⁴ that often problematically reflect white privilege. Guthman’s work notes that these projects are based on the assumption that providing knowledge on healthy and organic food, while working to provide access to food through gardening, will correct unhealthy eating practices. She notes, however, that these projects are based on “the intention to do good on behalf of those deemed other” (433), while, in many cases, the vision of these projects

³ Neoliberalism is often referred to as a political project where the state concentrates less on regulation and delivering public services, but more on creating an environment where individuals are forced to take on more responsibility for themselves and their behavior. The fundamental elements for governance then are based on greater emphasis on personal responsibility, self-help technologies, and consumption practices. This then informs the notion that the individual is expected to regulate her/himself to the market both as an entrepreneur and consumer (Lockie 2008: 193, 193).

⁴ According to Guthman, “many have come to use the term ‘food deserts’ to describe urban environments where few, if any, venues provide an array of healthful fruits, vegetables, meats, and grains products, but instead sell snack foods and highly processed ready-to-eat meals” (2008: 436).

do not necessarily resonate with many of its participants. This is in line with Pudup's argument, in that community gardening projects and food justice initiatives are seen here to operate in a manner that accommodates the neoliberal project which places emphasis on individual behavior and responsibility, ignoring how neoliberal policies exacerbate social inequalities. For these scholars, taking for granted the legitimacy and supposed progressiveness of community oriented garden projects can render invisible the neoliberal processes at work in these spaces.

Turning to my own project, much of the research discussed above resonates with my experience and many of the observations I made at the garden. For example, my research participants discussed with me at length the significance of the garden in terms of supplementing their diet as well as providing a trusted, nutritious, and fresh source of food. They also noted that they enjoy nurturing and tending to their garden space as it heightened their appreciation for nature and improved their physical and mental health. The gardeners, volunteers, and coordinators also spoke of how the garden was seen as a central component of their experience of 'community' informing their sense of belonging and social connectedness in the neighborhood. Some of my conversations and interviews with garden participants even reflected the moral regeneration discourses (i.e. the garden as a site for personal transformation) discussed by Pudup (2008). In this respect, there were many themes I could have focused on in my study, yet I found myself most curious about the way in which community building processes and social cohesion were enacted at the garden.

As I pursued my research, what I found to be compelling was how such a diverse range of people articulated the idea of community and how it appeared to be enacted in

the garden. Furthermore, my curiosity was intensified by the fact that most of the research mentioned here has consistently lauded the benefits of community gardening projects⁵ and rarely (with some exceptions) fully addressed the challenges faced by community garden projects, considering the processes through which conflicts are resolved in this context.⁶ Shortly after the mid-point of my fieldwork, research questions for my project emerged that centered on:

- How do gardeners, coordinators, and volunteers articulate the idea of community in association to the garden?
- In what ways do interactions in the garden promote and foster a sense of community belonging and attachment?
- How are conflicts, tensions, and general challenges approached in the garden? And what role does this play in community building?

Considering these questions, I found the work of Vered Amit (2002)⁷ and Gerald Creed (2004) on the notion of community particularly helpful. On the one hand, Amit

⁵ Guthman (2008) and Pudup (2008) are an exception here in as much as their work does not celebrate community garden projects but rather takes a critical look at them, pointing to their limited transformative potential and their potential complicity with neoliberal agendas.

⁶ Schmelzkopf (1995) mentioned that internal tensions and conflicts exist in community garden projects; however, she did not provide an analysis on the processes involved in resolving difficulties at the gardens she examined. Additionally, Ellis (2010), who did research for her M.A. at HOPE garden two years prior, argued that garden participants were able to reconcile certain conflicts because they took part in some key decision making processes, at the institutional level, in the garden. The example she used to elucidate these processes will be discussed in chapter two where I will also show how my research differs from her project.

⁷ Amit has edited two volumes discussing the notion of community which set out to rigorously interrogate the way in which the social sciences has harnessed this concept. In her work, she continues to acknowledge the importance of the imagined dimension of community, as illuminated by Benedict Anderson (1991), but argues that in the last two decades the treatment of community as an idea, in many scholarly works, has marginalized the vital importance of social interaction in community building processes. What she asserts is that we must not lose sight of the social context of community and how it is embedded in tangible social processes. The scope of my thesis cannot address the intricacies of her argument; however, essential components of her argument will be used to elucidate the notion of community created at HOPE garden.

(2002) insists that we must think about the notion of “community” not just as a mere social construction that has little grounding in social relations. Instead, for her, it is important to acknowledge that emotive attachments to community are, in fact, informed and grounded in “actual social relations” (18) that foster meaningful attachments and identification between individuals who come to see and experience themselves as part of a collective. Amit argues that the motivating factor that compels people to care about ‘community’ is ultimately rooted in actual relations they have had with “people they know, with whom they have shared experiences, activities, places and/or histories” (18). In this thesis, I explore how community is built, in Amit’s sense, out of the experience of sharing the garden space and activities like weeding and harvesting plots; cleaning the shed; turning the compost; tending to rain barrels; and participating in community potlucks, or workshops on canning and seed saving.

Bearing in mind that community, as Amit also points out, is neither a pre-existing thing or state nor a stable entity, this thesis also explores how community at HOPE is a negotiated process. As Amit points out, those who have “collective attachments” recognize that community is “fragile, changing, [and] partial” (18). Therefore creating community is also the consequence of negotiation processes that might involve conflict and tension, debates on who belongs and who does not, and what might ultimately constitute the primary aims of the collective.

Taking this into account, Gerald Creed’s (2004) notion of community was particularly useful for me as it accommodates both the possibility of conflict and heterogeneity. Creed’s research focused on Bulgarian Mummie rituals that showcased inter and intra ethnic conflict between Roma and ethnic Bulgarians which, according to

him, revealed locally specific enactments of community that strengthened social cohesion without needing to rely on notions of consensus and homogeneity.⁸ He conceptualized community as a “...field of dense overlapping relationships, many of which are conflicted and contentious... where conflict is not antithetical to community, but, rather, a constitutive element of community commitment and sentiment” (57). Drawing from his work, the research here takes conflict and hostility not as adversarial to community but as integral components that give rise to group attachments and sentiments. As shall be shown, HOPE garden serves as a focal point where diverse peoples, who might otherwise have socialized primarily with people of their own background, have to learn to work as part of a heterogeneous group. These kinds of interpersonal, more intimate, encounters with “difference” can often lead to misunderstandings and even conflicts that do not necessarily result in the dissolution of the project nor undermine the experience of community at the garden.

While the sense of community constructed around HOPE garden is the focus of this study, in order to contextualize the garden and its members, it is important to consider the characteristics of Parkdale, the neighborhood where HOPE garden is situated. It is located in downtown Toronto on the periphery of the city’s financial district along the busy street of Queen St. West. The financial district, in contrast to

⁸Creed was responding to Benedict Anderson’s (1991) ground breaking work *Imagined Communities*, in order to expand the discussion on nationalism by accounting for the ways in which “locally specific ideas about collectivity shape the experience and expectations of national level projections” (56). He argued that exploring different understandings and enactments of community, such as those that accommodate conflict and heterogeneity, at the local level, can assist anthropologists in better understanding the diverse range of nationalist constructs and experiences. Although Creed’s overall argument is aimed at re-thinking nationalism from a local perspective, his conception of community is useful to my project and it will be demonstrated throughout my thesis.

Parkdale, is a bustling place with people hurriedly walking among tall skyscrapers. The streetscape there is made up of upscale restaurants; banks and accounting firms; Starbucks coffee shops; and big multinational clothing stores, such as H&M, Gap, and Urban Outfitters. Further west, along Queen, between the financial district and Parkdale, is an area considered by many Torontonians as the ‘hip’ part of town. This area is characterized by trendy boutiques, vintage shops, cafes, indie bars, art spaces, and plenty of newly developed condos. Past this ‘hip’ and mostly gentrified area,⁹ which ends at the intersection of Queen St. and Dufferin St., under the CN Railway Bridge, is the neighborhood of Parkdale (See Figure 1).

Parkdale’s main commercial artery on Queen St. displays an eclectic mixture of commercial establishments that hint at the diverse social profile of the neighborhood. Thus, interspersed among the many small family-run restaurants, dollar stores, cheque cashing establishments, and doughnut shops one finds ‘trendy shops,’ such as a knitting café, a cupcake shop, a gelato ice-cream store, vintage clothing shops, expensive boutiques, art spaces, and a variety of ‘hipster’ cafes and nightclubs.

⁹ At its most basic level, gentrification takes place when the social geography of a neighborhood changes from predominantly working class to middle class and higher. Gentrification is also seen through the prism of increasing rental and property prices that eventually displace the original inhabitants, which usually include low-income residents. Not surprisingly, gentrification is often discussed in the context of how rising housing costs impact low-income renters and push them out of the community (Groen 2011).

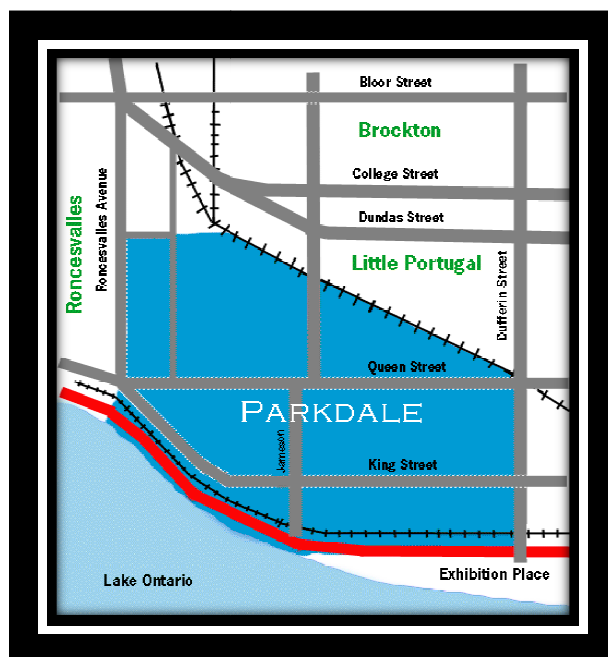


Figure 1: The neighborhood of Parkdale, Toronto. Source: Internet site for Creative Commons 2010.

Parkdale started to show signs of gentrification in the 1970s and for years, many Torontonians believed that the wave of development coming from the east of Dufferin St. would cut across the railway bridge and radically change the neighborhood. In a recent article that focused on gentrification, Danielle Groen, a writer for *The Grid*, a weekly left-of-center news and entertainment magazine, noted that gentrification in Parkdale, however, did not happen as expected. Groen (2011) commented: “Parkdale’s gentrification, it seem[ed], was cut off mid-yee-haw; the westward march of Queen Street didn’t quite breach Dufferin.” Heather Douglas, executive director of the neighborhood’s business improvement area and Alan Walks, a professor of planning at University of Toronto, both cited in Groen’s article, concurred on this point. Their assessment and those of others knowledgeable with the area suggest that the now popular image of Parkdale as a “revitalized urban village” may be misleading.

In her book, *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village: Transformations in Toronto's Parkdale Neighborhood 1875-2002* (2009), Carolyn Whitzman traces the relationship between the changing images of Parkdale and the actual socio-demographics of the area over a 125 year period. Whitzman points out that, historically, Parkdale has played a significant role in Toronto by providing a range of affordable housing, social services, and opportunities for many of the city's disenfranchised residents. She notes that Parkdale today remains "a complex place, where diversity has thrived despite repeated attempts to impose false unity through a simple label [that of the revitalized urban village]" (202). For her, the recent image of Parkdale as "a revitalized urban village" superficially celebrates diversity while reproducing a romantic vision of a past that never was, where diversity is narrowly defined in a manner that denies the everyday reality of many neighborhood inhabitants.

Parkdale is not a homogeneous area and is, in fact, geographically divided along class lines. The North Side of Queen St. is home to middle and upper class home owners, whereas the South side (South Parkdale), where HOPE is located, is home to low-income and renter populations. According to the 2006 national census, the area north of Queen St. has a median household income of \$47, 685, while the south side has a household median income of \$28, 560. Over half of all the households in South Parkdale, 52.6 percent, represent new immigrants and refugee populations, and 42 percent speak a language other than French or English at home. Around 90 percent of South Parkdale's inhabitants are renters and of those 46.4 percent are low-income (City of Toronto Neighborhood Profiles 2006). Furthermore, in a recent 2011 report, South Parkdale was

rated in the top five of low-income areas in the city of Toronto (Profile of Low-Income in the City of Toronto: 10).

The presence of social service agencies is particularly noticeable in Parkdale. Groen (2011) calls this area a “social services hub” as there are nearly two-dozen social service agencies operating there primarily to assist residents with low-income or mental illness. Some authors note that single residents with mental illnesses settled in South Parkdale as a consequence of mass deinstitutionalization from adjacent psychiatric facilities in the 1970s and 1980s (Slater 2004, Whitzman 2009), whereas new immigrants and refugees have historically come there looking for affordable housing—a situation that has resulted in the area being known as the “landing strip” (Groen 2011).

Although, as mentioned, the processes of gentrification have been slow in Parkdale, many residents remain concerned that the neighborhood’s present accommodation of diverse groups and individuals (including immigrants, refugees, street involved youth, people with mental disabilities), is more fragile than ever. Although the reasons that have arrested full gentrification in Parkdale are complex, the slowing down of this process can be attributed, in part, to committed community activist groups who are trying, with some success, to protect disenfranchised people from being pushed out of the neighborhood as a consequence of the increasingly profitable housing market.

The Parkdale Pilot Project, a decade-long municipal program, completed in 2009, was fairly successful in terms of ensuring low-income housing would remain available in South Parkdale (Simons 2009). According to Parkdale’s city councilor, Gord Perks, through this program, the government ensured the existence of “a housing stock which means that close to 1,000 people can’t be dehousing by the marketplace” (Groen 2011)

HOPE garden, with its explicit social justice objectives, is also one way in which social diversity is being defended at the local level. According to a diversity survey conducted by Greenest City, the environmental charity that runs the garden, in the summer of 2011, HOPE garden was successfully providing a space for individuals who are often marginalized from community activities due to a range of challenges such as low-income, mental health illnesses, cultural and language barriers, and lack of access to land. For example, 42 percent of survey participants identified themselves as new immigrants, while 10.5 percent of all respondents indicated that they had arrived in Canada in the last 18 months and were in the process of gaining landed immigrant status (these respondents were primarily refugees).¹⁰ The survey also included indicators of socio-economic status where 57 percent of surveyed garden participants were low-income and 26 percent of those surveyed were on social assistance or unemployed and looking for work. When compared with the data from the 2006 Statistics Canada census, which notes a high incidence of poverty in South Parkdale, as well as a sizable immigrant and refugee population,¹¹ the garden emerges as microcosm of the area.

The goal of Greenest City in HOPE (Healthy Organic Parkdale Edibles), as well as in its other urban agriculture initiatives in the Parkdale neighborhood, is to implement innovative social programs that “promote health, support community action and enhance social and environmental justice in Toronto” (Greenest City Annual Report 2010: 5). To

¹⁰ In terms of mother tongue, 52.6% of those surveyed spoke more than one language, while 18.4% spoke three or more languages.

¹¹ According to the 2006 census 52.6 percent of residents in South Parkdale were either immigrants or refugees.

this end, Greenest City oversees three cultivation spaces: HOPE garden, a youth garden in the neighboring Dunne Parkette, and a container garden, for the ESL (English Second Language) classes, located on a vacant piece of land a few steps away from the larger community garden. Additionally, Greenest City facilitates programs and workshops revolving around social and environmental issues, which include but are not limited to the community kitchen, after-school programming, a summer youth drop-in garden, a youth employment program, art projects, and canning workshops. The charity further organizes community potlucks, farm field trips, weekly after work parties, and annual events, such as the Food, Earth and Culture Festival.

Greenest City is funded by various foundations, corporations, and government departments and was recently awarded a large financial grant from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, which channels funds from government lotteries to various community oriented organizations across Ontario. Greenest City is composed of staff, which, during my research, included five people; the steering committee, comprised of staff and volunteers from the garden who work together to organize and implement projects in the garden; and the board of directors who are predominantly involved in the human resource, financial, and budgetary aspects of the organization. Greenest City's office is located in the basement of the Parkdale Community Center which means its employees are accessible to local residents and other community based organizations, while being only a few steps from the gardens it runs.

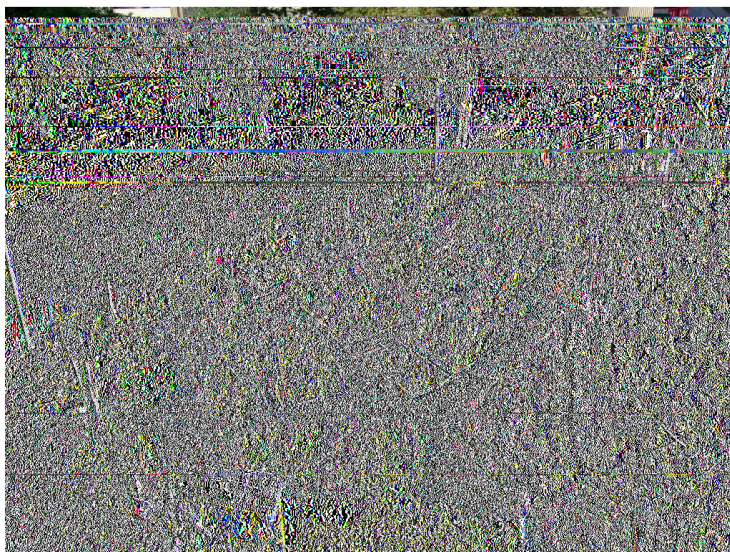


Figure 2 HOPE garden. Source: Greenest City Annual Report (2010).

HOPE garden (see Figure 2) is situated on the north side of the Masaryk Park right next to the community center. The garden, created on park land, covers about 800 feet and is enclosed by a wooden fence. The garden is divided into 48 plots. The majority of plots are tended by individuals, families, and social service agencies, such as church groups and NGOs (both staff and volunteers). There are no fees or charges for a plot, it is available for free. There are also a few communal plots which include a herb spiral garden, berry bushes that are interwoven through the outside fence, and a children's garden that is used during the weekly children's gardening program. Inside HOPE there is a shared garden shed that contains tools and watering cans; a small greenhouse; a three bin compost system; three water barrels that are filled using the city's water but are also designed to collect rain water; and a small sitting area with benches. Hanging on the outside of the fence are several signs in multiple languages that describe the purpose of the garden and provide contact information for those interested in being

involved. There is also a picnic table, located near the entrance of HOPE, where gardeners and other community members are often found socializing. In the central area of the park there is a children's wading pool, a large playground, plenty of tall and very old trees, as well as a few small flower beds. On the opposite side of the street, there is an alleyway that leads to the ESL container garden.¹² Lastly, a concrete walkway winds through Masaryk Park, beginning near HOPE garden leading to Dunne Parkette where the youth garden is situated.



Figure 3 The Youth Garden located in Dunne Parkette. Source: author's photograph.

The youth garden space (see Figure 3), like HOPE garden, is enclosed by a fence. Inside the garden, there is a shed, two water barrels, a herb spiral garden, three square-foot plots, four regular garden plots, two raised beds that are accessible for those with disabilities, a three bin compost system, and a sitting area with three benches. The youth garden is run by Youth Green Squad (YGS)—Greenest City's youth employment

¹² During my fieldwork I was unable to participate in the ESL garden; however, a few of my research participants reference their experiences with the ESL garden in their interviews.

program. It is a space where young people, mostly of high school age, learn about organic gardening and ecological sustainability. The garden is also used for the weekly drop-in garden where young people from the community come out and participate in gardening activities alongside the Youth Green Squad. The youth garden is a communal space where vegetables harvested are often used to teach the youth about healthy eating. The activities at the youth garden are often connected to HOPE garden as the young people often prepare harvested vegetables for the workshops and events at HOPE. These youth also participate in the majority of the events and workshops held at HOPE. I spent a considerable amount of time in the youth garden; however my research project predominantly reflects the experiences of the gardeners, volunteers, and coordinators in HOPE garden.

In order to understand the interpersonal dynamics at HOPE, I conducted participant observation at the garden and various related community events during June, July, and August of 2012. This method of research on its most basic level, as Crapazano notes, means embracing “everydayness” (Crapazano 2006:71). In the context of my own project, “everydayness” involved actively engaging with gardeners on a regular basis, participating in their informal conversations, partaking in their work, hanging-out with them, and finally, learning what it meant to be a gardener at HOPE.

My being there on a daily basis made it possible for me to develop the rapport needed to conduct my research. Admittedly, during the first few weeks at the garden it was difficult to establish relationships (mostly the result of my own social awkwardness), but it was also particularly difficult to do so with the garden coordinators. This was likely due, in part, to “researcher fatigue” (Greenest City not only had Becky Ellis, a

researcher from my home university, working at the site two years prior,¹³ but on the summer of 2011, when I conducted my fieldwork, they had had several requests for access to the site by other researchers). The concern here was not just simply over the potential disruption that could be caused by accommodating a researcher but by the understandable suspicion that, once granted permission, the researcher might just show-up at the garden, do some interviews, and leave without contributing anything back to the project. This wariness toward researchers, particularly anthropologists, is quite common among NGOs, community groups, and government agencies so I expected an initial cold reception. I was not discouraged, however, and constantly offered help, which they often needed. In a way, this allowed the coordinators to spend time with me, which eventually earned me their trust. The situation with the gardeners and volunteers was different as they were welcoming and interested in talking to me from the beginning of my fieldwork.

At the outset of my research, I was interested in how gardening in the city might influence a young person's perspective on the environment and the food system. Consequentially, I often participated in the daily activities of the Youth Green Squad—Greenest City's Youth Employment Program. While I worked with this program, I participated in a variety of youth centered activities. These included workshops on gardening techniques, art activities for children at the local Farmers Market, cooking at the community kitchen, tending the youth garden, attending the weekly afternoon drop-in garden, two fieldtrips to nearby CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms, and workshops at HOPE garden for the Wednesday After Work Party.

¹³ I should note that the garden coordinators that I worked with were not the same people that oversaw the garden during Ellis' (2010) fieldwork.

As the summer progressed, I spent more and more time with other gardeners and volunteers, and my interests, as well as participation, extended from the youth program into a variety of other activities at HOPE garden. For example, I participated in the weekly Wednesday After Work Party, the monthly community potlucks (3 in total), an Annual General Meeting, activities at the children's garden (located in HOPE garden), a variety of workshops, such as canning, art projects (including: murals, quilts, fabric flowers, silk screening, and stepping stones), an anti-discrimination seminar, educational sessions on bees and composting, and a fieldtrip to a fruit farm near the Niagara region. At the end of my summer fieldwork, I volunteered at the annual Harvest festival where I facilitated the children's art activity. Besides all the organized activities, I also spent leisure time with the gardeners, whether it was helping them tend to their plots in the garden or having a coffee together in the park. An average day at the garden for me included going to the Greenest City office at around 9:00am or 10:00am to participate in the daily activities for the Youth Green Squad. As the day progressed to the late afternoon, I would usually find myself spending time in HOPE helping the gardeners tend to their plots or simply hanging out with them having conversation at the picnic table by the garden.

Through my participation in HOPE garden and other related activities, my project started to evolve and I found myself moving away from my initial interest on youth, the environment, and food. I became curious, instead, about the ways in which gardeners developed a sense of belonging and attachment to HOPE garden. Specifically, I wanted to know how garden participants with such diverse backgrounds managed to create a fairly welcoming, tolerant, and inclusive community project.

In addition to participant observation, I conducted semi-structured interviews with youth, adult gardeners, and with Greenest City's coordinators. During these interviews, I explored a variety of topics and themes, including: a personal history of each participant, their motivation to garden at HOPE and participate in community related activities with Greenest City, their conceptualization of community, and the challenges that both they and the project might experience. I interviewed those gardeners that I spent the most time with at the site and with whom I was able to establish good rapport. Among them were five young people, whose ages ranged from 16 to 23. Three of them were working with the youth employment program, while the other two were active volunteers with Greenest City. Two of the youth were new immigrants of color who had arrived in Canada over the last four years while the others were first generation immigrants of color. In terms of gender, four were female and one was male. I also interviewed 5 adult gardeners; two were men and three women between the ages of 40 and 60. Two of the women I interviewed were immigrants of color who had settled in Canada about 10 to 20 years ago, while the other three were white and born in Canada. Of the 10 people I interviewed, five were either low-income or on social assistance, while the other five were of middle income. I also interviewed three Greenest City employees who work closely with participants in the gardens. There was the executive director, a white, university educated female; the youth program coordinator, a white female with a certificate in horticultural therapy and extensive experience working with environmental programs for marginalized youth; and the youth program assistant, a university educated

woman of color with extensive experience working with NGOs in the implementation of youth programs.¹⁴

For the analysis of the data, I transcribed all the interviews and used the computer program NVivo to identify important emerging themes. I did my best to contextualize all the data gathered by consulting census data of the ward and the neighborhood available through the City of Toronto's website. The mentioned diversity survey conducted by Greenest City was also useful in helping me place my findings in a broader context. Following Lila-Abu Lughod's advice on "ethnographies of the particular" (1991), during my analysis, I was careful to note and reflect on the diverse backgrounds and positions of my research participants in order to shed light on how their social location might impact on their experiences at the garden.

Besides reflecting on the positions and backgrounds of my research participants, I also recognize that my own viewpoint is shaped by my own social, political, and historical positionality, in turn informed by my gender and age—among other variables. As a white female growing up in the small, rural and relatively homogenous province of Prince Edward Island, I had travelled on short visits to many large cities but prior to my research in Toronto, I had never lived in such a densely populated and diverse urban area. This no doubt colored what I found of interest in my research and might have prevented me from identifying topics that might have stood out more for a researcher more used to a cosmopolitan context.

¹⁴ All of my research participants names have been changed to pseudonyms in order protect their identity.

In terms of my gender and age, I feel these facilitated my rapport with some gardeners and volunteers while inhibiting connections with others. For example, being a 26 year old, female researcher helped me establish bonds with many of the female youth, while it meant that it took me longer to establish equal rapport with male youth. Language was a barrier for communicating with some gardeners, and at times, I had to rely more than I would have liked to on the perspectives of garden coordinators and gardeners who spoke English fluently. Once again, this limited the kinds of claims I could make about the experience of certain garden participants, for example the Tibetans.

Acknowledging these limitations is not a declaration of failure since as James Clifford (1986) insists, ethnographic knowledge is always “inherently partial—committed and incomplete” (7), it “both fills and produces gaps” (6). As Haraway (1991) also notes, partiality is not a bad thing. One’s situated self does not need be a handicap if one realizes that “partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard” (195) and ultimately, of knowing anything at all.

Chapter one documents my initial observations at HOPE garden. Principally, I provide an overview of how I perceived HOPE as a place that was welcoming and inclusive for people from all sorts of backgrounds. Following this, I reflect upon my interviews and provide many examples that show how the garden is an inclusive space where its members feel a strong sense of belonging and community connectedness. In the second chapter, I provide critiques of my initial observations and begin to offer a more nuanced picture of HOPE. I go on to make the case that despite the garden being a great example of an inclusive and diverse community, conflict and tension are not absent, in fact, they are part of everyday exchanges at HOPE. In the third chapter, I examine the

rules and regulations that guide and encourage good “garden citizenship,” and consider how Greenest City programming appeals to a wide range of groups and individuals. At the end of chapter three, I go on to discuss the different ways that gardeners and the coordinators of Greenest City negotiate, and, often reconcile, conflict at the garden, making HOPE an exemplary community project.

Chapter 1 – Building Connections at HOPE

The first day I walked into Greenest City's office, I noticed a poster on the wall, crafted by one of the garden volunteers, that captured the sentimentality and attachments often associated with HOPE garden. The poster read "The garden will serve as a safe, welcoming place where community members of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and means can gather, share, celebrate, learn about ecological gardening and grow food for their personal delight & community benefit." The meaning of this quote did not become clear to me until I began participating in the daily activities and community related events at the garden. It was further elucidated during the in-depth conversations I had with gardeners who intimately discussed how HOPE was integral to their sense of community connectedness and belonging.

For many people, including my research participants, the notion of community evokes a sense of belonging, friendship, safety, and mutual trust. Zygmunt Bauman (2001) suggests that words like community not only have meanings, but at the same time also have a 'feel' or sensory element that goes beyond the literal meaning. In reference to the North American context Bauman explains, "It feels good: whatever the word community may mean, it is good 'to have a community', 'to be in a community'"(1). Similarly, the word garden has a 'feel' aspect, as noted by many gardeners and volunteers, it does not simply reference a patch of cultivated land but it conjures up the experience of a peaceful place incorporating lush and pristine beauty. A garden may be perceived as 'Eden,' or the utopian escape from the concrete, fast paced, and often

alienating, modern capitalist world. The two words, ‘community garden,’ can induce the feel-good experience of community as well as feelings of peaceful bliss often associated with gardens.

The socially nurturing dimension of community gardens is emphasized in the pertinent literature with phrases like ‘growing food, growing community,’¹⁵ ‘cultivating community,’¹⁶ and ‘a community of growing and sharing’¹⁷. Lauren Baker (2004) argues community gardens are sites where ethnic boundaries are crossed and barriers of difference are broken down. She refers to these effects of community gardens as “tending to the cultural landscape” (305). Similarly, Lorraine Johnson (2010) refers to community gardens as “nurturing hubs” that produce a civically involved and inclusive community. Indeed, HOPE is often depicted as a space where cooperation, mutual trust, respect for difference, and a culture of inclusion are cultivated and nourished alongside the greenery of the garden.

Drawing from my experiences at HOPE garden, in this chapter, I reflect on how gardeners, volunteers, and the facilitators of HOPE articulate the idea of community around the garden and its related activities. I examine how interpersonal relationships and attachments that incorporate people and the place of the garden are coupled with a sense of collective interests, ambitions, and belonging. The gardeners, volunteers, and

¹⁵ Cathy Tuttle (2012) “Sustainable Wallingford.” Accessed: February 20th 2012 <http://greenwallingford.ning.com/group/growingfoodgrowingcommunity>

¹⁶ Ellis, Becky (2010) “Cultivating community: a community garden in Toronto’s Parkdale neighborhood bridges isolation.” Briarpatch Magazine, August

¹⁷ Simon de la Salle (2010) The Edible Garden Project. Accessed: February 20th 2010 <http://www.ediblegardenproject.com/>

coordinators' stories provide insightful illustrations highlighting how they realize community in the garden—specifically how they conceptualize it as a place where diversity, respect and tolerance for others blossoms.

After exploring the links between community and attachments to the garden, I will illuminate how, from the outset of my research activity, the analyses of Baker (2004) and Johnson (2010) resonated with my experience because at that time I was moved by the harmonious relationships of the people in the garden. These initial feelings and associated understandings, as will be seen, colored my conversations and interviews with the gardeners and volunteers. I draw on examples from my interviews to showcase how new immigrants and refugees, people with mental health issues, youth, street people, and those with more privileged backgrounds participate in the garden. I discuss how these individuals feel HOPE is a place where a variety of backgrounds are welcomed and appreciated by articulating how they perceive HOPE as a space where it is a safe to both express and engage with “difference.”

Before I begin describing my fieldwork experience, I will discuss the notion of community. As noted in the introduction, drawing from Amit Vered (2002), my aim is to explore the attachments and emotive sentiments associated to the notion of community; specifically, I am interested in how face to face relationships and attachments to place are both articulated, practiced and enhanced at HOPE garden. I also draw on John Gray (2002) who insists that the sense or feeling of community is inextricably intertwined with the experience of belonging, whether this is based on shared culture, interests, or location.

In addition to thinking about community, Bourdieu's theorizing on social capital can help illuminate how social relationships and support systems are constructed at HOPE garden. Bourdieu refers to social capital as participation in social networks that reinforce a sense of shared membership in a group through repeated interactions of exchange and mutual obligations. This form of social networking results in access to possible, or concrete, support systems. My ethnographic examples will demonstrate how HOPE garden has assisted many people, including new immigrants and those dealing with mental health issues, to tap into social networks and utilize social support systems that helped them address stressful social circumstances and also proved to be useful outside of the garden context.

I would like to begin by considering how garden participants define community in general. For Marilyn, a retired middle class woman who has shared a plot with two other women from a neighboring Church from the inception of the garden, the term community means:

... a whole group of people that happen to live together and live together in proximity, and community is the stuff that brings you together, you know, that in some way brings you together for fellowship, for friendship, for a common goal of some kind—to better things, to care for people—it's just all that kind of stuff that happens at a community level. You can live near somebody for 26 years and never know their name, who they are, or what they do, but the building of community are the things that bring people together, and this covers a wide range of things.... So, that is what I would say about Parkdale that it is a group of people, many of them low-income, many of them with difficulties, but [they] come together and do their best to overcome some of those things through the engagement they have with one another, and the agencies, and community groups (August, 2011).¹⁸

¹⁸ In all instances when citations come from interviews conducted by the researcher and the interviewee has already been identified in the text, only the date of the interview will be given.

For Marilyn then the notion of community is not to be thought of as a bounded, homogenous, and cohesive entity, but as a process that brings people together for a common goal that is creatively made and re-made by those involved in its development. For her, HOPE is about encounter, engagement, and building bridges across difference. Ashley, the executive director of HOPE, who has overseen its administration for the past two years, holds a similar understanding of community:

...the community builds it [HOPE] into a community, that's the thing—I mean we set the stage, we are providing some resources and stuff—a lot of it comes from the community themselves, through workshops, fieldtrips, potlucks, events, through just being in the garden space together. It's a community space, it's not just a public park, it is a space they have pride in, they feel really a part of it, it's not just something they use and go home, it's something [the garden] they feel belongs in Parkdale (August, 2011).

In this statement, and in others I collected, my participants noted that a sense of community is created through people's contributions to the making of the garden space, their sharing of gardening experiences with others, and their participation in other activities associated with the garden.

It must be noted that the sense of community created at HOPE by its members is not based on homogeneity and sameness, but on incorporating differences and opening space for people that might have otherwise been excluded. During my analysis, I will expand on these themes and articulate how various people involved feel a deep and committed connection to HOPE garden and how this connection acquires meaning

through specific activities that forge relationships between people while cultivating a shared commitment to the garden.

My first day at HOPE garden was during the transition from spring to summer, when the city of Toronto was in full bloom. The parks and green spaces were lush with blossoming flowers and budding trees. The vegetables, herbs and fruits were ripening in HOPE as the gardeners kept a close eye on what might be ready to harvest. The sun shone as it welcomed me to Masryck Park, where I attended Greenest City's traditional monthly event, the community potluck. This activity involves the coordinators working together with the gardeners, volunteers and community members to set-up a community meal in the park next to the garden. When I arrived, people were frantically rushing around to prepare for the event. They lined up two rows of tables, which carried copious amount of delicious food brought by generous community members. One volunteer was specifically in charge of writing a list of ingredients for each dish to indicate to those with religious practices, food allergies, or special diets, the food appropriate to their needs. Meanwhile, others set up two tables; one for hand washing, and the other to carry the plates, bowls, napkins, and cutlery. People were placing blankets around the potluck area so people were able to sit-down and enjoy their meal under the warm early evening sun. People entered the park from all corners and I would guess on that day there were about sixty people attending the potluck. The event was energetic and provided a lucid demonstration of the work Greenest City was doing to bring the community together.

HOPE garden was the backdrop to the whole event (see Figure 4). The garden was not only clearly visible, but its bounty was evident in the food people brought to the potluck. Many people were using different herbs and vegetables they recently plucked

from the garden. The ingredients in the cuisine were often a topic of conversation as the gardeners were sharing recipes and would proudly note when ingredients came from the garden. The food available was also inspired by styles from all over the world, which, from my observations, was a material representation of the cultural diversity found in the garden. People were eagerly digging into the delicious cuisine. The attendees were happy as they talked, laughed and peacefully shared the feast with their neighbors. The potluck is a central event that showcases the connections people have to the garden and the sense of community shared by participants.



Figure 4 Hope garden provided the backdrop for the community potluck. Source: author's photograph.

The following day I went to the afternoon drop-in garden for youth. When I arrived three Greenest City coordinators and about seven youth volunteers greeted me. Some were shoveling soil into the new beds, while others weeded parts of the garden covered in grass. I quickly introduced myself and asked if they needed some help. The youth program manager, Selena, handed me a shovel and a smirk. While I worked, I met

few young people who recently arrived in Canada, including a Tibetan, an Indian, and a Burmese refugee—there were some youth who grew up in Toronto too. The young people told me all about Parkdale and all the things I should do while I spent my summer in Toronto—what to see, where to eat. I was really impressed by the dynamics of the youth working in the garden. For me, it shed light on how gardens are vehicles that bring people together.

Later on, we planted both seeds and recently germinated plants into a spiral herb garden bed. As we gathered around the new bed, Selena gave a lesson on the appropriate way to put potted plants into the soil. She told us that when you put plants into the ground, the soil from the potted plant must equally align with the top of the earth. If the plant stem is covered by the ground soil, it will likely cause the stem to rot. She also noted that germinated Tomatoes are the exception because they have suckers on the outside of their stem that takes in water so they can be planted deeper in the ground than most other plants.

Selena then went on to tell us the best way to harvest herbs, she noted herbs should be cut back to inhibit flowering which stifles their natural life cycle. This will ensure the herbs continue to produce leaves that are edible; she jokingly called it “birth control for plants.” There were about twenty small plants in a tray waiting to be put into the spiral herb garden (see Figure 5). Selena handed the potted plants to us and we took turns putting each one into the ground. A young female youth, an Indian who recently arrived in Canada, grabbed the purple basil plant, and began to put it into the ground. As she did this, she told us that in her culture purple basil is considered to be sacred—it is used for healing, in teas for relaxation, and given to people to help relieve cold

symptoms. She said her mother grows this type of basil on their balcony every year. At the end of the drop-in garden session, we ate snacks prepared by the Greenest City staff while listening to music played by a set of twin sisters, first generation South East Asian immigrants and active garden volunteers, who brought their guitar to the garden. The day was wonderful, and is something that will be forever embedded in my memory as I felt invigorated, hopeful, and idealistic. It seemed to me then that the garden was a place where people engaged each other and participated in the creation of a garden community.



Figure 5 Herb spiral garden. Source: author's photograph.

From these experiences I began to conceptualize the garden as a place that brings the community together in a cooperative and harmonious way. The notion of an inclusive and engaged community undoubtedly exists at HOPE and this perspective was also very much supported by the perceptions of people participating in the garden.

One of my most profound early memories from HOPE garden was the visibility of new immigrants and refugees in the garden, both young and old, and how they played a central role in the weekly activities at the garden. My observations resonated with the literature on community gardening that focused on how these initiatives assist new immigrants and refugees by improving their mental health, combating the negative effects of social isolation, and maintaining their cultural identity (Baker 2002, Corrllett et. Al 2005, Beckie & Bogdan 2010). Julie, a South East Asian immigrant, who settled in Canada about four years ago, formerly worked with the Youth Green Squad and is an active volunteer, remarked:

The Tibetans have big, big gardens back home and [in Canada] they all live in apartments and they can't grow anything. So, when you open gardens, like HOPE garden, they can actually come and grow vegetables and live their lives a little bit like they did back home. That's what I want to do, like I come from a big house and a big garden, and I come here to live in an apartment, when they come here and meet people and talk to them it just changes their life, like you need that, right? (August 2011)

As the preceding quote suggests, especially for some immigrants living in apartments, participating at HOPE gives them a space where they can continue their traditional cultural practices while at the same time engaging the community. Laura, a middle class Caribbean immigrant who settled in Canada over 20 years ago, is a representative of the neighboring church and shares her plot with Marilyn, she noted:

... not everyone has a house where there is back yard where they can garden, or a roof where they can grow a garden—or to put pots, some people do pot gardening on balconies and stuff—and in many apartments and condos you can't do that, so people don't have access to a home grown tomato or a home grown lettuce leaf....the fact that you can have parks in the community with a space allotted, a green space, a public area, it brings great balance to that community (August 2011).

Similar to Julie, Laura highlights the importance of providing access to space for people in apartments so they, like those who live in homes with back yards, have the opportunity to grow nutritious food and provide for their families.

The importance of having space to both garden and socialize was also illustrated by April, a youth of Tibetan background, who moved from India to Canada about 2 years ago. She explained that participating in gardening activities and programs with Greenest City helped her to adjust to her new home by connecting to the community of Parkdale. She said that following her ESL class at the library, she would volunteer with the afterschool drop-in garden. She did this alongside other ESL students from her class and other youth living in the community. She appreciated participating at the youth drop-in garden for two specific reasons: firstly, it reminded her of fond memories from her childhood in India:

When I was in India, my family owned a farm and then we used to grow corn, coffee, and a lot of other stuff. In our house we would have a front yard and backyard full of flowers and trees. My auntie used to love gardening, so I would help out just a bit. When I was really young, I did not like gardening at all. They used to force me to do it! Yeah, when you are small and are forced to do something you don't like, you don't feel like doing it. But then, I don't know through those years I developed some interest towards it. So I took advantage of this opportunity...(August, 2011).

Secondly, she mentioned the garden gave her the opportunity to connect with other Tibetans and Indians in the community. She was able to reminisce about her past back home, as well as discuss current affairs and popular culture in India:

Even weeding was fun because we would just gather around, weed, and talk. Most of the people, they were all Tibetan right? And we would all talk about what is happening in India, right--and I was just new so I was missing home, I was like, ah yeah, talking about home (August, 2011).

April's experiences at the youth garden resonate with some of the conversations I had with other new immigrants and refugees at the afternoon youth garden. For instance, I often had conversations with Dylan who was a recently arrived Burmese refugee. He was older than most of the youth, but I do not know his exact age. He has lived in Toronto for the past three years and regularly attends ESL classes at the library. His English was not that good but he made great efforts to speak with all of us at the garden. He would even play guitar and sing songs in his language and in English—in this case he sang Bob Dylan. He told me that in his home country he lived in a rural area where he gardened with his family and he said that being at HOPE was a comforting reminder of home. Additionally, participating in one of his favorite activities, gardening, while practicing English allowed Dylan to feel more at ease in Canada and adjust to his new life.

As Clarissa Kimber (2004) has suggested, gardens act like “an immigrant’s narrative” (272) deployed in the reproduction of cultural identity. As elucidated by April, Julie, and Dylan, by growing vegetables and herbs that are culturally appropriate to their diet, immigrants carry on traditional cultivation practices and can pass on embodied knowledge(s) associated with the “homeland” to the next generation.

Another activity that Greenest City facilitates highlighted for me the important role that can be played by community gardens when it comes to integrating immigrant communities. I am referring to the ‘Milky Way’ garden, which targets ESL students, predominantly seniors. The ‘Milky Way’ is a container garden located on a vacant piece of land only a few steps away from the central garden. Greenest City has a partnership with an ESL teacher at the local Parkdale library, who, in the ESL garden, mostly works

with seniors who are new immigrants or refugees (presently, most of the students are seniors from Tibet). The garden is said to be instrumental in providing an opportunity for the students to have a break from the classroom and connect to the community. Greenest City annual report states that the ESL “activities focus on experiential learning, reducing social isolation, and understanding and celebrating cultural diversity” (2010: 6).

Additionally, the ESL students have the opportunity to participate in the community kitchen, fieldtrips, potlucks, as well as workshops on a variety of food and environmental related issues. Laura notes how the participation of the ESL group has been a mutually beneficial experience:

So we got the ESL group in as gardeners--they are very much a part of the community because they are involved in all the festivals, the baking, the cooking, everything. Its great integration for them in more social ways—social skills, improving their language skills. Also, for some, who perhaps are coming in from countries who haven't been exposed to that open mixture, they are open there and everyone is like a little family—they talk freely with you if you talk freely with them—and you share veggies and everything. So, I think it is a wonderful experience personally... (August 2011).

Since the ESL group began, a few groups of Tibetan seniors now have plots in the bigger community garden, which helps them to engage and network with the broader community and share their cultural knowledge. Since most of them live in apartments, the garden further gives them an opportunity to grow their own fresh vegetables like they used to in their home country.

Many young people from HOPE also mentioned how Greenest City and the activities associated with the garden were useful in giving them opportunities to tap into social networks where they met other youth, learned new skills, and engaged with the community. One young female participant, Julie, the South East Asian immigrant

mentioned earlier, reflected on the ways Greenest City helped her feel grounded in Canada after she emigrated from Sri Lanka:

I met so much more people ... here, if you want to live in Canada, you need to know a lot of people, the more people you know, the more people you interact with...then if you need help, people are there for you. That means you need to interact and maintain good relationships with everyone and Greenest City has given me that good opportunity to meet people, and like, keep in touch with them, that's why I still come back, because at the end of the day you need some help, right? And maybe you need advice...like, who is going to give you advice, right? I have been here for three years and people have given me so much more, like, knowledge (August 2011).

In this specific quote Julie draws attention to the ways in which Greenest City has assisted in her adjustment to Canada especially through forging friendships that constitute a veritable “social capital” for newcomers providing them with a strong support system. As her words illustrate, the garden was a vehicle that allowed her to feel more at home in her community and more attached to Parkdale.

Interestingly, the experiences of new immigrants are similar to the experiences had by those garden members with mental health issues. I frequently had conversations with an active gardener, Timothy, who has lived in Parkdale for the past 17 years and recently recovered from his mental illness. He spoke to me at great length about the ways in which community gardening and his involvement at HOPE vastly increased his quality of life. He explained that he was socially isolated and depressed when he first moved to Parkdale; however, once he began participating in gardening activities and programs, he established an intimate connection to the community. This active participation was therapeutic for his condition. The bonds he made with the people, and the garden, were instrumental in counteracting the loneliness and despair that he endured prior to his involvement with HOPE.

Timothy cultivates a small garden plot that is shared with two other men with whom he now spends time. All of the men reside in the same apartment complexes, which are owned by a church organization that subsidizes their rent. The garden was the catalyst that brought these men together as companions, and provides another example of how the garden helps in building “social capital” allowing participants to expand their social support networks, nurturing sustaining relationships that spill into other parts of their lives. For Timothy, whether it is going out for coffee at a neighboring café, eating dinner together or pairing up during the Greenest City field trips, the garden serves as a communal focal point to meet others and to socialize in a constructive manner both within and outside of the garden.

During our interview, in August 2011, I asked Timothy about how Parkdale has changed since he moved here and he responded to the question in a very personal manner:

Well, it changed for me. I wasn't always a part of the garden. When I first came here I was mentally ill, like with an acute illness, in Parkdale, so I wasn't well. The first six months I was at a boarding house, I just lived in my bed and went to the clinic and that was about it, so I was pretty isolated. I wasn't really a part of the community. I was by myself trying to struggle with the illness.

Following this, I asked him how access to the garden had changed his life in Parkdale and he quickly stated “Well, I am more involved in the community...I think it is important.”

Later on, he told me that the garden was very therapeutic for him because it helped him to become closer to nature and to Creation. He said:

Well, the garden is from Creation too...I mean the plants, the fruits, they are all a part of Creation for me, so I have enjoyed them. Even the breeze, the wind has been kind of exciting. I love it. I love being a part of Creation, I love being next to it—you know the roses over there. There is no perfume like the rose perfume. No perfume like it, I haven't smelled any.

He is a tremendously religious man and he often felt like living in the city, or the “concrete jungle,” caused people to lose sight of the beauty embedded in nature by God.

He noted:

The asphalt jungle is an old term too. You know when they start cutting down all the trees. Like you know, in some places in Ireland they have no trees, there are just all these coal towns—it is just the like asphalt, concrete and stone houses—no trees, you know, because they have all died because of the coal slag...and it is just sterile no trees, no flowers, you know...I think it affects people in a negative way after a while in the heart—it hardens the heart. Cause I think trees, flowers, birds and the sky—clouds and the fruit of the garden, the plants...I think it gives people a bit of a smile inside—if not so much outside, I think it can grow on them. Get back to God and maybe, you know, be saved (August 2011).

Timothy’s comments support research findings about gardening and its psychological and physical therapeutic effects. Susan Stuart, drawing from her research on gardening initiatives involving women victims of domestic violence, noted that cultivation practices are “a powerful antidote to sadness and depression and a source of stress relief and relaxation” (2005: 70). Gardening activities assist people facing distress by allowing them to be in touch with ‘the natural world,’ to connect to people and larger support systems, and most importantly, as Timothy insisted, to feel better on the inside—to feel whole again.

Those suffering from mental illness were not the only ones to find a healing and communal spirit at HOPE; street people, city residents without a home or those who may live in a shelter or group home, were also involved at the garden. Their involvement, however, was notably different than that of other gardeners. This aspect of my research is quite fascinating, especially in terms of thinking about inclusion for those located at the very margins of society. There are many street people who live in, or tend to remain

near, the park and they often will take part in the potluck. During these organized social events there was a certain congeniality, which overrode socially prejudiced behavior. Participants of varying lifestyles and backgrounds would come together and take part in eating, sharing, conversing, and relating with one another and as a larger group. Some gardeners, indicating a clear, deliberate sense of inclusion for all noted in our conversations that “these people are just as much a part of the community as anyone else.” Indeed, during my fieldwork I had the opportunity to see how this deliberative sense of inclusion was cultivated at the garden for those on the very outskirts of society.

While I was at the garden I often conversed with Malcolm, a middle-aged man who lived on the street and attended many of HOPE’s weekly and monthly events. Malcolm had a severe addiction to alcohol and I would frequently see him hanging around in the park, or on Queen St. while I was on my way to the garden. On Wednesdays, for the after work party, he would come to the garden to help a staff member of the neighboring church with his plot, or he would come and participate in the art activities or other social programming. One Wednesday in particular, the youth group facilitated an art activity in the park next to the garden, where we made cloth flowers from old fabric. During this activity, I helped Malcolm and his friend to cut and sew the fabric together and add a button to make a flower. He was really appreciative of my help and was obviously enthusiastic to be participating in the activity. The important feature in this event was that Malcolm was sitting down with about fifteen other people learning to make these flowers—he was an active participant carrying on and having fun like the rest of the group.

What I noticed during the summer is when Malcolm came to garden he was fairly sober, in fact much more sober than on the days I met him on the street. The days he was sober were usually when the garden was holding public events like the potlucks, the weekly work parties, or other workshops. This is not to say that there were never any problems. In fact, as I note in chapter two, there were some points in the past where Malcolm was asked to leave the garden. However, for the most part he tried to behave in a way that was suitable for the gardeners.

What is important to note here is that Malcolm clearly feels welcomed in the space and is welcomed by others. Marilyn commented that Malcolm is often given vegetables harvested from the garden and he often has some intelligent things to say when it comes to gardening practices—he used to garden when he was younger. There is clearly not just compassion shown here but an appreciation for Malcolm’s contributions to the garden.

Another interesting story involving marginalized people at HOPE garden was revealed by Ashley, the executive director, when she told me about a woman who lived in the park the previous summer and developed a keen interest in the garden. Ashley’s story starts by noting how street involved people are often more ready to defend you and your place, she said:

Yeah, and they will actually go to bat for you in a way that you know that lots of other people wouldn't...we had a homeless woman that lived in the park two years ago, and there are homeless people in the park right now, and not all of them are like her, but she basically lived on the picnic table for like a month or two and she watched the garden. She connected with the staff, and she connected with the gardeners and she was out there all the time and the garden was in better shape than ever when she was out there because if she saw anybody that wasn't supposed to be in there, or doing anything they weren't supposed to, she would go

after them because she knew that it was something people put a lot of heart into (August, 2011).

To some degree, as Ashley noted, it was as if this woman felt a bit of ownership over the garden and felt it was her responsibility to protect the space. In fact, she would inform the gardeners when someone unwelcome went into the garden to steal something, or when vandals attempted to destroy the garden.

In the previous statements by both Marilyn and Ashley we come to recognize how the garden draws different people in, opening up a space for building relationships that are developed based on respect. Robyn, who works part-time as the youth program assistant, remarked on how social activities help to break down social barriers and are create space for marginalized people in the garden: The people that come there and you see them outside of HOPE garden, and you didn't know, I think a lot of people would pass judgement on them. For me, it breaks down those barriers because there is people with addictions that come there--there are people with different abilities... I think just being here I always had...and being at HOPE garden that broke down a lot of that...and the fact that the community comes together to help each other, even though there are issues in the garden, like the stealing of vegetables and whatever, but the fact that they interact with each other, you get different types of people, who otherwise would never talk to each other. It creates a community...I think what could happen from this is a safe community cause once more people feel connected to each other I think it can only get better, right. (August, 2011).

Robyn's comments were echoed by Marilyn who discussed her friendship with a man with addiction issues. Marilyn relayed to me how this man had told her that being

involved in the garden made him feel that he belonged in the community, he didn't feel like an outsider, or an invisible in public anymore. He felt as though he had made meaningful connections and attachments with people that he would have never had were it not for the garden. Marilyn explained:

I mean addictions are just so awful because they can leave for while and then they can come back at the drop of a hat, so I found that there were a number of people who did so beautifully, they blossomed, in the garden—their expertise was appreciated so much, and they knew what they were doing and then you don't see them for months at a time and you know that something has happened, but they show up, and now and then you see them, and you got this thing that, you know. I remember one of the guys saying to Laura and I, and this was when he was on a good path, you know, getting some real help, and he was working hard at his addiction, and he was involved in the garden, and he said “I couldn't have spoken to you a few years ago because you were just so far apart from where I was that I couldn't just speak to you.” He said, now I feel like we are friends—even now he is away for a few months, when we see him, he approaches us, he talks, we can talk to him, so there is something there, you know, that has made a change, just even in his ability to feel he can still approach people, he is accepted, no matter what (August 2011).

As illustrated in Marilyn's story, it is clear how the garden helped people to connect to other community members. Marilyn also points to the way in which this relationship was mutually beneficial in that both she and Laura established a new bond with this man that positively impacted each of them. Marilyn insisted that for her the garden's goal is:

... to be with people, to get to know people.. I get helped too, it's not just me out there helping—it's a mutual thing, it literally is walking alongside each other, you know, that is the way I see it. It's getting to know people and whatever has brought them, and me too, and find out some ways to make a community, I guess that's it, being a part of the community, helping to make that interaction happen (August 2011)

As poignantly depicted by the words of Marilyn and others cited in this chapter — including, garden staff, new immigrants, refugees, and mental health survivors—HOPE

garden works to create a feeling of community and place-attachment while providing participants with a way to amass much needed social capital.

HOPE also plays an important educational function that contributes to building a healthy and inclusive community. The garden, by contrast with other community-oriented activities, like a soccer team or dance club, which require specific athletic abilities and a certain degree of fitness, is truly open to people with different levels of fitness and abilities. This is likely why the garden constitutes a rare site where people of different backgrounds, ages, and experiences can come together and through this contact, learn to better understand each other. As mentioned, for many gardeners HOPE is a means for them to establish bonds with others and learn to better understand those with different backgrounds, especially those affected by poverty, addictions, homelessness or displacement. As shown, the garden was often experienced as an area of contact and engagement where people built bridges, made room for differences, and fostered a keen sense of belonging. Without denying the validity of this experience, in the following chapter, I look at conflict and tension at HOPE and how negative situations are approached and reconciled. This discussion, I will argue, is essential for gaining a more nuanced perspective on the garden and understanding the challenges the project faces.

Chapter 2 – Conflict, Tension, and Misunderstandings

As shown in chapter one, community gardens are often experienced as places that help cultivate a sense of community connectedness and belonging among diverse individuals. This, however, does not mean that interpersonal tensions, conflicts, and a general unease with “difference”—often ignored in the pertinent literature—are absent from the day-to-day functioning of even the most successful of garden projects. While HOPE garden, undoubtedly, provides a safe space for people from many different backgrounds to work together, this work involves continuous effort. Periodically, conflicts arise in the garden and these issues are not always perfectly reconciled. Animosity may even remain after conflicts have seemingly been resolved. As I will try to argue in this chapter, a consideration of these conflicts, tensions, and associated challenges provides valuable insight into the kinds of issues faced by garden participants in trying to work with each other. Specifically, this chapter examines the kinds of challenges I noted in my research, which stemmed from different understandings of inclusiveness; the inability to communicate successfully; cultural misunderstandings; general prejudice; territoriality and entitlement; and differences in the perceived purpose or appearance of a garden plot. These incidents are important to acknowledge and analyze in order to fully grasp the difficulties involved in building a smoothly functioning and inclusive community garden project.

During the first month of my fieldwork at HOPE garden, I felt as though I was taking part in a fertile utopia where people from a wide range of social backgrounds had

created a shared and inclusive sense of community. My initial observations, specifically at the community potluck and the drop-in youth garden, discussed in chapter one, seemed to precisely reflect the analyses by Baker (2004) and Johnson (2010) as I found myself moved by the harmonious and cooperative social relations in the garden. Not surprisingly, these feelings were often confirmed in my conversations and interviews with the gardeners, as well as volunteers, and to a certain extent are reflective of the common experiences people have at HOPE. However, as the summer progressed, this utopian, or Garden of Eden, image of HOPE evolved and changed as I witnessed conflict, fragmentation and the workings of garden politics. As mentioned earlier, HOPE is a place where people with widely disparate backgrounds come together. For many, the garden requires them to interact with “difference” on a more personal and intimate level than they might be used to in their everyday lives outside the garden and this sometimes translates into tensions that evolve into full-blown conflicts that must be addressed by those involved. In the end, I came to understand that while HOPE can be a site of community cohesion, it is also a space where conflict and tension over gardening practices, or larger issues, such as class and ability, are continually re-enacted in everyday encounters among the gardeners.

A prickly issue that posed serious challenges to the creation of an inclusive community space at HOPE was connected to incidents of vegetable theft, hinted at by some of the signs appearing at the garden entrance (See Figure 6). Drawing on the work of Rebecca Ellis (2010b), who conducted research at HOPE garden in 2009, as a supplement to my own research, I will examine two different ethnographic examples involving theft which allow me to illustrate the ways in which varied perceptions and

approaches to the problem of theft in the garden bring out important questions pertaining to inclusion, exclusion, and the maintenance of an open communal space at HOPE. As noted in Hilda Kurtz's (2001) study of gardens in Minneapolis and Minnesota, these questions are of outmost importance for community gardens in general.



Figure 6 Sign asking people not to steal vegetables. Source: author's photograph.

During Ellis' fieldwork at HOPE she encountered many gardeners who told her that vegetable theft was one of their primary concerns in the garden.¹⁹ She noted that while some individuals wanted to lock the garden gate in order to protect HOPE from thieves and vandals, other gardeners disagreed by calling attention to HOPE's mandate to

¹⁹ To some extent my research converges with that of Ellis since, like her, I also consider problems like theft and how institutional practices, like community meetings, assist in resolving resulting conflicts at the garden. My project, however, differs from Ellis' work in some important respects. First, in this chapter, I pay attention to a range of conflicts and trace how the gardeners themselves cope with, and address, these conflicts in their day-to-day interactions at HOPE. Second, in Chapter 3, I move beyond a focus on community meetings to consider how the specific governing structures and programming initiatives put in place by Greenest City encourage gardeners to respect and overcome their differences. Finally, while Ellis, like me, highlights the inclusiveness and diversity of the garden, I show how this inclusiveness and diversity is fostered through specific practices of different garden participants.

serve with openness and inclusion. Similarly, Ellis noted that some gardeners were devastated when their vegetables were stolen while others did not think it was a major concern. It was never fully clear who was stealing the vegetables or how much was stolen but it nonetheless remained a serious concern for gardeners. Many gardeners insisted that a lock was needed on the gate.

The coordinator, who was in charge of managing contentious issues, such as this one, took considerable time to discuss the situation with as many gardeners as possible. The issue was raised in two steering committee meetings where the coordinator brought up the perspectives of the gardeners she spoke with, and the 8-10 gardeners present in the meeting also shared their views. What they concluded was that although many people were initially against having a lock on the gate they had come to the realization that theft had become worse and now most of the people thought a lock on the gate was warranted.

During the meeting there was also a fascinating discussion on the ways in which the gardeners could actively try and deter theft. According to Ellis, most people believed that it was the most impoverished individuals in the area who perpetrated theft—though, this was never completely settled. As a tentative solution, a few people suggested that during the After Work Party on Wednesdays the gardeners could place a bucket of excess vegetables on the outside of the garden so that people from the neighborhood could freely take what vegetables they needed. Others thought that putting a communal plot outside the garden that was completely open to the public would deter theft; however, this idea was not feasible because there was not enough available space in the park.

Since the decision was to have the garden locked when no gardeners were on the premises, each gardener was provided with the combination to the lock and was able to

access the garden whenever it fit their schedule. Even with these new rules, during the day, HOPE was not often locked because a gardener was almost always found laboring or enjoying the lush green surroundings of the garden. Many gardeners noted that it was hard to determine how much the lock reduced theft. One gardener commented, “In all honesty, the lock is as much a social deterrent as anything else. If people wanted to physically get in and take anything out of the garden, they’d reach through the fence” (Quoted in Ellis 2010: 52). Ellis’ research exemplifies the tensions, difficulties, and contradictions that come with maintaining a community garden where most people want the garden to be inclusive but they also want their own interests and efforts to be protected.²⁰

My research in part echoes Ellis’ findings in this respect and shows how gardeners have different perspectives on the issue of theft. Selena, the youth program manager, explained how some gardeners react possessively and territorially when their vegetables are stolen. She notes, “People do feel a very wonderful sense of ownership [in the garden], the drawback of that is a minor incident of theft can become like, everything in the world has been taken from you, anything that doesn't go as you expect it to go, you feel like it is really an attack on you” (August 2011). In contrast, Marilyn, the long-time gardener and church member mentioned in chapter one, gave examples of gardeners who did not feel as upset when their produce was stolen. She explained, “My experience with some gardeners that were there first, [is that] there is a fair amount of tolerance around

²⁰ Community members are informed that they should not pick the vegetables freely from the garden. At the front entrance of HOPE, as shown in Figure 6, alongside the signs that welcome people to the garden there is also a sign that tells people not “to pick the veggies.” The signs suggest to me that, in the past, some members from the community may have been suspected of theft.

missing vegetables, they were just like ‘oh my cabbage is gone, I am just going to plant more,’ you know and ‘I hope it went to someone who needed it’” (August 2011).

During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to witness the tense negotiations surrounding a case of theft which, as was the case in Ellis’ example, involved the mediation of the coordinators of Greenest City. In this example, however, the circumstances were different because the suspect was a gardener from HOPE, as opposed to an outsider. In this case, I had the opportunity to observe and hear multiple perspectives, which included volunteers, gardeners, and coordinators who outlined how the situation unfolded.

It all started when an older woman with a mental health issue, presumably schizophrenia, was assumed to be stealing vegetables from other plots. The woman in question seemed to be targeting specific plots. In the beginning, the coordinators did not have any solid proof that the woman in question carried out the theft; at most, they only had hearsay from the other gardeners. The coordinators found it difficult to address the situation as they recognized the woes of the gardeners, but also knew that the woman involved (if she was committing theft) was not fully aware of her actions. Additionally, the woman struggled in her daily life, and did not have other viable social supports, so asking her to leave the garden was out of the question at that point. In order to address the situation, the coordinators watched the suspected vegetable thief more closely to find answers and appease the gardeners’ concerns.

The gardeners who complained were visibly disappointed and frustrated with the theft of their vegetables. One dedicated gardener in particular, Debra, a middle aged woman, who immigrated to Canada from Trinidad, was a repeated victim of thefts. I

remember having coffee with her a number of times in the garden where she would grumble about the stolen vegetables. At one point she even said that a whole plant had been pulled out of her garden. Debra's garden was robbed the most often, as far as anyone in the garden could tell. She would insist that she was going to leave the garden for good because she was fed up with the lack of respect for her garden space. Debra, undoubtedly, was deeply upset and hurt by the pilfering of her garden; however, she never actually withdrew.

By the end of my summer fieldwork period, it seemed as though people would just put up with this theft despite evident frustrations from the victims. The coordinators entertained the idea of banning the presumed thief, but they did not because they believed that they did not have sufficient evidence to do so. Although, the Greenest City coordinators were keeping an eye on the presumed thief, it was difficult to keep track of her actions as she would go to the garden when no one was present. The gardeners whose vegetables were stolen still felt upset, but, as noted earlier, remained active members of the garden.

During a follow-up interview with the executive director, Ashley, a few months after my summer fieldwork was over, we discussed the subjects of diversity and conflict at the garden. Ashley told me that since the summer the mentioned issue of theft had become a more contested and urgent problem. She said those directly involved in the situation had gone through the Greenest City's conflict management process, but it did not make that much of a difference. In the end, Ashley told me that, as more evidence was revealed, the organization had no choice but to ban the woman who was stealing the vegetables. She remarked:

There is a process, right? At the end of the day as much as we want people in the garden, and people need to be in the garden, there is a cost, and if the cost of having them in the garden exceeds a certain threshold we have to ask them to leave, they just can't stay... Well, if we had more resources or we had a social worker, case worker, or somebody, we could assign times, like being in the garden during certain times, but it then becomes challenging on enforcing if they are in the garden or not, but then you take away the gate combination or you change it to a key system then they don't have a key and they certainly can't get into the shed--and some equipment did get stolen as well--she'd take anything that's not nailed down quite frankly--we are not the only organization in the community that has a problem with her taking stuff--and we are not basing it on that, that's the thing, we knew that another program she uses has seen her consistently taking stuff but we still can't base it on that and it wasn't until we had really valid witnesses, and valid staff witnesses, until we could move forward with it (December 2011).

Evidently, in this case, it was difficult for Greenest City to come up with an entirely satisfactory response to the problem. Ashley was visibly saddened when she told me how the events unfolded. Yet, given the circumstances she knew the organization approached the situation as sensitively and as cautiously as possible. From what she stated above, it would seem that she felt things could be different if the garden possessed the required human resources to address this woman's needs. As this case illustrates, it is not always possible to find the right balance between being an inclusive organization that welcomes individuals with serious mental health challenges and the need to provide a safe space for all the gardeners involved. There are times when not everyone can be equally accommodated.

Beyond the issue of theft, there are also tensions in the garden that are related to cultural misunderstandings. One salient example involved a group for at risk youth, part

of the art program known as Sketch,²¹ and a neighboring group of seniors, primarily composed of Tibetan and Nepali immigrants. Each group has their own garden, but they were neighbors in that the plots were parallel to each other separated by a small path. These two groups have very different interpretations of ‘respect,’ in particular their different understanding of social hierarchies based on age, led to misunderstandings. The tension appeared to stem in part from the fact that whereas Tibetan and Nepali societies generally value communal and family living, ‘filial piety’ and respect for elders; these values are not shared by everyone in Canada. As noted by some scholars, many Nepali and Tibetan immigrants indeed have trouble adjusting to life in ‘Western’ contexts, vehemently resisting the pull towards individualism and what they see as the erosion of family networks (Wangmo 2010: 879). Taking this into account, it is not surprising to find that the Tibetans and Nepali seniors working at the garden found the informal behavior of the youth to be ‘disrespectful.’ Since in their culture, respect for elders is a cherished value, they expected young people to engage them in particular ways. The youth from Sketch, largely unaware of this, related to them in ways that the elders found inappropriate.

These seniors, as well others coming from countries where life is largely centered around the family unit, also found the Sketch youth ‘problematic’ in another respect. Ashley noted that many older seniors from other cultural backgrounds are not accustomed to seeing groups of young people who are separated from their families.

²¹ Sketch is a non-profit community artist leadership program that works with street involved and homeless youth between the ages 16 and 30.

According to Ashley, the seniors believed that there must be something wrong with these youth since their families are not taking care of them. Ashley remarked:

There are some challenges there but again that is something—some of the cultures in the garden have a big problem relating, understanding the kids at Sketch because they come from a culture where family takes care of family and the only reason they can understand [how] these kids can be street involved, looking the way they do, struggling the way they are, is because there is something wrong with them. If there wasn't something wrong with them they would be with their families because their families would have looked after them, so they must have left their families. They have turned their back on their families. Not that they have, but this is sort of the reasoning, as I understand it (August 2011).

Ashley then expanded on the importance of different cultural backgrounds and commented:

...it is getting better, but there were some tensions there for sure ...not being comfortable around them (the youth), just not understanding, and in group settings feeling like they were being disrespectful when that wasn't necessarily the intent, right. And that comes up a lot, the issue of respect because respect looks very different depending on where you live and worked (August 2011).

In terms of thinking about tensions in the garden, this case is particularly illuminating because it shows how cultural differences can become barriers to harmonious relationships.

Beyond cultural misunderstandings, other tensions and a noted uneasiness with 'difference' in the garden arise from prejudices that may be associated with class distinction or moral judgment. For example, Julie, a South East Asian youth mentioned in chapter 1 commented on her initial discomfort at dealing with the disadvantaged youth from Sktech at the garden, telling me "I was afraid to go up and talk to people from Sketch." She elaborated, "Well, when I heard their background, I had never spoken to people like that before—I was just used to the people I went to school with back home where nobody did anything wrong..." (August 2011). From this statement, it is evident

that Julie perceived the youth from Sketch as having a very different background from her. The youth for her ultimately represented criminality and a lower socioeconomic background. She noted that she was aware that many of them had issues with drugs, and this made her apprehensive toward their presence in the garden. In a similar vein, Sarah, a first generation South East Asian youth, and active volunteer with Greenest City, noted her apprehensive feelings toward those with mental health issues in the garden (often times they are 'street' people). Reflecting on her observations, when she began attending the garden, she told me, "I started to notice like a lot of drunk people around this area [the garden and nearby park area], and I wouldn't say crazy, but people who, who are not well." It was clear from what she told me that she, like Julie, did not feel at ease with such individuals at the garden. Like Julie, she also noted that this was the first time she had been around adults with visible mental health issues.

The important point about these examples is that they show that sharing the garden space does not lead to the immediate break-down of established social boundaries and distinctions. In fact, inasmuch as prejudices of all sorts are brought into the garden by various participants, these social distinctions and boundaries are quickly rendered explicit as individuals try to cooperate and share the same space with others whose demeanor and values may be radically different from theirs.

In addition to the topic of mental illness, Sarah also mentioned the issue of intoxication, which was another important concern expressed by gardeners, volunteers, and, specifically, the coordinators during my fieldwork. Although Greenest City has a rule that stipulates all participants must refrain from intoxication while taking part in gardening activities, it was clear from some of the comments I collected that this rule was

not always respected. Glen, a long time garden member, commented, “People are here and that’s—well, I know a lot of them who are here drink.” Similarly, Marilyn noted, “Occasionally there were people coming into the garden who were drunk or addicted, high or on something, and there were some people that took offense to that ...” (August 2011). Keeping the garden space safe is the number one priority for the coordinators; however, enforcing these rules is at times challenging.

During my fieldwork the issue of intoxication was often discussed in relation to Malcolm, mentioned in chapter one, who often hangs out in the park and also has a serious alcohol addiction. Ashley explained how she laid out the rules of appropriate behavior he needed to follow, and told him “if you are not able to do these things then you are welcome to hang out outside of the garden and I am happy to come out and talk to you” (August 2011). In most cases, Malcolm has respected Ashley’s wishes, but there have been times when he was asked to leave the garden because he was being too disruptive—it had not happened that often but when it does, it is always an uncomfortable situation that brings out the balancing acts involved in including people with addiction problems in the garden while ensuring that HOPE remains a safe space for everyone. Ashley noted “Malcolm and I are buddies but when he can’t come in he generally respects that but sometimes he does come in when he shouldn’t be there and I allow it as long as he is with somebody from [the neighboring church] who can manage it” (August 2011). Glen also commented, “Because he deals with [staff members from the church] who try to get him to stop drinking and that, and things like that...But you got to keep warning him, don’t be drinking, you know, don’t come in because if Ashley finds out...” (August 2011).

There are other people in the same circumstances as Malcolm, who are members of the neighboring church and with whom Ashley is lenient, particularly when they come to the garden supervised by church staff. Ashley explained:

[the neighboring church] has a plot but there are challenges around that too with some of their members who need to understand that some of them can only be in there [the garden] with the church staff because they are inevitably drunk or stoned and that's not allowed in the garden. I kind of cut them some slack if they are with some of the church staff (August 2011).

As evidenced by these accounts, there are serious challenges in trying to incorporate those struggling with addictions in the garden and there are clear barriers to making the garden inclusive for everyone.

Besides the challenges that arise from the integration of people with addiction problems, there are myriad tensions that surface in the day to day workings of the garden over all sorts of issues. In my observations, I found that gardeners' sense of territoriality and entitlement derived from long term participation in the program, sometimes interfered with the goal of inclusion for all people. For example, I noted that Glen, the active long-time gardener mentioned earlier, has a tendency to be apprehensive toward new gardeners and becomes uneasy when "outsiders" volunteer at large community events. He initially seemed to resent new garden participants, like the Tibetans, and was not very welcoming to them. According to one person's perspective, Glen likely felt left out and, as a white male, those feelings were probably not something he experienced too often. During the Food, Earth and Culture festival I myself witnessed how Glen became visibly agitated when volunteer jobs were not delineated properly and when people who were not directly involved in the garden seemed to be taking volunteer positions that he felt were meant to be his. I remember specifically hearing observations from other

gardeners that he seemed to be a bit jealous that other people were actively participating as volunteers in the event.

In a different yet related example, Selena, the youth program manager, discusses some of tensions that come with volunteering activities and sharing garden space. She states:

There are tensions around that too. Like some people love the garden so much that they volunteer every ounce of their energy to that garden which is amazing. But then they get quite offended when someone else just wants to work on their plot and show-up once a week and doesn't seem to be as committed. As I said, I think sometimes this ownership actually becomes problematic..ownership of land always becomes problematic it seems in the world but it is surprising that even though people don't own their miniature plot that that same sense of ownership develops and it becomes, it can become, quite detrimental actually. People can get quite disturbed if you suggest that maybe they should change plots the following year, or maybe their plots needs to be reduced because it is quite big to accommodate multiple people, or maybe they haven't been coming out very much so they still want their plot...well my gosh, right? And to be fair too like it is precious to people like they can't...like you are not dealing with a lot of people where they can say "oh I could choose to garden in my backyard but I am going to choose to come to the community garden instead" there isn't a lot of options, so, yeah, it is really, really precious to them which makes sense that they would feel a sense of attachment (August 2011).

As Selena illustrates the amount of time spent volunteering and the perceived level of commitment can become grounds for entitlement that can, in the mind of some gardeners, justify exclusionary practices.

In Selena's comment above, she also mentioned how the proper use of garden space is a contested issue. This resonates with some of my fieldwork observations. In one instance, some gardeners complained that the plot cultivated by Sketch seemed to be wasting precious garden space. The Sketch plot came across to these gardeners as too artsy and wild; being made up of a disorganized mix of flowers, vegetable plants, and artistic ceramic designs. This plot did not fit their view of what constitutes "a proper"

garden which for them should be manicured, orderly, and full of edible crops rather than ornamental plants. The proper use of gardening space, similar to the amount of time spent volunteering and perceived commitment to the garden, illustrates certain expectations that gardeners have of other HOPE members—expectations which when not met can lead to tension.

As these examples show, even though the garden is ideally an inclusive space, conflict, tension, and associated challenges remain present in the everyday operations of HOPE garden. These issues reveal social boundaries and distinctions that are often reproduced in the garden space around differences based on culture, class, ability, lifestyle, aesthetics preferences and level of participation in the garden community. They further uncover the diverse views on who belongs and who does not belong in the space. As noted in both the thievery and intoxication cases, inclusionary practices must be negotiated in the context of a group of people that have very different experiences and needs and where each individual cannot always be accommodated.

It is important to underscore that these challenges do not result in the dissolution of the project or on gardeners giving up on the notion of ‘creating community’ at the site. So, in order to understand how ‘community’ is constructed at HOPE garden, it is necessary to move beyond any notion of an ideal and harmonious community. As shown by anthropologist Gerald Creed (2004), cited in the introduction, the experience of conflict and hostility is not inimical to the notion of community but can be integral to it. Indeed, as I will try to argue in the following chapter, when garden participants engage each other, some issues may arise as a result of conflict, tension, and a general unease with ‘difference,’ which as my research findings suggest, can sometimes be a means to

strengthen community connectedness at HOPE garden. This will be shown by returning to some of the ethnographic examples mentioned above by noting how intimate face to face interactions and working together in the garden help to break down barriers and foster community connectedness and belonging. Furthermore, in the following chapter, I will outline the explicit mandate and initiatives Greenest City employs to address challenges in the garden by actively encouraging tolerance, inclusion, and community cohesion at HOPE. From this perspective, a consideration of conflict and tension, which does not merely acknowledge challenges but investigates the solutions generated by the group, and by Greenest City, can provide valuable insights into the kinds of practices that have made gardens like HOPE such a success.

Chapter 3 – “Garden Citizenship” and Reconciling Differences

Insofar as HOPE is predicated upon respect for differences, it is prepared for conflict and embraces the incorporation of these differences as a challenge to be overcome. The value placed on diversity at HOPE is reflected in the garden’s guiding principles, which encompass inclusion, tolerance, and respect for differences. Through an exploration of the policies and initiatives endorsed by Greenest City I hope to show how these principles are practiced and realized in the garden. This chapter will explore garden rules and regulations and a variety of initiatives that are implemented to ensure that programming has a broad appeal that incorporates the needs and interests of the various groups and individual garden members. Beyond the discussion of explicit guidelines and initiatives to address ‘differences,’ this chapter also examines the ways in which inclusion, tolerance, and good ‘garden citizenship’ are nurtured by the intimate face-to-face interactions among gardeners. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, conflict, tension, and an occasional discomfort with ‘difference’ are not unknown at HOPE garden. Returning to a few of the ethnographic examples already discussed, I will here examine how these challenges are addressed and sometimes even resolved in the garden.

Active participation, commitment, and inclusion are built into the governing structure of the garden. For example, in order to become a garden member at HOPE each individual is required to sign a gardening contract, which outlines rules and regulations concerning plot registration; expected commitment and obligations; conflict resolution; and the appropriate behaviors expected of garden members. A clause of the gardening

contract specifies that “plot registration will begin in mid-April with preference given to: (1) returning gardeners and volunteers; (2) those that have no access to growing space, and; (3) those that live in Parkdale” (see Appendix A). This clause hints at the value Greenest City places on community participation, social justice, and commitment to the locality. The first aspect of the clause, in particular, acts as an incentive for past and current gardeners to actively participate in the garden and community-related activities, and, from my observations, it seem to have the intended effect.

Often, though not always, current gardeners volunteered with Greenest City before they acquired a plot in the garden. For example, Glen, mentioned earlier, noted:

[The coordinator] was here and I started talking to her and everything and then I started showing up on Wednesdays to volunteer and help-out, got my foot through the door, and then I asked for a plot...they have the work parties and that is how I met [the coordinator], at that time, and being a volunteer for a year or something like that, and that’s how I got into getting a plot. They gave me an actual temporary plot because someone moved away—and they said here is plot you can look after and I was good with whatever they had (August 2011).

Similarly, the Tibetan seniors were involved with the ESL garden and volunteered at community events such as the Earth, Food, and Culture Festival, before some of them transitioned into the larger community garden and obtained their own plot. Volunteering demonstrates a noteworthy commitment to the garden and active volunteers who have already established a connection to the garden, are brought fully into the community once a plot becomes available.

Other parts of the gardening contract also require a certain degree of volunteer labor and community related participation through the upkeep of the general garden space or volunteering during community events. The gardening contract states:

I am responsible for general site maintenance. I will participate in at least one community workday at the end of the season. I will also volunteer to assist with garden events and regular clean up nights at least once a month during the growing season (see Appendix A).

From my observations at the Wednesday After Work Party, the community potlucks, and the festival, where the level of participation among gardeners was high, this aspect of the contract appeared to be largely fulfilled. As Glover et al. (2005) note, in relation to community gardens in general, the stipulation of garden duties is not uncommon in community gardens, which often require a certain amount of shared physical labor for their upkeep. What is important to note, as these authors underscore, however, is the extent to which this kind of group volunteering creates a space “in which gardeners can engage in activity about which they derive great satisfaction” (451). In the case of HOPE garden, the above mentioned garden duties, not only work to ensure that garden members are contributing to the overall maintenance of HOPE but also encourage community cohesion.

Other regulations that can be seen to foster community cohesion by encouraging respectful behavior and good ‘garden citizenship’ specify guidelines for minimal plot upkeep and the consequences of plot neglect. Some of these guidelines include:

- I will have something planted in my garden by June 1st and will keep it maintained all summer.
- I will tend to my garden plot at least once a week. I will have my garden plot cleaned up and ‘winterized’ by November 1st.
- I will contact Greenest City if I am unable to tend to my garden on a temporary basis (health, vacation, work, etc.).

- I will try to contain or cut back any aggressive plants from my plot that might be invading another garden plot.
- If my plot shows signs of neglect during the season and I haven't contacted Greenest City, I understand that I will be contacted by Greenest City. If I fail to respond within one week of this request and if there has been no improvement in my garden plot within two weeks of the request, I understand that my plot will be reassigned (see Appendix A).

The coordinators are required to ensure that participants are not violating their contract obligations as garden members. However, the nuances of actually enforcing these rules are not truly captured in the text of the contract. As noted in chapter two, Selena, the youth program manager, discussed some of tensions that come with managing the garden, noting that it takes a degree of improvisation to administer these rules in order to ensure there are realistic, fair, and balanced outcomes. For example, in order to maintain a standard of reasonable administration, which balances individual and communal rights, there must be clear communication with gardeners whose plot appears neglected before the rights to a plot can be revoked by the coordinators.

Despite the challenges that come with managing the garden space, rules within the contract protect each garden plot, outline appropriate cultivation practices, and specify the processes involved in dealing with plot neglect. These rules highlight the obligations of the gardeners and outline where it is appropriate for the coordinators to intervene if there are problems. The intent of the contract is to ensure respect and cooperation at the garden without taking away the personal and creative choices of gardeners to exercise a high degree of autonomy over their own plots. The hope is that the regulatory framework will strike a good balance between the personal freedoms of

gardeners and the good governance of the shared garden space where restrictions are reasonable, minimal, and understandable.

In addition to the rules and regulations for the maintenance of plots and commitment to the garden, the contract explicitly addresses the issues of inclusion, respect, and tolerance. For example, it states:

I will keep HOPE Community Garden free of discrimination, harassment, and hate activity, based on age, ancestry, citizenship, creed (religion), colour, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity, level of literacy, marital status, place of origin, membership in a union or staff association, political affiliation, race, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristics (see Appendix A).

From this declaration alone it is clear that Greenest City, as an organization, is aware of problems that may arise as a result of discriminatory practices in the garden. While I would not seek to argue that it is this policy alone that minimizes controversies, it is my assessment that these policies have served to assist in producing social practices in the garden which are more often than not inclusive, accepting, and tolerant.

Aside from the contract, Greenest City also endorses inclusive and engaged community building through a number of initiatives. Despite the fact that Greenest City is an environmental charity, the organization implements programs in a holistic manner that goes far beyond an environmental mandate. Ashley, the executive director, remarked, “We are a bit complicated because we sit in this funny place where we’re officially an environmental organization but the work we do sort of straddles environment, community, social work, and food” (August 2011).

In keeping with its goal of inclusiveness, Greenest City has always made an effort to include groups whose first language is not English and who might be excluded from community participation due to their limited language skills. Whenever possible, the text

of the contract is often translated for people who are not fluent in English to ensure that they are completely aware of the rules and regulations that guide HOPE garden. On the other hand, if the text cannot be translated, the coordinators will try to find an intermediary who can verbally translate the contract to the individual prior to signing the agreement. Moreover, during important community meetings, translators will often help people who are not fluent in English to understand the material being discussed. Marilyn noted:

Greenest City has always done stuff [around] language from the beginning, there [were] always translators there in our large meetings and they always had a little group around them [The Tibetans] and there was someone who would translate what was being said, so there was always a little rumble in one corner of the room (August 2011).

Furthermore, at the entrance of the garden (see Figure 7) there are a number of signs in different languages that say “We welcome you to visit the HOPE garden...” The bottom of the sign provides an encouraging message and telephone number for those who wish to be involved with the garden.



Figure 7 Multi-lingual signage at the entrance of HOPE. Source: author’s photograph.

Additionally, Greenest City offers a variety of workshops that are designed so that anyone, regardless of the language they speak, can be actively involved. The executive director, Ashley, remarked:

It's about finding ways to bring people together where things like culture and language are a bit less of an issue. So when we do workshops, it's not having too many workshops where it is just somebody talking, people like the hands on kind of stuff.

Selena, the youth program manager, made similar comments about both the community kitchen program and drop-in youth garden that Greenest City facilitates. She noted:

I think a lot of things can play a similar role but different things are effective for different people. I certainly find it easy to work with food and with gardening because, especially food because it is something that tends to be pleasurable to most people--it tends to build bridges pretty quickly. The things that matter in school seem to matter a bit less in the kitchen. Language comprehension is not as necessary for the types of activities that we do. Its not to say that kids who don't speak English may not feel left out or may not be able to participate fully, its not that, but it does definitely help. And it is a bit more of a non-threatening environment.

During the Food, Earth, and Culture Festival, I observed the senior Tibetans, who do not speak fluent English, play a key role in the community kitchen helping to prepare and serve food at the event. The hands-on workshops not only include the community kitchen activities but many other workshops and art projects, such as making fabric flowers, painting creative signage for the garden, or creating concrete stepping stones. A unique workshop involved the creation of a community quilt where garden members designed their own quilt square that was meant to express what the garden meant to them.

Not only is Greenest City concerned about ensuring that people who do not speak fluent English are engaged in the garden, but they also incorporate material in their programming that will resonate with the needs and/or preferences of different ethnic

groups. Satya Ramen and Silvia Langer (2003), who both formerly worked with Greenest City, outline what Greenest City has learned about engaging immigrant communities in its environmental programs by referring to one of its first initiatives: the creation of a Chinese Community Outreach Program. In this case, Greenest City created printed material in Mandarin about composting in the garden. The problem, however, was that the printed resources did not address culturally relevant factors in the translation—many gardeners were unsure if certain “culturally specific” food, including congee and tofu, could be composted. Ramen et al. note that “Having a trusted contact...from within the community is vital to bridging cultural and linguistic gaps. Community members can provide invaluable advice on approaches to disseminating environmental information, helping to ensure cultural, sensitivity, timeliness and relevance” (29).

The planning process for the construction of a community garden in northern Etobicoke in Toronto, facilitated by Greenest City, further demonstrates the organization’s commitment to cultural sensitivity and accommodation. During the planning, organizers discovered that Sri Lankan immigrants preferred to plant in raised beds, whereas the Jamaican immigrants preferred to cultivate plants on hills. Therefore, the communal space of the garden had to be design to accommodate, as best as possible, the preferences and needs of these two groups. Ramen et al. insist “As with translation, environmental messages and approaches need to be tailored to each of the different cultural groups with which one works; there is no one multicultural approach” (29).

Beyond creating programs that appeal to a wide range of people, Greenest City also does workshops with the Opening Doors Project—a joint initiative to raise

awareness about discrimination in Ontario sponsored by the Toronto branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, and Across Boundaries. The project provides “free, interactive, and experiential peer-led workshops that address mental health, racism and discrimination within newcomer communities and communities of mental health survivors” (The Opening Doors Project 2011). The objectives of the workshops are to promote mental health, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination awareness by creating more inclusive, welcoming and safe environments for new immigrants, refugees and those struggling with mental health challenges.

The anti-discrimination workshop clearly illustrates how Greenest City does not simply pay lip service to multiculturalism. Its activities do not stop at that superficial celebration of diversity, which Uzma Shakir’s calls the ‘Sari and Samosa Syndrome’ (cited in Nast 2008). This syndrome, as Candace Nast (2008) outlines in her blog, is evident at events where immigrants are invited to “wear their “traditional cultural dress” and serve “ethnic” food and where “there’s music and dancing and before you know it, we’re all diverse and tolerant and there’s no more racism” (2008). Drawing from Shakir, Nast argues such multicultural events are not transformative, nor are they necessarily directly anti-racist as they do not engage in much needed conversations on social justice but rather, sugar coat the pressing issues faced by minority groups.

While Greenest City does organize food festivals that could be likened to ‘Sari and Samosa’ type celebrations, it is evident that their agenda on multiculturalism is much more complex and does not avoid confronting the subject of cultural intolerance head on. Contrary to much of the literature on community gardens, which does not adequately

acknowledge the often uncomfortable aspects of engaging with cultural diversity in the garden, Greenest City staff not only acknowledges these challenges but tries to address the very real possibility of discriminatory practices in the garden.

On a warm summer day at the beginning of August, I had the opportunity to participate in an anti-racism workshop held on a Wednesday at the end of an After Work Party at HOPE garden. The young people from the Youth Green Squad, the program coordinators, and I were in charge of setting up the area by the garden for the activity. We grabbed blankets, chairs, jugs, cups, and some cookies for snacks. Some of the youth were in charge of setting up chairs and small tables and spreading out blankets in the park beside HOPE garden, while others were in the kitchen preparing iced mint tea to serve to participants. Most of the people who were working in the garden came over to participate in the activity, and the people from Sketch joined in, as well as some people who were sitting in the park. Everyone waited patiently for the facilitators to arrive.

The two women facilitating the workshop approached the park. As they walked toward us, I recall one of them saying, “Oh, I just love the feeling in Parkdale—it feels like such a welcoming neighborhood.” The two women stood up in front of everyone, introduced themselves, and told us all they were going to do an interactive presentation on discrimination. They began the presentation with a group discussion that reflected on the meanings and significance of certain terms, specifically racism, mentalism, prejudice and stereotypes. We then discussed the differences and implications of systemic and individual racism. We were told that individual racism means the attitudes, behaviors, biases, and actions that support and perpetuate racism while systemic racism is a form of racism that occurs in institutions, such as in public services and corporations. Following

this section of the presentation, we began the interactive aspect of the workshop. The facilitators separated us, the audience, into two different groups and asked us to create a short skit where one group acted out an example of systemic racism and the other group acted out an example of individual racism.

My group decided to do a small skit on individual racism that depicted a situation where young people of color walked into a convenience store and were immediately treated as suspicious by the store manager. The store manager followed the young people around because he assumed that they would steal. The other group did a skit on systemic racism in the context of an airport where two pregnant individuals, a woman of color and a white woman, had to go through airport security. In this case, the security guard tried to make the woman of color go through the TSA scanner while the white woman was allowed to bypass it. The racial profiling in this case was the main issue, but what intensified the situation is that fact TSA scanners are unsafe for pregnant women. The point of both of the skits was to create meaningful ways to confront these situations by encouraging the audience members to interact with the performers by interjecting during a scene and suggesting ways for them to intervene in the situations presented.

In the first skit, the audience suggested the youth could simply ask the store manager why he was following them around the store; alternatively, they suggested that onlookers could intervene and help the young people by confronting the managers about their prejudiced attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, in the second skit, it was recommended that the woman of color ask to speak with a manager to discuss the issue, or that people witnessing the situation speak up about the discriminatory practices of the

security guard. Overall, the interactive workshop encouraged those involved to explore how different approaches can be used in situations where discrimination exists.

After the skits, we had a discussion that focused on racism and also introduced other issues pertaining to the stigma faced by those with mental health challenges. At this point, the facilitators introduced a rather new concept called “mentalism,” which is a form of discrimination directed at those with mental illnesses. The facilitators then began talking about the ways in which racism, mentalism, and other forms of discrimination put pressure on people and construct barriers that prevent them from realizing their human potential. The facilitators then asked the audience if they had any stories they would like to share where they faced discrimination.

Joseph, a first generation Ecuadorian youth working with the Youth Green Squad, shared his story about people presuming he either did drugs or sold drugs based solely on his skin tone and ethnicity. The people he mentioned thought he was Mexican. He said it was an uncomfortable, annoying and insulting experience. He found it difficult to speak about his feelings as he thought that people either would not understand or they would not care about his concerns. In a similar vein, Malcolm, who was mentioned earlier, talked about his struggle with alcoholism and mental illness. He noted that when he walks down the street he often feels invisible, as though he does not matter. On the other hand, he said that if he does not feel invisible, he finds that most people think he is crazy; either way, he feels that many people do not treat him with dignity. This workshop and others like it allow garden participants to speak about their vulnerabilities with other members of the garden community encouraging feelings of belonging to the group. The

fact that the garden was the backdrop to this event only underscores its central role in building bridges across difference and fostering a sense of community at Parkdale.

While I would assert that this kind of open discussion about the need for tolerance and understanding of “difference” has been beneficial to the gardening community, as noted in chapter two, challenges remain in the day to day functioning of HOPE garden. In the next part of this chapter, I will return to the ethnographic examples from chapter 2 to show how these challenges are met and how peoples’ views and actions change in a positive way after engaging groups and individuals with varying backgrounds in the garden. As shall be seen, not all issues are happily resolved at HOPE, but despite this, the success and strength of the community comes through in the ways in which these challenges are addressed. My research suggests that active engagement, face to face interaction, and a commitment to address and overcome challenges are key in creating an inclusive and respectful community at HOPE garden.

For instance, Julie, who, in chapter two, was cited as noting her initial apprehension around the young people from Sketch, explained that she did not have any experience with young people who were not in the care of their families. For this reason, she initially judged and made assumptions about the Sketch youth based on what she perceived to be their criminality, lack of education, and moral failures. However, Julie remarked that once she actually began engaging in conversations and activities at the garden with the youth from Sketch her views changed:

... I came here [the garden] to see people from ESL who didn’t know English, and they [the youth from Sketch] were helping them [the ESL students] and being really patient with them. And Sketch told us what they are, and what they want to change, and we became closer after that—we went for bike rides together, we

went rowing together at Sunnyside, and we played games and stuff like that—we did all that (August 2011).

Julie's experience with Sketch during the summer working with the Youth Green Squad, Greenest City's youth employment program, also contributed to changing her mind. She said:

We went to Sketch and we did art projects...yeah I think we painted T-shirts. They were like so excited to see us and to like teach us how to do it. They cooked for us, they played music for us, and they were so happy to interact with us. We treated them as normal people...they just have habits that they are trying to change, right?

Similarly, Sarah, mentioned earlier, also described how her involvement at HOPE garden for the last three years deeply impacted her views on different marginalized individuals and groups in the area.²² She commented:

For me, I am more willing to accept people because, you know what it's like—I met so many people being in HOPE, the youth garden, and working with people at Greenest City...no, I mean, I did accept people [before], but I never actually had the chance to experience different kinds of people...you know what I mean...You get to see the reasons, you get to know them, you don't just see them as someone who is walking down the street, cause I see a lot of people that I know now who comes down here...and she [pointing to her sister] saw them too...and we were never near them before...and now when we see them down the street we say hi—and it's just cool to know that—every time I walk around Parkdale you usually see at least one person you know from the garden (August 2011).

What is notable about Julie and Sarah's accounts is the way they reflect how the garden allows people to build relationships with individuals they would likely never have

²² I want to note here that the prejudices expressed earlier by both Sarah and Julie are not only found within immigrant groups but are also held by the wider society. For example, when I worked on a research project in my home province of PEI focusing on a grassroots community based program for disadvantaged youth living in the marginalized neighborhood of Hillsborough Park, 'born and raised' islanders, often times, would express prejudiced views against the youths of Hillsborough. I remember having discussions with people about the community program and they would frequently respond by labeling all the young people in Hillsborough as troublemakers, hoodlums and lost causes.

engaged with in the past and how this builds bridges across differences. From Sarah's account, in particular, it is evident that the positive effects of such close encounters spill beyond the space of the garden to encompass the entire neighborhood area.

Sarah and Julie lucidly described how their perspectives transformed after their experiences working with different groups. This transformative process resonates with Selena's comments on the importance of engaging with "difference." Her statement specifically discusses her experience as the youth program manager at Greenest City but it also speaks to the broader theme of this chapter: how the garden provides a space for close interaction that can break down social barriers and promote understanding. She states:

yeah, its interesting, though, because I think that maybe some of the incorrect assumptions would be that if you grow up in a community like this, surrounded by this, that you are more empathetic, that you understand, and I don't think being surrounded by it is enough, I think you have to engage, because a lot of kids that live in this area, for example: in the After School Program we always do a cooking [workshop] at PARC [a neighboring soup kitchen]. We actually always do it at night so there are very few people there, but we do it, and we ask the kids "how many people have been here [at this time] before?"...Nobody, right?...of course they haven't been here..."How many people know what goes on here?"...Well, some hands kind of partially go up..."Well, what do you think goes on here?" Of course [they are] afraid to say what goes on. So, [most of them] really don't know even though they live side by side by people who are mental health survivors they may have never talked to one, they might have never actually [engaged them] (August 2011).

As well as resonating with Sarah and Julie's accounts, Selena's comments are applicable to another example where bridges were built between a long time member of the garden, Glen, and the Tibetans who had recently acquired their own plot. As noted in chapter two, Glen often acted territorially toward the Tibetan seniors re-asserting his seniority at the garden and trying to make them feel unwelcome. Nevertheless, during

the fall workday when the garden was closed down for the winter Glen found himself working alongside a few Tibetans. They cleaned the compost area together and following this, Glen's attitude towards the Tibetans drastically changed. When he talked about this experience with the Tibetans his eyes lit up and he seemed pretty happy about the connection he made with this group. This particular example, like the one mentioned earlier, demonstrates how sharing garden space and work has the potential to improve relationships by invalidating prejudices about certain groups. This was also the case with the already mentioned tensions that arose between the Tibetan seniors and the youth from Sketch. In this case, as described in chapter two, these tensions were largely related to cultural misunderstandings. Ashley, the executive director, said the relationship between the Tibetan seniors and the youth from Sketch improved over time as they worked together on art projects (which are facilitated by the youth), participated in the same workshops (i.e. canning), cooked together for the festival and by simply shared space in the garden. Ashley remarked:

Through our gardening gatherings, with the Tibetan community in particular, there are a few things that happened. One thing is that they have become more active in HOPE and less of a separate entity. Interacting with HOPE gardeners a lot more, they have got to know the Sketch people more that way through the gardener's gatherings, through the potlucks, through just being in HOPE (August 2011).

The relationship between these two groups still was not perfect, but according to the accounts I collected, working together helped them cultivate a better understanding of each other, appeasing tensions, and allowing them to share the garden space. The rather ironic part of this story is that the people from Sketch love working with the Tibetan seniors; in fact, it is their favorite group to collaborate with for art projects.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will show the lengths to which Greenest City staff is willing to go in order to accommodate differences and help marginalized people feel a sense of belonging in the garden. Additionally, I will illustrate how the gardeners themselves do their part in this process. As will be shown, regardless of interventions by Greenest City staff, the gardeners ultimately take their own initiative in establishing their own connections and building relationships that help create a safe and inclusive garden community. In order to develop these points, I will return to two ethnographic examples discussed previously which elucidate what could be seen as a conflict of values at HOPE garden which, on the one hand, values inclusiveness and, on the other, recognizes the need for exclusion in extreme circumstances. The first example will involve the attempt at including those with addiction issues, often street involved, into the garden. The second example will turn to the case of thievery in the garden.

In chapter two, I discussed the challenges associated with incorporating people with addictions, often street involved, into the garden and how this was often a concern among gardeners, volunteers, and the coordinators. To overcome this challenge, Dorothy insisted that respectful interactions between gardeners and street people are essential in negotiating realistic boundaries that make the community feel safer. She said:

...there is only always an element there that causes anxiety for some people—there is always somebody drinking or somebody causing anxiety, especially when there is little kids around—but we have engaged with the people that are doing it, I hope in a way that is respectful and tries to encourage [reasonable] boundaries (August 2011).

The idea of boundaries here is essential since it hints at acceptance within reasonable limits, discouraging, for example, cases of profuse intoxication that may result in others feeling unsafe or disrespected in the garden. Marilyn's comment led me to realize that

“inclusion” is usually respectfully negotiated at the garden by first trying to take everyone’s needs into account. Of course, this is not always easily achieved

The case of thievery involving a mentally ill woman who was eventually banned from the garden was a contentious one that brought to the surface the tricky balance between the value placed on inclusion for all, and the recognition of necessary boundaries and respect for the rights of all gardeners. The significant part about this case was the great lengths the coordinators went to, in order to try and address the situation. Banning the woman was their last option. Before the woman was banned from the garden, the people directly involved in the situation participated in a conflict resolution process (see Appendix B). Unfortunately, most of the details of how the process unfolded were not available to me but Ashley, the executive director, told me that she facilitated the meetings between Debra, a few other gardeners, and the woman who was the thief. Ashley noted that these meeting were difficult because the woman who actually perpetrated the theft was presumably schizophrenic, and she believed that people were stealing from her garden too. Although this might have been true (some gardeners may have stolen from her out of revenge), there was no evidence to back-up her story. The tough part of the coordinators job was definitely represented in this case. The coordinators had to ensure that the garden remained a safe space for everyone. As much as they would have liked to have the woman with the mental illness involved in the project, they could not provide the support she needed to help her act more appropriately in the garden. Still, as Selena commented, HOPE was lucky to have a policy and staff in place to help mediate such conflicts. She commented:

...like a lot of community gardens do not have an organization behind them.

HOPE is one of the gardens that's supporting people in their involvement which I think can be really helpful. You know it is nice to imagine that these projects would be entirely run by volunteers, but I do think to break down barriers you do need to have to help to facilitate things and to manage some of the diversity. I'm not saying that we always do a great job, it can be really tough as well to play that role.

Besides highlighting the important role played by garden coordinators, this case for me underscored the role the gardeners themselves play in assuaging conflict. In fact, gardeners provided the victim in this case, Debra, mentioned in chapter two, the support she needed while the coordinators were establishing a strategy to deal with the thief. Debra often mentioned how she was grateful for the support she received from other gardeners. She noted that some people were kind enough to give her space to grow a few plants in their garden or they gave her harvested produce. The generosity of other gardeners was very much appreciated and always emphasized by Debra. In a conversation with me, Marilyn expressed empathy for Debra by saying:

... every time she [Debra] went to her plot it was dug-up, and somebody was focusing on her garden. And it was very disappointing for her...and I know a number of different people from a number of different plots who offered [her] spaces here, or little spaces there, or offered her some of their produce because I think her stuff was just nicked, it was almost as if someone in the garden was following her around, I don't know. It was as if someone was specifically targeting her (August, 2011)

Marilyn also noted how despite Debra's disappointments, she did not quit the garden:

At one point she was just going to quit and leave and never come back—but she kept being there even though her stuff was gone—and it was really hard on her. She even had some very special stuff that had been given to her, you know, sort of, for her—an unusual plant that was in her plot and that was taken...Yeah, she always came back, and she loved that garden and the people (August 2011).

Robyn, the youth program assistant, while not mentioning Debra directly, made similar comments in reference to this incident, "Even when people have problems they come

back, they always come back. I mean we have waiting lists for people to come into the plot, even though we have vegetables being stolen” (August, 2011). Debra herself remarked in an interview that despite the fact she was upset about what was going on in the garden, on most days, she continued to have a positive outlook on her experience at HOPE. She noted:

[The garden] makes a lot of contribution because people give back, we give back, everyone of us, we give back, and we give our time. When we come to the garden on Wednesdays we don't always do our plots, we do others. Ida looks after many peoples' plants, even mine sometimes—if, I am not going to be around I phone one of them and tell them I am not going to be around. So, there is motivation, there is giving back (August 2011).

The accounts by Marilyn, Robyn, and Debra suggest that gardeners become attached to their plots and to their social life in the garden. For many, HOPE is a significant component of their experience of community and their sense of collective belonging. Solidarity among gardeners is not just reinforced by official garden activities and guidelines; it happens spontaneously as gardeners gain affection for the place and for each other. For many, the garden is a place they associate with mutual relationships, support and friendship.

In closing, the importance of face to face interaction, as well as good governance, are key aspects of HOPE garden that foster and build an inclusive, respectful, and welcoming community project. As demonstrated in this chapter, the contract encourages participation, commitment, and a shared work ethic. Moreover, the contract explicitly values inclusion and tolerance for differences by mandating a policy of anti-discrimination. Different initiatives facilitated by Greenest City also make room for difference by creating holistic programs that appeal to a wide range of groups and

individuals. Finally, intimate face to face interaction and having to work together forces people to engage in dialogue and break-down down barriers in a manner that creates meaningful relationships. Above all, even in the case of contentious situations, the garden project's success rested on the ability of its participants to confront and often reconcile differences. This is very much at the heart of the community building process at HOPE garden.

Conclusion

Commitment, flexibility, and a willingness to overcome challenges are the fundamental pillars of HOPE garden's success. Indeed, as demonstrated in this ethnographic work, this garden, located in a neighborhood characterized by considerable diversity, is a space where people not only grow vegetables but also cultivate what I refer to as respect for differences. While intimate encounters with 'difference' may be a source of conflict, tension, and unease, these encounters, I have argued, much like 'seeds' when properly nurtured, can foster the growth of an inclusive and welcoming community.

In contrast to both the popular and academic literature on community gardening, that has a tendency to idealize community garden projects, my research explored the more uncomfortable elements of the HOPE garden experience in order to address how, in this specific context, respect, acceptance, and tolerance are cultivated. As demonstrated in chapter one, the experiences of the HOPE garden participants resonate with the majority of the literature on community gardens which praises the positive effects of these spaces on the health of the individual, the environment, and local communities. The gardeners and volunteers, particularly the new immigrants, refugees, and mental health survivors participating in HOPE, repeatedly told me that the garden was a place where they felt they belonged. Additionally, many of them mentioned that the garden was a means for them to connect with others and to gain a better understanding of people living in poverty, dealing with addictions, or with the experience of migration.

My project's aim is not to invalidate these experiences, or the research that emphasizes them, but rather to highlight how the less positive aspects of community

gardens need to be considered if we are to fully understand the challenges that are overcome on a daily basis in the making of a successful garden like HOPE.

As illustrated in chapter 2, conflict, tension and a general unease with ‘difference’ are an important part of the experience of community at HOPE. The garden is a place where people with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds have to interact in a more personal and intimate manner than they might be accustomed to in their everyday lives. These close encounters, as I have illustrated, sometimes result in conflict, tension, and misunderstandings. During my fieldwork, I came to the realization that while HOPE garden can enhance community cohesion, it is also a place where conflict and tension can easily surface. I have shown how garden guidelines, and in general face-to-face interaction, encourage gardeners to break down barriers, ease tensions, and build meaningful relationships that strengthen social cohesion. I have also shown, through my discussion of theft incidents, for example, that while not every conflict is reconciled to everyone’s satisfaction, it presents gardeners with an opportunity to openly discuss and mediate differences. In the end, even the most difficult of conflicts I observed did not result in gardeners abandoning the project or on Greenest City staff giving up on their mandate to maintain a fair and equal administration of the garden. The encouragement of dialogue and reconciliation by the coordinators, gardeners, and volunteers are the social practices that make HOPE such a successful space where people from different backgrounds can ultimately feel welcomed.

As I have shown, Greenest City programs and workshops not only consciously appeal to a wide range of people but are designed to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, the gardening contract, also enforced by Greenest City staff,

promotes active participation and joint work in a manner that foments socialization among gardeners and potentially contributes to greater group cohesion. The policy of anti-discrimination, also found within the contract, clearly demonstrates that the organization values both diversity and inclusion. In all its activities, Greenest City works diligently to ensure that the guiding principles of HOPE, which include inclusion, tolerance, and respect for differences, are practiced in the garden.

Beyond this thesis' focus on the complex social dynamics involved in the making of community at HOPE, there are other topics I would have liked to explore in more depth had time allowed me to do so. The time constraints of a Master's research project, however, limited the range of observations I could make and the kinds of questions I could explore at HOPE garden. In the following paragraphs, I will outline potential themes for possible future research endeavors.

The topic of garden governance and 'garden citizenship,' partly discussed in chapter 3, could be further explored in future research in order to better understand the degree to which gardeners are involved in the overall management and decision making processes of gardens like HOPE. Tracing the specific relationships and interactions between the gardeners, the coordinators and the different branches of Greenest City, which include the steering committee and the board of directors, might yield some interesting insights on the topic of management and participatory practices within the garden project. The role of the board of directors is of particular significance because results from the Greenest City's Diversity Survey (2011), where gardeners were asked to make suggestions on improving inclusiveness in the organization, indicated that more interaction between garden members and the board of directors was needed. This

examination should include a thorough analysis of all parts of the organization— something which I was unable to do for this project— in order to elucidate how successful the garden is, not just at the level of ensuring that a diversity of gardeners ends up cultivating a plot, but importantly ensuring that they are fully engaged in relevant decision making processes. When one considers that, as mentioned in the thesis, Greenest City staff tends to represent a fairly privileged sector of the population (white, university educated, etc.) while gardeners tend to be people of color, immigrants, refugees, and otherwise disadvantaged residents of Parkdale, investigating the nature of decision making processes at HOPE is of utmost importance.

Another related question for future research, which concerns the power dynamics at play in the garden, involves the pervasiveness of moral or neoliberal discourses when describing the purpose and social effects of HOPE garden. In many of my interviews, a number of people noted that gardening, and being in touch with ‘nature,’ helps those who struggle with poverty, addictions, and/or mental health to heal themselves and find a way to improve their situation. In chapter one, I briefly overviewed a number of authors (for example, Guthman 2008, Pudup 2008) who critique alternative food initiatives, such as community gardens, as yet another expression of a neoliberal logic that denies structural inequalities and makes the poor and the disenfranchised responsible for their own welfare. Some of these authors see community gardens in marginalized neighborhoods of various North American cities as fitting in with neoliberal policies that withdraw state services from the poor leaving every person to fend for themselves. To some extent, these arguments resonate with my observations at HOPE garden and seem particularly relevant when considering the garden population and its location in a gentrifying area of Toronto.

Still, my observations also suggest that these authors' interpretation of community gardens may be too one-sided. Here, I find inspiration in the work of David Hess (2009) who provides an alternative analysis of community garden projects by suggesting that neoliberal re-structuring in cities has actually opened up a political space where community groups can promote anti-neoliberal agendas. Hess insists that urban food initiatives, such as community gardens, at times, may involve productive cooperation with local governments, which might include contesting the privatization of publicly used land (i.e. Schmelzkopf 1995). As Hess (2009) notes, many community groups are working against government driven neoliberal policies by requiring them to live up to their "...democratic mission of representing the people rather than development interests" (160).

In my case study, Greenest City, for example, has asserted its democratic and inclusive agenda in various ways. Aside from those initiatives mentioned in chapter three, Greenest City has partnerships with different organizations in Parkdale, such as Sketch,²³ the West-End Food Co-op,²⁴ Sistering,²⁵ which are working to bring about social change. It has also done work with various affordable housing advocacy groups in the area. These initiatives are not only focused on 'changing the individual' or making

²³ As mentioned earlier, Sketch, which has a plot in HOPE garden, is an artist leadership program for disadvantaged youth between the ages of 15-30.

²⁴ The West End Food Co-op is an incorporated multi-stake holder food based co-operative located on the ground-floor of Parkdale's community mental health center. This group often holds canning work-shops for participants from HOPE garden.

²⁵ Sistering is a woman's agency that assists homeless, marginalized, and low-income women in Toronto and advocates for improving the social conditions for women at-risk. A branch of this group has a plot in HOPE garden.

individuals responsible for their own welfare but rather advocate for changes in government policies that are designed to acknowledge structural inequalities, improve living conditions, and provide better opportunities for marginalized people living in Parkdale. For Hess, the neoliberal critiques espoused by Guthman and Pudup do not accurately capture the complex power dynamics that shape community garden initiatives and can potentially subvert neoliberal re-structuring in cities. Considering the critiques put forward by Guthman and Pudup, and the insights offered by Hess, I feel that more work could be done in the future to examine how Greenest City, in partnership with other organizations, may, or may not, be involved in effectively challenging urban policies that aim to implement a neoliberal agenda in Parkdale.

Although due to time limitations, I was unable to fully explore the research paths I just outlined during the period of M.A. research, I hope that this thesis has offered new insights on how to approach and articulate the notion of ‘community’ in diverse community garden projects. In order to understand the sense of community constructed at HOPE, it is important to move away from the notion of an ideal community that takes for granted social cohesion and harmony. As I have argued, conflict and tension are not in opposition to the notion of community, but they can actually be an essential part of its development. In the ethnographic examples provided, I have shown that conflict, tension and a general unease with difference has actually contributed to understanding and enhancing social cohesion at HOPE garden. Most importantly, by acknowledging the challenges that the garden project and its participants might experience, I have shown that these types of initiatives do not have to be ideal or utopian in order to be successful and inspiring. HOPE garden exemplifies how community garden projects, with institutional

practices that are premised on inclusion and anti-discrimination, indeed have the potential to create healthier communities in urban contexts characterized by the kind of social diversity.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Contract for HOPE garden

The Healthy Organic Parkdale Edibles (HOPE) Community Garden Contract 2011

General Information

- HOPE Community Garden is a place for residents to gather and get their hands dirty. These regulations are designed to keep the garden peaceful, productive, and community focused.
- Greenest City is committed to keeping HOPE Community Garden free of discrimination, harassment, and hate activity, based on age, ancestry, citizenship, creed (religion), colour, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity, level of literacy, marital status, place of origin, membership in a union or staff association, political affiliation, race, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristics.
- Plot registration will begin in **mid-April** with preference given to: (1) returning gardeners and volunteers; (2) those that have no access to growing space, and; (3) those that live in Parkdale.
- HOPE Community Garden maintains a waiting list. The details of these lists are available at the Greenest City office.

Rules, Regulations & Guidelines for Gardeners

- I will keep HOPE Community Garden free of discrimination, harassment, and hate activity, based on age, ancestry, citizenship, creed (religion), colour, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity, level of literacy, marital status, place of origin, membership in a union or staff association, political affiliation, race, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristics.
- I will have something planted in my garden by **June 1st** and will keep it maintained all summer. I will tend to my garden plot at least once a week. I will have my garden plot cleaned up and 'winterized' by **November 1st**.
- I will contact Greenest City if I am **unable to tend** to my garden on a temporary basis (health, vacation, work, etc.).
- I will **not pick from my neighbour's plot** under any circumstances (unless given permission by the plot user). If I am concerned, I will talk to the Executive Director about my concern and let her/him deal with the situation.
- I will try to **contain or cut back** any aggressive plants from my plot that might be invading another garden plot.
- If my plot shows signs of **neglect** during the season and I haven't contacted Greenest City, I understand that I will be contacted by Greenest City. If I fail to respond within one week of this request and if there has been no improvement in my garden plot within two weeks of the request, I understand that my plot will be reassigned.

- I will engage in a **conflict resolution process** in the event of a conflict - which is available at the Greenest City office.
- I will refrain from being intoxicated while I am in the garden and/or participating in any Greenest City program activities.
- I will only use **organic methods, fertilizers, and insecticides** approved by garden participants and the City of Toronto. If in doubt, I will ask the Executive Director prior to applying anything on the garden.
- I am responsible for **general site maintenance**. I will participate in at least one community workday at the end of the season. I will also volunteer to assist with garden events and regular clean up nights at least once a month during the growing season.
- I will keep the garden a **smoke-free and pet-free space**. However, guide dogs are always welcome.
- I will **put weeds and plant material** in designated compost areas and I will keep my plot and all pathways **free of trash and litter**.
- **Kids under 12 years old** will garden with the supervision of an adult.
- I will contact the Executive Director if I have grown **excess food** that I want to donate to my community.
- I will not give out the combination to the lock on the gate or invite those not already involved in the garden to harvest from my plot when I am not there unless I have already told Greenest City that they will be in the garden.

I understand the above rules and regulations and promise to follow them.

If I fail to follow these rules and regulations, I understand that I will receive disciplinary action in three stages: verbal warning, written warning, and dismissal.

Name: _____ **Date:**

Signature: _____

Address: _____ **Tel #:**

Appendix B – Conflict Resolution Policy

Conflict Management in HOPE Community Garden – 2011

1. All gardeners can avert conflict by communicating, nurturing and encouraging appropriate attitudes and behaviours that will make the gardening experience a happy and a healthy one for all.
2. When a problem or conflict occurs in the garden and it cannot be worked out in conversation between the individuals involved, the matter should be taken to Greenest City's Executive Director. The Executive Director may ask for the complaint in writing.
3. All problems will be dealt with as soon as possible. Encourage working them out immediately. If extreme tension or anger is involved, there might be a delay to the resolution for a few days to give breathing time.
4. The Executive Director will meet with the individuals separately to hear all sides of the story and discuss resolutions that will be beneficial for all parties.
5. The Executive Director will then set up a meeting (if appropriate) for all involved individuals to discuss resolutions.
6. The Executive Director may ask individual Steering Committee members for advice/input if appropriate.
7. If there is no solution that can be reached, the Executive Director is responsible for coming up with an appropriate resolution.

Ethics Approval

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Monica J. Kelly

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: University of Prince Edward Island
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2005-2010 B.A., Honours, Anthropology

The University of Western Ontario
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