

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

**NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION AS A STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY
CAPACITY BUILDING: LESSONS LEARNED IN IMPLEMENTING A
COMMUNITY-BASED WOMEN'S PROGRAM IN NORTH POINT DOUGLAS
NEIGHBORHOOD**

By

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A Thesis Report

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

**In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for The Degree of
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK
University of Manitoba**

Winnipeg Manitoba

May, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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**Neighborhood Revitalization as a Strategy for Community Capacity Building:
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North Point Douglas Neighborhood**

BY

Issa Samba Kamara

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of**

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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Abstract

This study was exploratory in nature and focused on the experiences of residents and professional staff involved in the implementation of a revitalization program in the North Point Douglas neighborhood. The study involved a review of related literature and previous research, and an assessment of capacity building activities occurring during the revitalization of the neighborhood. The main objective of the study was to investigate the specific roles of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, a community-based organization, and individuals involved in revitalizing the neighborhood. It examined whether their activities were leading to capacity building at the grassroots level.

Fourteen (14) interviews were conducted for the study, including (10) community residents and (4) professional staff, using knowledge of the neighborhood, history of community organizing, community development, and/or involvement in program activities as criteria for selection.

Both sets of participants identified the same strategies employed by the organization in building community capacity. These include involvement in the design and implementation of programs, participation in brainstorming sessions, and building networks of social relationships for the cultivation of social capital. The findings indicate that community capacity building for neighborhood revitalization will be much more successful if community residents are given enough control in the design, planning and implementation of programs. Residents must also be provided with support through adequate financial resources, information, and skills to meet the needs of their communities.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Daba Turay and Samba Kamara (both deceased) for their foresight in sending me to school. May their souls rest in perfect peace. Amen!

Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to the completion of this thesis project. My gratitude and thanks go to my Advisor, Lawrence Deanne, whose continued support, guidance, and encouragement ensured the completion of this project. I am particularly grateful for his insightful comments throughout the project.

I am also grateful to my Advisory committee, Tuula Heinonen and Ian Skeleton for their time and support.

My deepest and warmest thanks go to Margaret, my wife for her understanding, patience, and emotional support. Because of her, as wife and supporter, I am able to work long hours and keep the home fires burning during the years that I devote to my school work. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being there for me.

I received some valuable practical support in completing this project. Professor Brenda Bacon deserves special recognition for her background support and debriefings with me whenever I am facing difficulties, Andrea Murdy, Walters, and Hai Lo for their peer support.

I would also like to sincerely thank all those who guided and stood by me during the difficult years of my resettlement in Manitoba. Thank you to Tim Young and wife for emotional support, Terra Orlikow for your role in getting me my very first good job in Manitoba. I would also like to say thank you to Foday Kamara for making it possible for me to come to Canada and to all members of the Sierra Leone community for your support and encouragement. Thank you to all the women of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre for your time and support and making this study possible.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the early 1960s, many large cities, in the United States and Canada, became marked by dramatic decline in both their social and physical infrastructures (Carter & Polevychok, 2003). Inner cities during these periods became highly disconnected from the benefits of improvements in wealth and from the intended policy effects that are aimed at revitalizing both their social and physical fabrics (Carter & Polevychok, 2003).

The social and economic circumstances faced by many households in the inner city neighborhood of North Point Douglas, for example, are among the worst in Winnipeg. Economically, the area has less strength than the rest of the city. Incomes are low, poverty and housing problems are widespread, and unemployment and dependence on welfare are very high.

This image is supported by statistical data. The 2001 Census data portrays North Point Douglas (N.P.D.) as one of Winnipeg's most economically challenged neighborhoods, with average family income of \$36,415, less than half the Winnipeg average of \$63,567 (City of Winnipeg, 2001). Fourteen percent of the homes in North Point Douglas were in need of major repair compared to 9.4% for the city as a whole.

The 2001 census data also indicates that social and economic problems affect people disproportionately in the neighborhood. For example, the average employment income for men was \$23,199 compared to \$19,123 for women in the neighborhood. Participation rate in the labor force was 67.2% for men while it was 42% for women. The unemployment rate for the two groups was 14.4% for men while it was 23.2% for

women in the same period. In addition, there were 31.0% lone parents (women) compared to 15.0% lone parents (male) in the neighborhood (City of Winnipeg, 2001).

Against this background of social needs, the N.P.D. neighborhood residents, as well as residents of other declining neighborhoods in Winnipeg, have responded by forming self-help neighborhood organizations to address and slow the process of decline. These organizations have emerged in response to the real and immediate needs of the residents and the neighborhoods. In North Point Douglas, for example, the self-help approach gave rise to the formation of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre to empower and build the capacity of local women to address their problems and those of the neighborhood. This program focused on the needs of women because the problems affecting them, as portrayed by the 2001 census data, tend to be greater in magnitude than those experienced by their male counterparts. For instance, the data indicate that there were more single parent mothers in the neighborhood than men in the same period.

Best practices in neighborhood revitalization show that problems of deprived neighborhoods require locally defined solutions (Carley, 1990). The idea is that social and economic problems in poor neighborhoods are best addressed by strengthening the community and local residents within communities. Existing residents have an important role to play in neighborhood revitalization, and the best renewal schemes are usually undertaken with their active involvement. Therefore, encouraging a climate that will enhance their capacities and initiatives to grow is essential. Involvement in program planning and implementation is often an important first step. Neighborhood organizations play an important role in this regard (Carley, 1990).

The Manitoba government is supporting these ideas through funding from Neighborhoods Alive! (Neighborhoods Alive!, 2000). Neighborhoods Alive! is a program funded through the provincial Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. It is a long-term, community-based, social and economic development strategy that supports, encourages, and tries to co-ordinate community driven revitalization efforts in a number of key areas including: housing and physical improvements; employment and training for capacity building (which is the focus of this study); education and recreation; and safety and crime prevention. The program supports these efforts through funding and planning assistance to build on existing strengths and experiences of communities. Funding through this program is currently available to five priority communities in Manitoba (thirteen in Winnipeg communities, as well as Brandon and Thompson) (see map for designated communities, Appendix A). Neighborhoods Alive! recognizes that the best ideas for neighborhood revitalization come from the community itself (Neighborhoods Alive!, 2000).

Housing and physical improvements in themselves do not usually empower local residents to take ownership of their communities or make them full partners in the revitalization process. For example, although Temkin and Rohe (1998) see housing as important, they argued that “an overemphasis on improving the physical conditions of a neighborhood may not have favorable long-term effects” (p.9) of reducing poverty, unemployment, crime rate, or dependency in many inner cities. These authors therefore argue for incorporating a concern for social capital directly into urban revitalization for community capacity building and warned that generating feelings of neighborhood pride

and a strong sense of place are not soft variables to be ignored by policy-makers. The energy generated from active civic engagement in and of itself benefits communities as it strengthens civic bonds that can be tapped for the varied challenges that lie ahead for many urban neighborhoods.

This research project therefore focused primarily on Neighborhoods Alive! revitalization initiatives that direct their attention to people and the relationships and skills they need to work in challenged neighborhoods like North Point Douglas. The study sought to identify and examine the lessons learned in implementing revitalization programs that led to community capacity building at the grassroots level in the NPD area. It focused on a community-based program, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, supported by the provincial government through Neighborhoods Alive!

Problem Definition

Urban decline is mostly the result of an interconnected mix of environmental, social and economic circumstances, sometimes exacerbated by public policies. This mix of circumstances discourages investment and job creation and encourages alienation and exclusion (Kamal-Chaoui, cited in Cater & Polevychok, 2003). Thus, urban decline is typically measured in terms of a series of indicators characterized by the geographical concentration of social, economic and spatial problems that portray the decay of community infrastructure and the depletion of resources from neighborhoods (Leo, Shaw, Gibbons, & Goff, 1998; Broadway, 1988; Committee for Economic Development [CED], 1995; Cater & Polevychok, 2003).). These indicators include loss of population,

deterioration of housing, lower educational attainment, disinvestment and economic decline, high rates of unemployment and poverty, vacant and abandoned property, the increasing concentration of vulnerable families in geographic areas, low levels of socio-economic mix, and the intensification of social problems such as crime, substance abuse, and family violence.

A very important indication of decline is the loss of human capital among residents of declining neighborhoods which is reflected in the decline in civic participation and in the sense of community identity and solidarity (Kamal-Chaoui, 2001 cited in Carter & Polevychok, 2003; Temkin & Rohe, 1998). Vandalism and lack of proper maintenance result in damage to public and private infrastructure, representing a considerable loss to local assets. The CED (1995, pp. 11-12) has argued that the process of decline is compounding and self-reinforcing.

The North Point Douglas (N.D.P.) neighborhood for example, exhibits classic signs of urban decay such as increasing out-migration from the area, with a trend toward an unskilled and uneducated population, serious deterioration of the available housing stock and of the quality of neighborhood life, and higher rate of unemployment than the rest of the city of Winnipeg (North Point Douglas Renewal Program, 1989).

The 2001 Census data reveal that neighborhood income from government transfer payments for North Point Douglas totaled 26.0% compared to 12.1% for the city of Winnipeg as a whole. Employment income was 68.4% of the total, while it was 76.1% in the rest of Winnipeg (City of Winnipeg, 2001). The dwelling units in need of major repair were 14.0% in N.P.D. compared to 9.4% for Winnipeg. Educational attainment in

N.P.D. neighborhood has remained fairly low. Those 20 years and over with a university education composed 7.4% of the population compared to 18.3% for the rest of Winnipeg (City of Winnipeg, 2001). There were 31.0% lone parents (female) in the neighborhood compared to 15.4% for the rest of the city and 15.0% men (lone parents) compared to 3.1% for the city as a whole.

The dismantling in the 1980s and 1990s of many social programs designed to protect people from the inevitable ups and downs of the capitalist economy has been partly responsible for creating and perpetuating these problems in N.P.D. (Silver, 2000). Overall government spending, particularly on social programs, was dramatically reduced during these periods. Unemployment insurance has been restructured to the disadvantage of unemployed workers, universal social programs have been significantly abandoned, and the social safety net has been significantly weakened (Silver, 2000).

The problems of declining neighborhoods are complex. However, in many North American cities, including Winnipeg, a new determination to comprehend the problems, and to start addressing them is becoming visible. In some places it is starting to produce results. The process requires public understanding of the problems and the engagement of citizens in addressing them (Leo, Shaw, Gibbons, & Goff, 1998). A variety of organizations have therefore emerged to revitalize local communities, to make them places of responsibility and recreation, and to attract investment. These initiatives that have emerged spontaneously from most declining neighborhoods in Winnipeg, seem to provide practical solutions to the problems of the neighborhood.

Research evidence in the early 1980s and, to some extent still today, suggests that

neighborhood based organizations, despite sporadic and often inadequate support, have increasingly taken up a comprehensive and integrated array of roles in many aspects of revitalization. These include housing rehabilitation and construction, economic and commercial development, and the provision of community facilities in declining neighborhoods (Mayer, 1984; Murphy & Cunningham, 2003). The organizations are practical and innovative and are tailored to the needs and circumstances of the community. They build upon the principle of full involvement of the local residents. The comprehensive activities build communities, and in the process repair shattered lives, strengthen personal networks, enhance social capital, and increase civic engagement and well functioning neighborhoods (Silver, 2000; Kubisch & Stone, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

This study was based on a single case study and therefore exploratory in nature. It focused on the experience of residents, mainly local women of NPD, and the professionals involved in the implementation of a revitalization program in the neighborhood. The study involved a review of the literature and previous research, and an assessment of capacity building activities occurring during the revitalization of the neighborhood. The key aim of the study was to investigate the specific roles of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, a community-based organization and individuals involved in revitalizing the neighborhood. It examined whether their activities were leading to capacity building at the grassroots level.

More specifically, the aim of the study was:

1. To examine the implementation process and level of involvement of local residents
2. To identify the benefits of these programs
3. To examine the level of autonomy, control and decision-making by local residents; and,
4. To make suggestions for future directions for neighborhood revitalization programs for local residents.

These issues were investigated using qualitative research methods and addressed the following questions:

5. Who are the key stakeholders in the design and implementation of the programs and what are their specific roles?
6. What, if anything, is preventing people from participating in decision making?
7. What factors make resident participation possible?
8. How is the implementation leading to community capacity building?
9. Which dimensions of capacity have been developed?

Significance of the Study

This study emanates from the desire to learn about the concept and principles of neighborhood revitalization for community capacity building. It arose partly as a result of the writer's prior involvement with a Capacity Building Project in Sierra Leone, Africa. A study of neighborhood revitalization as a strategy for community capacity building is important for several reasons as discussed below.

Conducting this study and learning how the programs are implemented has helped to equip the writer with the necessary skills for replication in Sierra Leone. The study highlighted experiences that practitioners, policy makers, students, community organizers and advocates may find useful in addressing the problems of declining neighborhoods. Local residents may also find this study useful as it attempts to identify practical issues at the neighborhood level that may help to give them more voice and control over decisions affecting their lives and the neighborhood. Finally, the study has the potential to add to the body of knowledge about community capacity building (CCB) by identifying the lessons learned in the implementation of neighborhood organization programs.

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter Two examines related literature including a discussion of the pioneers, strategies and components of community capacity building. Chapter Three describes the constructivist paradigm, characteristic of qualitative research methodology, and how this research method was used to study the experiences of the staff and community residents in the implementation of the revitalization program in relation to community capacity building in North Point Douglas neighborhood. Chapter Four describes the findings and analysis of the study based on data provided by the respondents. Chapter Five includes discussions of the study findings, lessons learned, and a concluding statement.

Definition of Terms

Due to the variations of terminology in this field, the researcher will use only the following definitions.

Community Capacity Building

Community capacity building is defined as efforts within communities to increase the individual and collective skills, organizational abilities and social capital to enable communities to address issues on their own. Capacity building may involve:

- Increased resources
- Improved relationships and networks
- Development of skills
- Development of organizational capability (Chaskin, 2001).

Empowerment

For the purpose of this thesis, empowerment is defined as the process by which individuals within communities, individually and collectively, gain influence or control over the affairs which affect their lives and the communities in which they live.

Community Involvement

Community involvement includes all activities designed to inform the community or to involve it in problem definition and decision-making processes. It covers a range of activities from informing people to delegation of responsibility to community-based organizations (Chapman & Kirk, 2001).

Community Participation

The mechanism for active community involvement in partnership working, decision-making, project delivery and representation in formal partnership structures.

Social Capital

The definition provided by Robert Putnam (1993) will be used in this study.

According to Putnam, social capital refers to the features of social organizations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.

Neighborhood

For the purposes of this study, the terms community and neighborhood are used interchangeably. A neighborhood is a human community that may fulfill human needs by allowing people with common interest to interact with one another in the same geographical area. Urban neighborhoods represent distinctive places, and ways of life. (Keating, Krumholz, & Phillip, 1996) define neighborhood as local areas with physical boundaries, social networks, concentrated use of area facilities, and special emotional and symbolic connections for their inhabitants.

Community of Interest

Community of interest is a community composed of people who share concern about an issue, may be willing to take action on such issues, but may have little else in common. They may live in almost any place and be linked to each other for example by, for example, a newsletter (Rubin & Rubin, 2002)

Geographic Communities

Geographic communities describe a geographic place, a neighborhood perhaps, a large housing complex, or a park in which people congregate. People live in this place and interact with each other, at least occasionally (Rubin & Rubin, 2002)

Neighborhood-based or Community-based Organization

This is an inclusive type of organization created and controlled by local people for

their own benefit. These can be traditional organizations or more recently formed groups designed to help members meet their basic needs and further their common interests. Examples include self-help groups, savings and credit groups and resident development committees.

Neighborhood Decline

Neighborhood decline is the simultaneous presence of multiple social and physical problems: poverty and joblessness, growing crime and vandalism, depressed property values, and physical blight (Keating & Smith, 1996; CED, 1995).

Revitalization

Revitalization is the comprehensive approach for preserving and improving deteriorating neighborhoods. It encompasses all aspects of community life including social, physical and economic conditions. It may involve the efforts of neighborhood organizations, government, and the private sector.

Sustainability

The author adopts the definition provided by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg [SPC] (2000). Sustainability is defined with respect to community capacity building efforts at the neighborhood level. Sustainability is defined as “the long-term ability of a system (organization, initiative, program, and neighborhood) to function and build upon its capacities without being forced into decline through exhaustion of required resources. In community work, the ability to ‘grow’ local leadership, formal and informal partnerships and civic participation is as important as financial resources.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review examines various definitions of community capacity building by scholars in the field of community development. The review examines key elements and strategies of community capacity building needed by local residents for neighborhood revitalization. The literature review also examines the importance of social capital to neighborhood revitalization and how that leads to capacity building at the grassroots level. This includes a discussion of the importance of social relationships and networks in mobilizing community residents in affecting the success of revitalization programs. It also examines how neighborhood organizations help to build these relationships and ties in their efforts to promote community capacity for neighborhood revitalization. The goal is to investigate how communities can build the types of social relationships and networks that will serve as assets in the revitalization process.

Definitions, Strategies and Pioneers in the Conceptualization of Community Capacity Building

The notion of community capacity building (CCB) is both explicit and pervasive in the rhetoric, missions, and activities of a broad range of contemporary community development efforts (Chaskin, 2001). Capacity building may at times be a fuzzy, complicated, and multi-dimensional concept with little clarity in practice at the

neighborhood level. There have been few attempts to define community capacity in the literature. This has led to considerable confusion in the meaning of the concept and to inconsistent use of the term.

The term is often defined narrowly in terms of housing production and economic development. This limited definition is not, however, surprising, as most of the work of urban community building organizations has involved building and rehabilitating housing. New research, however, highlights how capacity building extends beyond housing production (Pierce & Steinbach, 1987; Vidal, 1992; Glickman & Servon, 1998).

Chaskin (2001), is credited with helping to shape, redefine, and expand the meaning of community capacity building to encompass a broad range of practice and policies as they relate to neighborhood revitalization. He did so by dividing the concept into a broad range of components. For the purposes of this study, the author will provide an operational definition emerging from the literature for better understanding and measurement of capacity building.

Capacity building is used to apply to individuals, to community building groups, or communities. On the one hand, it is concerned with the building of confidence and skills of local people, especially those who are most discriminated against. On the other hand, it is focused on strengthening of local organizations and the development of networks. Emphasis was given in this study to a systematic approach of helping local residents play a major part in the revitalization of their neighborhood.

This study utilized the definitions and elements identified by Chaskin (2001), some scholars like Poole (1997), and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (2000). For example, Poole (1997) defines community capacity as the characteristics of communities that affect their ability to identify, mobilize, and act to resolve community issues and concerns. Key dimensions include participation by a broad spectrum of community members, leadership, access to and wise use of resources, social and inter-organizational networks, sense of community, community history of collective action, community power, shared core values, and the capacity to engage in critical reflection (Poole, 1997). Community capacity building (CCB) fosters conditions that strengthen neighborhoods and enable them to plan, develop, implement, and maintain effective community activities (McLeroy, cited in Poole, 1997).

The SPC (2000), refers to community capacity building as the central way of dealing with community problems, human problems, and human development. It is an approach that empowers local neighborhood residents to address their priority issues. In a conference report (SPC, 2000) on sustainable communities in Winnipeg, the SPC identifies many dimensions of capacity building. According to the SPC, capacity building happens at the individual and neighborhood levels simultaneously (SPC, 2000). At the individual level, it leads to individual growth and development; self-esteem, self-worth, and feelings of confidence, as well as human capital and leadership. Together, these make up the skills, knowledge, and resources of individual residents in the community and their participation in community improving activities.

Capacity building focuses on instrumental skills to support employment and on

opportunity for civic engagement (Chaskin 2001). Therefore, investments in increasing the human capital of individuals can have significant influence on their ability to garner resources and improve their economic well-being. The existence of human capital among a community's residents contributes to community capacity both through its availability as a collective resource and through specific, individual contributions (Chaskin, 2001).

At the neighborhood level, capacity building includes active engagement of residents in community planning and community activities that give them control. Therefore, capacity building happens at the neighborhood level when local residents take ownership of issues and solutions. When they get results that are beneficial to them, they gain hope and a sense of control and empowerment (SPC, 2000)

Littrel and Hobbs (1989), argue that capacity building is essentially based on the notion that local residents can, will, and should collaborate to solve community problems. Furthermore, capacity building leads to a stronger sense of community and a foundation for future collaboration. It also embodies the notion that a community can achieve greater self-determination within constraints imposed by the larger political economy in which it is embedded (p. 48).

According to these authors, without a commitment to self-help, a community may exist as a place or an organization but may be lacking the capacity to effectively act on its own behalf.

Chaskin (2001) defines community capacity as "the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community" (p. 295). It is the ability of residents to participate effectively in

community life through collective problem-solving, translating plans into action (Chaskin, 2001, Green & Haines, 2002). Capacity involves access to resources (economic, human, physical, and political), networks and relationships both within and outside of the neighborhood (Chaskin 2001; Chaskin et al., 2001; Naparstek & Dooley, 1997). Neighborhoods are embedded in and intimately tied to the broader socio-economic systems of the metropolis and region, and the prospect for stability and well-being in a neighborhood largely depends on policy made beyond its borders and on the nature of macro-structural changes in the broader environment (Jargowsky, 1997; Halpern, 1995; Teitz, 1989). Communities with abundant capacity have some ability to influence policies that directly affect them and to garner resources to support development.

Each of the above definitions emphasize various dimensions of community capacity. Some focus largely on organizations, others on individuals, others on affective connections and shared values, and still others on processes of participation and engagement. All these attempts to define CCB, according to (Chaskin, 2001), suggest some agreement on at least a few factors mentioned earlier. These include:

- Increased resources
- Improved networks of relationships
- Improved skills
- Increased organizational capability

The concept of capacity building assumes that all communities, whether geographic or communities of interest, have strengths or assets as well as needs

(Hounslow, 2002). This view counterbalances the deficit prism, explained in subsequent sections of this paper, through which disadvantaged people and communities are often viewed.

A study by (Jupps, 2000 cited in Chapman & Kirk, 2001) notes that revitalization professionals often believe that providing training to local residents will automatically strengthen community capacity. However, this approach often neglects the wealth of knowledge, skills and expertise to be tapped and utilized in communities. It fails to recognize that every community, whether distressed or not, has a local reserve of skills, talents, gifts, and resources to lend to improvement efforts. Assets exist in the untapped qualities of individuals, local organizations such as churches and businesses, and collective creativity and talents of residents (Chaskin et al., 2001; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Naparstek & Dooley, 1997). This expertise needs to be tapped and utilized in a constructive manner through the provision of necessary resources that will empower local residents for effective participation in neighborhood revitalization. This is borne out by the fact that the expertise present in communities is usually lost or underutilized because of lack of access to necessary resources (Marshall, 2004). Just because skills and talents are present in communities does not necessarily mean communities will have the opportunity to explore those talents. Necessary resources must be provided for proper utilization of the talents and skills (Marshall, 2004).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), for example, provided financial and human resources to a capacity building project in Sierra Leone that in turn provided training, facilitation, and training materials to local community residents. This

training enabled them to effectively participate in the rehabilitation of devastated communities after the rebel war. Other resources provided by the UNDP included vehicles, office supplies and accommodation. It follows that capacity building takes on a wider meaning than just training and skills development. It also means providing needed resources to local community groups that might help to create informed, participatory, and empowered residents to address community problems.

The long term aim of CCB is to allow communities to have control or influence in partnership with revitalization professionals of a revitalization process (Jupps, 2000 cited in Chapman & Kirk, 2001). Jupps (2000) stresses that real capacity building involves giving groups access to manage resources and not just training them in how to work on committees. As mentioned previously, this training is often helpful, but it is not sufficient in building capacity.

Research evidence suggests that communities should be actively involved in any revitalization process from the very onset, in designing programs, setting out priorities, contributing to the management of services and controlling of budgets (Carley, Chapman, Kirk & Pawson, 2000; Chapman, Kirk & Young, 2000). This is based on the notion that in the most successful community development efforts, local residents create the vision for the neighborhood revitalization by establishing goals and priorities, and providing continuing leadership, and support as the revitalization plan is implemented (Lansberry, Litwin, Slotnik, & Vaughan, 1995). Thus, local residents know the problems affecting their communities, know what they need for a better life, and may sometimes have a good idea of what is needed to fix the problems. They can make informed choices, rather than

having professionals making choices for them all the time (Lansberry et al., 1995).

Besides, initiatives that are targeted at declining neighborhoods and that are led by city government agencies, or are sponsored by foundations or other entities outside the community, that do not truly involve the active leadership of local residents as equal partners, no matter how well intended, tend not to address the fundamental concerns of such communities (Lansberry et al., 1995). Community reinvestment which truly benefits the neighborhood is the result of an organized and politically skilled resident population, one which recognizes that the community capacity lies in the ability to articulate and advocate a vision of the neighborhood's function and future.

Therefore, the people most affected by a problem must be part of the solution. As such, creating strong and viable communities needs a vibrant and powerful community voice at the very centre of the decision making process. Influence over decision making helps communities achieve a sense of ownership of any revitalization outcomes and helps gain a sense of influence over resources and assets to sustain cohesive and balanced neighborhoods.

Efforts directed at building the capacity of a community must therefore focus on identifying the knowledge, talents, skills, and social networks of individuals, groups, and local organizations. Capacity building supports a strengths-based perspective that recognizes the existing level of competence or experience of individuals, families, and groups that leads to empowerment. According to Chaskin (2001), empowered communities engage in capacity building strategies as an important means of increasing the information and resources available for developing innovative partnerships that

promote community well-being.

Empowering local residents to help themselves is an effective method of attacking poverty. Empowerment is the ability to understand one's environment, to manoeuvre through it, and at a higher level of facility with the goal of increasing personal efficacy and satisfaction (Rocha, 1996). People become empowered as they increase their understanding of how a set of economic, social, and political system operates. A number of studies have identified participation in neighborhood groups and non-profit organizations as an effective means of engendering empowerment. Through their participation, residents develop and share their talents, skills, and abilities. They also grow in confidence and self-esteem in the process and become empowered to take greater control over situations that affect their lives (SPC, 2000).

According to Murphy and Cunningham (2003), "deep participation is the rock on which sustainable revitalization rests" (p. ix). However, it is not simply participation in these groups that is important in the empowerment process. Rather, it is the role the individual is allowed or able to occupy and how much decision-making power he/she actually possesses (Gruber & Tricket, 1987). The processes that engender empowerment through participation include the acquisition of skills, knowledge, experience, and self-efficacy. As local residents become empowered and grow in skills, they often aspire to improve circumstances for themselves and their communities. It is these processes the researcher is interested in investigating.

Community capacity building acknowledges the real power relationship that exists between revitalization professionals and residents and the need to ensure that local

people are in a position to take as much control as they wish. This is not a straight forward process because some individuals in a community will have more experience of community action than others. Certain groups in the community have been excluded due to institutional racism and/or discrimination based on gender (Wood, cited in Chapman & Kirk, 2001). These issues need to be resolved to ensure effective participation of community residents without discrimination before any successful revitalization can take place that will lead to community capacity building.

A major aspect of community capacity is providing opportunities for residents and local organizations to collaborate as change agents in resolving problems. The aim is to empower local residents to play a major role in addressing local concerns. Empowered communities can develop collaborations that harness power at the grassroots level. This process brings together neighborhood groups, human service providers, planners, non-profit and private developers, local governments and legislators to work together and in subgroups to define problems, consider alternative responses, and develop strategies for community enrichment (SPC, 2000; Drnevich, 1995). Partnerships that draw on the assets, skills and resources of individuals and groups can help to construct solutions to community issues. If the partnerships that evolve in the process of collaboration are firmly established within communities, divergent resources and expertise will be accessible to community groups to develop and implement strategies to improve the lives of the residents and the communities in which they live (Drnevich, 1995).

In working together, residents and organizations share their expertise and knowledge. In most cases, time and energy are volunteered to help to access resources,

or to help with particular event or task. The result is increased knowledge, skill learning, improved understanding, and learning to work in collaboration with one another, better coordination of services and sharing of resources (SPC, 2000). Besides, by working together, people can muster the strength to slow or even stop the decline of their local living places and bring them to renewed states of stability and viability. Well organized local residents may be capable of reversing social and physical decline in their community if they have the capacity (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003).

Asset-Based Capacity Building for Community Development

Neighborhood revitalization can begin from a capacity-focused approach that recognizes the skills, talents and gifts of community members. This approach is fundamentally bottom-up, beginning with what is present in the neighborhood, and inside out, relying heavily on the efforts of internal agents, such as residents, associations and institutions (Aspen Institute, 1997). A capacity-focused approach lies at the heart of community building—a model of community revitalization that is focused on strengthening the capacity of residents, associations, and organizations to work individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change (Aspen Institute, 1997).

Delgado (1998) notes that community capacity building for neighborhood revitalization will be an elusive goal if indigenous assets are not integrated into the strategy. Kretzman & McKnight (1993) also emphasize that:

Asset-based community development begins from the premise that outside resources will be much more effectively utilized if the local community is itself fully mobilized and invested, and if it can define the agenda for which additional

resources must be obtained (p. 8).

Kretzman and McKnight (1993) therefore make a strong argument for developing community assets. Their approach is to develop strategies and policies based on capacities, skills, and assets of lower income people and their neighborhood. An asset-based approach identifies what is already present in the community, not what is problematic or absent. Thus, focusing on existing assets in a declining neighborhood does not necessarily mean that such communities no longer need additional resources; but suggests that the possibility of attracting outside resources increases immensely when local communities are mobilized and act to use external resources showing visible, tangible improvements which indicate to funders that the community provides a sound basis for involvement.

The asset-based approach challenges the paternalism present in many policies and programs and in the ways that professionals often work with communities. It perceives local residents and their community stakeholders as active change agents rather than passive beneficiaries or clients. For example, it has been pointed out earlier that interventions which take into account and build upon existing community capacities are more likely to succeed in accomplishing desired change than those that are adopted in a more traditional top-down manner.

Although building upon assets in communities is essential for transforming power relations, change strategies must also acknowledge that these same communities also confront serious problems. These problems include high levels of poverty, very limited

employment opportunities, wages that cannot support families, violent crime, drug use, physical abuse, and very inadequate housing, schools and health care (Green & Haines, 2002). It is both unwise and unthinkable to say that problem-focused community change is wrong; the problems are real and require the same attention as community capacities. Part of the struggle to gain better balance in change efforts requires that funding sources be convinced to spend as much, if not more, on community organizing and revitalizing efforts as they do on human and social service agencies (Green and Haines, 2002; Huxman, 1996).

Most critics of asset-based community development point out that it provides less than a complete analysis and strategy of a community's situation—that it may underemphasize the powerful systemic forces, both political and economic, that affect communities from the outside (Green and Haines, 2002). Many advocates of asset-based community development however, acknowledge this point, noting that an asset-focused inside-out approach is a necessary but not a sufficient perspective for successful community building (Green and Haines, 2002). A combination of the strategies, designed both to mobilize internal resources and to pressure outside powers, seems to hold the greatest promise for building stronger communities.

Research evidence now links CB and community development to the concept of 'social capital' and how networks of trust, belonging and community participation provide a powerful force in the revitalization of disadvantaged neighborhoods (Anastacio, Gidley, Hart, Keith, Mayo, Kowarzik, 2000). As mentioned earlier, it is this recognition or link between community capacity building and the concept of social

capital that is of great importance to this research.

The Role of Social Capital in Community Capacity Building for Neighborhood Revitalization

Social capital can be defined as “the norms, shared understanding, trust, and other factors that make collective action feasible and productive” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. ix). The term capital presumes that investments in social connectedness and engagement will yield returns in the overall quality of community life (Green & Haines, 2002).

To many scholars, social capital has emerged as a critical factor in the stability of neighborhoods and in their potential for revitalization (Baku & Smith, 1998). There is also a growing consensus that social capital constitutes an important new dimension of community development. The Committee for Economic Development (CED), report, (CED, 1995), therefore, urged public officials and private businesses to support policies that build social capital in distressed neighborhoods.

Social capital facilitates collective action of groups and is seen as a building block for other forms of capital such as human, physical, financial, and environmental (Green & Haines, 2002). The key constituents of social capital in communities according to (Taylor, cited in Chapman and Kirk 2001), include social support, formal and informal social networks, group membership, shared norms, trust, reciprocity, and community involvement. Additional measures of social capital identified by Green and Haines (2002) include attendance at local meetings, use of local facilities, and social interaction between neighbors. The stronger these networks and bonds are, the more likely it is that members of a community will cooperate. In this way social capital provides a supportive

environment for neighborhood revitalization that leads to community capacity building.

Social relationships and networks require investments in time and energy. They serve as a form of capital because individuals can tap into these resources when necessary (Green & Haines, 2002). The more individuals invest in these resources, the more they are likely to receive benefits in the future. It is within the realm of social relationships that new ideas leading to the strengthening of the community are co-created, shared and developed (Rubin & Rubin, 2002).

High levels of social capital in a community can enhance the civic infrastructure and impact public participation and community input in decision making (Warner, 2001). Some scholars suggest that social capital impacts economic growth in communities and may be even more important than the human capital (Mohan & Mohan, 2002; Putnam 1993).

For example, Putnam's work on the role of social capital in regional development in Italy indicated that social capital was highly correlated with economic development. He concluded that regions with high social capital had more economic development in terms of higher quality jobs and income than those with low levels of social capital (Putnam, 1993). This view is often criticized because of the number of variables that affect economic development (Green & Haines, 2002). The critics argued that the link between strong and vibrant civic organizations, economic growth, and development was tenuous.

There are different types of social capital. Putnam identifies two main types: bonding capital and bridging capital. "Bonding capital brings people together who

already know each other. The goal is to strengthen relationships that already exist. Bridging capital brings together those people or groups who previously did not know each other” (Henderson & Thomas, 2002, p.104). The goal is to establish new social ties so as to provide information and access additional social networks in the community for collective community capacity building. It is this second dimension of social capital, the formation of new social ties within and outside the neighborhood, that is of interest to the author.

Social capital exists within geographic areas, among neighbours and family members, and among groups that share common characteristics. It may be referred to as strong ties, primary associations or bonding capital. Social capital also exists among weak or secondary ties in communities of interest. It may also exist as bridging capital between economic and social groups (Putnam, 2000; Warner, 2001).

Despite all the positive attributes associated with social capital, Lang and Hornburg (1998) noted that “social capital, in and of itself, does not always correlate with healthy, democratic and economically viable communities” (p. 10). In this vein, a major issue that has received an increasing amount of attention according to (Portes & Landolt, cited in Green and Haines, 2002) is the negative aspects of social ties. According to these authors, excessive connection to an isolated community with limited access to outside contacts and opportunities, may trap individuals in a narrow social world (Lang & Hornburg, 1998).

Many poor and minority groups that rely heavily on family and friends to find jobs may be lacking sufficient variety of job information that may be more valuable to them.

Lack of ties to the larger mainstream economy may produce obstacles to mobility (Portes & Landolt, cited in Green & Haines, 2002).

The author is highly supportive of this view based on his experience as a member of a minority group in Winnipeg. By networking with friends outside his own social networks, mainly from Sierra Leone, the author was able to secure a decent and well paid job that has played a crucial role in connecting him to the mainstream society in Winnipeg.

Putnam (2000) has argued that there has been an erosion of civic society over the past fifty years in the U.S. This claim is seen in the decline in the number of people belonging to and participating in local organizations. The decline in social capital has important implications for community development. For example, a lack of social and organizational ties among local residents makes it more difficult to mobilize them to address local problems and raise their consciousness about local issues (Green & Haines, 2002).

In his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam (2000) suggests several causes for decline in social capital including increased time pressures, residential mobility, increased labour force participation of women, growth of the welfare state, growth of suburbs, generational effects and television (Putnam, 2000). Critics of Putnam's work argue that social capital is not declining, but simply changing form. People are engaging in alternative forms of associations, beyond what traditionally has been studied. These forms may be more difficult to measure. Examples of emerging communities of interest include workplace associations, internet

communities, and special interest or political groups where participation is minimal as paid professionals engage in associational activities (Mohan & Mohan, 2002).

Summary

Capacity building can be a useful phenomenon for guiding and understanding community social change efforts, but the translation from broad concept to social action is fraught with difficulty (Chaskin, 2001). In practice, such efforts need to craft greater specificity about their goals and the likely means to reach such goals, incorporate greater awareness about local dynamics and their likely impact on implementation, and explore more effective means to engage community residents (Chaskin, 2001).

Capacity building is a process that enhances the well-being of local residents through personal growth and empowerment. Communities must be provided with the necessary support by social services organizations through adequate financial resources, information, and skills to meet the needs of their neighborhoods. Local residents must be involved in the design and implementation of programs at the neighborhood level. The rationale is that neighborhood revitalization will be successful if managed by local residents in partnership with professionals. Capacity building activities cannot only improve the revitalization process and the long-term sustainability of an area or a neighborhood but, if undertaken in a systematic and structured manner, can act as a catalyst to engender stronger social ties, trust, and responsibility while enhancing the social fabric of the community (Chapman & Kirk, 2001).

Therefore, community development researchers, practitioners, and funders have

begun to emphasize the need for community development organizations to build capacity. The practice of using the term, without carefully defining it, however, allows for a range of meanings to be assigned to the term and hinders efforts to study and measure it. As mentioned earlier, the author attempts to partially fill the gap by providing a definitional framework and suggesting strategies for capacity building through community-based organizations.

From my point of view, capacity building means, residents having the skills, abilities and knowledge to facilitate their participation in identifying solutions to deal with the problems affecting them and those of their neighborhoods. In my view, capacity building occurs through encouragement from community-based organizations and professionals implementing the programs. The encouragement can be in the form of resources to enhance their participation in the decision-making process. This process may help to bring residents together to work on issues giving rise to the formation of social capital in the community which is an integral component of community capacity. Local input in the decision making process must also be respected by all the stakeholders in the revitalization process if capacity building is to take place.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of neighborhoods Alive! revitalization efforts in Winnipeg, a detailed examination of the research design including the debate between the positivists and constructivists paradigms, the reasons for using qualitative research methodology for the study, and case study research. It also examines the target population for the study, sampling, data collection, and analysis strategies. It concludes with the discussions of ethical considerations and issues of reliability and validity.

Overview of Neighborhoods Alive! Revitalization Programs

The neighborhood has long been an important centre for addressing urban problems (Keating, 1999). These problems are often addressed by neighborhood-based organizations through a participatory approach. These organizations have led efforts to improve neighborhoods by encouraging resident participation and control leading to community capacity building (Keating, 1999). They have emerged as key players in efforts to revitalize neighborhoods.

It is, therefore, essential to provide some context for the research by briefly describing the nature and activities of some of the Neighborhoods Alive! revitalization efforts in Winnipeg. As mentioned in Chapter one, Neighborhoods Alive! is a provincial government funding initiative that provides a comprehensive set of government resources to enable community groups in distressed neighborhoods to pursue

development. It aims at integrated economic, physical, and social revitalization.

Neighborhoods Alive! programs include the following:

- The Neighborhoods Alive! Housing Assistance Program: This program provides financial assistance to support community-based homeownership and renovation initiatives in designated neighborhoods (Neighborhoods Alive!, 2000). This assistance is available to neighborhoods identified by the city of Winnipeg as “Major Improvement Areas.” Manitoba has identified them in turn as priority areas under the Neighborhoods Alive! initiative.
- Neighborhood Renewal Fund (NRF): This program provides funding to community organizations for capacity building, economic development and well-being in the designated neighborhoods through broad range of locally planned and supported initiatives. Each of the designated neighborhoods has different needs, priorities, and resources that should be identified in a neighborhood plan. The fund makes it possible for neighborhood organizations to carry out projects that will help achieve the goals of the neighborhood plan. Support from the NRF can complement local contributions of cash, labor, materials, services, and other in-kind support and contributions from other funding sources (Neighborhoods Alive!, 2000).
- Community Initiatives Program: This program supports initiatives that have a broad impact on Winnipeg’s inner city or target specific groups across the inner city.
- Training Initiatives: offers a variety of training to targeted residents to provide them with new career opportunities in areas of labor market demand.
- Light Houses: This is a program that works to enhance public safety by supporting

local communities to provide after-school recreation activities for youth. It is available to communities throughout Manitoba. Light Houses funds a wide variety of recreational and other programs that promote anti-vandalism, safety, and crime prevention and community building.

- **Neighborhood Development Assistance:** This program assists community economic development in designated neighborhoods by supporting the formation and operation of democratic neighborhood renewal corporations that are locally administered (Neighborhoods Alive!, 2000).

Neighborhoods Alive! Provides funding support to the North Point Douglas Women's Centre that helps to empower local women to address the problems affecting them and their neighborhood.

Research Design

Theoretical Orientations

Philosophers and scientists over the centuries have debated at length over the nature of reality and how people can know it. These have been controversial issues for scientists who study the physical world, but they seem even more contentious among social scientists who are interested in studying human beings and their psychological and social reality (DeJong, Monette & Sullivan, 2002). Part of the reason for this is the belief that the study of human beings is different from the study of the natural world of physical objects and events.

Scientific activity is shaped by paradigms which are general ways of thinking about how the world works and how researchers gain knowledge about the world. In the

social sciences, paradigms are classified into positivist and non-positivist. Positivism tends to be the philosophical basis of quantitative research, experimental science or scientific inquiry. The philosophical basis for qualitative research tends to be constructivism, critical role theory, feminism, and naturalistic social science (DeJong et al., 2002; Creswell, 2003). Thus, quantitative and qualitative research represent different ways of thinking about knowledge of the world. The belief systems are the philosophies underlying each paradigm.

Positivism is the philosophical system that recognizes only facts and observable phenomena. It is an approach that is based on the scientific method of developing knowledge through cause and effect thinking and reduction to specific variables and hypotheses (Creswell, 2003). The positivist assumes that “the world exists independently of people’s perception of it and that science uses objective techniques to discover what exists in the world” (DeJong et al., 2002, p. 38). Despite the popularity and dominance of the positivist paradigm, it has been subject to considerable criticism over the years. Based on these criticisms, alternative paradigms, such as the constructivist approach have emerged to examine human behavior.

Constructivism has its roots in an inquiry paradigm that is an alternative to positivism. The constructivists claim that knowledge is based on the multiple meanings of individual experiences in which the researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the aim of developing themes from the data. According to the constructivists, meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world in which they live. Thus, constructivist researchers often address the process of interaction among

individuals through open-ended questions so that participants can express their views (Creswell, 2003).

It follows from the above discussions that, researchers must decide which research paradigm (positivism or constructivism) they will use in the design stage: quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of the two, referred to as a mixed methods approach. Since qualitative and quantitative research reflect different ways of thinking about the world, researchers must make a choice between the two. This study used the constructivists paradigm, characteristic of qualitative techniques, to examine the experiences of local residents in implementing revitalization programs in the North Point Douglas neighborhood in relation to community capacity building. This discussion focuses on the differences between the two paradigms and concludes with a discussion of the reasons for choosing qualitative methods.

Focusing on the philosophical orientations of the paradigms to science, positivists claim the existence of a single reality that is independent of any observer's interest in it and which operates according to immutable natural laws, many of which involve cause-effect relationships (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). According to the positivists, "not only is there an ultimate objective reality out there, which goes on about its business irrespective of the interest that an inquirer may have in it but that reality could be found by applying proper objective techniques" (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 84). In other words, the world exists independently of people's perceptions of it and science uses objective techniques to discover what exists in the world. Thus, it is the responsibility of science and the scientists to describe that reality and to uncover the laws that govern it. This

reality can be approximated only through the use of methods that prevent observer contamination of its apprehension or comprehension. The universe is organized in such a way that with the correct use of techniques it is possible to reveal objective facts (Holliday, 2002).

Constructivists on the other hand, assert that “there exists multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by any natural laws, causal or otherwise. These constructions are devised by individuals as they attempt to make sense of their experiences. They are always interactive in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

Constructivist approaches perceive “social reality as having a subjective component to it and arising out of the creation and exchange of social meanings during the process of social interaction; social science must therefore have ways to understand that subjective reality and to an extent science is a part of that process of meaning creation (DeJong et al., 2002). Additionally, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences that are directed toward certain objects or things.

The positivists view this claim differently. According to the positivists, reality can be discovered if viewed with complete objectivity, without the influence of personal values and biases of researchers. As scientists conduct research, they move progressively closer to the truth, which involves uncovering the laws and patterns that underlie objective reality. The essence of science then is an objective search for the truth, in which human values are a hindrance whose impact should be limited if not eliminated. Values can only interfere with the objective search for truth (DeJon et al.,

2002).

The positivists also claim that it is possible for researchers to remain objective, detached and distant from the phenomenon being studied, and exclude any value considerations from influencing the particular phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). This view suggests that scientific data must be absolutely accepted, because if they are properly obtained in the manner described above, the data will be free from any subjectivity or bias. Inquiry can, in short, be both objective and value-free according to this view (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

In contrast, constructivist social science argues that, the quantitative approaches of positivism miss a very important part of the human experiences; the subjective and very personal meanings that people attach to themselves and what they do. Reality is seen as something emergent and in constant change that arises out of the creation and exchange of social meanings during the process of social interaction (DeJong et al., 2002). Rather than seeing reality as apart from human perceptions, constructive social science sees social reality as the product of human perception and the interpretation of meaning. These meanings are varied, complex, and multiple, which leads researchers to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into few categories or ideas (Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Creswell, 2003 & DeJong, 2002). This has led social scientists to conclude that social life cannot be understood by the same method used to study the natural world.

In addition, constructivist social science argues that researchers need to look not only “at what people do but also at what they think and feel about what is happening to

them” (DeJong et al., 2002, p. 39). This meaning or interpretive dimension cannot be adequately captured through objective, quantitative measurement techniques. to talk to the people at length and immerse Constructivist research methods provide an understanding through empathy whereas positivist methods provide understanding through generalized explanations.

Methodologically, paradigms consist of a collection of different inquiry tools and techniques. The positivist paradigm consists of experimental, quasi-experimental, and survey research in which data are gathered by means of standardized instruments and analyzed through statistical procedures. The constructivist paradigm on the other hand, consists of an assembly of ethnographic/anthropological field work techniques including case study designs, in-depth interviews, participant observation and non-mathematical data analysis.

The instrumentation used in an inquiry process, according to the positivists, must be certified objectively beyond any manipulation or misdirected interpretation by the inquirer or subjects. “The instruments must be of a sort that put the questions directly to nature and have the capability to record nature’s direct answers” (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 169). Paper-and-pencil instruments represent the ideal situation, especially if they have been independently standardized. The aim is to interpolate some amount of objectivity between inquirer and the inquired that will prevent any interaction between them (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). The positivists further argue that the objectivity of the instrument will be severely threatened, perhaps even compromised, if the instrument is the investigator as in the case in open-ended interviews or participant observations, in

which case subjectivity becomes a real issue because of the inevitable interactions between the inquirer and the respondents.

According to the constructivists, standardized tools shut down the possibility of exploring a wide range of responses to the topic of interest. Closed-ended questions, scaling, and/or multiple choice questions only require or allow, short answers. This may discourage participants from discussing personal perceptions and from providing in-depth meanings. Besides, it is likely that the inquirer may have devised the questions based on some a priori theory or position. As such, the respondent can only confirm or reject the inquirer's etic formulation. Even if such a view is confirmed by the respondents it may miss what is most important to the respondents. They cannot register those other elements, because the structure of the instrument neither elicits nor provides a means for registering them (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

Open-ended questions, on the other hand, offer the investigator an opportunity to learn or explore in detail the personal experiences of individuals. The goal of qualitative research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participant's view of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meanings of situations. The more open-ended the questioning, the richer the response as the researcher listens carefully to what respondents say or do in their life settings (Creswell, 2003). This debate provides the basis of using qualitative methodology for the study.

Why Qualitative Methodology was Chosen for this Study?

Qualitative research was chosen for this study because capacity building is a complex, multifaceted, and rich concept that requires an exploratory approach to data collection and analysis. Qualitative methods can explore complex areas not amenable to quantitative research. Since an exploratory approach is considered to be flexible and consistent with the constructivist paradigm, this encouraged participants in this study to discuss their views and perceptions about capacity building in as complete a manner as possible. An exploratory approach allowed for a detailed understanding of what the women's centre does in building community capacity in N.P.D. neighborhood. It also permitted the admission of unanticipated data within a framework that maintained consistency in the focus of the inquiry. Furthermore, flexibility allowed, and even encouraged discovery and creativity.

Furthermore, the purpose of initiating an exploratory study was to satisfy the researchers' curiosity and desire for better understanding (Babbie, 1989). Thus, an exploratory approach was chosen for this study not only to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding, but to provide a thorough description of one community's experience for further research. Qualitative researchers seek to understand the experiences of selected individuals, not to test a hypothesis but to explore the questions. Therefore, this design did not seek to test, prove, or disprove a particular theory. Rather it sought to document the perceptions of residents about community capacity building. These perceptions can only be captured through face-to-face interactions characteristic of qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative research is a strategy that describes phenomena from the participants' point of view. Padgett (1998) argues that the "way in which respondents view their worlds and create meaning from diverse experiences are myriad, and can best be tapped by qualitative research methods" (p. 9). Operating within a constructivist paradigm, qualitative research seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations, and what their perspectives are on particular issues. It is an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, cataloguing and classifying the content of study (Woods, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This entails deep involvement in the everyday life of the respondents and the setting chosen for the study. By entering the informants' world and through ongoing interaction, this method seeks the informants' perspectives.

Case Study

A case study is an in-depth study of a specific case. A case, in a case study, is a bounded system, bounded by time and place that can seek to explain an individual, an outcome, event, or community situation; it may seek to explore, describe a single community or organization (Yin, 1994). This may include, for example, a multi-site study including the study of several programs, or a single program (within-site-study). The researcher in this case, collects multiple sources of information including observations, interviews, or document reviews. The researcher develops an in-depth understanding of the case(s) through collecting multiple forms of data. Providing this in-depth understanding requires studying only a few cases, because for each additional

case examined, the researcher will have less time to devote to exploring the depth of any one case. The emphasis tends to be upon a detailed and an intensive examination and analysis of the case in question. In addition, a case study can explore a topic where there has been little prior knowledge or understanding (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Bryman, 2001; Stake, 1995; Miller & Salkind, 2002; David & Sutton, 2004).

The purpose of a case study is to reveal the properties of the class to which the instance being studied belongs. Case studies are distinguished from experiments in that they are not specifically designed for comparison. They are also distinguished from surveys in that they are primarily designed to investigate a specific case in depth (David & Sutton, 2004).

The case study approach is familiar to social scientists because of its popularity in psychology, medicine (case analysis of a problem), law (case law), or political science (case reports) (Miller & Salkind, 2002). These authors trace the origin of modern social science case studies to anthropology and sociology. Today, case study writers have a range of approaches from which to choose to develop a case study. Yin (1994), for example, espouses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to case study development and discusses exploratory and descriptive qualitative case studies. Stake (1995) systematically establishes procedures for case study research.

Case studies may be selected for a study because they have merits in and of themselves. When the case is of interest, it is called an intrinsic case. Alternatively, the focus of a qualitative study may be on a specific issue, with a case used to illustrate the issue. This type of case is considered to be an instrumental case, because it serves a

purpose of illustrating a particular case. Case studies may also involve multiple cases, called multiple cases. Multiple cases are described and compared to provide an insight into an issue (Miller & Salkind, 2002; Stake, 1995).

The exponents of the case study design often favor qualitative methods such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing, because these methods are viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case (Bryman, 2001). Yin (1994), for example, suggests that the case study method is best applied to the study of contemporary events by methods that are naturalistic in form (that is, which gathers data in natural settings or via open-ended interviews or observation techniques). However, case studies are frequent sites for the employment of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Exponents of case study research counter suggestions that the evidence they present is limited because it has restricted external validity, arguing that it is not the purpose of this research design to generalize to other cases or populations. Instead, case study researchers tend to argue that they aim to generate an intensive examination of a single case, in relation to which they then engage in a theoretical analysis. The central issue of concern is the quality of the theoretical reasoning in which the case researcher engages. The crucial question is not whether the study findings can be generalized to a wider universe, but how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings Yin, (1994).

This study used a single case study (within-site-study) that focused on a single population and a single organization in a single community (that is, residents and

professional staff involved in the implementation of project activities in North Point Douglas neighborhood). This made it possible to explore in detail, their perspectives about the role of the organization in building community capacity in the neighborhood. This was made possible by gathering multiple forms of data including, in-, depth, individual interviews and participant observation during the implementation of project activities.

Target Population

The target population for this study was drawn from two groups of people. They include residents and professional staff implementing the revitalization program in the neighborhood. The purpose of selecting the professional staff for the study was to capture and represent different perspectives on the concept of community capacity building in the community.

The participants from the two groups were selected based on their knowledge of the neighborhood revitalization process, knowledge of community development, community organizing and/or direct involvement in the implementation of project activities. Particular attention was paid to their individual roles in initiating change in the neighborhood and participation in decision making. Most of the local residents were selected from those serving on committees at the time of conducting this study.

The study also included residents not directly involved in the implementation process but known to benefit from the revitalization process. These residents were interviewed based on their experiences and perceptions about the program.

Sampling Strategies

Sampling strategies with clear rationale are needed in all research, since researchers cannot study everything and everyone at the same time. Sampling strategies enabled the researcher to select a sample from the entire population of interest in order to study a particular phenomenon. Sampling decisions are as critical in qualitative research as in quantitative research. However, sampling in qualitative research is directed to differing ends and proceeds from different assumptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Padgett, 1998). Thus, in qualitative research, the focus is on flexibility and depth rather than on mathematical probabilities and generalizability.

Unlike quantitative sampling techniques, qualitative sampling involves much smaller numbers and non probability techniques such as purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. While quantitative sampling seeks to recreate the total population on a very small scale, qualitative samples seek to capture depth and richness rather than representativeness (Weiss, 1994). Therefore, since the emphasis in qualitative research is on quality rather than quantity, qualitative researchers sample not to maximize numbers, but to become 'saturated' with information about a particular topic or group.

Well developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study's soundness (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). It helps to define the people and the knowledge base that they will bring to the study. Thus, the primary sampling strategy for selecting participants for this study was snowball sampling. Using snowball sampling, a small number of data sources were located in the population of interest. Each person interviewed in the population of interest was asked to recommend community residents

who they thought would make good interview participants for the study. The newly identified data sources were contacted, data were obtained from them, and requests for additional sources were made. This process was repeated until saturation was attained. Saturation means sampling until no new or relevant data seem to emerge from the selected samples.

Thus, snowball sampling helped to identify participants for this study from people already interviewed in the community following a set of criteria. As noted above, these criteria included knowledge of the neighborhood and community development, history of community organizing, and /or involvement in project activities. Most of the participants comprising local residents were selected from those serving on neighborhood committees at the time of conducting this study. Particular attention was paid to their individual roles in initiating change and participation in decision making at the neighborhood level. All the participants for this study were found to meet all the selection criteria mentioned above.

A total of fourteen interviews were conducted for this study. This includes four professional staff of the organization and ten local residents. The professional staff interviews were held between August-September, 2004. The length of the interview sessions for the professionals was approximately one and one half hours and all the interviews were conducted in the conference room of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre. The ten local residents were interviewed between September to November, 2004. These interview sessions lasted for 45 to 60 minutes. It was considered imperative to recruit more of the local residents in order to balance the perspective of the data

collected from the professional staff. Twelve out of the fourteen participants were women because the aim of the study was to investigate the specific roles of the centre in empowering and building the capacity of women in the neighborhood to address their own problems. The two men who were interviewed were serving on the board of the women's centre.

Most of the interviews took place in the conference room of the centre. Some of the residents, however, asked to be interviewed in their respective homes because of their busy schedules. These interviews were held in the homes of these participants. Both sets of participants provided very detailed information throughout the interviews. However, very rich and detailed information was elicited from two of the professional staff and a few of the local residents. On the whole, the questions elicited sufficient information for the study.

Some of the board members were interviewed as residents rather than as professional staff because they were not directly involved with program implementation on a daily basis. All the four professional staff, and most of the community residents, agreed to tape record the conversations, and only two of the residents declined to be tape recorded. Notes were also taken as the interviews progressed which were used by the researcher to reflect on the views of the respondents.

However, an experienced professional staff member observed and cautioned that detailed note taking might prevent further probing and focusing of the interview process. Following this observation, the rest of the interview process relied on the use of the tape recorder. The researcher found this information to be very helpful as it made it

possible to probe for more information throughout the interview process. It also made it possible to elicit very rich and detailed information. The researcher also interacted very well with participants and observed non-verbal cues.

As a male researcher coming from a different cultural background, I had to negotiate entry into the neighborhood and the organization. Again, entry had to be negotiated to avoid the manipulation of participants and their sense of dis-empowerment. When I first visited the centre, I introduced myself to a professional staff member who later became my gatekeeper. After several visits to the centre, a meeting was held with a few of the residents and the professional staff members where I was given the opportunity to formally introduce the purpose of my study. Following this meeting, I was introduced to almost every participant that came to the centre. The gatekeeper took a special interest in my thesis project and asked if a copy of the report could be made available to the centre after the study. The gatekeeper also became very instrumental in helping to build the relationships by taking up such basic tasks as explaining the purpose of the study to the women each time I visited the centre. I was very respectful of the women and their cultural values and beliefs. I was aware of my position as a researcher who should neither be manipulative nor coercive throughout the study. Through this, I was able to develop trust with most of the women who came to the centre. I was also able to spend considerable time observing implementation activities in the organization. The rapport that developed in the process, made it possible to elicit a wide range of perspectives from the participants about the role of the organization in building community capacity.

Although gaining entry into the organization did not prove to be much of a problem, there were a few concerns raised by some the women before the interviews. One of the issues of concern to the women was the fact that similar interviews had been routinely conducted in the North End of Winnipeg without yielding any positive outcomes. This concern was validated in working to establish contacts with people in the neighborhood, by honestly telling them that, although the study was meant for school work, the results may, however, be used to guide policy making. This encouraged some of the women to be interviewed and to open up during the interviews.

Another concern raised by the women was their busy schedules, which I respected as a researcher. Most of the women in the neighborhood are single parents, some of whom have to look after several children. Some are also engaged in various labor force activities. One of the woman who was identified by most people as having a wealth of knowledge about the neighborhood and the organization, did not only decline to be interviewed, but told me over the phone never to call her place at any time about an interview because of her busy schedule.

I considered these issues to be very legitimate on the part of the women. There are many studies done and often the environment does not change. Because these problems were not fully resolved, I appreciated greatly the fact that some of the women agreed to be interviewed in spite of the fact that no benefits as resulted from previous studies. The interviews with most of the participants went extremely well. Most of the residents surprisingly open up about their experiences with the organization. It was interesting to know the wealth of experience and knowledge some of them had, despite popular

beliefs that professionals know all the answers.

Some of the participants have lived in the neighborhood for nearly twenty years and they are quite knowledgeable about the history of community development in the area. Some of them have had the privilege of listening to McKnight, one of the leading figures in community development in North America.

Data Collection

Data for this study was obtained mainly from in-depth, individual interviews, participant observation during project implementation, as well as the review of literature.

In-depth, In-person Interviews

Interviewing is a data collection method that requires the researcher to identify, approach, and interview specific people who are considered knowledgeable about research questions (Unrau, Gabor and Grinnell, 2001). Interviews are appropriate for obtaining a full range and depth of information from participants. They are also among the most powerful ways of understanding research participants. Interviewing provides the unique opportunity to produce the kind of data that makes qualitative studies so memorable and valuable (Padgett, 1998; Punch, 1998).

In qualitative interviews the researcher explores a few general questions of interest that will help to uncover the participant's perspective. Otherwise, the process respects the way that participants frame and structure responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Interviews are therefore considered a very good way of accessing people's

perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and construction of reality. The primary purpose of qualitative interviews, according to Patton (1980), is to provide a framework through which participants can express their own understanding in their own terms. The in-depth interviews enabled the researcher to explore the participant's knowledge, perceptions, and interpretations of the concept of community capacity building.

The potential disadvantages of interviews relate to the subjective meanings ascribed by participants. This subjectivity emanates from the inevitable interaction between the inquirer and respondents. Respondents may withhold vital information to protect their privacy, or avoid revealing some unpleasant truths about themselves. As discussed above, these limitations were addressed by developing trusting relationships with most participants during the visits to the neighborhood over the last year. This encouraged them to be as open and honest as possible during the conversations.

The constructivists, however, note that trust is normally built among people over a long period of time, and as such, researchers must sometimes work within constraints. The researcher addressed these problems within the constructivist paradigm by developing powerful self-awareness before entering the field. This was achieved by respecting and recognizing the participants for who they are, and their cultural values, and beliefs without being judgemental. The problem was also addressed by achieving consensus or joint constructions with participants. Thus, constructions of a variety of participants were elicited until some level of consensus was reached. In this case, each respondent interviewed was allowed or encouraged to provide detailed information and to comment on the themes identified by the previous respondent.

An additional disadvantage of qualitative research is that the interviewer may ask inappropriate questions, or may misunderstand the answers to the questions. In order to overcome these problems, two of the professional staff were asked to review the research instruments. These staff found the questions to be filled with technical jargon that might be difficult to interpret by some of the residents. It was therefore agreed at this point to conduct a pilot study with two of the residents who have had a long history with the organization. The pilot interview was conducted on the 20th of August, 2004, in the conference room of the centre. These participants found the questions to be quite appropriate and comprehensible. Only minor changes were made to a few of the questions which did not necessitate a thorough rewording of the instruments. The instrument was therefore accepted in its original form. The two respondents were also included in the final interviews for the study. The questions were also discussed with the advisor to determine their appropriateness, relevance, and clarity.

The interview guide was developed to guide the data collection (see Appendix B). This ensured that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each participant. The interview guide provided the topic or subject areas within which the interviewer was free to explore, probe, and ask questions that helped to elucidate and illuminate the particular subject to be pursued. It also made it possible for the researcher to carefully decide how best to use the limited time available in the process. Moreover, the guide made interviewing different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored (Patton, 2002).

Observation

Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and objects in the social setting chosen for the study. Observation has a long tradition in the social sciences (Punch, 1998). It has been extensively employed by psychologists and by educational researchers. In naturalistic observations, observers neither manipulate nor stimulate the behavior of those whom they are observing (Punch, 1998). The record of observation is frequently referred to as field notes. Field notes are detailed, non-judgemental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Through observation the researcher documents and describes complex actions and interactions of the participants. Observation can range from highly structured, detailed notation of behavior of the study subjects guided by checklists, to more holistic description of events and behavior (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Whatever the recording technique, the behavior is observed as the stream of actions and events unfold in a more natural and open-ended way and without using predetermined categories and classifications (Punch, 1998). The "logic here is that categories and concepts for describing and analysing the observational data will emerge later in the research, during the analysis, rather be brought to the research, or imposed on the data from the start" (Punch, 1998, p. 185).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), the researcher usually enters the setting in the early stages of qualitative inquiry, with broad areas of interest but without predetermined categories or strict observational checklists. This will enable the

researcher to discover the recurring patterns and relationships. Checklists become more appropriate and context sensitive after such patterns are identified and described through early analysis of field notes. Focused observation is then used at later stages of the study, usually to check analytical themes to see, if, for example, they explain behavior and relationships over a long period of time or in a variety of settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The challenges of observation include such issues as uncomfortable ethical dilemmas (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As discussed below, ethical issues were dealt with through a written consent to participants.

Observation, as a data collection strategy was used in this project to observe first hand, in connection with interview data, the capacity building activities taking place at the Women's Centre. The researcher spent considerable time in the site in order to observe implementation of program activities that lead to capacity building at the grassroots level. This was marked by taking field notes during implementation of program activities. The field notes were then correlated with the in-depth interview data to enhance the study's credibility.

Ethical Considerations

For ethical considerations, the rights of participants in the study were safeguarded as much as possible throughout the study. The research project was reviewed and granted ethical approval by the Joint Faculty Review Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba, (JFREB) in August of 2004 (see Appendix C). The consent of participants

was sought before the commencement of interviews (Appendix D). Every effort was made to maintain the anonymity of the participants. All subjects were kept anonymous in the report. Only the researcher, and his thesis Advisor, had access to the interview tapes. Participants were assured of anonymity as much as possible after they had been informed of the nature and purpose of the study. However, due to the very small size of the sample, it is possible that some details or comments made by participants may be recognizable to others. No names appeared on transcripts.

Participants for this study were asked to give their informed consent to all data collection procedures, including the use of audiotapes. They were also assured of the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the interview sessions without any consequences. The risks and benefits to participants were assessed to be minimal. The feedback from the project could potentially help community members and policy makers to provide support to neighborhood organizations.

Data Analysis

“Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating process” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p. 150).

The data collected for this study was analyzed using common qualitative data analysis techniques consisting of organizing of the data; coding, generating categories, themes and providing detailed description of the themes by building an argument (Creswell, 2003; Holliday, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1999 & Mason, 2002).

Organizing the data involves transcribing the interviews verbatim and typing up

all field notes to allow the context of the conversation to provide as much meaning as possible, thus giving flavour and texture to the data (Patton, 2002). In organizing the data, the researcher read and reread the transcripts to get a general sense of the information. Particular topics began to emerge which were then assigned a category. The transcripts with the categories were read again, and broader themes were thus identified.

The above procedures were enhanced by coding of the data. Coding qualitative data is a process of identifying pieces of information (meaning units) and linking these to concepts and themes around which the final report is organized (Padgett, 1998). This means organizing the data into chunks or bits and pieces of information before bringing meaning to them. It involves taking text data or segmenting sentences or paragraphs into categories; and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based on the actual language of participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1999).

The coding scheme was developed on the basis of responses of interview participants to the open-ended questions. Open coding was utilized in the initial stage to understand the data. This enabled the researcher to uncover, name, and develop concepts about community capacity building. This was achieved by reading and rereading the transcripts to gain greater understanding and to discover the range of potential meanings contained within the words used by respondents.

The point of assigning labels was to attach meaning to the pieces of data, which enabled the summarizing of data by pulling together themes and by identifying patterns related to the concept of community capacity building. It also enabled the researcher to

group similar events, and happenings under a common heading or classification. This step involved a higher level of abstraction and conceptualization. Conceptualization is the process of grouping similar items according to some well defined properties and giving the items a name or conceptual label that stands for that common link. In conceptualizing, the researcher reduced large amounts of data to smaller, more manageable pieces.

The categories were used to focus and organize the retrieval of sections of texts, elements of data for the purpose of further analysis or manipulation. Sorting, organizing, and indexing led to some surprises in the data (Mason, 2002).

The formation of themes helped the researcher to make sense of the data and also provided a structure for writing the report. The themes were used as major findings in the study and they were stated under separate headings in the finding section. Thus, the whole purpose of organizing the data was to present a comprehensive picture of the written report. Emergent headings helped make further sense of the data itself. They also helped to form and adjust the themes (Holliday, 2002).

The final phase in the data analysis involved presenting convincing arguments with the data. The concept of argument according to Mason (2002) is the construction of a perspective, an interpretation, or a line of reasoning or analysis. This process assumed a relational process in which the researcher thought continually about, and engaged with those to whom the argument was being made. This stage also included the highest level of abstraction and consists of linking the study findings into the literature.

Verification: Issues of Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers, like their counterparts in quantitative research, need to argue and establish the trustworthiness of their study if the findings are to have any merit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This is of particular importance since the qualitative methodology is subject to criticism about its subjectivity. Thus, alternative strategies to achieve rigor for constructivists include credibility, transferability, auditability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1989) which are analogous to the positivist view of internal validity and reliability. Several strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

The main strategy that was utilized to ensure validity in this study was the provision of rich, thick, detailed descriptions of the experiences of the participants so that those interested in transferability would have a solid framework for comparison with any existing data or study findings. Transferability refers to the generalizability of a study's findings to another setting. A strategy that was used to enhance the transferability of the study findings was triangulation of multiple sources of data. The researcher maximized the use of multiple informants in order to increase credibility of the study findings. This is sure to strengthen the usefulness of the study. Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Diversifying sources of data and means of interpretation has value for enhancing the credibility of the findings. Data from different sources were used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research questions in this study. Thus, data from the in-depth

interviews of a range of professionals and residents involved in program activities and the observations supported each other and were used to help to strengthen the reliability of this study. Reliability involves the accuracy of research methods and techniques. Data collection and analysis strategies were reported in detail in order to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methods used in the study. Finally, the researcher continually visited the community both to gain permission to carry out the study and to establish contacts with key actors or gatekeepers.

Chapter 4

Presentation of The Study Findings

Introduction

The purpose of the research project was to examine the capacity building activities taking place during the implementation of a community-based revitalization program in the North Point Douglas neighborhood. The activities of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre were examined in this regard to determine the specific role the organization may be playing in helping to build capacity at the grassroots level. The study findings indicated that the organization has made significant contributions in empowering and building capacity in the neighborhood.

This chapter presents the results from the residents' and professional staff interviews and the researcher's observations of implementation activities. In line with the constructivist paradigm, the interview data are presented through the use of direct quotations from the participants, to reflect their views and perceptions of the activities of the organization in helping to build community capacity.

The themes identified in the data analysis section included community mobilization and involvement in the decision making process, improved networks of social relationships and information sharing, partnerships with other organizations, and the mobilization of domestic resources.

Community Mobilization and Involvement in Decision-Making

A significant contribution of the organization was the mobilization and involvement of local residents in identifying issues affecting the community and their well being. The residents were unanimous in their responses and perspectives of increased involvement over the years in the decision-making process at the community level. Prior to the implementation of program activities, a consultative process was employed by the organization to help the residents to identify community issues and to develop interventions to effectively tackle those problems. This included a needs assessment to determine the needs of the residents and the community in general. The assessment of needs enabled the organization and the community residents to come up with solutions based on those needs. It also helped to lay the building blocks for the planning process as it generated information on what the local residents wanted. This participatory decision making process provided an opportunity for the local residents to identify the priorities the organization should embark on.

When asked about their input into decisions affecting their lives, and their level of involvement in the activities of the organization and the neighborhood, most of the participants responded that they were always consulted for their input for the good of the community and their overall well-being. They also described how important it was for them to be able to express themselves, to be listened to by professionals, and to have input into issues they considered important in their lives and the neighborhood. One woman stated that, "When the centre first started, women were called upon for their

input on what they would like to see in the women's centre".

A participant describes her level of involvement this way,

I have been involved in the decision making-process for nearly three years since the inception of the women's centre and my involvement has changed over time. I always go to the community meetings and I have always given my thoughts and views about what programs the centre should be involved in.

Another woman described her role in the decision making-process especially during meetings, "When I attended meetings, I just gave them my input on things that I would like to see change in the neighborhood and what the women would need or want from the centre."

A local resident who has lived in the neighborhood for about 25 years described her involvement this way:

When I was working as a teacher I didn't usually attend meetings....That was my focus. So even though I knew a lot about the organization and the community, personally I wasn't active. But when I retired, I decided that it wasn't enough to live in a place but getting more involved is important. So I guess you could say my involvement keeps increasing.

People are involved in different ways in the activities of the organization. One woman describes her involvement this way:

I run the Teen Girls' program Mondays and Fridays, 5-8 pm and I do casual hours here. When the full time employees have a meeting to go to, they will ask me to come in and fill in for them. Other than that I usually come here for coffee and that's it.

Most of the community residents had never attended a formal community meeting, and most of them had seldom spoken in public. However, since their involvement with the organization, most of them have become regular and active participants on

neighborhood committees and frequently attended community events. They have learned to contribute their opinions. Because of the initiatives and support from the centre, community residents have felt the need to be active in the life of their community, in having a voice in the decisions affecting their lives. The following comments were given in response to how often residents attended community meetings:

I never attended a meeting at the community level nor visited or stepped a foot in any organization, but with the coming of the women's centre, I have been actively involved.

I am involved with the community meetings cause I go to the housing meetings, I go to safety audit meetings, resident committee meetings, and parent counsel meetings.

I'm very well involved. Well 3-4 years ago I wasn't. I'm really involved now. I'm involved with housing, cause now I go to the housing meetings. I go to the residents meetings, parent counsel meetings, and I'm very involved with the centre. Three years ago I wasn't really involved with the resident committee, but gradually, I've been more involved cause I'm part of the women centre and continue to go to my residents meetings and the community meetings.

Presently I try to attend the housing committee meetings and then contribute to the discussions in those meetings. When I have an opportunity, I go to the resident committee meetings.

A participant stated in general that, "attendance at committee meetings by residents has been quite good over the last year."

The professional staff also had a range of opinions regarding resident involvement in the decision-making process. As such, most of them admitted that since the implementation of program activities, many of the residents have become actively involved in various activities in the neighborhood. One of the professional staff

mentioned that

Since the inception of this project, a lot of people in this neighborhood, especially women around this project, have been involved in setting direction through coming to discussions, through being members of the Board, through being volunteers in the outings we undertake. So they are providing leadership and they are providing their energy and the time in keeping this project alive....With the formation of the resident's association, a large group of residents are involved in meeting on a monthly basis to look at what are the issues around the residents committee. They are also members of housing committees or the environment and safety committees. So these are the issues that they get involved in because they are the everyday issues, that is, safety, housing, and recreation for the children. So that's how they have become involved.

A number of comments from the interview and observational data also demonstrate that, since their involvement in program activities, residents have assumed an increasing role in the decision making process and setting direction in the neighborhood. When asked about their level of involvement in program activities around decision making, and how that has changed over the years, most of the residents mentioned some changes that indicate their increasing roles in setting direction in the neighborhood. One of the participants elaborated on this theme and reinforced the importance of her role in setting direction in the neighborhood:

Initially I was just one of the community women. As such, I didn't see my role as being specifically anything than just another community women's voice towards giving ideas about what I would like to see in the community.... And then eventually, I became part of the Advisory Committee that was developed by women who became committed to seeing the dream being accomplished. I was co-chairperson of that Advisory Committee at the initial stage before we actually became a women's centre. Then last November,....we had the first General Annual Meeting and then I've been the Chair of the Board over the past year.

Another woman stated,

I'm part of staff now. I was actually a volunteer. Getting familiar with the women's centre, what they stand for and what they do for the community and the women and their families, I got more involved in that and the next thing I knew, I'm hired as an outreach worker.

One woman's opinion provided a general illustration of other women's views,

We usually do get together. Like there is a few of us that are in a discussion right now what to do about a certain situation and we do come here and get together and talk about what we should do about it and how we can resolve it. And I think, that's very helpful because all the resources are here for us to find out what we can do about certain situations going on in the neighborhood.

The professional staff were also unanimous in their responses on how the involvement of local residents in the decision making process in the neighborhood has changed over the years. They mentioned that residents have been increasingly working with the organization and other community groups in identifying problems in the neighbourhood and helping to find solutions to some of those issues. As described by a professional staff, the involvement has gone from less to most involved,

I think compared to few years ago, its being apparently now up by about 70-80 percent more participation in the neighborhood right now than it was, may be five years ago. Now local residents are encouraged to make more input on community issues.

To further elaborate on this theme, residents were asked to describe the specific roles they played in the initiation of the women's centre. The following responses were given,

Well, first of all, I was part of the group that initially met to dream about what it is we could do as a group at Point Douglas. We were approached by people of the Social Planning Council and Health Canada to see what it is that women in this

community wanted to do. We met initially back, I think it was in 1998 or 1999 and had a focus group of community people. The women met to brainstorm what it is they wanted to see in their community. I was part of that group of women. After the brainstorming sessions, there were several of them actually, when we met with the community women, it was decided that we were really to talk and develop a project that will address the problems of women in this community. Then our proposal was accepted and we met for the first two years.

Another woman describes the general roles of women,

The first thing the women did was getting the school family room for the meetings. This room was made available by the school principal to establish a location where women could come and meet with each other and start brainstorming ideas on what they would like for a better life in the community. The second thing was seeking funding. The third thing was to do a survey to find the needs of the residents to see what they can bring to the community to address those needs.

Finally, a participant mentioned that "The idea came from the women within this neighborhood, who had the dream and vision of a great community." A professional staff member also described the specific and general roles of local residents in the initiation of the organization this way:

The main actors have been, all the four years of the project, the women in this community. These women came from all walks of life. They are professional women. They are women who are self-employed. They are women who are not employed currently. But they all came together with this one dream to have a place for themselves. So the roles of these key players were to form an advisory committee that took the responsibility of laying down the guidelines on how the project was going to be implemented, and how they are going to proceed step by step in getting a wide representative view from the community women on what they wanted this project to be for themselves.

However, while these are positive comments, there were some concerns raised by a few of the participants about residents' involvement in program activities. These

respondents perceived community involvement differently at the neighborhood level.

They pointed to the negative factors that may be preventing people from participating in the decision making process or the activities of the organization. The following comments indicate their views about some of these factors:

The biggest problem in a community like this is that it tends to be just the same set of people that probably already have a lot of skills that are doing the same jobs over and over again. And I think our biggest challenge is to create the conditions where other people are comfortable and have confidence to be involved.

Well, I think there are certain factors we have to take into consideration which is not an impediment, but it is certainly an obstacle. In a neighborhood like this, there is a large number of people who are living on or below the poverty line. And then a lot of single parents, a lot of elderly, lots of teenage moms, you know all of that is responsible for deterring people's capacity to be involved.

I think there is always room for more involvement of people. I think one of issues here that is difficult to address and that can be a touchy thing is that at least about 40-42 percent of the population of the neighborhood are aboriginal people. There are few people involved in the implementation of project activities that reach out to these people. This is really important and needs to be addressed.

During the Annual General Meeting held in September 7th of 2004, I saw the amount of control local residents exercised in the implementation of program activities especially in the selection of Board members. The residents were given the opportunity and encouragement to be elected to the Board membership so that they could have equal or higher representation on the Board in order to be able to influence decisions affecting their lives. All the residents who expressed an interest in Board membership were unanimously approved and therefore elected to the Board.

The importance of involving women in the decision making process through board

membership was emphasized by one of the women:

We were very deliberate in our Board structure....We wanted the women in the community to have at least 50 percent of the seats on the Board so that their issues, their concerns, would be well heard and represented on the Board....We didn't want this to be a group of outside people who would be running this place for us. It is our place and we wanted to have strong input into what happens here.

As the organization has fully developed its capacity to work on community issues and in partially fulfilling its objective of empowering community residents in taking care of their own problems, most of the people who had played very active roles in the early stages of dreaming about a centre, are now retreating to the back stage and giving way to fresh blood and new ideas. They have developed their own leadership skills and also helped others to build their leadership skills too. For most of these people, involvement in the activities of the organization and in the life of the neighborhood in general is characterized as being more to less involved:

I'm going to feel little bit less involved right now because the centre has grown stronger. We have a staff person who is more familiar and comfortable in her role. We have a community development worker from C.E.D.A. who is being helpful to our community. So all kinds of supports have allowed me to back off a little bit personally. I don't have to take a strong leadership role any longer. There are people in place now who are able to carry more of the weight of it and I feel confident about the way they are doing things. So it is a kind of relief.

I'm not so much involved in the present compared to the previous couple of years where I was much more involved. Just the way it has to be right now, you know. May be by next year, I will see myself involved again than I am right now. I can't get more involved than I am right now because of my own commitments and responsibilities.

The above statements indicate that participation in the decision making process was a powerful means through which community residents became empowered to take

care of their problems and their neighbourhoods. This is supported by the increased roles residents have been playing in the life of their neighborhood. The positive correlation of perspectives between the professional staff and the local residents is explained partly by the supportive environment and welcoming atmosphere from the centre.

The elements associated with increased involvement in the decision making process include; changes in self-esteem and self-confidence and acquiring and developing knowledge and skills.

Changes in Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem.

Another major effect of the organization on the lives of the local residents as a result of their involvement in program activities, is a significant increase in their individual self-confidence and self-esteem. Self-esteem and self-confidence are essential elements of community capacity building. Most of the residents felt they have improved their self-confidence and self-esteem since becoming involved with the centre. As such, they were unanimous in expressing an enhanced perception of self as a result of their involvement in project activities. They described feeling confident about themselves now in terms of taking up new challenges, getting out of their shells, and being able to open up to professionals and friends. The following excerpt from an interview with one of the women shows how she felt good about herself as a result of her involvement with the activities of the organization:

My self-esteem was low before coming to the Women's centre. Now my self-esteem has improved drastically over the years. I am now able to speak up about

my feelings in the presence of other women. I used to have a hard time talking about myself when I first started, I used to be really quiet. But I have developed the confidence to talk about my feelings openly in the presence of other women without being shy.

Another participant expressed how her self-confidence and self-esteem have improved since her involvement with the Women's Centre, "Before coming to the centre, my self-esteem was low. On a scale of, say, 1-5, my self-esteem would have probably been a 2. But now my self-esteem has improved to say a 5."

For many of these residents, perceptions of self before coming to the Centre were marked by reduced personal confidence, shyness, the inability to speak and open up about one's feelings. But since their involvement with the organization, they have had a renewed sense of ability to speak up to overcome these problems. In the words of one of the residents,

I guess I realized even now how honest I can be, before I used to hold back from being honest, cause I didn't want to hurt people's feelings. When you're honest, you're really being honest with yourself and honest with the organization, like if you see something that doesn't look right, doesn't feel right, then say something, or do something about it. And that's what I have been doing. I have learned to speak up and be honest about my feelings and thoughts to help the organization move forward and improve more.

The professional staff also gave similar responses on how the organization has helped local residents in developing a sense of self worth as a result of their involvements in program activities. Most of these participants commented on this theme by stating that many of the women have had an improved self image since their involvement with the Centre. A good number of the women now have the motivation to

take on challenges such as going back to school for higher education. Most have overcome their shyness, because of the positive reception from the centre, and have developed the ability to identify their needs and the ability to identify what they want in life.

The professional staff therefore, perceived community capacity building as improving one's image and being given opportunities to feel good about oneself in the eyes of others. The professional sample focus on community capacity building as an outcome to achieve self-confidence and self-worth.

In order to reinforce and underscore the positive contribution of the organization in helping residents in developing their self-esteem and self-confidence, one professional staff mentioned negative past stories about what she saw in most of the community residents when they first came to the centre.

Some of the women used to sit quietly in meetings and not talk to anybody and just mind their own business. Some women in a physical or abusive relationship, would not want to talk to somebody and would sit quietly in a corner. Even looking for a job was the hardest thing for them to do because they felt they didn't have the skills or may not get the job they are looking for.

Thus, providing a safe and supportive environment for people makes them feel more comfortable, start to open up, and eventually get out of their shells. According to this same professional staff member:

By boosting people's confidence, they can start opening up and take on new challenges. People begin to feel relaxed and talk if they feel safe. Once you make people feel safe and comfortable, they start opening up and asking questions. So once we boost up people's confidence, they begin to feel they can do anything....I can do this, I can do that. Now people are getting more confidence and their self-

esteems are getting higher. They are not shy, they are not afraid or ashamed of asking questions any more. I see a great deal of the ladies improving more and more. They say the women's centre is a great place for them. We just filled up their self-esteem saying that you can do this, it is not a matter that you can't, you can if you put your mind to it.

Community residents demonstrated their improving self-confidence through the articulation of their felt needs, advocacy, and assertiveness. Since their involvement with program activities, most of the local residents admitted that they have been feeling confident and able to open up in the presence of professionals and others, and are actively participating in discussion sessions. One of the participants described this level of assertiveness for the rest of the women this way:

It was hard for us to be assertive enough to insist on what it was that we wanted rather than letting people who were suppose to be helping us decide for us what it was they thought we needed. I think working as a community, we the women at the community have developed some strengths because we felt so stronger to insist on doing the things, going after the things that we really wanted rather than letting the people from the different organizations take it away from us.

This assertiveness is the result of the self-confidence gained over the years at the centre. Overall, the study findings indicate that both sets of participants' responses were similar in terms of changes in self-confidence and self-esteem.

During my visits to the centre and the Annual General Meeting in particular, I saw the results of these positive changes in the residents to varying degrees such as: trust in each other, confidence to be on the Board, outspokenness and readiness to take on major challenges, and ability to participate in the decision making process. As such, I saw most of the women who had reported negative aspects about themselves during the interviews

expressing themselves openly in the presence of a large number of people and making their voices heard without being shy. Most of them expressed the desire to be Board Members. Because of their courage and improved self-image, all of the local residents who expressed such a desire were unanimously elected to the Board.

Acquiring knowledge and developing skills

The next set of changes reported by residents from their involvement in project activities decision-making process was the acquisition of knowledge and skills. When asked if they had acquired any particular skills and abilities since their involvement with the centre, residents mentioned different types of skills including organizational, communication, and leadership skills and the ability to run meetings effectively. The following comments indicate the specific skills and abilities experienced by residents since their involvement with the organization,

I have learned how to draft proposals, write memos, and keep records. My organizational skills have drastically improved as well as my phoning skills... I am now experienced in how to work in a team. My speaking skills, communications skills, and listening abilities have all improved. I have learned how to listen.

I have developed the ability to make referrals to resources in the community, passing information to other residents about issues affecting their lives.... I have also developed the following skills: proposal writing skills, computer skills, communications skills and ability to use the phone effectively.

Now I have more people and communications skills than before.... I have learned how to talk to the ladies in a polite manner in order to calm them down because some of them have mental health and substance abuse issues. So I have been able to read these people in order to sit them down and not let them feel threatened. Now I treat people with respect."

I have developed the ability to make connections in the community, developed outreach abilities, and the ability to help families prepare budgets.

A woman described the specific skills she has acquired as,

Secretarial skills, computer skills, people skills, cause I never like talking to people. I never used to go out of my way to talk to somebody, but now that I've been working here and hanging out with people, then my people skills have developed I guess you can say. My communications skills has developed also. Now I know more about the options out there.

Finally, a participant stated,

I think some of the skills I have developed are part of the experience in terms of providing support to staff, learned a bit about how to run meetings, giving directions to a board. As such I have developed leadership skills. I was also given a good amount of exposure to the kinds of things that are heard of a community working together, to invite community participation as well as a way to listen to women.

The professional staff also provided responses on the range of skills local residents had acquired from the project. They identified the skills mentioned by the local residents. Most of them stated that the centre had had a profound impact on the lives of the women. In response to how the organization is helping local residents in developing and acquiring various skills, both sets of participants identified a series of activities including: attending workshops, involvement in brainstorming sessions, developing programs, access to resources such as computers and telephones, and a safe and comfortable environment for residents. A professional staff person described the processes that have been employed to help residents acquire specific skills:

In the past years, we've done workshops on healthy relationships which is really about developing your self-esteem, developing skills to deal with every day interactions with the members of your family like your husband or your

children, how to talk to people, so you are able to be effective in your communication. So those are some of the skills they learned in this workshop. We also provided series of workshops on how to do a budget, manage, and keep it safe for their households. So we provided them with budgeting skills.

Another staff member stated:

Because of the fascination of the computer as they don't have them at home, most women have learned some basic computer skills. Some had never been on a computer and once they come in a few times and then watch someone on the computer, they would ask how do I find out about something on the computer. That's the biggest skill that they are learning and taking elsewhere with them. So the computers are the biggest skill that the women are coming in without and leaving with.

A local resident stated that "the women centre once had a proposal writing workshop and some of the women participated in that and improved their writing and computer skills." Providing local residents the opportunity to attend workshops, seminars, and brainstorming sessions are essential elements for developing and acquiring skills. Most of the residents felt that the skills and knowledge they had acquired had provided them with the opportunity to help other women in similar situations. Most acknowledged using their increased knowledge and skill levels in helping themselves and other members of the neighborhood:

Cause I think if you get that all for your self, that is, you build your skills and self-esteem you can have the skills and knowledge to help the women also too of this community. What I do is that when they have problems looking for a place, I would sit them down and say this is what you have to do in order to help yourself. I show them the initiatives to do things on their own, that way they are actually learning how to either speak on the phone or use the computer. So I am helping them to get more knowledge and how to improve themselves and develop their skills.

My skills have developed more and now I can tell the women who have been in my

position when they don't know where to go, or they don't know what to do, now I can tell them what is available for them, what kind of resources are out there for them...In addition, I help women to do their resumes, help them do research papers for school work and stuff like that.

I have used my skills to help other women in the neighborhood to improve their self-esteem, helped them to use the phone effectively, helped to connect women to resources and other women in the community.

For most of the local residents, using their acquired knowledge and skills to help themselves and others were new experiences they got from the centre.

Local residents were also asked to comment on other activities that may have led to their increased skills besides the activities of the centre. In response, most of the residents mentioned that they had acquired some skills from other activities prior to their involvement with the centre. These included participation in the activities of the resident committee and the family room at the Norquay Elementary school. A participant mentioned, "the resident committee meetings helped improved my communications skills and to overcome my shyness." Another woman stated, "I have been involved with other similar projects in the past that contributed to my skills in the community. I was involved with the Resident Committee."

Despite these comments, most of the residents stated that the woman's centre had played a significant role in increasing their knowledge and skills. A participant noted:

Well I've always had organizational skills pretty good but I've learned more. The other thing that I have learned was how to learn from other women that come to the centre. I have developed phoning skills and writing memos and may be I should mentioned too that I used to work here, so there is some experience in working after I became involved with the centre, I got some experience in working.

Another woman stated:

I don't particularly need the women's centre as much as other women do, I feel like my life is structured and I have a lot of things going through me that some women might not have. I have a career, my work life keeps me busy as I want to be. I think my skills developed prior to my involvement with the women's centre. However, my skills have grown strongly over time with the centre. For example, I have gained some confidence in my leadership skills from my involvement with the centre.

Professional staff were also asked if the women acquired some of these skills solely from their involvement with the activities of the organization. Some of the staff were very cautious in their responses with regard to this question. One of the staff cautiously replied:

I think partly yes, probably a big yes. May be they came because it was time, so it was partly that. May be we were just the right people in the right place at the right time. I'm not sure we can blanket that we are touching a lot of lives, but hopefully we are doing some good. We can take all the credits, I don't think so.

Another staff member expressed her view this way:

I would say that in both ways. I think if the women's centre wasn't here, there isn't another meeting place for women in this community. So we have brought a lot of women together and they have learned to interact with each other. I would say that's the hard question because change takes a long time and people's lives are very, very complex. Change can be measured in many different ways. So it is very hard to answer this as a yes or no. But I think that just being here I know for sure that more women have been able to get access to resources, to information, to possibilities for themselves, to possibilities of how they can improve their own lives. So by having the centre here you can say that it certainly has had a positive effect.

Only one participant expressed some pessimism in the capacity building efforts

in the neighborhood and stated that most of the capacity building that is taking place is not utilized in the neighborhood because of the lack of job opportunities. He noted specifically that:

Most of the capacity building we have done is not for Point Douglas. For example, we have trained people in how to use the computers so they can get jobs. But there isn't any jobs in Point Douglas for these people. So I can say we have increased people's capacities but that is taking them out of the neighborhood.....In order words, not that many people that ever get trained will get to stay in the community to do things that they have been trained for because they have been eager to get a job. But we don't have that many jobs in Point Douglas. So I can say we haven't increased people's capacity in Point Douglas very much but I would say we have increased people's capacity in Winnipeg.

Overall, both the residents' and professionals' categorical responses were similar in nature. Although there were differences in the responses of the professional staff in terms of details, both sets of participants saw capacity building as residents gaining concrete skills and abilities to influence decisions affecting their lives.

Improved Networks of Relationships and Information Sharing

In terms of networking and sharing information at the individual level, the findings indicated that the women's centre has had profound effects on the lives of the residents in helping them to be connected to each other and to resources in the community through a safe and comfortable meeting place. The organization was found to have played a significant role in the lives of the local residents in terms of meeting new friends and sharing valuable information with other people in the community. These networks of social relationships have led to the cultivation of social capital which is

critical for effective community capacity building. Most of the local residents reported having built very supportive relationships with new friends and professional staff and to having access to resources from coming to the centre:

I think the women's centre is here so that women can get to connect with each other, to interact with each other, get to know each other, get to know your neighbours, get the kids to know other kids in the neighborhood. The centre helps to connect local residents to each other and to resources. If new people move to the neighborhood and come to the centre, they will be connected to resources or meet other people in the neighborhood.

The kids and I just need to get out more and get to know new people. The women's centre is a comfortable and a safe place to visit. My kids have gone to the Kildonan pool, Tinker town and have helped out in the community garden. I feel that all this has helped to broaden their horizon and helped them to interact with different people.

I can pretty much say the centre has helped to bring us together in the community. There is a few of us that all live on Austin and we can all get together now and just talk and have coffee together and use the computers as such, where we probably wouldn't have done before.

The women's centre is a place where women will have a chance to learn about different things that they could access that will help them to accomplish the things they wanted. It makes them feel that they belong. They recognize the people that they meet here and they feel they have friends in the community.

The Women's Centre has made me feel more secure. The staff and other women are very courteous and have made me feel like I belong to this other family. I have enjoyed using the laundry facilities, the phone and reading news papers. I have enjoyed meeting different women, I feel less threatened and happy that violence is not tolerated at the Women's Centre.

A professional staff member stated that:

The women's centre provides a comfortable meeting place to women in this community, where they will meet their neighbours and friends, where they will come with any problems that they are not able to deal with on their own, and where they will be connected to resources, be it human resources or some of the neighbours may have information on programs they are looking for.

Finally, a lady noted that:

The centre has a variety of things to do there. Speakers, events, friendly conversations, someone always there to help you. A bit of everything, from A to Z. I go there not on a regular basis but when I get more mobile, I can drop in more. Anyone else that is willing to enter the centre, could find what they need, provided they enter. Thanks to women's centre for being there for me.

The increased socialization has resulted in positive changes in the way the women interacted now compared to before:

Ever since the women's centre opened up, people have become more friendly to each other. Before you would walk down the street and nobody would talk to you. Maybe they would say hi or just probably look at you. Today if you walk down the street, people would say hi, how are you doing? People are getting to know each other.

In response to the question about how the centre is helping local residents to become more connected to each other, the professional staff mentioned range of activities undertaken by the organization in bringing people together. The most frequent responses mentioned included organizing community events such as pot luck dinners, barbeques, and community gardens. The following excerpts from the interviews suggest the specific ways the organization has created the networks of relationships among residents:

The organization has helped to create and build the networks among the local residents by providing a safe place for them to meet. This has been the main way we have been able to bring them together in this community. By just having the centre, we have coffee on every morning, the laundry services. When women are looking for a way of passing some time or they are looking for information or meeting with other women, they

come to the centre because there are always women around. It is an informal gets together kind of place. Through meeting and talking, they find some things they are most interested in. So they build those connections that way....It is an informal, interactive sharing of ideas, sharing of resources. And so they even informally help each other deal with immediate problems:

Well, what we try to do is to have functions here like crafts, we have the phone here, the computers, we bring in clothes that we donate out....So we have more ladies coming and getting involved with other women just to sit and have a coffee and get to know your community, get to know your neighbours, plus sometimes once a month we have a pot luck dinner at the school, so I bring women from here to go to the school and participate in the pot luck dinner so that they can meet more women. You live in the community get to know all the people who live in it.

By keeping the doors open, providing a safe and comfortable place for the residents to meet and interact with each other. I think just having community events where the women are invited to come and participate. We make them all get together as often as possible.

Trust may be one of the outcomes of networking as people get together and know each other. It develops over a long period of time. It was described as a feeling of confidence in talking to or confiding in someone with whatever problems in a collegial atmosphere. Through interaction with each other and with the staff, the organization has helped residents to develop trust:

People feel that they can come here and talk about their problems and have somebody to confide in. A lot of women come here and know that somebody is gonna sit here and listen to them and not go and blab it all over the neighborhood so that everybody knows her problem. Its just a safe place for women to come. Women who have being in abusive relationships come to the centre to feel safe because they know that nothing can happen to them while they are here.

Some of the women now have the confidence and trust to come in the centre and talk to someone or to seek resolutions for some of their issues. Once they have developed the trust in us, the staff, they would loosen up and start to speak about their problems.

The professional staff also had a range of opinions regarding networking among local residents in the neighborhood. When asked to describe the purpose of networking to them, the following responses were the most frequent:

- Meeting different people
- Building and accessing social networks
- Resources
- Programs and activities and
- Knowing your neighbours.

One of the staff summarized the benefits of networking as follows:

I guess the biggest thing with networking is that through interaction, you learn a lot about yourself and you learn about the other person. Women have been able to get access to information, to resources, to possibilities for themselves, to possibilities of how they can improve their lives. I think if you are sitting alone in isolation in your home, you are deprived of all these activities.

It is apparent from the above statements that networking has had a profound impact on the lives of the local residents. Access to resources and information can significantly impact capacity building activities at the grassroots level. The organization has played an integral role in promoting these networks among the local residents by providing a safe place for them to meet and interact with each other and to brainstorm on issues affecting their lives and the community.

Thus, by meeting and discussing with other people in the community, local residents can learn how to build their individual skills and to work on not only individual problems but community problems as well. According to a professional staff member, the informal relationships they formed, just by coming to the centre "is priceless and a sure

way of forming relationships at the neighborhood level“.

One of the biggest forces for spreading information in the neighborhood and helping to create and build networks of relationships among local residents has been a local community new paper, the Point News Paper. It is published and distributed by the Residents' Committee in collaboration with the centre. The Editorial Board consists of a retired teacher, who is the editor and a member of the residents' committee and a group of local women who conduct interviews and compile information on issues affecting the neighborhood and the residents. The Point News Paper has helped to bring up to date information on community issues to local residents. According to one of the professional staff, "We have the local news paper here, so they can come and read the news paper to look for either an employment opportunity or a decent house in the neighborhood to rent."

A resident mentioned that:

One of the features of the neighborhood that has been put out by the resident committee and the women's centre has been the community news paper. It is helping in uniting the people and making sure people feel part of the community, you know...Just spreading information about what is available in the neighborhood in terms of resources, offering other possibilities to people to connect with each other.

Another resident evaluated the specific role of the community news paper:

I think the news letter has being a real positive force for change in a few ways. I think it helps bring several different groups of people together in a way. The other way the newsletter is being important is getting out information about the neighborhood housing plan which is probably, at this time, one of the biggest forces for a positive change.

Finally, a participant mentioned that:

A lot of the community women relate to the news paper. It ties a lot of the community together. It allows some of the residents to show their talents and skills to write to participate more fully in their community.

The community news paper has therefore played a major role in the lives of the people of North Point Douglas and has been a major contributing factor in helping to provide information to the local residents. It has also been an important tool in the capacity building process.

I saw the organization as an important source of contact for most of the residents. During my visits to the Centre, I saw the influx of women. The doors were always open to welcome people from all walks of life. Most of the community residents came in to share the centre's coffee, and sometimes just to pass time with friends. I saw the centre as a drop-in where women would come with their problems and share them with a staff of the organization, or with other community members. Some residents come in for the use of the phone, computers, or dryer and washer. Most of them do not have these resources at home. They may come in for information of any kind that could be used to improve themselves. The centre also has a play room with all sorts of toys for the kids. As an observer, I had the privilege of sharing their coffee, making new friends, and sometimes using the computers to check my emails.

I also observed some negative effects of the influx of residents to the centre which I considered to be factors that may affect the staff's ability to carry out their day-to-day activities effectively. They may be disturbing to other women coming to the centre too. For example, some of the women would stay on the few telephones or computers meant for the use of all the women for a long period of time. This, I observed, was annoying to most of the women who could be waiting to use either a phone or a computer. Thus, waiting time to use any of these resources can be quite frustrating. The centre also appears to be very small for the number of residents who drop in. This can create chaotic scenes or overcrowding during peak periods which may slow down administrative work during such periods.

These observations correspond to the views of one of the ladies who commented on the small size of the building:

I think the women's centre should continue its activities in the neighborhood. It is a great place for the ladies. We should have a bigger building, as this one gets crowded sometimes, so many people come to the centre on a daily basis.

Linking with other Organizations

Networking is as important to local residents as it is to community-based organizations. It helps to give access to much needed information and resources in the community. In the same way that community residents need information in the capacity building process, neighborhood organizations need access to information and resources to help build their capacities too. In creating networks of relationships among local residents, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre has developed working relationships with several community-based organizations, including schools and local social service agencies in and outside the neighborhood. Some of these organizations are providing funding to the centre. The partnership is seen as a way to leverage resources for specific programs and for sustained community capacity building.

The organization has developed these networks of relationships since its inception in 2000. These partnerships have been critical in helping the organization to effectively respond to the needs of the local residents and their community. These networks have also led to the exchange of both human and financial resources. For example, most of the people on the Board of the organization are also on boards of other community groups.

Both sets of participants were asked to describe networks between the women's centre and other organizations. A range of organizations were identified by the two groups of participants. A local resident states that:

The Women's Centre has very been very reliant on the support of other organizations in and outside the neighborhood like the North End Women's Centre on Selkirk, the Social Planning Council, C.E.D.A. [Community Education Development and Association] and many other organizations. We don't work in isolation. We work with a lot of community groups that supports us financially and in terms of human resources.

We work in collaboration with the community centre that deals with the youth and the resident committee that deals with issues that come up from time to time that the residents have. Whether it is crime prevention or whatever, we work with other community groups.

One of the local resident summarized this networking:

We have a good working relationship with the Norquay elementary school. I know that we are very much reliant on the support of other places like the North End Women's Centre and the Social Planning Council, the Community Education and Development Association. Another group I think is the Spence Group Neighborhood that had a similar program. We were seen such of as a sister program because we were both funded by Health Canada and sponsored by the Social Planning Council. These are some of the organizations that I feel we have some connections with.

Another resident describes the relationship with other organizations this way:

First of all I think we have a very good working relationship with the elementary school because initially we had a room at the school family room when we didn't have a building of our own at the time. We also have a good working relationship with the resident association and we have been working collaboratively with the people at the Ross House, we've had a summer program there in the last couple of years and done some gardening in their garden.

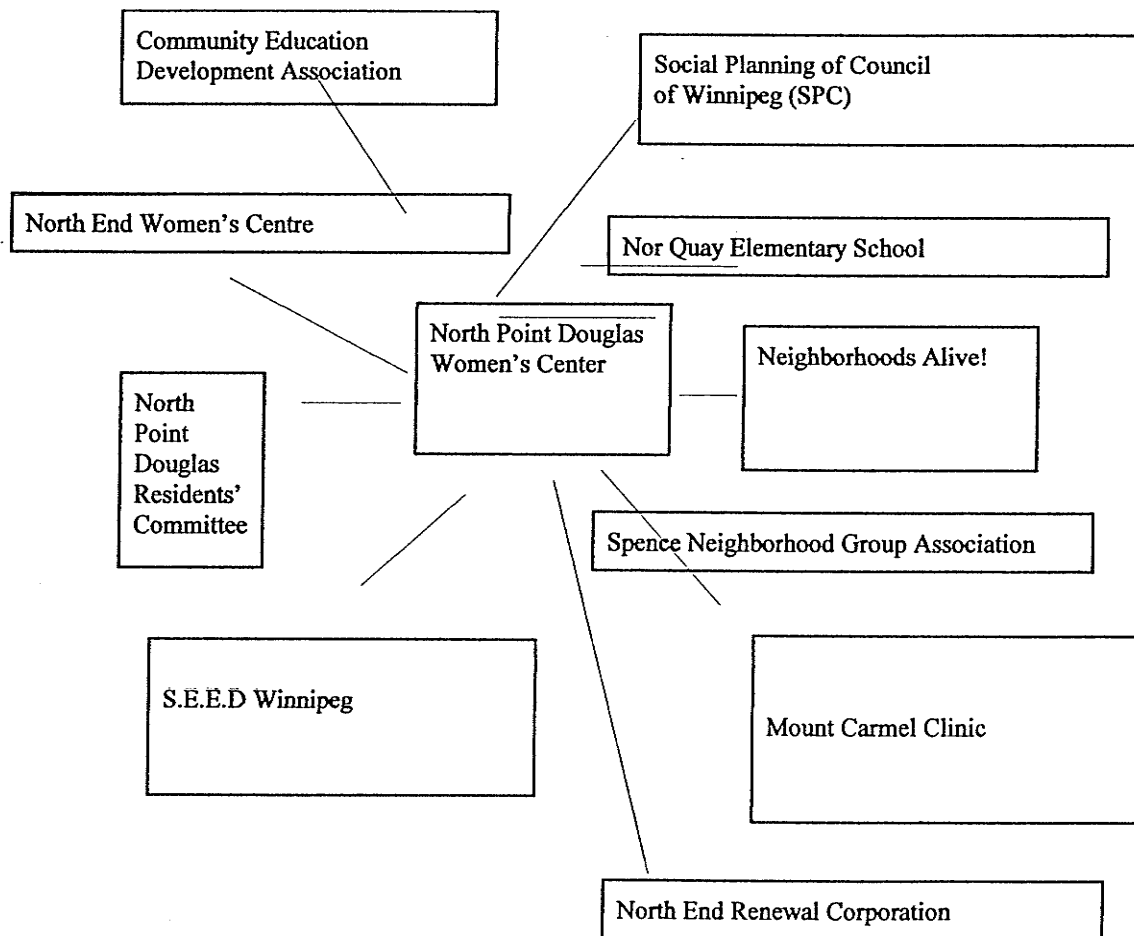
A professional staff also describe the relationship:

We do a lot of networking with regard to the availability of services that could be shared, availability of programs that could be located here in the centre. For

example, last year we were able to run a program called healthy relationships and the facilitator of the program came from the North End Women's Centre and she was able to spend from January to March and the program ran every week. The relationships have developed through really the human resource, the personnel that are involved in the centre and what organizations they are involved with. They bring back information, they take information from here, so that's how it happens. It is a very creative kind of ongoing partnership on how these programs are working.

The partnership with the various organizations is represented in the following diagram:

Map of Network of Organizations



The centre has developed these networks through collaboration on specific issues and needs in the neighborhood. A significant outcome of these partnerships is the mobilization of domestic resources.

Mobilization of Domestic Resources

When asked about the resources the organization has been able to attract to the community, participants responded unanimously that the level has been significant. These resources are drawn both from within and outside the neighborhood. They have played important roles in adding to the resources in the community and in helping to build capacity. According to a professional staff member:

I think the very first important resource was the availability of funds from Health Canada which was instrumental in getting this project launched. Then the other organizations that provided grant funds to the project were the Community Mobilization and that's a Federal government department focused on safe neighbourhoods. And so they were able to provide some funds to do programming. The Winnipeg Foundation also supplemented the funds raised from the province.

In addition to financial resources, the organization has also attracted a large pool of volunteers including professionals and non-professionals. They are providing services on a voluntary basis in the community.

The second most important resource we should acknowledge here is the human resource, the coming together of women who in their volunteer time were time were willing to make a commitment to make this project successful. So I think that is the most important resource in this neighborhood, the volunteer efforts of a diverse group of people, especially women around this project.

We have quite a number of board members who are all volunteers. We have a lawyer and she does a lot of our legal work for us at no cost. We have health professionals, we have Health professionals, we have other agencies represented

on the Board. They all donate their time and expertise to our Board meetings.

The Board is made up of many professional women, some of them have other jobs during the day, but they are providing their volunteer time when they come to the board meetings and committee meetings. There are also agency representatives, like the Mount Carmel Clinic, Winnipeg Health Authority, the City of Winnipeg. So we have a very rich resource from these agencies in the form of staff members who come here and participate in our discussions.

We have been able to get resources in terms of human resources, people who are paid as well as people who come in to volunteer to do different things. The organizations that are funding us also provide people to help with different things.

The financial resources that the organization was able to attract in the early stages of program implementation were a one time grant of one year. Some were targeted to specific programs. The study findings indicated that funding from Neighbourhoods Alive! was meant for the development of the building. The funds now, however, are targeted for the development of programs, organizing activities for the women and for some recreational activities with the children.

The North Point Douglas neighborhood was identified as one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Winnipeg. Some of the issues identified in the neighborhood included the inability to provide a telephone, washer and a dryer at home, and access to day care. The organization has been instrumental in providing these resources in the community so that those who cannot afford them can have access to them at the centre.

Chapter 5

Discussion of the Results

The findings have illustrated the positive effects of the organization and individuals, mainly the key actors, in promoting community capacity building in the North Point Douglas neighborhood. The central themes that emerged from the study findings argue for involving community residents in decisions affecting their lives and the neighborhood, creating and building a network of relationships among local residents and community groups, and the mobilization of domestic resources to sustain community involvement for community capacity building.

The purpose of this study was not to evaluate specific activities of the group, but to examine capacity building during the implementation of program activities of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre.

This section will summarize the findings of the study from the results discussed in the previous section and will focus on the themes identified in that section. This section of the thesis considers the findings and discusses them within the context of existing literature, the interviews, and the observational data.

Active Community Participation

The first theme addresses the idea that active participation in the decision-making process helps to build the individual and collective capacities of community residents. Significant findings of this study, therefore, were an increased participation by

community residents over the years in the decision making process. In order to ensure increased participation, the community residents were fully mobilized to identify priority areas in collaboration with revitalization professionals prior to the implementation of program activities. The initiatives that were undertaken to ensure active participation in the decision making process included encouragement to attend community meetings, workshops, and brainstorming sessions. Initial efforts therefore focused on community initiatives that will empower residents to support personal development and growth.

Involving community residents in the initiation and design of programs for intervention begins with the recognition of the fact that residents have the solutions to their problems. This is based on the notion that, community residents know what they need for a better life, and have a good idea of what is needed to fix the problems of the neighborhood (Lansberry et al., 1995). Silver (2001) notes that the needs of inner city residents are best served if programs are delivered by locally-based, grassroots organizations that are staffed primarily by people who are drawn from and intimately knowledgeable about and committed to the neighborhood.

Literature cited earlier supports the study findings. The organization has utilized a participatory approach in empowering the local residents to take care of their own problems. A professional staff member emphasized the level of participation by stating that

Since 2000, a lot more women have been involved in setting direction in the neighborhood through meetings, outreach activities, environmental and housing issues, and recreation for the children. I see people getting more involved in the decisions affecting their lives. Lots of people also get involved with the residents'

committee board in the neighborhood.

Another professional staff member stated:

The majority of the women involved on our board and in programming are from this community and that is the key point, we want the community people here to play the major role in keeping this organization going. When we are promoting the programs that we run we target the women.

The organization has therefore placed an emphasis on local inputs in the decision making process and on the ownership of ideas and their implementation. According to one staff member's view, "we are trying to stimulate more ownership by the women of this community, so that not only by coming in here to use the phone or to have coffee or to watch TV, but also to participate in program planning and implementation."

As suggested by the SPC (2000), capacity building occurs at the individual level when community residents take ownership of revitalization efforts in identifying and addressing community problems. When they get results that are beneficial to them, they gain a sense of control and empowerment. The increasing role of local residents in the decision making process was originally intended to help empower them and build their collective capacities so that they could become equal partners. This is indicated by their higher representation on the Board of the organization.

A number of studies of community participation have shown that active involvement and perception of influence and control contribute significantly to the personal empowerment of community members (Mattaini, Lowery, & Meyer, 1998)). Rappaport (1998) defines empowerment as determination over one's life and democratic participation in the life of one's community. According to this view, the goal of

empowerment practice is for individuals and communities to develop the capacity to resist and to change environmental conditions that negatively affect their life chances and to access resources and services. To become empowered is to perceive both oneself and one's community as effective and powerful and to develop the ability to alter the conditions of daily life (Mattaini et al., 1998). The primary objective of empowerment is the redistribution of existing power and resources.

This view was clearly demonstrated by the study's findings. Through active participation, residents were given the opportunity to identify their long-term hopes and dreams for the neighborhood and develop solutions toward a shared vision or common good. Increased participation and a role in decision making has created the opportunity for the local residents to take action toward positive improvement beyond the individual.

The local residents in the study stated that participation in every day activities, such as brainstorming sessions and parent counsel meetings, having a safe, non-judgmental and nurturing environment, and participation in the design of programs helped them to feel empowered. They also saw involvement in activities such as pot luck dinners, arts and crafts, and community gardens as contributing to their increased sense of self-worth for empowerment.

The literature reviewed suggests that each community has a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future. Identifying and mobilizing and involving these community assets is critical for community capacity building and for progress in redeveloping the community. It is evident from the findings that the organization has

focused on the strengths-based perspective identified by Mcknight & Kretzman (1993) that recognizes the strengths, capacities, resources and potentialities of individuals, families, and groups. Any serious attempt to help people regain control of their lives must provide opportunities to invest and build on such assets. According to a participant “the people working in the centre always see the good in every person, and they see the gifts, the talents they have and they tell them, and that motivates the women to go out and help.”

The organization has made an effort to identify, mobilize and involve these community assets in its operations to address community problems. The key players and an outreach worker were very instrumental in mobilizing these local assets, according to a participant, “by organizing and calling meetings, informing women about meetings and what it is they will be discussing that they think is most viable. I think they were the driving force behind the dedication and the organizational skills to keep the women involved.” In the words of another participant, “these women probably have more knowledge about this community and what they need than a lot of the other Board members.”

The mobilization of community residents empowered them to embark on a PATH process in collaboration with the professionals to help identify their strengths, skills, visions and their allies. An advisory committee was set up to help lay the foundation of what women would want in the community. An area of focus that was seen to be important to them was a centre where women would come with their problems and meet with other women. The board and management team of the organization also supported the

establishment of different committees and partnerships with other community groups to assist in various ways.

They have had three PATH discussions from 2002-2003 according to a professional staff member, "to see how the vision was changing, how the strengths of the community were building towards establishing that vision and actualizing it, and to identify their current shortcomings or weaknesses in the neighborhood that they had to address so that they could realize their dreams".

Community representation in neighborhood organizations is also an important aspect of capacity building. To obtain community representation, a neighborhood organization can try to ensure that its board and staff reflect the makeup of the community (Gittel, 1995; Gittel, Gross & Newman, 1994). The internal structure of a neighborhood organization should be democratic to maintain an adequate level of accountability to the community. An elected board and an involved membership can create clear lines of communication between the organizations and residents.

It has already been established by the findings that the organization encouraged and supported local residents to be elected to the board so that they could have higher representation and more voice in the affairs of the community. The data reveal that over 50% of the board members were women from the community. The rest of the board members were representatives of other community groups. The board membership reflects a non-hierarchical, flat organizational structure that demonstrates a degree of control exercised by the community residents in the decision making process. As mentioned by a

professional staff member:

The organizational structure is very simple. The women are trying to keep it very non-hierarchical as much as possible, and always trying to recruit more community women to be involved in whatever ways they can so that their views can be heard. As such, we are going to ensure that the structure remain fluid and that the voices of the women, for whom the centre has been created is kept alive.

Another staff mentioned that:

The management style of the organization is very participatory. The local residents have a lot of inputs in the issues affecting their lives, in the centre programs, and in what we do on a daily basis. So it doesn't matter who is sitting on the table. Whether it is a lawyer, or Public Health Nurse, or a Social Worker, or a local resident, they all have the same vote and the same say.

A hierarchical structure centralizes the power of decision-making in the top management of the organization. Democratic processes include quality, non-hierarchical structures, and involvement in the decision-making process by all interested parties. A non-hierarchical structure develops a sense of community ownership because it encourages community participation and involvement in the decisions regarding the community. Community stakeholder's involvement in the decisions more accurately represents the community's needs and possible strategies. It also gives community members the control that restores their power and confidence to provide direction to community programs.

Through planning with community stakeholders, local residents help set direction in the neighborhood and support and assist with programs and activities. The local community takes ownership and moves forward with hope and commitment. There is also flexibility to adapt to issues of concern to the community on a continuing basis, rather than to those issues defined by people outside the community. This lends credibility at the

neighborhood level, and increases commitment.

Acquiring Knowledge and Skills

The second theme from the involvement in the activities of the organization is the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Capacity building activities strive to upgrade the ability of individuals to enable them to respond adequately in taking decisions in an effective way. Neighborhood revitalization can be successful only if local residents have the knowledge and skills to collaborate effectively with professionals.

The study findings indicate that the organization has directly contributed to the skill levels and life experiences of the residents. The findings also indicate marked changes in residents' perception of self-image before coming to the centre from one characterized by low self-esteem, inability to take on challenges, to one of increased self-image to take on challenges in life.

The organization has provided an opportunity to some of the residents to embark on activities meant to enhance their future employability such as going back to school. One of the residents who has become a role model in the community and admired by everyone else, started as a volunteer with the organization and moved up to contract employment. After serving the organization for some time, and having realized greater potential, she went back to school to obtain her General Education Diploma. She is now ready to go for advanced studies. According to a professional staff member, "this woman enjoyed doing her job so much that she went back to school to get her grade twelve so she can get this

type of job permanently". This woman was able to realize her dreams because of the caring and nurturing environment within the neighborhood.

During the Annual General Meeting, she stated:

My involvement in the centre for the past three and a half years has given me experience in proposal writing, board development, computer skills, speaking skills, and above all, to dream big. I took this experience with me when I went back to school last year. I was out of school for twenty years and I managed to finish the Mature Student Program or G.E.D. in less than a year. The centre people have all been part of the support system I needed to climb one of the steps of my dream process.

The centre has been using a capacity building and an empowerment approach that emphasizes various processes to empower the residents to improve their quality of life and that of their neighborhood. As such, the outcomes of the activities of the organization in the lives of the local residents has been learning of new skills, developing knowledge, and also strengthening the community. As discussed in the previous section, the processes that facilitated this capacity building at the grassroots level include local control, resident involvement in taking decisions affecting their overall well-being, relationship-building among residents, attending workshops and brainstorming sessions.

According to a participant, the organization has helped in the empowerment and building community capacity, "by providing opportunities for the women such as education, information or referral, networking whether it is the meetings or whatever, just by been here with the doors open."

The knowledge, information and skills participants gained from the organization depended on their starting point, their levels of motivation to learn something new, the

opportunities available to them, and their degree of participation in either the decision-making process or implementation of program activities. People need both motivation and support to take on new challenges, and they need to be provided with the opportunities to do so. The motivation to learn new skills and take on new challenges has to come from residents themselves. In the words of one of the professional staff:

Taking the chance to come in here, to get to the door, turn that handle and walk in, is the first important thing to learn something. So by coming in, they have taken the chance to learn something new. I think by coming here, they have taken a major challenge. I think the first step to acquiring skills is to become opened to opportunities and then beyond that to identify what your needs are. The second chance you take is to put out your understanding of your life and what you want in life and what you want to improve in life. Unless they are ready to embark on a life journey, all we can do is have coffee on, the news paper and then wait for them to come, because we can't grab them from the streets and from their homes and force them to come here. But its been amazing in my one year here the variety of people who come here. People are taking the chance. We have to give them the chance to decide for themselves whether they are ready or not.

The above excerpt shows that the skills and knowledge the residents acquired from the centre depended on their initial motivations to take on new challenges in life and these motivations were matched by corresponding opportunities provided by the organization. One example, is a safe, comfortable, and nurturing environment where people can feel free to openly discuss their views.

Since their involvement with the organization, local residents have had improved self-esteem and self-confidence and have developed the ability to articulate their priorities without being shy. As noted by one of the professional staff member, "Some of the residents were very, very shy in the beginning and now they are talking like they've lived

here all the time.”

In the interviews, the residents attributed their improved self-esteem to the activities of the organization. Therefore, involving residents in the decision making process can lead to positive changes in their self-confidence and self-esteem. These changes may be a result of opportunities to assert or speak out about community problems, to initiate programs to deal with those problems, and a sense of belonging to the larger society. These improved self perceptions are also characterized by a strong desire to improve deplorable situations not only for oneself but for the entire community. For example, by asserting themselves as a group, and by doing what they considered to be best for themselves and their community, local residents have been able to take on a diverse range of programs which they facilitated themselves. In one of their numerous discussion sessions they came up with the idea of a day care program for children in the neighborhood. This program was conceived in September, 2004, and they are planning to invite the Minister of Family Services to listen to their idea. This is all born out of the assertiveness and self-confidence they have gained over the years from the organization.

The process of community capacity building which is an outcome of increased self-esteem and self-confidence and the acquisition of knowledge and skills, is very important in the revitalization of declining neighborhoods.

Improved Networks of Relationships and Information Sharing

The next theme that focused on the outcomes of active involvement of residents in

the revitalization processes in relation to community capacity building, is improved networks of relationships among residents. Simply stated, networking means people getting together jointly with one another to work on issues and to share resources and information. As discussed in the previous section, a number of benefits have come from networking at the individual level. These have occurred in terms of new social ties, increased cooperation among individuals to address community problems, access to resources, and the building of trusting relationships. Networks may consist of family, friends, acquaintances or people who share a concern. Healthy social relationships provide members with material assistance and services, emotional nurturance and counseling, problem solving, advice, referral, and a forum for collective action and advocacy.

By bringing people together, the centre has enhanced the formation and cultivation of social capital in the community. Putnam (1995, 2000) defines social capital as the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits. Increased social capital has been shown to make a significant contribution to community capacity building. Community members can cooperate to work on community issues if the networks and bonds existing among them are stronger (Ricks, Charlesworth, Bellefeuille, & Field, 1999).

The centre has helped to cultivate two types of social capital identified by Putnam (1993). These are bonding capital and bridging capital. As previously defined, bonding capital brings together people who already know each other. Bridging capital brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other. The study findings

indicate that the organization has helped local residents to meet and establish trusting relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. Through these networks of social relationships both within and outside the neighborhood, the organization has enabled local residents to have access to valuable information, different resources and new opportunities in the wider community. For example, a high proportion of participants of the study were women, some of whom had had issues with substances or abusive relationships. Many of them have now found resources to help deal with these issues.

Well I think, with the women getting involved with each other, they're getting to know other neighbours and plus they are feeling comfortable to offer services like crafts, different stuff that they could teach each other, and let each other know about the different resources and information about issues like child and family rights, landlord and tenant issues, and welfare rights. Most of the women didn't know about these issues, but by coming to the centre and networking with other women, they have been able to learn about all these different issues.

As suggested by (Bullen and Onyx, cited in Chapman & Kirk, 2000), where high levels of social capital exist, people are more likely to:

- Feel they are part of the community
- Feel useful and able to make a real contribution to the community
- Participate in local community networks and organizations
- Come together in times of crisis
- Participate as a group.

It has been established that, social capital, created by coming together to work on issues, may increase the capacity of local residents in declining neighborhoods for effective revitalization.

Overall, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre, has undertaken appropriate measures identified by these authors to help to build social capital in the neighborhood by undertaking activities that develop the essential human capital prerequisites such as self-esteem and communications skills:

- Increasing the material well-being in the community
- Ensuring access for the community through the provision of designated meeting rooms and public spaces, and
- Promoting activities through which people can make interconnections with each other in a safe environment.

These factors can lead to enhanced community capacity for a comprehensive community initiatives.

The organization has used local media to help bring people together to work on community issues. It was stated in the responses by subjects that the work of the local news media in sharing information was of considerable value to the organization. Sharing of information can help to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to participate and understand what is taking place in the neighborhood. During my visits to the site I observed the way the residents and professional staff interacted with each other, non-verbally. The interaction was both friendly and welcoming. One resident stated, "To me, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre is a building for creating friendships. It provides space for women to meet their neighbors and share helpful information with each other". Another lady noted that:

They have helped me find resources and the answers I need. I also enjoy coming here to visit with all the women. They are friendly and they are not judgmental towards anyone. We are all treated like equals. The fax, phone, computers and the laundry are a bonus along with the toy room. I am glad to be part of the centre, but most importantly, I am excited to be on the Women's Council.

Through this relationship building, the community residents have been able to access information from people they had not met previously.

Partnership with other Organizations

Community building organizations cannot solve all the problems of declining communities. They need the collaboration of other organizations as part of a wider system. Moreover, local solutions do not always exist for local problems regardless of the strengths of a community capacity. Some local problems require changes in policies or resource allocations at the provincial or national level. Part of the effort of building and sustaining community capacity is building partnerships between the neighborhood organizations and the broader community. The ability to build partnerships with other organizations is an important aspect of community capacity building (Temkin & Rohe, 1997).

The study found evidence of institutional and network capacity. The North Point Dougals Women's centre has established partnerships with several other groups both within and outside the community. Through these networks, the centre has been able to mobilize resources from both private and governmental institutions. The study found that these networks have provided guidance in program design.

The most frequently mentioned organizations with whom the NPD Women's Centre networks are the Norquay Elementary school which provided the initial meeting place for the local residents and where the idea of a centre was conceived, the community centre for the hosting of activities, the Social Planning Council for their expertise in helping with the initial planning of project activities, Health Canada for providing the initial funding, C.E.D.A, for providing the centre with a community development worker, the North End Renewal Corporation for buying and renovating the current structure that houses the centre, and Neighborhoods Alive! for ongoing financial support.

This partnership is reflected in community residents serving on the boards and committees of other community groups and by representation of other organizations on North Point Douglas Women's Centre board. As noted by a professional staff:

The Board of the Women's Centre is made up of many professional women including a nurse, a lawyer, and a business woman and representatives from other agencies like the Norquay Elementary school, Mount Carmel Clinic, the North End Renewal Corporation, the North End Women's Project, and the Resident Committee. Most of the local residents are also serving on the boards of some of these organizations.

An infrastructure of relations among community organizations can provide individual organizations with greater access to resources and can help to structure relations among them. Producing a steady flow of resources is a test for an organization's capacity.

Lessons Learned

The main objective of this study was to examine the capacity building activities

taking place during the implementation of a community-based organization in North Point Douglas neighborhood. Part of the interest was for possible replication in the writer's own country, Sierra Leone. Although the contexts are completely different, learning how programs are initiated, designed and implemented in a country like Canada, certainly has far reaching potential benefits which may be replicable in a less developed country like Sierra Leone. The following factors are presented as a summary of the lessons that the researcher has learned with respect to the design and implementation of program activities.

One of the greatest lessons the writer has learned from conducting this study is the manner in which the views of community residents were considered important in the design and implementation of programs. This study has shown that community capacity building can only be successful if community residents are fully mobilized and involved in taking decisions that affect their well-being and that of their neighborhoods. This may help to build the collective capacities of the community residents and empower them to take care of their problems individually and collectively.

The community-based organization recognizes the views of the local residents and uses an assets-based approach integral to community development. In many cases, community-based programs have failed to achieve desired outcomes in Sierra Leone because the programs have been imposed on the communities from outside. Moreover, the programs are mostly implemented by 'experts' who have little understanding of the unique problems of local communities. These experts make little attempt to include local

assets or develop them for sustainable program implementation. These programs tend to fail, or they are discontinued with the departure of the experts. Local residents in such situations are seen as 'recipients or beneficiaries' of services. This does not serve to empower them to address their local problems.

The United Nations Development Capacity Building Project, for example, was designed by United Nations Housing Specialists and Consultants in the Habitat Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya, in consultation with a few professionals from Sierra Leone, who were far removed from the local realities. The views of the local residents were not fully represented in the design of the program. The implementation team also included a group of experts who were not fully aware of the local problems. The project therefore, did not succeed in empowering and building the capacity of local residents to address their own problems after the rebel war.

Community-based organizations can be effective only if the different stakeholders including, government, funders, and residents are committed and willing to support the programs. The government, for example, must be willing to create a conducive environment for the organizations to thrive by encouraging and facilitating sustained funding from both local and international funding agencies. Local residents must also be willing to dedicate their time and energy in keeping the organizations active. This dedication can be achieved through encouragement from those implementing the programs. Commitment and dedication of residents must be matched by increased funding from the different stakeholders. However, commitment is what is usually lacking

in Sierra Leone from the government and those implementing the programs. The government on its part, usually fails to follow through with the implementation of programs to determine, through program evaluation and monitoring, if the programs are achieving desired outcomes. On the other hand, commitment from the local residents is usually motivated for personal gains and not for the collective improvement of individuals and communities. This has been responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of many community-based organizations in Sierra Leone.

A final comment, that is related to the above argument but different in some respects is that, to thrive, community-based organizations need a stable political climate. Community-based organizations have been successful in Canada because of the stable political climate which may be seen as an 'enabling environment'. The capacity building project in Sierra Leone was unsuccessful in building capacity at the grassroots level and was also short lived because of the unstable political climate at the time of its implementation.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations were identified in the design of this research project, which need to be mentioned. Since the study focused on only one community-based organization, it became apparent that the method of inquiry is limited to the phenomenon of interest in this single organization and with a single population. These were the residents and professional staff involved in the activities of the women's centre. Therefore, findings

from this single organization and single population would be hard to generalize to a larger population. Including a larger number of residents and professional staff would have provided the opportunity to capture a wider perspective. However, since the emphasis of qualitative research is quality rather than quantity, this issue was addressed by encouraging participants to provide detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated (a single case) until saturation was attained. Thus, the aim of the study was to generate an intensive examination of a single case.

The constructivist paradigm therefore, provided an opportunity to participants to provide their own constructions about the phenomenon. It also provided an opportunity to the researcher to probe further for detailed information as the emerging constructions became clear. Thus, the constructions of a variety of participants were elicited until a wider perspective was captured and some level of consensus reached.

Another major weakness of this study is that all the participants in this inquiry, in general, reported specifically on the positive contributions of the organization in building capacity in the neighborhood. The research project would have taken a different interpretation if some participants had expressed some critical doubts about the role of the organization in the neighborhood.

Concluding Statements

The purpose of this research project was to examine the specific roles of the North Point Douglas Women's Centre in empowering and building capacity of local women to

address their own problems. The constructivist paradigm, characteristic of qualitative research methodology, was used in this research to explore the capacity building activities taking place in the neighborhood.

The research project has provided important information on the role of the organization in empowering and building community capacity. The benefits of the research project emerged from the responses of both sets of participants in the study. The responses highlight the processes undertaken by the organization in empowering and building the capacity of the local women.

The study has shown that community capacity building is a process that enhances the well-being of local residents through personal growth and empowerment to address their own needs. Capacity building strives to upgrade the ability of individuals, organizations, and institutions to enable them to respond adequately in taking good decisions in an effective way.

The North Point Douglas Women's Centre was assessed to have empowered local women to seek resolutions to their own problems and those of their neighborhood. The data reveal that local residents were provided with the necessary support by the Women's Centre through the mobilization of domestic resources, access to information, a safe and comfortable meeting place, and encouragement to attend brainstorming sessions and workshops.

The organization has also demonstrated commitment and responsiveness to the needs of the local women by involving them in program design for empowerment and

personal growth. Through this, the residents have acquired the skills and abilities to work in collaboration with professionals, both staff and volunteers, to find resolutions to their problems and those of their neighborhood. Some of the skills learned, as reported by residents include communication, computer, leadership and organizational skills.

The study findings also show that the centre utilized the strengths-based perspective identified by Kretzman & McKnight (1993) in empowering and building the capacity of local residents. As discussed earlier, the strengths-based perspective recognizes the strengths, capabilities, resources, and gifts of the local residents in addressing community problems.

To design programs to effectively tackle community problems, community-based organizations need to tap into the existing local resources and build on the existing community strengths. This is based on the argument that the people most affected by a problem must be part of the solution to those problems. Programs that are imposed on the community from the top tend not solve community problems. Comprehensive strategies should begin not merely with a neighborhood's needs but an inventory of assets.

Strategies must involve residents and other local stakeholders in setting goals and priorities and shaping plans to address them. The answers to a community's problem must be generated by that community and that any meaningful strategy for neighborhood revitalization must be comprehensive in nature and integrated in its implementation.

The study has shown that the driving force for effective capacity building must

come from the local residents. This process must be encouraged and supported by funding agencies and professionals working with the community groups. Therefore, community-based programs must not focus exclusively on the needs of the communities. Focusing on the needs of residents and their communities can be stigmatizing and discouraging in the empowerment process.

The community assets were identified and mobilized in the ongoing revitalization process for the empowerment of the women. The organization perceives the local residents as active change agents rather than passive beneficiaries or clients. Thus, in order for neighborhood revitalization to be successful for effective community capacity building and empowerment of local residents, community ownership and design of programs must be encouraged. The North Point Douglas Women's Centre encourages ownership and design of programs by the women to address their problems. The data suggests a need for involvement of local residents based on a participatory approach for collective community capacity building.

The organization also recognizes the importance of partnerships with other community groups. The study has shown that the centre has developed useful partnerships with several community groups in the wider community. These partnerships offer the most promising and viable route toward comprehensive community initiatives.

There is also a need to build networks of relationships between and among local residents for the cultivation of social capital. The study findings reveal that the organization used local media to build the networks of social relationships among

community residents and the wider community. This has ensured a steady flow of information and resources to address community problems. By coming together and forming networks, the local residents have been able to overcome some of the numerous challenges facing the community. Thus, acting as a group, is a strategy that empowers the residents to take collective actions that can lead to effective decision making for the good of their community and in the process build individual capacities.

Therefore, neighborhoods that lack internal resources or connections to broad social networks necessary for improvement can turn to community building organizations not only for traditional assistance to meet short-term needs, but also for services and support that build the capacity of residents to participate effectively in decisions that affect their lives.

The author believes that the objectives of this project have been achieved. The research questions raised in the study have also been adequately addressed. This is indicated by the study findings in chapters 4 and 5. For example, it has been shown that local residents played a major role in the design and implementation of the programs. Some of their specific roles include dreaming about a centre, mobilizing other community women to attend meetings, seeking funding, and outreach activities. The factors that were found to be preventing people from participating in decision making include poverty, illiteracy, and the presence of a lot of single parents and elderly people. The factors that make residents participation possible in the neighborhood include a respectful, nurturing and caring environment, availability of resources, providing support

and assistance that enables residents to identify and deal with problems affecting them and their community, respect for local input in the decision making process, and the ownership of issues. The implementation process was therefore found to be leading to community capacity because of local control and ownership of issues, encouraging residents's participation in the decision-making process to identify and determine long solutions and priorities.

Since community members are most likely to act in the best interest of their neighborhoods, it becomes necessary to ensure that programs are carefully implemented so that they strengthen existing community capacity. The data reveal that community residents need the support and encouragement of professionals implementing community-based programs to become increasingly involved in the design, planning and implementation of programs. Community-based organizations must therefore support a decision making process that is inclusive and participatory rather than exclusive and discriminatory.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Future Research

This study has raised a number of issues that can be addressed in further research. As previously noted, community capacity building is a broad and complex concept in nature with little clarity at the neighborhood level. More research needs to be undertaken to focus attention on the processes that bring it about in practice particularly at the community level.

Another factor that needs to be addressed includes the factors that are preventing people from participating in the life of their community and how that can be addressed before a problem arises.

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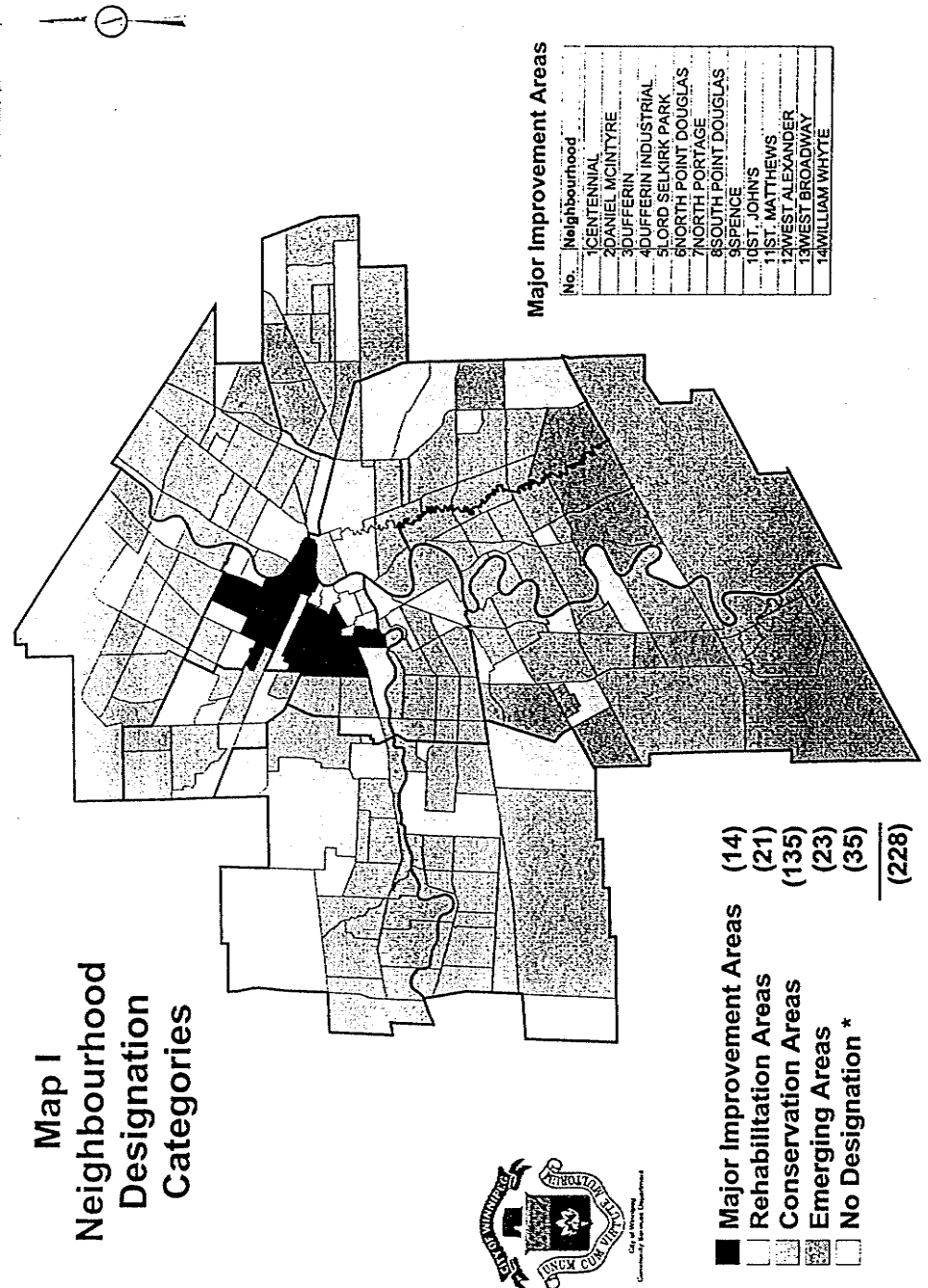
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Appendix A: Neighborhood Map



* Neighbourhoods which had 2 or less residential dwellings.

Appendix B: Interview Guide
Interview Guide for Professional Staff

Interview Guide for Professional Staff

Lessons learned in implementing a community-based program for the revitalization of North Point Douglas neighborhood in Winnipeg North End.

1. Background
 - 1.1 Type of project/organization (Project objectives, structure)
 - a. How long has the project been in operation?
 - b. What are the objectives of the project?
 - c. Who are the key players in initiating the project? (Discuss some of their specific roles in project implementation).
2. Resources
 - a. What resources has the community been able to attract since the implementation of project activities?
 - b. Who funds the project?
 - c. What is the duration of the project?
 - d. Are there any professionals providing services on a volunteer basis in the organization?
 - e. How are they involved?
3. Networking with other organizations
 - a. With what other organizations or community groups/institutions does the project have a working relationship in North Point Douglas? Outside North Point Douglas? Describe the relationship?
 - b. How have these relationships developed over time?
4. Type of social structure-Level of residents involved and networking
 - a. How has the community organization helped local residents in the neighborhood become more connected to each other?
 - b. Compared to few years ago, how involved are residents in setting direction in the neighborhood?
5. Governance
 - a. How is the project managed? Describe structures.
 - b. How are people involved chosen? (Describe the process).
 - c. How many are from North Point Douglas?
6. Skills development
 - a. How is the organization helping residents in developing and sharing their talents, skills and abilities?
 - b. What noticeable changes in skill levels and self-confidence have you observed in residents since their involvement in project activities? Can you give some examples?
 - c. Do you think residents acquired these skills because of their involvement in project activities?
 - d. How did they acquire these skills?

- e. Do they need any special skills to be involved in project implementation? If yes, what kind of skills do they need?

Interview Guide for Local Residents

1. In what ways are involved in project activities? How long?
2. Has your involvement changed over time?
3. Have you acquired any particular skills in working with this organization?
4. Have you been able to use any of these skills to effect change in your neighborhood? Help other residents? Please discuss.
5. Are there other types of process(s) or activity (s) that contributed to your skills?
6. Have you noticed any particular skills that other local residents have acquired in project activities?
7. Has your organization developed or increased its capacity to work on as a group on issues? If so, please discuss.
8. Does the project have a working relationship with other organizations or community groups in North Point Douglas? Outside North Point Douglas? If so, please discuss the relationship?
9. Has the community organization helped local residents in your neighborhood become more connected to each other? If so, in what ways?
10. Do residents set direction in the neighborhood? (Do they work with the community groups in identifying issues, priorities and solutions?). Yes or No? If yes, please discuss.
11. Compared to few years ago, how involved are you in setting direction in the neighborhood?
12. Has the program been able to be effective in its work? If so, in what ways?
13. Is there any information you would like to share with the researcher regarding capacity building?

Appendix C: INFORMED CONSENT



UNIVERSITY
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Neighborhood Revitalization as a Strategy for
Community Capacity Building

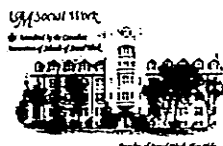
Consent form

Researcher: Issa Samba Kamara
Faculty of Social Work
University of Manitoba

Telephone Number: 947-1164

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. I am currently studying towards a Masters Degree in Social Work at the University of Manitoba. The final step in qualifying for this degree is to complete a research project. The project I have chosen is to study "Neighborhood Revitalization as a Strategy for Community Capacity Building: Lessons Learned through organizations in North Point Douglas neighborhood". The focus of the study will be to gather and analyze information on capacity building activities that take place at the grassroots level during the revitalization process.
2. Your participation is requested in an individual, in-depth interview schedule that will include a series of questions that deal with specific issues on community capacity building. These interview sessions should take approximately about an hour and a half of your time.
3. I do not anticipate any risks to you in participating in this study.



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4. With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded to accurately record the conversations.
5. The information that you will share with me will be completely anonymous. Your name will not appear in any part of the report. Participants will be referred to in this study as "Family 1", Family 2", etc. I am the only one and possibly my thesis Advisor that will have access to the tapes and the transcripts of the interviews. The tapes and the transcripts will be destroyed once the final report is written.
6. If you would like to obtain a summary report of the study, please include your mailing address on the included form.
7. I appreciate your time in participating in this study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agrees to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights to release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time, and /or refrain from answering questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Thesis Supervisor: Lawrence Deane

Telephone Number:

Researcher: Issa Samba Kamara
Faculty of Social Work
University of Manitoba

Telephone Number: 947-1164

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this research project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature

Date