“It’s not just for food”: Women’s Perceptions of Community Gardens as Places of Health, Wellbeing and Community Organizing.

by Karen Lind

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

The increasing popularity of community gardens in North America is a result of their ability to simultaneously address the social, emotional, economic, physical and spiritual wellbeing and health of both individuals and communities (Wakefield et al., 2007; Williams, 1998). While much of the community garden literature recognizes women's equal, and often prevalent participation, there has been very little exploration into their community garden experiences. That community gardens, particularly in the inner city context, are threatened by development makes understanding what community gardens bring to the lives of women gardeners, and what women gardeners bring to their community gardens and larger communities, important areas to investigate in order to better understand how the women and the communities of which they are a part of be affected by the potential loss of their gardens. The research presented in this thesis addresses this gap by exploring suburban and urban women's community garden experiences in Winnipeg, Manitoba, using semi-structured interviews with 12 urban and 12 suburban gardeners. These are supplemented by subsequent interviews with nine of the urban gardeners, three urban garden facilitators and a municipal counselor. The results highlight that issues around wellbeing and health provide a link between urban and suburban gardeners, who otherwise function independently from one another. In addition, the role wellbeing may play in facilitating a more unified and effective community garden network strongly emerged in the research. Furthermore, the results suggest that inner city community gardens represent a women-centered model of community organizing that is used to address community concerns and protect their

gardens, and by extension their neighbourhoods.

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CHAPTER 1

STUDY RATIONALE

My desire to study community gardening as a Master's project came from attending the food security conference "*Our Food, Our Health, Our Future – Making Manitoba Food Secure*" in the early Spring of 2003, the final year of my undergraduate degree. There, I was introduced to the potential of urban agriculture, particularly community gardens, to increase local food security by transforming the passive consumer into an active producer, and by providing an environmentally sustainable alternative food system capable of supplying nutritious and affordable food. I clearly remember walking away from that conference thinking I wanted my graduate research to support urban agriculture in the form of community gardens in my home city of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Shortly thereafter I began examining Winnipeg's community gardens in an attempt to better understand how Winnipeg compared with other Canadian cities in terms of community garden activity and support. I soon realized how difficult it was to access any information on existing gardens. This lack of regional community garden information limited awareness on the part of policy makers and the general public, and restricted the visibility of these valuable public spaces. I was surprised when I counted over 35 community gardens scattered throughout the city, as I had assumed this lack of information reflected a lack of activity. I also discovered some University of Winnipeg students had tried to establish a community garden network back in 1997 for the purpose of strengthening and promoting community gardening initiatives, but its short-lived existence did little to mitigate the isolation of existing community gardens.

One of the primary barriers for community gardens across North America is land security (Hynes, 1996), something that was perpetuated in Winnipeg, especially the inner city, because of the absence of any organized community garden lobby group or municipal policy that supported (or even recognized) community gardening. Whereas other Canadian cities, such as Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Montreal, Ottawa, Kitchener/Waterloo and Edmonton have adopted community garden action plans, models or policies to support established and future community gardens, at the outset of this research a Winnipeg community garden policy seemed very unlikely. I thus felt my project should contribute to increasing the visibility of and public awareness about these gardens and gardeners. It was my belief that by highlighting community gardens as more than just a low cost form of greening, and focusing on their potential to increase food security and encourage community participation, that both the municipal and provincial government would be more likely to lend their support.

I chose to specifically focus on women community gardeners for a number of reasons. Women show a high level of participation in Winnipeg's community gardens, particularly in the inner city; but, unlike the literature in developing countries (Hovorka, 2001), the North American community garden literature has not yet included a gendered perspective. Women show a higher susceptibility to food insecurity (Che and Chen, 2001) while still being largely responsible for household food provision (DeVault, 1994). Although I soon realized community gardens were not regarded as a food security initiative by many of the women I interviewed, but instead as a place contributing to their health and wellbeing, I chose to continue with a women focused study because of their lack of voice in community garden research. Furthermore, community gardens have been

identified as a gateway for community participation and revitalization (Hynes, 1996), yet no literature had focused on the role of women gardeners in community organizing and social change. I chose to include both suburban and urban women's perspectives to contrast the values and experiences of these very different kinds of community gardens and to identify possible linkages between the suburban and urban gardeners for the purpose of a new community garden network in Winnipeg.

Thesis Organization

The overall goal of this research was to address women's missing voices in the North American community garden literature. The following Chapter 2 comprises a literature review focusing on community gardens and their relationship with women's health and wellbeing and women's community organizing. In Chapter 3 I describe the methodology of my research including how it evolved from my initial food security focus to include a more comprehensive health and wellbeing focus and a specific look into the inner city women's experience, particularly with respect to their community gardening and/as community revitalization. Ultimately, the evolution of my research came directly from the gardeners, including the formal interviews; the casual garden side conversations; the events I attended and sometimes helped organize; my participation in the establishment and maintenance of a Winnipeg Community Garden Network; the making of a community garden public awareness video; and eventually my own experience in a community garden. The following section outlines the two main objectives of my research that arose from all of these experiences.

Chapter 4 presents the results of my overall objective to characterize and contrast suburban and urban women's community gardening experiences. More specifically, I assess:

- To what degree community gardens affected women gardeners sense of wellbeing and health and how this varied according to socioeconomic background; and
- The potential of wellbeing and health to link urban and suburban gardeners who otherwise function independently from one another, and how this may play a role in facilitating a more unified and effective community garden network.

Chapter 5 presents the focus on gardening in the inner city, particularly on neighbourhood revitalization, and explores community gardening as a women-centered form of community organizing. More specifically, I discuss:

- How these women view their community gardening as community organizing, and assess to what degree the gardens represent an opportunity for women to address broader community issues they identify as important; and
- The implications of community gardening for community development and community organizing as a whole.

The concluding Chapter 6 summarizes the research outcomes, the community located implications, as well as my own development throughout this project. This

experience is ultimately coming back to where I started as I prepare to present my research at another food security conference hosted by the Manitoba Food Charter in Winnipeg, March 2008 entitled *"Growing Local, Getting Vocal: Cultivating a Food Secure Future for Manitobans"*. And while this conference enables me to communicate how these gardeners perceive their community gardens to contribute to their idea of food security, it also allows me to highlight how they are creating change at both the personal and community level.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining a Community Garden

According to the American Community Garden Association, a community garden is simply "any piece of land gardened by a group of people (ACGA, 2006)". This deliberately broad definition embraces a diverse array of gardens, including variety in where they are located, how they are operated, and what purpose[s] they serve. Whether they are located in the suburbs or inner-city, community gardens are most often situated on underused or development-inappropriate land and are either subdivided into individual plots or communally maintained (de Zeeuw, 2004). The community of gardeners can be neighbourhood-based, or organized through churches, daycares, schools, horticulture clubs, or other organizations. The cultivation of fruits, vegetables and/or flowers through community gardening may be for personal and household consumption, as well as for sale to the public. Beyond producing food and flowers, community gardening plays a significant role in the greening of the urban landscape (Malakoff, 1995). In North American cities community gardening has been growing in popularity since the 1970's (Lawson, 2004), however, the historical roots of community gardening can be traced back to the 19th century.

Community Garden History

The growth of North American community gardens descended from the European

allotment garden movement that spread throughout much of Northern Europe during the early to middle 1800's (Bellows, 2004). The allotment garden movement was primarily motivated by industrialization and the mass rural emigration into growing urban centres. Factory owners would often rent out tracks of land to their employees for the benefit of their physical and mental health, as many of the rural migrants were accustomed to the self-sufficiency and practice of cultivating the land (Zimbler, 2001). The living conditions of these early industrializing cities were often described as filthy and dismal, and allotment gardens were seen as a sort of sanctuary for workers, women and children (Bellows, 2004; Zimbler, 2001). These early community gardens were said to benefit the urban women and children by providing a green space in an otherwise unpleasant environment; however, men primarily managed them, as the work offered a retreat from wives and children (Alleyne, 2006). Although Europe's post-industrial cities have come a long way from their grim industrial pasts, the practice of allotment gardening continues to this day.

Similarly, in North America the development of community gardening is associated with urban growth. Gardens, not just community gardens, have played an important role in Canada's urban development. The early Canadian Railway Gardens starting in the 1890's were meant to create an attractive and welcoming impression for new settlers, and although the railway station manager and employees maintained these gardens, they have been considered community gardens because they provided a focal point for the town and helped build community pride (von Baeyer, 1984). Other waves of urban gardening in Canada can be found in the Moral garden movement of the early 20th century, based on the idea that gardens "became a metaphor for civic duty and

responsibility, civilizing raw towns and cities, especially in the newly developing West, Canadianizing new immigrants, providing wholesome exercise for the lower classes, keeping children in school, keeping rural families on the farm, beautifying our cities and towns, as well as providing economic stability" (von Baeyer, 2003: 57). Gardening was also included in education curriculum across Canada starting in the early 1900's for the purpose of teaching agriculture, connecting children to the land and creating moral students (Martin, 1998), but by the 1920's gardening was largely phased out of the curriculum in favor of more traditional academic studies (Quayle, 1989). The vacant lot garden movement started in 1910 and reflected a desire to beautify the urban landscape. Groups of volunteers primarily tended these vacant lot gardens, and often encouraged the poor or unemployed citizens to participate so as to avoid moral corruption (von Baeyer, 1984).

In both Canada and the United States, community gardens mushroomed in response to times of economic depression or war (Cosgrove, 1998). The first state sponsored community gardens in the United States are traced back to the 1890's during a depression era when they were introduced as a means to give disenfranchised urbanites an opportunity to grow food for consumption and sale (Lawson, 2004). Although initially intended for men and widows, wives and children were soon introduced to the gardens so as to contribute to the household income during this depression period (Lawson, 2004). The two World Wars brought a new meaning to the community or "Victory" gardens, which were promoted as part of the national war effort in Europe, Canada and the United States. During these war years, community gardens received great official support "because they reduced costs in time, labor, and equipment; provided

a centralized place for training; and promoted healthy rivalry between gardeners" (Lawson, 2004: 159). And with the men off fighting, women were the champions of victory gardens (Millar, 2003), connecting the domestic skills they possessed with supporting the war effort. Thereafter, the popularity of urban community gardens declined with the new found prosperity of the 1950's and the associated suburban migration.

Post World War II: Community Garden and Inner City Decline

Government support for community gardening in both the United States and Canada was practically eliminated with the end of World War II, as the gardens were no longer regarded as part of the war effort (Lawson, 2004). The post-WWII era is not only associated with a decline in community gardening, but also a decline of North America's inner cities. The suburban growth that accompanied the booming economy and consumer culture of the 1950s and 1960s (Bunting and Filion, 1988) not only meant the exodus of the middle class from the city centre, but it also placed greater pressure on city budgets, which had to provide new services and amenities to suburban residents (Leo, Shaw, Gibbons, & Goff, 1998). As more people were drawn out to the refuge of the suburbs, less money was available to invest in the inner city neighbourhoods, creating poor social and economic inner city conditions.

Who moves out and who stays in the inner city neighbourhoods often becomes racially segregated, where studies in some American inner city neighbourhoods indicate a higher proportion of black or Hispanic people living in poverty residing in the inner city, while white people living in poverty tend to be scattered throughout working-class or

middle-class neighbourhoods (Rusk, 2006). This racial discrepancy has resulted in what Massey and Eggers (1990) have termed the "ecology of inequality". Fong and Shubuya (2000) found a similar concentration of low-income minority, new immigrant and Aboriginal people living in poverty and residing in Canadian inner cities. As inner city neighbourhoods become largely low-income they have what Rusk (2006) describes as a push-pull factor, where high crime rates, poor schools, and low property values push out middle class people. They are then pulled towards the safer neighbourhoods, better schools, and higher property values of the suburbs, perpetuating suburban growth.

The combined impacts of suburban growth and inner city decline are reflected in decreasing employment opportunities in the inner core, as businesses move out to suburban industrial or office parks, leaving inner city residents with fewer opportunities for employment (Blackwell and Fox, 2006). Infrastructure, including housing, healthcare facilities and grocery stores also deteriorate, affecting residents' health and self-esteem, and public facilities such as parks and community centres are often closed or abandoned, leaving few opportunities for recreation and socialization (Leo, et al., 1998). The economic and physical impacts of concentrated poverty have social implications, ranging from gang activity, to substance abuse, crime, lack of agency, decreased social capital, and disempowerment (Gee and Payne-Sturges, 2004; Ross et al, 2002). Together these social, economic, and environmental factors combine with personal behaviors to affect the health of individuals and populations, and are now understood as the determinants of health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004).

Determinants of Health

Health is no longer regarded as a state; rather it has been defined as the "capacity of people to adapt to, respond to, or control life's challenges and changes" (Frankish, Green, Ratner, Charmik, and Larson, 1996). The determinants of health evolved from an understanding that people's health is influenced by an interrelated set of factors, and are listed as: income and social status, social support networks, education, employment/working conditions, social environments, physical environments, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, health services, gender, and culture (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004). The following section will use gender, particularly focusing on women, to illustrate some of the interconnections between these determinants of health.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada (2004), gender "refers to the array of society-determined roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis." The social construction of gender impacts both men's and women's health by affecting their ability to cope with life's challenges and changes, however gender inequality has been argued to have a greater impact on women's health (Janzen, 1998).

Gender, Income and Health

One of the most significant consequences of gender inequality lies in the higher rate of poverty for women across the globe. In Canada, one in seven women live in poverty (FAFIA, cited in Morris, 2005). Women who are Aboriginal, visible minorities,

heads of a single parent households, elderly and living alone, and/or with disabilities are over-represented in the category of poverty (Morris, 2005). Structural problems contributing to women's poverty relate to lower incomes and absence of income when it comes to domestic and caregiving work (CRIAW, 2005). Traditionally associated with the private sphere, women often engage in unpaid domestic work and care-giving responsibilities to children, spouse, parents, extended family and community (Dominelli, 2006). Because women still predominantly take on domestic responsibilities, their ability to work fulltime is negatively affected, which has long-term implications for pension benefits and retirement plans. Furthermore, the professions where women are primarily employed, including teaching, nursing, and clerical work, are generally undervalued and lower paying than those dominated by men (Dominelli, 2006).

Poverty affects women in a multitude of ways, including personal health and the health of children in their care, but the impacts of poverty on women have received relatively little attention in the academic literature (Savarese, 2003). Beaudry and Reinhart (2001) present the impacts of poverty as all encompassing, stating that "if we are to define poverty as more than simply the lack of income, but a systematic deprivation of healthy human development as part of the human community, then poverty can be an extension of all the life experiences [of abuse, school dropouts, substance abuse and victimizations.] As well, women who have endured these histories have accepted (not willingly) the transfer of their own decision-making to the state ..." (as cited in Savarese, 2003:2). Although income is one of the most obvious determinants of health, the relationship between women's income and health is not guaranteed to have a positive

reciprocal effect and can depend on the type of employment, such as full time or part-time, the area of employment, as well as other roles in a woman's life (Janzen, 1998). Ultimately, however, income directly affects women and their children's health through access to quality housing, food security and social support (Donner, 2002).

Women and Housing

Housing is one of the basic necessities for healthy living, and fits within the physical environment determinant of health. For low-income women or those on social assistance, however, finding safe and affordable housing in most cities is very difficult (Rude and Thompson, 2001). Very often, the type of shelter low-income women can afford is substandard in terms of its condition and location. Women's caregiving responsibilities affect where they can rent because proximity to certain amenities such as schools and hospitals is often factored in, as is access to public transit (WHAG, 2003). Furthermore, low-income women have to spend a disproportionate amount of their budget on accommodations, leaving little money to secure other needs such as food and clothing (Callaghan, Farha, and Porter, 2002). The transience that stems from trying to find safe, affordable housing affects both women and their dependents, particularly children who often have to change schools or do not have any quiet place to do their homework (MacKinnon, 2007). And the fear of losing their children because of substandard living conditions only adds to stress levels for many low-income women (Hurtig, 1999). The lack of safe, affordable housing available to women further undermines their health if it forces them to stay in abusive situations because they cannot afford to escape and live on their own (WHAG, 2003).

Women and Food Security

Food, like housing, is another necessity for good health that is affected by income. The concept of food security is based on the five "A's": availability, accessibility, adequacy, acceptability and agency (Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2007), and defined as "a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2002). In a country like Canada, where food is ostensibly abundant, poverty is the primary reason for people's food insecurity. Food insecurity affects a person's physical, mental and social wellbeing, and contributes to socioeconomic disparities (Hamelin, Habicht, & Beaudry, 1999). The response to Canada's food security problem has been an increasing dependence on food banks and other forms of emergency relief, and less attention has been paid to addressing the underlying issues of poverty and livable wages. In 2006, approximately 753,458 people across Canada depended on a food bank (CAFB, 2006). Although no gender analysis was conducted, the majority of users were lone parents, and according to the most recent Canadian census data 80% of lone-parent families are headed by females (Statistics Canada, 2006). In Manitoba, 46 % of food bank users are children, the highest rate amongst Canadian provinces and territories (CAFB, 2006). Women's higher rate of food insecurity is also related to their mothering role as studies have found women will restrict their personal food intake as a means of providing more for their children (Tarasuk and Maclean, 1990).

Women and Social Support Networks

Relationships between income and access to safe affordable housing and food security and their impacts on women's health may seem rather obvious, but poverty affects more than women's ability to meet basic needs. Social isolation, or exclusion, is an often too familiar outcome of poverty, preventing people from participating in the social, economic, political and cultural life of their communities (Duffy, 1995). Social isolation can limit a woman's support network, which may compromise her ability to deal with stressful situations, be it acute, chronic or the day-to-day, (Grzywacz, Almeida, Neupert & Ettner, 2004). Reid and Ponic (2004) have identified social isolation to be a function of material, institutional, and cultural exclusion that ultimately leads to feelings of powerlessness, low self-esteem, stress, and depression. Thus, poverty affects women's ability to meet basic shelter, food, social and emotional needs, often combining to further undermine women's health and wellbeing.

Although poverty is undoubtedly one of the greatest barriers to women's health, that does not imply women who are not low-income do not experience ill-health. One barrier to health that appears to transcend socioeconomic boundaries is stress (Grzywacz et al., 2004). Women's double burden of paid and unpaid (read: domestic and caregiving) work contributes to heightened stress, leaving many women feeling burnt out, exhausted, and overwhelmed, which slowly takes its toll on their health. Although women of higher socioeconomic status often have more access to resources that help to cope with stress, and may not deal with as severe stressors as women of lower-incomes

(Grzywacz et al., 2004), it is becoming an increasing health concern regardless of socioeconomic status.

Women and Social Environments

Up until this point I have used some of the determinants of health to illustrate how they can work together to compromise women's health, however, the determinants of health also work to enhance health. For example, social environments are included as a determinant of health based on the premise that a supportive or cohesive community can enhance people's ability to cope with changes (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004). Interestingly, it is women who have traditionally been given, or taken on, the responsibility of building and maintaining the social environments of communities. Women's roles as community builders and organizers have contributed to their personal, family and community health (Pardo, 1995), and likewise, threats to the health of their family or community have frequently transformed women's social networks into political forces. For example, Pardo (1990) described how the Mexican American women of East Los Angeles used their social networks to create an organized group to fight against the development of a state prison and toxic waste incinerator in their neighbourhood. Yet women's community role has traditionally been regarded as apolitical and thus largely ignored (Ackelsberg, 1988).

The apolitical stereotype of women's community work can be explained through the association of women and men with the private and public spheres, as well as the conventional measures of what determines someone or some action as political. Very often "political action and political groups are implicitly or explicitly measured in terms of the relative radicalness..." (Milroy and Wismer, 1994: 74), and therefore, if women's

community work is not deemed radical it does not get recognized as political. The following section further looks at how women's association with the private sphere, and men's association with the public sphere has affected women's political voice.

Private and Public Spheres

Private and public spheres are not a function of biological determinism; rather, they are socially constructed and based on cultural norms that conceptualize women as inferior to men (Dominelli, 2006). Boulding (1976) identified how the construction of these two spheres, and corresponding responsibilities associated with them, has been strongly influenced by the process of urbanization. The resulting loss of the village common spaces has segregated women into the private household space, alienating them from the political public sphere and taking away their ability to contribute and participate. This separation left men with the role of representing their communities, which we can see today in terms of the substantially higher rate of male-elected officials at all levels of government in Canada (Cool, 2006). Aside from formal elected representation, the spokespersons for many community-based groups are generally male, even if much of the invisible organizing and initial mobilizing is performed by women (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). Much of women's community work, such as network building, creates social capital, which "enhances individuals' capacity to join together in collective action to solve common problems" (Lowndes, 2000:533), but is often considered apolitical, undervalued and even co-opted for the benefit of advancing men's political activity/work (Lowndes, 2000). Furthermore, that women continue to take on much of the family and community care giving work compromises the time they have to participate in the public sphere, which has been further affected through government policies offloading care

responsibilities onto the community (Abrahams, 1996, Dominelli, 2006). Women are thus primarily responsible for producing and maintaining the community, yet are rarely recognized for this work (Hilfinger Messias, Im, Page, Regev, Spiers, Yoder, Meleis, 1997).

The private/public dichotomy has been criticized by a number of feminists who argue it falsely separates the two spheres, when they are in fact interrelated (Bookman and Morgen, 1988). The inability to understand these spheres as interdependent only perpetuates the dichotomy, and negates women's public sphere influence and men's private sphere influence. Pateman (1983) instead proposes that women's subordination is tied to sex, not spheres, and argues that people are theoretically equal as individuals, but that women are subordinate in practice because of patriarchy. A further criticism to the private/public divide is rooted in the implied homogeneity of the spheres, which diminishes the diversity of women's experiences and realities in that women are also defined and oppressed by race, class, sexuality, and age (Arneil, 2001). Regardless of whether we choose to frame women's relative inequality within the public/private dichotomy or not, women's inequality greatly affects their community experience, at once contributing to their oppression and motivating them to take action.

Women's Political Community Work

There are conflicting messages around women's community work; women are supposed to care about issues that affect their family and community, but women are not supposed to challenge the social institutions that engender these concerns (Blackstone, 2004). Regardless of these social expectations, women have long played an important

activist role, both in their neighbourhoods and at their workplaces, at once challenging their submissive stereotype (Ackelsberg,1988) and bringing them rights that would otherwise not be given. Aside from the suffrage and pro-choice campaigns, much of the North American literature has glossed over women's roles in political movements, particularly at the community level. Abramovitz (2001) traced American working-class and low-income women's activism back to the turn of the twentieth century, identifying numerous (and influential) examples of women directed activism at the workplace, in the community and at the state level. Although middle-class women were kept out of the formal political arena, they have used their voluntary associations to create urban reforms since the 1830's (Gittell and Schtob, 1980). Indeed, Sapiro (1989, cited in Milroy and Wismer, 1994) argues that it is precisely because most women's activism did not fall under the guise of the political, that they were able to create such an effective political force.

Sapiro touches on one of the key problems associated with women's community work, the fact that much of it is not considered political. Women do the social reproduction work that is necessary to create and sustain community, different from that of the political/public sphere (Staeheli, 2003). The pre-political work of community organizing, a necessary process for any political movement to occur, is commonly taken on by women (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). This behind-the-scenes work of community organizing affects the public's perception of community mobilizers and activists because men, whose success is predicated on women's invisible organizing work, largely take on these roles.

The greater amount of care work that women continue to shoulder, on one hand

may prevent women from participating in community organizations or political campaigns and on another hand is a source for women's civic engagement (Herd and Meyer, 2002). Women's community organizing often transpires around issues that reflect their gendered areas of concern, such as childcare (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). Women's mothering roles and caregiving work has been shown to influence their community work, (Culley and Angelique, 2003; Pardo, 1990), indicating the interrelationships between women's political activism, mothering and community work, particularly in the case of Black and Latino women (Naples 1992). The idea of "activist mothering" expands the definition of mothering to include the actions that women take on to address the needs of their families and their neighbours families (Naples, 1992). In Pardo's study focusing on Mexican-American women activists protesting the establishment of a state prison and toxic waste incinerator in their neighbourhood, she notes that "the women's activism arises out of seemingly 'traditional' networks and resources based on family and culture into political assets to defend the quality of urban life (Pardo, 1990: 1)". Again, however, gender-based identities are not the only influence on women's community work, as race/ethnicity, class, ability, sexuality and age often combine with gender to influence women's community work (Abrahams, 1995; Dominelli, 2006; Naples, 1991; Rodrigues, 1998).

Women's community organizing often challenges the separation between private and public spheres (Stall and Stoecker, 1998), and represents a third and separate sphere encompassing both the private and public (Milroy and Wismer, 1994). The tireless hours and often under-appreciated work that women have put into their communities to improve their lives, and those of their families and other community members have

addressed a wide range of issues affecting their personal, family and community health, ranging from domestic violence, rape, childcare, welfare benefits, healthcare, education, housing, environmental degradation (Stall and Stoeker, 1998) and many, many more.

Community Gardens, Another Example of Women's Community Work

Another initiative women are investing much of their time and energy towards is the development and maintenance of community gardens (Hynes, 1996). Although the number of community gardens in North American cities decreased after the end of WWII, they have been growing in popularity since the 1970'S, but largely as a grassroots movement (Kahn, 1982). Community gardens began to make a resurgence as a social, environmental and economic response to declines in low-income neighbourhoods, and have since continued to grow. Community gardens are increasingly established to deal with the mounting number of vacant lots, lack of safe green space and decreased sense of pride in these impoverished communities. Hynes and Howe (2004:172) state that "At its core, the community garden movement of the early twenty first century is about rebuilding a spirit of local community tied to a place and restoring nature and food growing in the inner city." The need for parks and green spaces, like community gardens, particularly in lower-economic neighbourhoods is now being framed as an environmental justice issue as research increasingly indicates that green space has both direct and indirect impacts on personal and community health (Frumkin, 2005). That community gardens are improving the health of the women gardeners, their families and communities reflects the caregiving responsibility women have traditionally taken on through their community and political work. The following section highlights the literature relating to

both green space and health, as well as community gardens and health, so as to better understand the similarity between the issues community gardens address and the issues often addressed through women's community and political work.

Green Space and Health

Green space has long been recognized as a positive feature in the urban environment, dating back to the beginning of urbanization. Parks were meant to address the unhealthy and grisly reality of early urban life, specifically for the sake of the poor and the safety of the wealthy classes, whereby civilizing the urban poor through exposure to nature and proper social etiquette would lessen the chance of riots (Taylor, 1995). Much of the current research focuses on the relationship between urban green space and health, at both a personal and community level (de Vries et al., 2003). Kuo (2001) suggests that one of the major problems facing many inner city neighbourhoods is a lack of green space, preventing people from having a place where they can relax mentally, which, in turn, leads to mental fatigue and ultimately poor coping behaviors and outcomes. Other studies looking at inner city children indicate that green space, particularly diverse green space which includes various plants, trees, their associated invertebrates and vertebrates, and other landscape features (as opposed to an open area of grass), supports children's healthy development through creative play, thereby for example helping children with ADD function better and decreasing the severity of their symptoms (Taylor, Wiley, Kuo &Sullivan, 1998, 2001). The presence of green space also appears to reduce crime levels (McPherson, 1995), including domestic violence (Kuo and Sullivan, 1995), and increases neighbourhood ties (Kuo, Sullivan, Coley & Brunson,

1998). Unfortunately, urban green space is all too often seen as a luxury, as opposed to a necessary component of healthy urban communities, which means green space is very rarely seen as a priority for communities in the inner city that face a multitude of challenges.

Community Gardens and Health

Community gardens maintain many of the health benefits associated with green space, while simultaneously addressing the issue of too little green space in many urban neighbourhoods. The grassroots nature of the latest community garden movement has allowed communities to create and manage their own green space, instead of depending on rare government surpluses to support such development. Today, community gardens are a popular and widespread community-enhancing tool, as they enable citizens to make positive changes to their physical environments, and their social environments by building social capital (Glover, 2004). Hancock (1999: 276) describes this as the 'glue' that binds communities together. The simple process of cleaning up an abandoned piece of property by planting flowers and vegetables affects the physical environment and represents a form of grassroots activism whereby neighbours take control and address some of the issues facing their communities, and in turn, identify and mobilize around other issues confronting their communities (Linn, 1999). Involvement in community organizations, much like a community garden, has been a key method for improving the physical, social and economic environment of communities (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990).

While the issue of food security is ultimately connected to income, community

gardens are widely identified as a form of urban agriculture that creates an opportunity for people to address food security (Brown and Carter, 2003; Warman, 1999). Community gardening has been shown to decrease people's food budget, while providing fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables to the gardeners, their friends and neighbours, and to food relief programs (Patel, 1991). The food producing and storage skills gained through gardening, as well as the intimate relationship formed with the production of food through gardening can also be understood as a form of education and activism, by decreasing the alienation urban people experience from their food system (Kneen, 1993). Kneen coined this separation of people from their food supply as the "distancing effect", believing that the corporatization of the global (including Canada's) food system is responsible for "individuals, families, and communities [becoming] disempowered and deskilled in terms of their capacity to produce their own food, make sound choices when they purchase food, and feed themselves nutritional and well-balanced diets." (Riches, 1999: 206). In this way, community gardens act as a form of food education and activism by creating an outlet where people create and participate in alternative food systems.

Environmental activism is also embedded in the community garden movement. The back-to-the-land movement of the 1960's and 1970's was also in part responsible for the resurgence in community gardening at and since that time (Bassett, 1981). Community gardens have the ability to counter many of the environmental problems associated with the built, urban environment by: increasing biodiversity, decreasing water runoff and pressure on the storm sewer system, providing habitat for animals and plants, filtering the air, decreasing soil erosion and regulating the temperature (Hall, 2000).

Certainly communities, particularly women of minority communities, are mobilizing to fight against the environmental disparities associated with the urban environment, including other impacts such as exposure to chemicals and toxins that stem from the built environment (Frumkin, 2005; Pardo, 1990).

Community gardens provide an opportunity for urban residents to reconnect with nature in both an active and passive sense, and are thus seen as a form of health promotion as they enable relaxation (Kuo, 2001). The active connection to nature stems from the direct interaction the gardener has with the soil, plants, insects, fruits and vegetables through the production and consumption of their garden plants. The non-gardening visitors are able to connect with nature as they walk through and explore the ever-changing garden from the beginning to end of the season. Children often use the space as a natural playground, both running through the garden and investigating the diversity of plant and animal species (Hynes, 1996). The passive enjoyment of nature in a community garden can come from just sitting and experiencing through the many senses that are stimulated by the garden, such as the *sight* of vibrant flowers or a rabbit feeding on grass, the *smell* of sweet peas or dill weed, and the *sound* of birds or the wind passing through the cornstalks.

Community gardens are also seen as a form of health promotion because they encourage physical, mental, and social well being, for both gardeners and observers. Physical wellbeing has been linked to an increased rate of vegetable consumption, as well as the physical activity of gardening (Twiss, Dickinson, Duma, Kleinman, Paulsen, and Rilveria, 2003). Impacts on mental wellbeing have been attributed to feelings of support and stress reduction through the social interaction of community gardening and the

viewing of nature (Wakefield et al. 2007). The social wellbeing of these gardeners has also been linked to becoming more involved in the community and creating new social networks (Wakefield et al, 2007). The many health and wellbeing benefits associated with community gardens have encouraged some academics to explore them as therapeutic landscapes (Milligan, Gatrell and Dingley, 2004). The understanding of a therapeutic landscape is based on the idea that certain places can "promote wellness by facilitating relaxation and restoration and enhancing some combination of physical, mental and spiritual healing" (Palka, 1999: 30).

Threats to Community Gardens

According to the American Community Gardening survey of over 6000 gardens across the country, the greatest threat to their future was land security (ACGA, 1998). Only six of these surveyed gardens did not cite land permanency as an issue. That community gardens are usually situated on borrowed land, often city owned, and operate under short-term lease agreements leaves them vulnerable to other forms of development, particularly as communities revitalize and land prices rise. The successful contribution community gardens make to community revitalization efforts can ultimately contribute to their loss, as the process of gentrification ensues (Linn, 1999). Gentrification is the change in social class of a neighbourhood by an influx of middle and upper class people into a formerly working class neighbourhood (Sullivan, 2007). While gentrification has positive outcomes, such as revitalizing neighbourhoods, increasing property values and economic opportunities (Brown-Saracino, 2004), it can also make it difficult for community gardens to occupy newly valuable land (Linn, 1999). The economic benefits

associated with development frequently appear to outweigh the benefits associated with the presence of the community gardens, at least from a landowner perspective. In 1998, New York City was prepared to sell 114 of their community gardens to the highest bidder, bringing much attention to the insecurity community gardens face in the urban environment. Although all of the 114 gardens were saved, which was no small feat, many more of New York's community gardens still face the threat of development (Englander, 2001). Unfortunately, New York community gardeners are not alone in the fight to save their gardens from development.

Women's Community Gardening

Although women have shown an equal, and often greater, rate of community garden participation (Glover et al., 2005, Patel, 1991, Schmelzkopf, 1995), their voices receive very little attention in the literature. This oversight opens the door to explore women's community garden experiences. That women are often responsible for much of the community organizing work and community gardens all across North America, including Winnipeg, face an insecure future means women will likely play a significant role in building community garden support. However, interaction amongst different community gardens, particularly between suburban and urban community gardens can be very minimal especially in cities like Winnipeg that until very recently have lacked a community garden network. This lack of interaction is both a reflection of physical distance as well as perceived differences in gardener motivations and garden goals (Lind, 2008). Therefore exploring across different socioeconomic groups to identify how women's community garden experiences affects them, so as to better understand possible

linkages amongst a diversity of gardeners, could encourage a larger and more influential organization of community gardeners. Furthermore, the relationship between community gardens and gendered aspects of community organizing have yet to be explored in the literature. The subsequent chapter identifies the methodology employed in this research project, including the evolution of the research from a primarily food security focus to understanding health and wellbeing as connecting suburban and urban women community gardeners and the relationship between community gardening and the women centered model of community organizing.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This research is based on qualitative methodology and consisted of two separate phases. Initially, my intention was to use quantitative methodology because my goal was to evaluate the potential for community gardens to increase women's personal and household food security. Furthermore, I was more comfortable and confident using quantitative methodology from my undergraduate experience in Environmental Science. My shift from quantitative to qualitative methods was directed by the questions I started to include in my close-ended questionnaire, focusing on women's values, perceptions and experiences around community gardening and community. It soon became clear that a qualitative methodology was better suited, as qualitative research concerns itself with the "detailed descriptions of social practices in an attempt to understand how the participants experience and explain their own world" (Jackson, 1999, p.16). Using a qualitative approach enabled the women participants to have more influence on the direction of the research and gave me a far better understanding of how community gardens were contributing to these women's lives at both the personal and community level. Although the focus and methodology of this research evolved, a feminist perspective was always central to my project, which simply put means my belief that "women's lives are important" (Reinharz, 1992: 241).

Phase 1: Suburban and Urban Women's Perceptions of Community Gardening

The method I selected for the first research phase was a semi-structured interview, which enabled me to standardize questions for each participant, while providing the freedom to explore participant's answers in greater depth. This phase was designed to get an understanding of the women's perceptions around their community garden and gardening. The interview was designed as eight sections; the first was based on 'throw-away' questions, which were intended to develop a rapport with the participant (Berg, 2001), the following sections were broken down into Motivations, Food Security, Sense of Community, Community Garden Experience, Challenges, Knowledge and Methods/Practices (Appendix A). The interview questions were based on previous research into the benefits of community gardens and issues around food security.

Twenty-four women from suburban (12 participants) and urban (12 participants) community gardens in Winnipeg, Manitoba participated in the first research phase. The six urban gardens were located in Winnipeg's inner city, as designated by the City of Winnipeg. The four suburban gardens were from outside the inner-city designation (please refer to maps in Chapter 5 methods section). The decision to study community gardeners in Winnipeg was both a practical and deliberate choice because I have lived there almost all my life and Winnipeg has had a longstanding lack of municipal support for community gardens.

Contacting the potential participants was one of the first challenges because no community garden registry existed for Winnipeg. I spent three weeks in June 2003 visiting the gardens in hopes of talking with gardeners and getting contact numbers for

any facilitators or garden club presidents. Contacting urban gardeners was often easier because the gardens were operating through their local neighbourhood association, which was easier to track down. During the summer of 2003 I sent out letters and telephoned the community garden facilitators I had located to inform them of my research and asked them to forward my name and contact information to the women gardeners, who were then able to contact me if they were interested in participating in the research. I let each participant select when and where they preferred the interview to take place; all of the suburban interviews took place in the participant's homes, two of the urban participant interviews were conducted in local coffee shops, two took place at their community church and the rest were conducted in their homes. Once I had identified a participant, I would ask her if she would be comfortable passing on my name and contact number to any other women gardeners from her garden, and would wait for them to contact me. This "snowball" sampling worked well and I did not have to use any other means to attract participants.

I personally conducted each interview, which I felt was important to the process of analysis. I also kept a journal where I would record notes from our conversations that happened outside the interview proper, or would write down questions that stemmed from the interview. Before the interview began, I would review the formal ethics form and ensure they were clear on the goals of my research and their rights as a participant, which they then signed (Appendix B). All the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim, except sections of the interview that strayed far off topic, such as one woman's description of her past marriage. Each interview participant received a $20 honorarium, regardless of whether they completed the interview. The interviews lasted

approximately 90-120 minutes, although two urban interviews lasted considerably longer and each had to be broken up into two sessions. Part of the reason for the extended length of these interviews was my inexperience as an interviewer; I was unsure how to steer the conversation back towards the interview without feeling insensitive. I soon came to realize however, that by allowing the participant to divulge information they had not consented to discuss was a misleading representation of the researcher/participant relationship. And while it is in my nature to listen to someone when I can see they have a need to talk about something, it became clear that I had to disassociate myself from this character trait for both ethical and practical purposes.

Although there was no preset number of interviews, I finished the interview process once I reached a point of saturation, or when I felt no new information was being introduced (Berg, 2001). This point was first reached with the suburban gardeners, and I continued interviewing urban gardeners until I felt I had reached a similar level of saturation. At that time, I had interviewed twelve urban gardeners and nine suburban gardeners. I then interviewed three more suburban gardeners to keep numbers equal for both garden types. While the interviews were the main source of information, I also attended many community garden meetings, workshops and celebrations where many informal conversations took place. These helped better my understanding of the different community gardens and community gardening as a whole.

Upon completion of the interviews and transcription the data were imported into Atlas-ti (Muhr, 1997), a qualitative data analysis software program that helps organize and code data. Themes I initially identified were community garden benefits and challenges. I chose to use thematic analysis, as opposed to content analysis because I felt

this technique was better suited to my research. Ezzy (2002: 88) explains that "thematic analysis aims to identify themes within the data. Thematic analysis is more inductive than content analysis because the categories into which themes will be sorted are not decided prior to coding the data. These categories are 'induced' from the data." I then proceeded to use an open coding process and reviewed the data line by line, creating a large number of codes, which were color coded to differentiate between urban and suburban. After reviewing the transcripts until no new codes were identified, I started to organize the codes into groups. Very often these groups of codes would give rise to a larger code, and thus become sub-codes. Essentially this process enabled me to work from the bottom up and identify more comprehensive themes (Ezzy, 2002). One such group of codes gave rise to the mental benefits of community gardening, which then branched off into the mental benefits associated with the act of community gardening and the mental benefits associated with the community garden as a place, and eventually these falling under the larger themes of personal health/wellbeing and community health/wellbeing. Repeating this process over and over again allowed me to create four meta-themes relating to the benefits of community gardening: personal health/wellbeing, community health/wellbeing, education, and environment. I also identified three meta-themes related to challenges, including: resources, management and security. At this point I then took all the codes and various levels of sub-codes, wrote them down on color coded pieces of paper and attached them to a large nylon wall sprayed with an adhesive that allowed me to arrange and rearrange the pieces. I chose to work with my data in this format because it enabled me to see everything all at once, unlike the computer software. From this process of hierarchical coding, I was able to see which themes appeared to be discussed in greater

detail amongst both suburban and urban gardeners, and how they differed.

The purpose of my research was not to highlight all the benefits and challenges women associated with their community gardening, but rather to understand and contrast how suburban and urban women value their community garden experience. I eventually chose to focus on the one theme that was discussed in the greatest detail, personal health/wellbeing. The theme of community health/wellbeing was discussed in a different context between the suburban and urban gardeners, which I highlight in Chapter 4, and further explore in the urban context in Chapter 5.

Phase 2: Urban Women's Perceptions of their Community and Community Garden

The second phase of this research took a more direct focus on the urban women's community garden experience, which arose directly from my analysis in the first phase. When I had completed the analysis in Phase 1, it was apparent that the urban women discussed issues relating to their neighbourhood community health and wellbeing, unlike the suburban women, and I decided to further explore this topic. Also influencing the focus of the second phase of research were the informal interactions I had with many of the urban gardeners through co-organizing a Community Garden Celebration Week during the summer of 2004, consisting of suburban and urban public garden tours. Through our planning meetings I heard many of the women discuss the significance of their community garden to their community, and I witnessed the roles these women played, both within their garden and community. My experience with the community garden tours lead to the idea of creating a Winnipeg Community Garden public awareness video because I realized it was easy for people to see the physical and

aesthetic benefits associated with the urban community gardens, but the many other effects these gardens and gardeners have had on their community were relatively invisible to non-residents. Therefore, phase two interviews were video recorded so as to use the information for both research and video purposes, as decided by the participant.

This time I decided to use a non-standardized interview, instead of a semi-structured interview because during many of my informal conversations I learned that allowing people to talk freely addressed issues I would probably not have asked in an interview. In addition, I had developed a level of trust with many of the participants during the first phase and through the tour, which I felt would allow participants to feel more comfortable with this less structured approach. Each interview began by my explaining the idea of making a local community garden video and asking what they thought the video should include and letting the conversation flow from that point. All the interviews were based on exploring women's perceptions of their community and how their community garden has affected those perceptions and their role within their community.

This research phase consisted of video interviews with nine urban gardeners, all of whom had participated in the initial round of interviews (two of the original contacts had moved and the other said she did not have time). I also interviewed three community garden facilitators from the Spence neighbourhood and one city counselor for the West Broadway neighbourhood. These interviews took place during the summer months of 2005.

After contacting the participants, I explained the purpose of the intended interview and stressed that this interview would be video recorded, as opposed to audio

recorded. Each participant had the option of consenting to the use of the video for research purposes only, or for both research and the local community garden video. They were also free simply to be audio recorded if they so chose. Before each interview I reviewed the Research Consent Form outlining the goals of the research and their rights as a participant (Appendix B). Each participant would then indicate for what purposes she wanted her interview to be used and whether she consented to audio or video recording. If the participant consented to the use of their interview for the video project she also signed a separate video release form (Appendix B). Two participants indicated they only wanted to be audio recorded and all participants agreed to their interview being used for both research and video purposes. These interviews were conducted in their community garden, and on average lasted between 45-60 minutes, with each participant receiving a $20 honorarium. The community garden facilitators and city counselors were given the same options regarding how they wanted the interview to be used, but their interviews were conducted in various locations, including local gardens and their offices.

Once the interviews were complete they were all downloaded onto a computer and I began to analyze the interviews using the video editing software Final Cut Pro:4 (Apple, 2003). This process of analysis was not thematic, as it was in the first phase; rather I was analyzing the interviews for content. Using the software, I created and labeled 'bins' corresponding to the codes I had identified in the first phase of analysis under the large theme of community health/wellbeing. As an example, one bin was labeled 'for the children' and I continued to take segments of interviews that related to how the women discussed their garden in terms of the children, both their own and the neighbourhood children. Each segment, however, could be played back within the larger

interview, preventing the shorter clips from being taken out of context. When new themes arose that were not represented in the first phase of analysis, new bins were created, but given a different color. Once the interviews had been reviewed a number of times, I chose to focus on the bins (read: codes) that were discussed most frequently because I felt those represented some of the most significant issues these women addressed. The results and discussion of Phase 2 of this research are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

"It gives you back your self-esteem": Community Gardens as places of health and wellbeing for gardeners and their community

Abstract: Women's health is affected by the social, economic and political conditions of their lives. While larger structural changes are imperative to address women's health inequalities, the smaller actions women take to increase their everyday feelings of wellbeing are also important. Community gardens provide an outlet where women can invest in their wellbeing through the physical activity of gardening, socializing with other gardeners and the exposure to green space. My goal is to examine how urban and suburban community gardens and gardening contribute to the wellbeing of those women who garden. Using semi-directed questions, I interviewed 12 suburban and 12 urban women community gardeners in 2003 from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Both suburban and urban gardeners discussed how they personally benefited from the act of community gardening in terms of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing. Community gardening provided a therapeutic landscape experience for both suburban and urban participants. Yet urban gardeners were more affected by the neighbourhood changes associated with their gardening activities, these including socialization, sense of safety, and neighbourhood pride. In contrast, suburban gardeners put greater emphasis on the personal cultivating experience and the community that arose within the gardens themselves. These differences reflect, in part, the motivations that underlie their activities; suburban gardens provide recreational space and urban gardens are introduced as community revitalization tools. These perceived differences between the urban and suburban gardens are in part responsible for separating the two groups of gardeners. This research illustrates how the many similarities in wellbeing arising from the gardens, regardless of their location, provide a possible framework for future communication, support, and sharing of resources, which will work to benefit all the community gardeners

INTRODUCTION

Women's health is more than the absence of illness or disease and generally understood to include emotional, social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and physical wellbeing as determined by the socio-economic and political context of their lives as well as by their biology (Phillips, 1995). The former non-biological context is influenced by

the social roles, behaviours, values, attitudes, and social environmental factors that society constructs for, around, and by both women and men (Davidson, Trudeau, van Roosmalen, Stewart, and Kirkland, 2006). Thus the value society puts on women's multiple roles has created a situation where women are still largely responsible for domestic activities and therefore less likely to participate in full time employment or experience the same opportunities for advancement as men (Dominelli, 2006; Status of Women Canada, 2001). In addition to affecting women's health by compromising economic wellbeing, this also compromises physical and emotional wellbeing through stress, exhaustion, anxiety, and depression (Walters, 1993). Gender affects the social status and roles of women, in turn affecting their ability to achieve and maintain good health, and it is thus accepted as a key determinant of health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004).

Past research examining how gender influences health has generally focused on social structural factors, including socio-economic inequalities surrounding income, education, occupational and employment status; behavioural factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, diet and exercise; and psychosocial factors such as critical life events, psychological resources and chronic stressors (Denton, Prus, and Walters, 2004). There are many other issues that contribute to inequalities negatively affecting women's health (see Arber and Khlat, 2002 for overview). Recognizing that women's social, political and economic circumstances are influenced by their cultural and ethnic backgrounds, able bodiedness, income status, age, geographic location and sexuality (Ruzek, 1998) challenges any notion that there is any one way of improving women's health. Thus, in Canada for example, Aboriginal women are more prone to chronic

disease, suicide, domestic abuse, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and shorter life expectancy, which requires that the broader circumstances contributing to this inequality be understood and addressed (Stout, Kipling, and Stout, 2001).

While accepting the importance of identifying and understanding the barriers of gender and women's health as a priority for creating awareness and action around the issues that enhance and compromise health, I also recognize that women have not been passively waiting for these changes to occur. Rather, they have been, and continue to be, actively engaged in maintaining and improving health and wellbeing for themselves and their families from the local to international scales of organization. The women's health movement that began in the 1960's and continues its work today is based on educating and empowering women around health knowledge, politics and service, and began addressing how issues such as anti-choice legislation, violence against women, access to contraception, poverty and inequality were affecting women's health and wellbeing (Boscoe, Basen, Alleyne, Bourrier-Lacroix & White, 2004; Cohen, Chavez, & Chehimi, 2007). The Canadian Women's Health Network was launched in 1993 as a means to continue and advance the work of the women's health movement in Canada, with a particular focus on the health care system including women's participation and the social determinants of health (Boscoe et al., 2004). Beyond the formal research and organizational campaigns lie the day-to-day actions women take to increase their feelings of wellbeing that contribute to their health. Although these actions may not necessarily challenge the structural inequalities that undermine women's health, they are significant in the lives of the women and deserving of attention.

Starting with the premise that women are the most knowledgeable about their own

sense of wellbeing and therefore best situated to discuss how some of their actions improve their sense of wellbeing I will present how the women community gardeners I spoke with in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada use their gardens and gardening activities to contribute to their own, and their communities', wellbeing and health.

Relationship between community gardens and health

The American Community Gardening Association broadly defines community gardens as any piece of land gardened by a group of people (ACGA, 2006). Gardening contributes to people's health by providing an accessible activity that promotes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing (Armstrong, 2000; Cooper-Marcus & Barnes, 1999; Kaplan, 1973; Owen, 1994). Beyond providing a physical space for gardening, community gardens can act as a therapeutic environment, which according to Gesler (1993:171) has "an enduring reputation for achieving physical, mental, and spiritual healing." Williams (1998) has expanded the idea of therapeutic landscapes beyond places of healing to include the maintenance of health and wellbeing. Our experience of place, or sense of place, can have a positive or negative association, and it is thought that places associated with positive feelings can serve as therapeutic environments (Williams, 1998). Community gardens provide an opportunity for physical and mental engagement, relating to Palka's (1999:30) understanding of a therapeutic landscape as a place that promotes wellness by facilitating relaxation and restoration and by enhancing some combination of physical, mental and spiritual healing. There is an important distinction between the space of a community garden and a community garden as a place, particularly when viewing gardens as therapeutic or healing landscapes. Cresswell (2004:10) differentiates

between the two, indicating "when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way it becomes a place." The difference between place and landscape is understood as place being something we experience and landscapes are something we look at (Cresswell, 2004), thus community gardens provide both a place and a landscape with therapeutic value.

Community gardens have the potential to further enhance health by contributing to social wellbeing through the interactions and support associated with this group-based activity (Hancock, 1999; Milligan, Gatrell, & Bingley, 2004). Their ability to improve local environments in aesthetic, social, ecological and economic ways reflects the growing understanding that health and environment are inextricably linked (WHO, 1986). Furthermore, community gardening provides an avenue for practicing self-care, which is understood to be a mechanism of health promotion and included in the women-centered model of health (Boscoe et al., 2004, Spasoff, 1990).

Past Community Garden Studies

Past community garden studies have focused on the relationship between community gardens and different issues that affect wellbeing, such as sustainable development (Quale, 1989, Roy, 2001), social capital (Glover, 2004), community revitalization (Schmelzkof, 1996, Landman, 1993), places of healing (Milligan et al, 2004), as well as more specific health issues like nutrition and food security (Blair et al., 1991, Brown, 2000). Armstrong (2000) surveyed a number of New York community gardeners to better understand the health related contributions of community gardens, but her approach was quantitative and focused on garden coordinators, not the gardeners

themselves. Very recently Wakefield et al. (2007) studied how gardeners understood their community garden to contribute to their health and wellbeing; however, as with almost all other community garden studies, there was no explicit focus on gender, even though they identified women as the dominant participants in their study. The majority of the community garden literature in North America also focuses on inner city gardens (Hynes, 1996; Glover, 2004; Shinew, Glover & Parry, 2004), and, thus, suburban garden experiences have been included in little community garden research.

This chapter explores both suburban and urban women's community gardening experiences. I assess to what degree community gardens are seen to affect suburban and urban women's sense of wellbeing and health and how this varies according to the socioeconomic backgrounds of the gardeners. Moreover, I explore the potential of wellbeing and health to link urban and suburban gardeners who otherwise function independently from one another. Additionally I explore the role wellbeing may play in facilitating a more unified and effective community garden network.

METHODS

This study presents the findings from interviews with 24 women community gardeners in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Community gardens are not a new initiative in Winnipeg, as they date back to World War II. However, after many years of stasis, the city is presently experiencing a boom in participation in these gardens. Within the last ten years, the popularity of community gardens has grown substantially, especially in the urban core, which now boasts approximately 20 community gardens. This increased

interest is associated with the community revitalization efforts that many inner city neighbourhoods are currently undertaking. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into the motivations, experiences, and values of these gardeners in order to better understand how the women perceived their community gardens and their gardening. This research was constructed in an iterative manner such that the direction of the research emerged from the gardeners themselves.

Participants

In total, twelve suburban women from four different community gardens and twelve urban women from six different community gardens participated in this research. The urban gardens are located within the inner city centre, as indicated by the City of Winnipeg, specifically in the Spence and West Broadway neighbourhoods (Map 1.1), and included the Sherbrook (3 participants), McGee (3), Spirit Park (3), Maryland (1), Langside (1) and Furby (1) community gardens (Map 1.2 and 1.3). The suburban gardens were scattered throughout the city outside the downtown core and included the Lindsay Garden Club (3 participants), Riverview (3), South Winnipeg Garden Club (3), and Millennium (3) community gardens (Map 1.4).

In general the demographics of suburban gardeners differed from those of urban gardeners. Suburban gardeners were generally older than their urban counterparts, such that 75% of the suburban gardeners were 50-59 years of age, whereas 67% of the urban gardeners were 40-49 years of age.

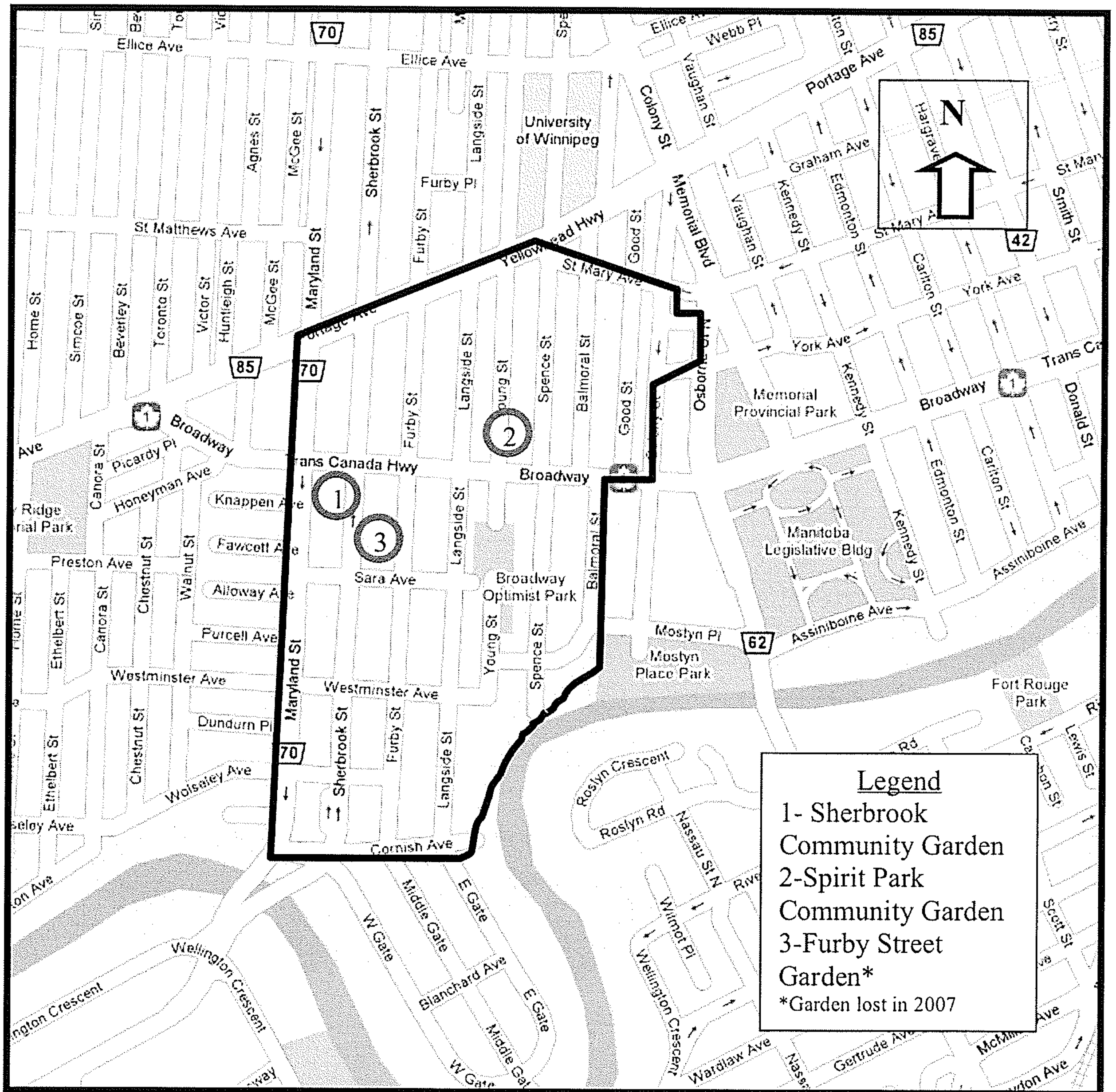
Inner City &
Non-Inner City

Spence
Neighbourhood

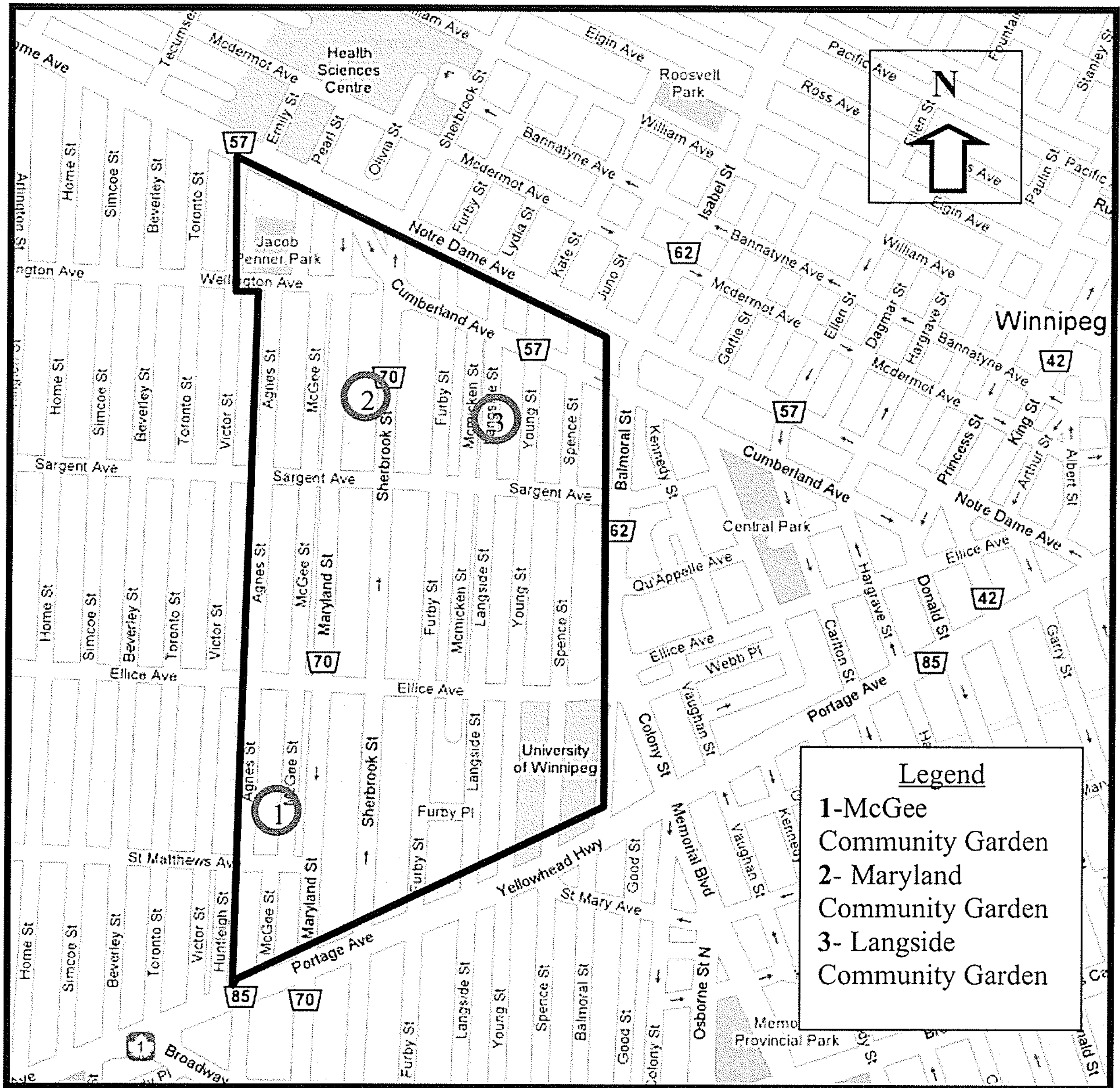
West Broadway
Neighbourhood

Inner City
Non-Inner City

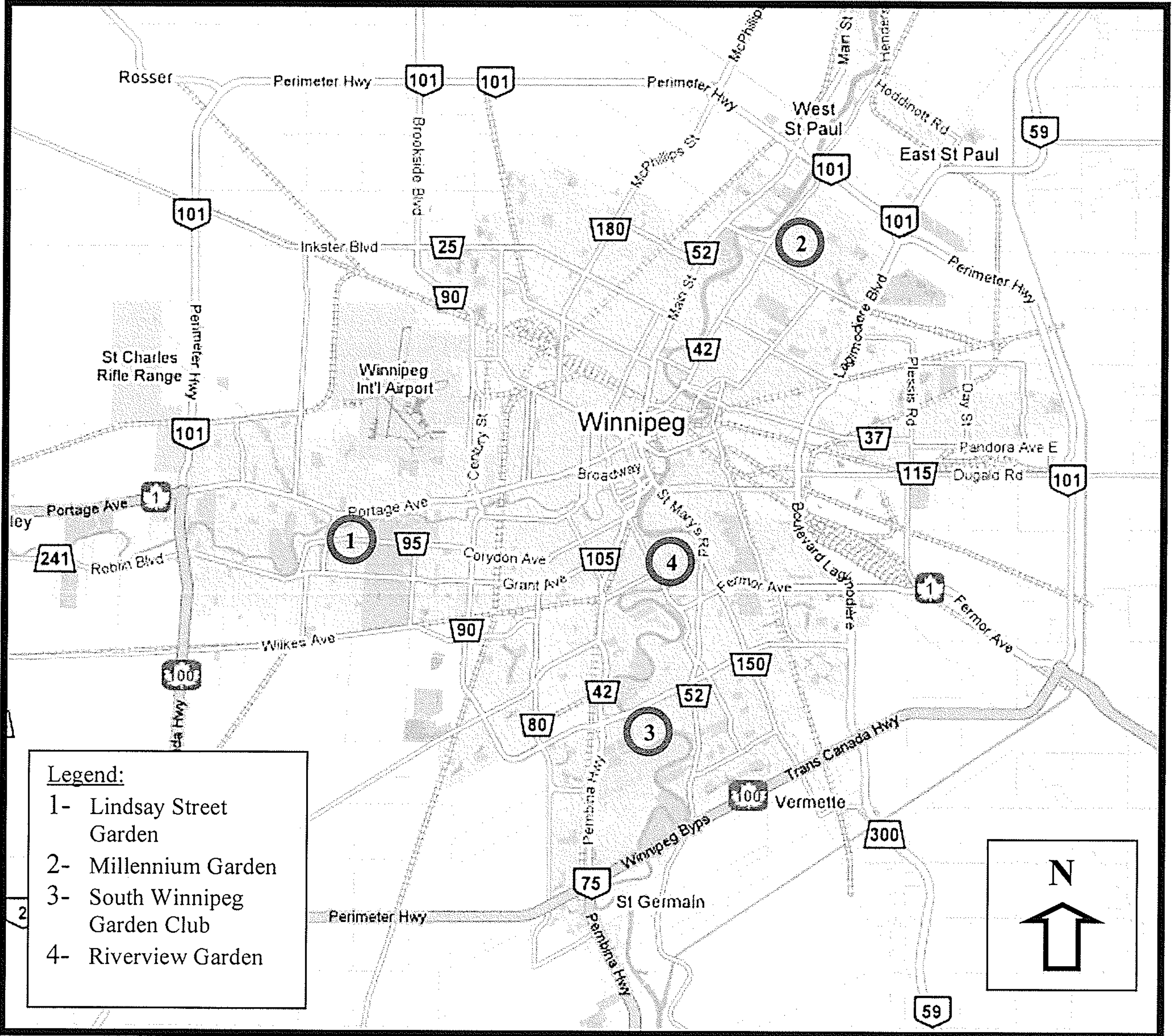
Map 1.1: Designation of Inner City and Non-Inner City Neighbourhoods According to City of Winnipeg (Manitoba, Canada).



Map 1.2: Location of participating inner city community gardens situated within the boundaries of the West Broadway neighbourhood, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.



Map 1.3: Location of participating inner city community gardens located in the Spence Neighbourhood of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.



Map 1.4: Location of participating suburban community gardens in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

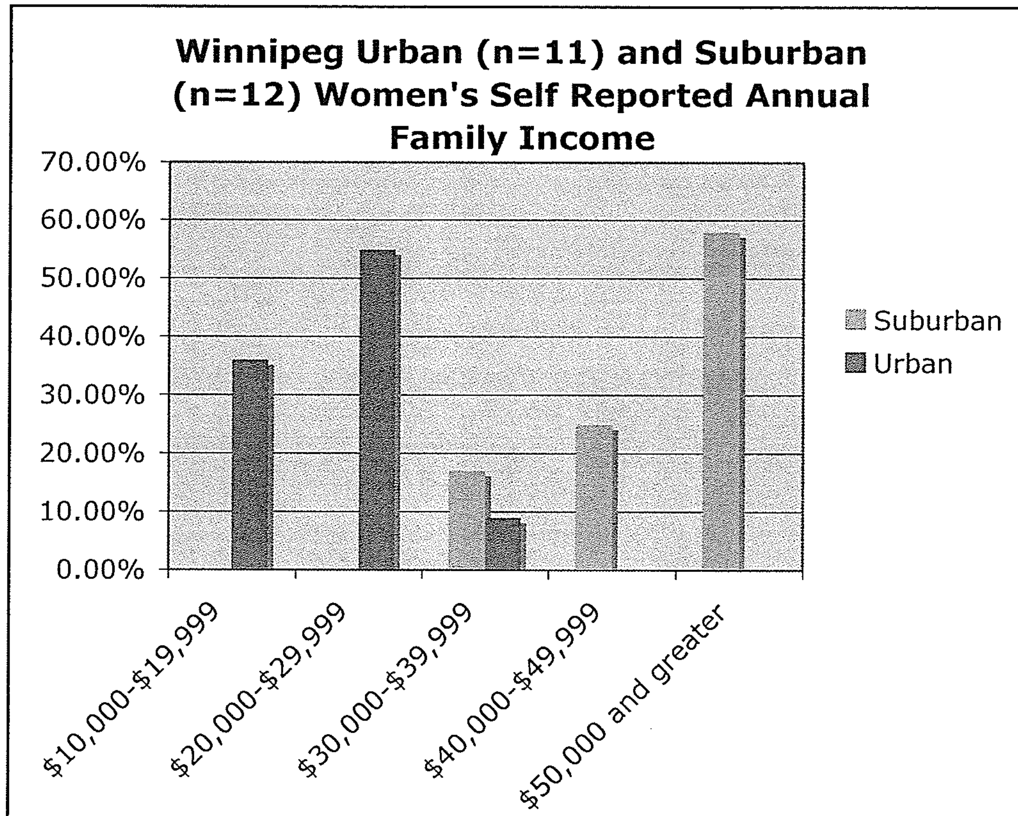


Figure 1.1: Winnipeg Urban and Suburban Women's Self-Reported Annual Family Income (note: one urban woman chose not to report her annual family income)

The annual family incomes of the suburban gardeners were generally higher than those of the urban gardeners such that 58% of those in the suburbs had annual incomes greater than $50,000 whereas none of those in the urban gardens had incomes that were greater than $50,000 (Fig 1.1). Over 80% of the suburban gardeners held a university or college degree whereas most (60%) of the urban gardeners were completing college or university degrees. The majority (75%) of the suburban participants lived in detached homes whereas 50% of the urban gardeners lived in apartments and one lived in a rooming house. All of the suburban gardeners identified as being of Western European heritage whereas only seven (58%) of the urban gardeners self-identified as being Western European, three identified as Aboriginal, one as Sri Lankan, and one as French-Canadian.

Setting

The size and location of the community gardens varied, but as a rule the suburban gardens occupied more land area and had larger plots. Suburban plots ranged from 5 sq m to 232 sq m, averaging 116 sq m. Of these, Riverview had the most plots (107) while South Winnipeg had the fewest (56). The urban gardens were generally much smaller, in part because they were often positioned on house lots that have a total area under 232 sq m. Spirit Park, the Sherbrook Garden and Maryland Garden were situated on more than one house lot, but the plots remained smaller than the suburban garden plots.

Figure 1.2: Spirit Park garden plots in West Broadway neighbourhood, Winnipeg, Manitoba (Photo credit: Julie Price-Henderson)

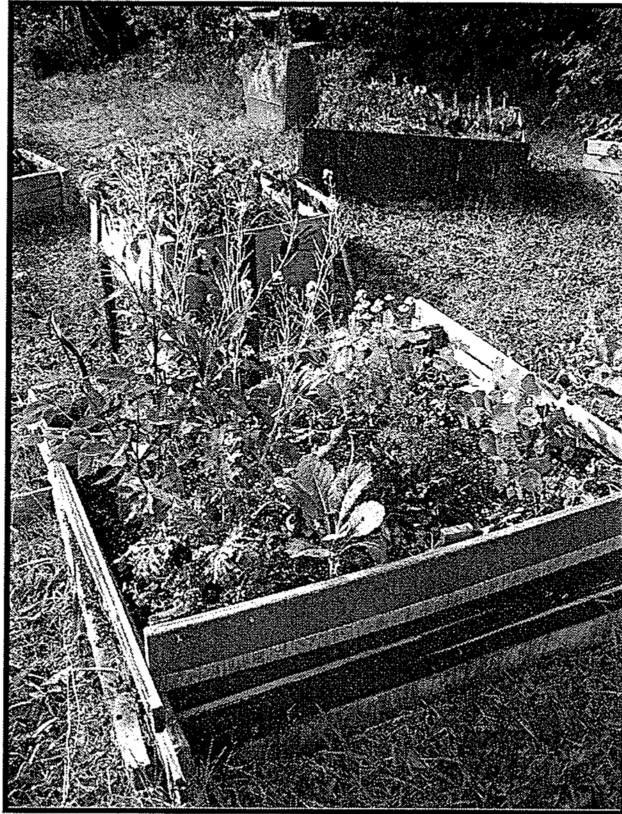


Figure 1.3: Example of raised bed plots in Furby Street Garden, West Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba (Photo credit: Julie Price-Henderson)

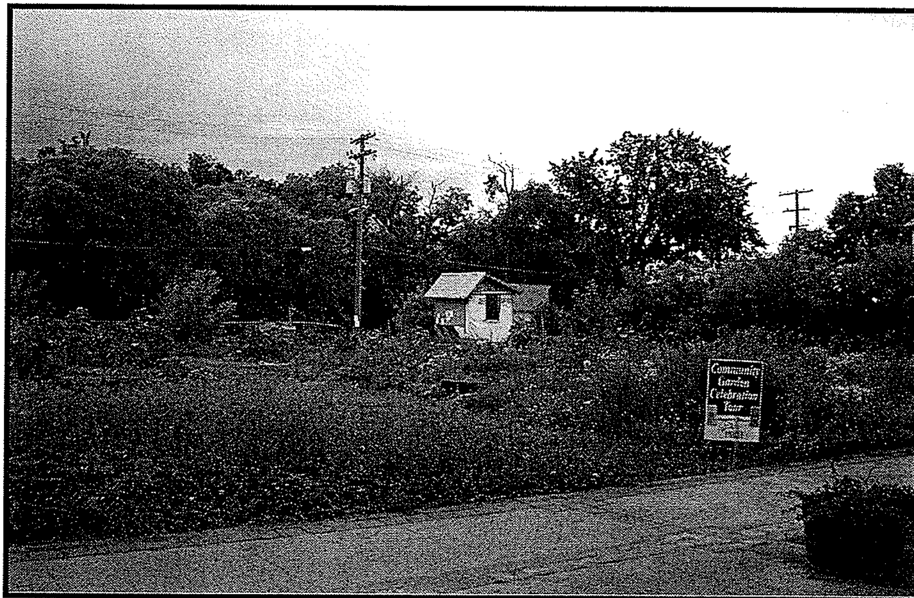


Figure 1.4:Sherbrook Garden in West Broadway neighbourhood, an example of a double lot inner city garden in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Photo credit: Julie Price-Henderson)

Figure 1.5: Millennium Garden in Winnipeg, Manitoba, an example of a suburban garden (Photo credit: Julie Price-Henderson).

Figure 1.6: Riverview Community Garden, an example of a suburban located garden in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Photo credit: Corey Toews).

Procedure and Analysis

Early in the summer of 2003, I contacted gardening clubs and neighbourhood associations by telephone and email, gave a summary of my intended research, and requested that this summary and my contact information be forwarded to women gardeners. Any gardeners interested in discussing their community gardening experiences were then able to contact me. For most of the gardens, the first interview participant would then pass my information on to other gardeners who would then contact me.

The interview schedule used open-ended questions, focusing on community gardening history, motivations, experiences, and benefits and challenges. The interviews on average lasted between 90-120 minutes, and each interview participant was presented with a $20 honorarium. After the interview, participants were asked to fill out demographic information on their own. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. There were not a preset number of interviews; however, I stopped interviewing once I reached a point of saturation, or when I felt no new information was being introduced (Berg, 2001). Although the suburban interviews reached a point of saturation first, I continued to interview urban gardeners until I felt a point of saturation had been met, and then for the sake of balance increased the number of suburban interviews until the number of gardeners was equal for both groups.

Other interactions beyond those of the 24 community gardeners helped inform my understanding of Winnipeg's community gardens. I had conversations with many community garden facilitators and attended many board meetings, community garden workshops, and garden celebrations to help to increase my knowledge of the community

gardens. Although these informal discussions and observations are not explicitly included in this study, they played a major role in shaping my understanding of community gardening, particularly in the Winnipeg context, and influenced both my analysis of the interviews and the direction of this research.

I first reviewed the transcriptions and identified a number of broad themes that generally focused on the benefits and challenges of gardening. The data were then imported into Atlas-ti (Muhr, 1997), and using a thematic analysis framework I coded all the data, creating many additional sub-themes, which were later consolidated into the larger themes that inform the research reported upon here.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Physical Wellbeing and Gardening

Next to walking, gardening is the most popular form of physical activity for adults in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003), and can be adopted by almost everyone regardless of their fitness level. Many of the women in this study, both urban and suburban, attested that they enjoyed the physical aspect of gardening, including the weeding, digging, hauling and planting, as it contributed to their physical wellbeing as an effective form of exercise. For some of the senior gardeners from Millennium garden, the ability to maintain some form of physical activity through their gardening was especially important. As Dorothy* explained,

> " It keeps me active and it gives me something to do, I feel I have to go out and check on my garden, so it gets me out of the apartment. It's so easy to just sit in your apartment and waste away, but having a garden keeps me physically active and I like that feeling."

* All names used in the presentation of results are pseudonyms

Anne, a 52-year-old suburban gardener from the Lindsay Street Garden club was particularly adamant about the effects gardening had on her sense of physical wellbeing and was confident that if she were unable to garden, her health would suffer,

> "It will be about the end of February when I begin to feel the sap running in the trees and I go for walks and I know if spring came and I couldn't work in the soil I actually would feel sick…It makes me feel strong, like I have to carry all of the water to the garden and stuff and I don't' feel like I am losing muscle mass at my age than as fast as I might be if I weren't gardening. "

These physical benefits clearly contribute to Anne's physical wellbeing and, in turn, her health.

For Lisa-Marie, (urban) gardening was a means of physical therapy that helped her manage a disability she had been dealing with for the last ten years.

> "I was trying to get coordination back in my hands and because of my disorder I can't feel sensation in my hands and stuff and my muscles really tire out from the simplest of activities, but I figured I could do a little bit, it is still an activity, it is still stimulating the muscle, and still exercising the mind and getting me outdoors."

Accommodations like raised beds, which a number of Winnipeg community gardens employ, allow people of all physical abilities, especially those in wheelchairs or with limited range of motion, to participate in a recreational activity that might be otherwise only available for the able-bodied.

Emotional Wellbeing and Gardening

Gardening also affected the women's emotional wellbeing, a point that was discussed in greater detail by the gardeners. Gardening contributes to a decline in stress (Lewis, 1996), and many of the women, both urban and suburban mentioned how gardening helped them relax. As Tannis, a suburban gardener from Riverview highlights:

> "I'll go out and weed with a Discman [portable CD player] and weed for a whole morning and I find it very relaxing…I don't consider it physical activity – I'm a former rower, that's what I consider physical activity"

As a gardener myself, I am well aware of the relaxation that comes with this activity, and how it can help to lower my stress levels. Gardening helps refocus attention, most often away from the pressures that weigh on our minds, providing a much needed mental break for many. Penny, mentioned how (urban) gardening helped her through a tough period when her daughter would leave for extended periods of time,

> "When I was stressed about my daughter when she was young, she's kind of a run-away…I didn't see her for like 3 weeks sometimes. The garden took my mind off it."

Acute and chronic stressful events adversely affect both physical and mental health and vary in occurrence and severity with socioeconomic status (Grzywacz et al., 2004). Although stress reaches across socioeconomic status, and is understood to be one of the major contributors to ill-health (Grahn and Stigsdotter , 2003), socioeconomic status appears to affect people's vulnerability to stress. Gardening may help those of higher socioeconomic status, like suburban gardeners, cope with the more frequent, but less severe daily stressors, but may play another role for relatively poor urban gardeners, particularly with respect to their relatively greater vulnerability to stress.

Some of the urban women made specific comments on how gardening gave them an increased sense of control by providing a space that they could order and manage the way they wanted without interference from others (as long as it was not negatively affecting other gardeners). Jenny thus indicated,

> "No one tells me how to order or plant my garden and I like knowing that I can do whatever I want in my own little plot. Sometimes I go out there and dig up some of the flowers and put them in a different spot…and I am always trying different techniques that some people think are weird, but I like that I can do that."

Receiving social assistance or of low-income, Jenny, along with other low-income gardeners would likely have fewer opportunities to exert control over factors that ultimately affect their health, such as safe housing, participating in social events, food security, employment and education (Lachman and Weaver, 1998). This sense of control is often associated with both physical and mental wellbeing (Rodin, 1986), and an important means of coping with stressful situations (Kessler and Cleary, 1980).

Gardening also appeared to help some women increase their control over depression and other mental health problems. Lisa-Marie shared a story of one woman in her urban garden that used gardening as a tool to help manage her depression. Her garden plot was quite unique, often referred to as the 'Zen' plot, as it showcased ornaments, which she changed frequently and both flowers and vegetables were planted in almost random fashion. Gardening provided an escape from her basement apartment and helped her cope when she felt overwhelmed, which often contributed to her depression. Lisa-Marie witnessed how significant gardening was to the emotional wellbeing of her acquaintance when her plot was mistakenly given away preventing her from gardening. The situation became traumatic enough that another of the gardeners donated one of her plots. Although having a sense of control contributes to one's health through emotional wellbeing, the opposite becomes true when that control is compromised (Schulz, 1976). This may be especially important for urban gardeners who lose their garden to development, as this is a threat (Lind, 2008), especially if they have no other recourse for gardening.

Interestingly, gardening was also seen as a space where some of the more privileged women learned to give up their need for control, like Anne, a suburban

gardener,

> "I am a person that is very specific and in some ways controlling about my life, I really like to have my life the way that I order it, but gardening is a huge lesson in not being able to control everything - it is huge, we have to let go."

Although she indicates she likes order in her life, Anne appreciates that she cannot control all the factors that determine whether or not her plants will thrive. Some studies suggest that a strong sense of control can have negative health consequences, as these people often blame themselves if something goes wrong, or are less able to cope with unpredictable situations (Landman and Weaver, 1998). That control is often positively associated with socioeconomic privilege may explain why some of the relatively marginalized urban women shared different experiences in terms of how the sense of control they associate with gardening affects their emotional wellbeing.

Gardening may also contribute to emotional wellbeing because it exposes people to nature. Barbara, a suburban gardener, indicated

> " I sometimes run to the garden on my way home from work, and even though I'm just stopping by so I can grab some stuff for dinner, I always notice how it calms me down right away, just being out there, and I often just take a moment to look at the plots around mine, see who's growing what, and when I get back into the car I feel, I just feel better."

Barbara illustrates that she benefits simply from being in the garden. Some suggest that humans benefit from experiencing natural or green spaces (Lewis, 1996), in that natural environments help us recover from the mental fatigue of our daily lives (e.g. Attention Restoration Theory, Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Natural landscapes have long been understood as a means to alleviate stress and are thus often incorporated into care facilities (Cooper-Marcus and Barnes, 1999).

Wellbeing and the Products of Gardening

Gardening, or rather the product of gardening, specifically the fruits and vegetables, also contributed to these women's perceptions of health and wellbeing. Growing plants for consumption appeared to have additional benefits associated with consuming fresh, local and organic produce. All of the women in this study included food plants in their garden; however, the suburban gardens were able to support more food plants because of the larger plot sizes.

Many discussed their community garden as a source of 'healthy' food, which contributed to their individual, family, and community wellbeing. Their views of 'healthy' food were often informed by awareness of how this food was produced, resulting in an increased security about the quality of this food. Approximately 80% of North Americans live in urban environments where they are both separated from and often unfamiliar with the production of their food (Kneen, 1993). This lack of control over how our food is produced and where it comes from is increasingly becoming an issue for consumers, in large part because of health concerns surrounding conventional food production (Rimal, Fletcher, McWatteers, Misra & Deodhar, 2001). As one urban gardener described: " We know the vegetables we grow are innocent and they are real." This in turn, sometimes led the women to question the quality of foods available to them through their grocery store, which they stated never tasted or looked the same.

In this regard, all of the women showed concern over pesticide use in store-bought food and the potential implications for their personal and family's health. Two suburban women discussed the importance of producing organic food, as they had both been diagnosed with breast cancer and tried to eliminate their exposure to chemicals,

particularly in their food. Other studies have indicated that pesticide residue is the biggest food concern amongst consumers (e.g. FMI, 1991; Rimal et al., 2001), although these concerns do not necessarily translate into changes in consumer behaviour (Rimal, et al., 2001). The latter may reflect the higher price of pesticide free products that generally remain inaccessible for those of lower income. Furthermore, many of the urban gardeners indicated how frustrating it was to have to pay such a high price for produce from their local stores, when it often went bad shortly after it is purchased. Community gardens provided an outlet where these women could produce food that they felt was safe and enabled them to feel better about the food they ate. Joy from the Spence neighbourhood, indicated,

> "When I buy vegetables or apples and things that I might normally eat with skin, I find that I worry about it every time I pick one up and you know I would rather peel it...I really wonder because just the washing doesn't seem to be enough sometimes, it does stay in the back of my mind. Whereas, when I pick from my garden I know that maybe the neighbour's cat was there but you know I can wash that off and that is about the worst that can happen, so no pesticides or chemicals because that is a concern. I would rather have a curled cucumber that tastes nice than a long straight one that doesn't taste like anything."

Having the means to feed their family the 'right' kind of food, contributes to an increased sense of wellbeing because women's identity and sense of self is often based on their ability to adequately feed their families (Van Esterik, 1997). Buckingham (2005) associates the increase of women allotment gardeners in Britain with their greater concern for securing organic produce. And while the older Millennium gardeners, who all had past experience in conventional farming, did not voice as much concern over the potential health implications of store-bought foods they were passionate about the taste of their products.

Interestingly, some of the urban women also mentioned the significance of their community garden as a source of healthy food for other community members. They talked about some of the challenges their community faced in accessing high quality food, in part because of price and because the alternatives, such as farmers markets, are inaccessible for those without access to vehicles. Although it might sometimes be frustrating when other community members used the garden as a source of food, especially when gardeners would arrive and see that all their tomatoes or potatoes had been taken, they almost always accepted it as a situation where someone else might really need the food, and as one gardener put it "At least they didn't have to beg for it." Some urban gardens actually incorporated public plots with the dual purpose of providing community members, particularly those that were insolvent, with access to fresh produce while protecting the private plots from theft. In these gardens, many of the women described how their garden was not only a source of healthy food for themselves, but for the benefit of the larger community, and thus contributed to the gardener's emotional wellbeing. As Pat indicated,

> " People get so excited when I tell them they can pick from the public plots, I always let people know and it's kind of a nice feeling knowing that this [garden] can help feed the community."

Although many of the urban gardeners spoke very proudly about their community gardens as a source of fresh produce, two of the urban gardeners were quite adamant that community gardens should not be framed strictly as food-based initiatives, particularly for people who live in the inner city. As Lisa-Marie from West Broadway put it,

> "We have to be realistic, I mean how much is one little plot really going to help sustain a whole family, but if it sustains their physical as well as mental well

> being that should be just as important as what they are putting on their plate…You can't force people to grow something because *you* think they should be growing it, like growing stuff they can eat and that's all. That's not the only reason people have a plot and that's not the only reason people want to dig in the dirt, it's not just for food."

Justifying community gardening as a food security initiative, particularly for low-income inner city residents, potentially frames the issue of food security as a matter of individual responsibility, as opposed to the government's responsibility to ensure that people of all income categories have the capacity for food security, based on livable wages and affordable housing. Furthermore, the sole focus on a food security initiative potentially detracts from the other, often health and wellbeing related benefits associated with the gardens.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing through Community Gardening

Community gardening, by definition, is not an individualized or isolating experience and was often considered a social activity as much as a garden activity by the gardeners in this study. Maggie used to garden in an urban community garden, but, having been frustrated by the ongoing theft of her produce, started to plant on her apartment roof and, eventually, in the suburban Lindsay Garden. She made a clear distinction between gardening and community gardening:

> " I got to the point where I put some plots on my roof and grew them on my own, but there was not the community and it was not a lot of feeling good and admiring what other people have done and learning recipes, you know different ways of doing things. I met one women at Lindsay Garden, she was from China and I got to speak Mandarin with her and I don't get to do that very often and it was really nice."

Maggie brings up an important point that many of the other gardeners spoke to as well,

relating to the idea that their community garden was a place where they experienced positive social interactions. For many, the gardening community contributed to wellbeing by building new relationships and enjoying new-found friendships. Edna, a gardener from the Millennium garden saw her garden a place where friendships were formed,

> " I just really enjoy it because you make friends and you talk about gardening, and it is nice to have the garden so close to home so that if you want to go out and talk to someone the garden is always there."

The opportunity for forming new friendships and social networks, particularly among the older gardeners at Millennium Gardens, may be particularly more significant, as elderly women are more prone to suffer from isolation and loneliness (Hall and Havens, 1999), affecting their social wellbeing. Milligan, Gatrell and Bingley (2004) made a similar conclusion in their study of senior allotment gardeners in the UK, stating "Allotments are, thus, seen as relational spaces in which gardening, as a social activity, acts as a mechanism for overcoming social exclusion (p 1790)," and contributes to the idea of community gardens as therapeutic landscapes.

Lillian, from the Millennium garden mentioned how the socialization in her community garden prevented her from becoming socially isolated after she had suffered a stroke that affected her speech and ability to communicate. Her stroke had made her self conscious about talking with other people, but in the garden, where many of the other women knew of her condition, she said she felt more comfortable getting into conversations, especially because they were often about gardening. I also witnessed how Lillian's gardening talents were often recognized and admired by many of the other gardeners, which undoubtedly contributed to her self-confidence and the therapeutic

nature of her garden experience. For Lillian, the community garden became a place where the effects of her stroke were less of an issue.

Aileen, another Millennium gardener, communicated how her garden enlarged her social circle with people she would otherwise not interact with,

> " Because a lot of those people I would never have talked to them. At first you kind of slowly get into conversations with them and it's really nice when you see them over and over again; we go to the meetings and you get to know the people. Yeah it has added more, you get closer to people."

Should gardening have become too physically demanding for Aileen and her husband, she would have still spent time at the garden because it was important to her to maintain those social connections, indicating the garden as a place fostering valued social relationships.

Although both urban and suburban women identified their community gardens as social places, some of the urban gardeners made a more explicit link between the social interactions and feelings of wellbeing. Lisa-Marie discussed how these social connections positively affected her emotional wellbeing,

> "With community gardens you get to meet people, you get to share ideas, it really opens up the word community because then you know if you are feeling stressed you can just go out to the garden and in no time someone will come along and you get to talking and your troubles start to go away… it makes you feel not so isolated and alone and you realize other people out there have the same problems or same kind of things and they're finding ways to deal with it."

She identified her garden as a source of support, a place where she felt she could go if she needed to talk about her problems, which for those who live alone can mitigate feelings of isolation. Lisa-Marie also mentioned how the social aspect of her garden further supported her healing process with her disability,

> "It gives me a drive to get out of the apartment, I get to go see whether this is

> coming up or that is coming up, so it gives you the means to get out, where I had been home bound for more than 10 years and couldn't really get out to enjoy much. I had a yard, but it wasn't as much fun as this because here you are sharing with people and there is much more verbal communication which then helps calm the muscles down which helps calm down things mentally for myself too."

Although Lisa-Marie recognized that the physical benefits afforded by a private garden, she highlighted the therapeutic benefits of the social aspects of community gardening.

Heather, another urban gardener, further recognized that her garden provided a place where community members, both gardeners and non-gardeners could come and share their problems,

> "I guess it's a place where people can come and tell their stories and somebody will listen. You'll find that if you were gardening in here it is hard to do any gardening because people want to talk to you, people who wouldn't talk to you in the grocery store will come in here and start talking to you, and you hear a lot of really horribly sad stories."

That community gardens could contribute to emotional and social wellbeing through social support was reflected in many of the urban women's interviews. The relatively greater role of social wellbeing for the larger community in urban gardens was likely associated with the locations of these gardens, which are embedded right in the community. The relative lack of green space in Winnipeg's urban neighbourhoods (Forsyth, Bodnarchuk, O'Kell, & Roos, 2005) also increased the likelihood that non-gardeners would visit these spaces, especially since many of the gardens are used as thoroughfares to traverse the long city blocks.

Sharing What We Know: Self-Esteem and Community Gardening

Community gardens also facilitated the exchange of knowledge. Community gardens act as living classrooms where people learn about the many aspects of gardening,

from seeding and growing to preparing and preserving. Gardening knowledge is largely experiential, and thus almost all women recognized that the greatest source of gardening knowledge came from other gardeners, and quite often their parents. The affirmation of this otherwise undervalued knowledge system also contributed to wellbeing, as Anne a suburban gardener referred to,

> "I think gardeners are pretty modest about what they know. And it's funny because when you asked me about my gardening knowledge, I felt funny saying I was a knowledgeable gardener, but certainly in the garden there are a lot of people who come and ask me about my flowers and I'm always excited to talk about it because I don't get those opportunities outside the garden."

Lisa-Marie further suggested that her community garden was a place where official credentials did not matter, in part because of their irrelevance when it came to controlling nature,

> "You don't have to have a college education or a university degree, and you don't have to be worried because if you don't have those, you don't have to worry about being called dumb because no one is dumb about gardening. Two peas from the same pod will grow differently, there's nothing you can do about it, and nature is nature."

The confidence and sense of value grew for many of the woman when their knowledge was recognized and sought after. I witnessed on several occasions how fellow gardeners and other members of the community would often go to Lisa -Marie for cultural and biological gardening advice, which she found tremendously fulfilling. She is now recognized by many other neighbourhoods as a gardening "guru" and often invited to facilitate various workshops for other neighbourhood gardens, that from my observation contributed to her confidence and self esteem.

Much of the gardening experiences are culturally located and in turn reflect the diversity of gardeners. Cheryl, an urban gardener who had immigrated to Canada from

Sri Lanka discussed how many of the other gardeners would ask her about some of the unusual plants she grew. Indeed, she had been asked to deliver a workshop on the uses of herbs and of vegetables.

Annette added that other community members would often stop by and give their advice or learn about what she was growing. Thus, community gardens can also provide an opportunity for other community members to share their knowledge. Edna from the Millennium garden mentioned how the garden was a place where she could share some of the knowledge she had acquired throughout her lifetime,

> "Gardening is just in me, and I didn't want to have to quit. I can plant some things in pots on the balcony, but it's so nice to go to the garden and talk about different varieties of plants, and recalling all the different tomatoes we used to grow. There are so many things you forget about until you start talking with the other gardeners and you share stories about how you learned to deal with certain pests and stuff like that."

Having the opportunity to reflect on their knowledge and share in it with other gardeners may be particularly significant for the elderly, whose knowledge is often undervalued in western society.

That these community gardens provided a place where many of the women could go and be recognized as knowledgeable and continue their own learning was of great value for many of the women. Having a place where their talents and skills are acknowledged contributes to their self-esteem and ultimately their wellbeing, further contributing to community garden's therapeutic value. The women who discussed their community garden in this light were primarily from the urban gardens, and it seemed to be particularly significant for women who were visible minorities, unemployed and/or, living with a disability. Annette from the Spence Neighbourhood explicitly addressed this point, when she mentioned,

> "Now I am back at work, but for a while I wasn't working and by doing something like [community gardening] it gives you back your self esteem, you know you feel you have value and that helps put people back on track I think."

Environmental Health and Community Gardening

For some women, their urban and suburban community gardens were also places where they felt they could be environmental stewards, extending their perceptions of health beyond their own to ecological health, which can in turn contribute to their wellbeing. Linda, an urban gardener emphasized the importance of her garden for biodiversity,

> "If you ask some people what this garden is about they would say it is about biodiversity and preserving an environment where butterflies can live and where birds can come and that kind of thing…it's a little bit and people do what little they can do."

All of the urban community gardens hosted compost facilities, which many of the women perceived as a very positive initiative, especially when the larger neighbourhood started to use them (although this did create some frustrations when it came to managing overflowing composters). Environmental action may be even more significant for women, who arguably show greater concern for environmental issues (see Zelezny, Chua, & Aldrich, 2000 for examples). This may, in part, reflect differences in socialization between women and men, where women are largely socialized to "value the needs of others, [and] exhibit more helping behaviour and altruism" (Zelezny et al., 2000: 445).

Community gardens and healthy communities

Women from both urban and suburban community gardens shared similar ideas of community, summarized as a group of people who work together, socialize with one

another, and support each other. When discussing their ideas of community, many women commonly referred to the importance of "knowing your neighbours"; feeling part of a larger group; and encountering a wider diversity of people and ideas. Although the suburban and urban women shared similar sentiments about what community meant, they expressed different perspectives around how their community gardens contributed to their feelings about and ideas of a healthy community. The suburban women primarily discussed a healthy community existing within the garden, while the urban women described a healthy community in the context of the larger neighbourhood, of which the garden was a part.

A Healthy Garden Community

The larger suburban gardens attracted gardeners from many different neighbourhoods, creating a situation where they had the opportunity to interact with a group of people with whom they might otherwise not socialize. Many of the suburban women I spoke with referred to this circle as their 'gardening friends', a relationship that was most often restricted to the garden and gardening season. Lillian from Millennium Garden described how her fellow community gardeners created a social group distinct from her other communities,

> "...When you're out there you're with completely different people and that is your community very much with the gardening. There is only one couple from this block that go to the Millennium Gardens so of course we talk about it, but really it's in the garden - that is a community. And different ones are saying how you get to meet new people and so it is a different, that is a community and they are completely, completely separate."

Although many of the women discussed that gardener interactions were limited to the garden space they also discussed how their unanimous desire to garden enabled them to build a sense of community.

The women emphasized the importance of helping one another in their pursuit of gardening as their main community-building tool, reflecting their primary motivation to participate as a desire to cultivate the land. Supporting one another's need to garden is the most obvious way the gardeners were able to build a sense of community, especially considering the challenges of building relationships within the garden. Social interactions could be infrequent due to conflicting schedules and the large size of the garden plots. Therefore, the ability of relationships to expand beyond the common interest of gardening was limited, but by supporting each other's gardening success they transform the garden into a garden community.

Carol, from the Lindsay Street garden discussed how people in her garden supported one another by ensuring that anyone who wanted to garden could garden,

> "And community gardens, there are always people who will put in your stakes for you if it is something you can't do, so yeah there is always someone who will ensure that they can because I have helped people along the way– there are people out there who I have encouraged to continue and they say well I can't do it anymore, I can't carry the water or something and I will carry some water for them or I will put the stakes in ..."

The practical, gardening-based support provided in the suburban garden was also seen as a symbol of belonging. Stephanie, a suburban gardener who had just moved to the city discussed how the gardening support she received signified the existence of a community and that she belonged,

> "And if we couldn't get down there one week, someone would water our plants for us, so it was really nice in that sense. Yeah, it made us feel more at home absolutely. And then another day some guy comes along, he said "oh, I staked up your tomatoes for you, they were falling down" and so you know it is sort of like a sense of community there and everything."

Although other gardeners I spoke with were quite adamant that no one should go in and interfere with someone else's plot, Stephanie appeared to interpret this assistance, not as meddling, but as the gardeners taking her under their wing. Ultimately, the suburban women described the garden as transforming a group of relative strangers into a garden community by creating an opportunity where they could gather, discuss and support one another's common interest - gardening.

Healthy Neighbourhood Community

The urban gardeners also discussed their community garden in terms of creating a healthy community, but this community extended beyond the garden proper. Like their suburban counterparts, the urban women recognized the community existing amongst the gardeners, but they did not distinguish between their garden community and their neighbourhood community. Urban community gardens were regarded as community places because the location and design of these gardens increased the likelihood the larger neighbourhood would make use of these spaces.

All of the urban women described how their community gardens affected others in their communities, often locating their gardening activity in the context of this larger community work. Cheryl was initially attracted to the community garden in order to fulfill her passion for gardening and to grow some of the vegetables and herbs from her home country that she found difficult to find or too expensive in Canada. However, when

discussing her community garden work she described a strong community focus extending beyond her own desire to grow food plants,

> "Everything I plant doesn't have to be for me, me, me; it can be for the entire neighbourhood, it is for everyone because it encourages the community to participate and to have some courage, and to have some pride in improving the neighborhood."

Cheryl's motivation to community garden extends beyond satisfying her own gardening needs, as she recognized the potential of her community gardening to inspire other people in the community to get involved in bettering the community as a whole.

The improvement that urban community gardens made to the biophysical environment was often attributed to creating a healthy neighbourhood community. Lisa-Marie described what the space looked like before her community garden went in,

> "This was just an empty lot, it had a couple mounds of dirt, some old house foundation, pieces of bits of fencing, needles all over the place, diapers. I found out it was known as needle park and I could see why, it was just a dump, a real dump."

The urban gardens were often introduced as a way of dealing with abandoned lots, which were usually seen as "eyesores" and littered with garbage and weeds. The impact of these dilapidated physical environments affects how people view themselves and their communities, as Lewis (1996 p 54) states, "what we see often tells us what we are." Many women thought that living in a rundown community enabled passive acceptance of these conditions and, indeed, further dilapidation. Furthermore these neglected neighbourhoods reflect a breakdown of social order, which can contribute to feelings of mistrust amongst residents and can undermine social connections (Ross, Mirowsky & Pribesh, 2002). The transformation of physical space associated with the gardens changed the attitude of many community members to create a renewed sense of

community, as Beth's comments illustrate,

> "Before this garden, people didn't really show much interest in the community. No one really seemed to care about how it looked because everywhere they turned there was an empty lot or abandoned house. But when this garden went in people immediately became enthusiastic about it and were always telling me how happy they were to see the community improving and asked how they could get involved."

The urban women also stressed how the community gardens increased the safety of the neighborhoods, which, in turn, contributed to a healthy community. Both violent and property crime is considerably higher for those living in the inner city than for those living in newer developments on the periphery (Forsyth et al., 2005), and crime in Winnipeg is the second highest of major cities across Canada (Stats Canada, 2007). Lisa-Marie felt that the gardens led to "more eyes on the street" and created an informal neighbourhood watch. Annette, from the Spence neighbourhood, spoke of a gang member that felt protective of the gardens,

> " ...he will come to me and he will say there were some punks there last night in the garden and they were sitting on the bench and drinking beer so I kicked them out!"

Generally, the urban women felt that the gardens raised people's expectations; such that what used to be accepted behavior in the vacant lots was no longer acceptable in the gardens. Furthermore, the social connections the women made through their garden appeared to increase their perceptions of safety because they were more familiar with their neighbours and had met others who felt that neighbourhood improvement was a priority, like Sophie,

> "It was an occasion for me to meet my neighbors and to work together on something that is important to all of us."

Finally, the urban community gardens contributed to the (re)creation of a neighbourhood community by allowing residents to explore their similarities – and, for that matter, dissimilarities. The diverse inner city neighbourhoods, where 34% of Spence residents and 15% of West Broadway residents are considered visible minorities (City of Winnipeg, 2001), can potentially compromise a sense of community and belonging if the various cultural groups are not provided with an opportunity to interact. One gardener mentioned how she saw the importance of the gardens in their ability to attract others from diverse backgrounds, in large part because gardening appeared to be of interest and resonate with people from almost every culture. Furthermore, gardening can act as a universal language, allowing people to interact with one another even in the absence of a common verbal language. Without these opportunities, neighbourhoods often become segregated and increase the chance that racial or cultural stereotypes will prevail. Cheryl discussed how through her garden experience she had the opportunity to work through some of the prejudices she had been exposed to about Aboriginal people,

> "I got a chance to, like know more of the Natives, like we normally, we don't, like we kind of keep away from them right? And I noticed like towards McGee we get a lot of the Native kids and I got more comfortable around them. All these people give you a bad impression meeting Natives, but you see some of them are trying to better themselves, so it is not like everybody is drinking."

Shinew, Glover & Parry (2004) believe that leisure settings like community gardens can provide a space where interracial connections might lead to more positive relationships. These gardens may foster relationships amongst neighbours if they encourage people to recognize what they share, be it the joy of gardening or an appreciation of the gardens. Lisa-Marie from Spirit Park spoke to the importance of recognizing similarities with people whom you might not think you share any similarities,

"It breaks down the barriers of color, race, creed, religion because gardening doesn't recognize any of those. For me it was something that taught me more about humanity and people and how even though we have our differences once you realize the similarities that's really what matters – is what is similar, not what's different."

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research indicates that community gardens are not only recreational spaces or neighbourhood improvement initiatives, but they are also places that contribute to the maintenance and promotion of wellbeing and health. All of the women from this study discussed how the activities of gardening and community gardening specifically contributed to their feelings of wellbeing, and therefore, by definition, contributed to their health. Both urban and suburban women understood their community gardens to maintain and improve aspects of their wellbeing and health, representing Williams (1998) idea of a therapeutic landscape.

These community gardens also appeared to provide different therapeutic landscape experiences for the urban and suburban women, reflecting Conradson's (2005) idea that therapeutic landscape experiences are a relational and contextual outcome. The urban therapeutic landscape experience appeared to be affected by the neighbourhood impacts the women associated with their community gardens, such as increased socialization, sense of safety, and neighbourhood pride. This, in turn, reflects the differing neighbourhood circumstances between the urban and suburban women. Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods report higher crime rates, both violent and property, poorer housing stock (Forsyth et al., 2005) and lower employment rates (City of Winnipeg, 2001) than any of their suburban counterparts. The urban community gardens improved these women's perceptions of their neighbourhood and provided a place where

they could help shape their community into what they saw as a more positive physical and social environment. This neighbourhood change contributed to their interpretation of the therapeutic value of their community gardens.

The suburban women's therapeutic landscape experience appeared to be affected more by the sense of community that evolved within the garden and remained separate from their other communities. These garden communities may provide some of the suburban women with a needed break from their other roles within the voluntary sector, in their neighbourhoods, at work or in their families. This physical and mental separation enables some of the suburban women to temporarily relieve themselves of the stresses and demands of their other roles, both through the gardening itself and the interactions with the other members of the garden community. The suburban women appeared to appreciate the fact that there was little controversy in the garden, but instead a supportive environment that promoted a positive experience; something that may be missing in their other communities, such as at work or in their neighbourhoods.

This research highlights the potential that health interests might play in linking suburban and urban community gardeners together to strengthen the community garden movement. Winnipeg's urban garden groups are beginning to network with one another, as a means to share resources, to resist development pressures, and support one another's desire to garden. However, through my work with the recently established Winnipeg Community Garden Network, I have noticed there is little interaction between the urban and suburban gardeners. This appears to primarily reflect the perceived differences between the motivations and experiences of urban and suburban women, where suburban women are focused on cultivating plants and urban women on building community and

working towards social change (Lind, 2008). Although there are important differences in motivations between urban and suburban gardeners, it is clear that community gardening, and community gardens contribute to health and wellbeing, regardless of garden location. These shared experiences might facilitate gardeners from urban and suburban environments to identify with one another, and recognize that regardless of where a community garden is located, how it is operated or what socioeconomic population it serves, they are places that maintain and improve peoples health and wellbeing through everything from social interaction, to physical activity, exposure to green space, increased self-esteem, and healthy food. Recognizing this common experience could lead to a larger network of community gardeners that could share resources and support, and have a larger voice when interacting with the municipal and provincial government.

Community gardens are becoming increasingly vulnerable to development, regardless of whether they are on private or public land (ACGA, 1998), and over the course of my research four community gardens were eliminated. These threats hold true for all the gardens. Suburban gardens are often understood as leisure spaces, primarily benefiting the gardeners, although one gardener was quite concerned that his community garden might be lost to a new baseball diamond, which he assumed the city would likely see as a better use of neighbourhood space. Some suburban community gardens have become too cumbersome for private landowners to administer, and because these gardeners are often more privileged than those in the inner city, their community garden space may not be framed as a necessity, particularly when many of them have their own yards to cultivate. That urban gardens largely occupy potential housing sites which makes them susceptible to development given that inner city housing is recognized as a

need, especially if they are seen as a temporary means of revitalizing communities (Lind, 2008). Yet, if community gardens are looked at as both revitalization tools and recreational spaces as well as places that maintain and improve the wellbeing and health of women, then the opportunity for public health policies to protect community gardens may come into play.

Although community gardening may not challenge some of the structural inequities that compromise women's health, this research shows they play an important role in women's personal wellbeing and health. While I agree that the larger economic, political and social issues that challenge women's ability to achieve good health are necessary struggles to undertake, the smaller and often overlooked actions that contribute to women's wellbeing and health are just as important. It is my belief that supporting small initiatives that contribute to women's wellbeing and health, like community gardens, increases the opportunity for more women to get involved in the larger issues because it builds self-esteem and the capacity to address issues that are often too overwhelming for those with poor health and/or from marginalized backgrounds. Exploring how the urban women perceive their community gardening to address some of the larger issues confronting their communities as well as encouraging community organizing is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 5

"How would you feel if someone told you – you weren't worth a flower?": The relationship between urban women's community gardening and community organizing.

Abstract: *Community gardens are now widely recognized as an important and popular revitalization tool in many inner city neighbourhoods across North America. Although women play a fundamental role in their success, this has generally been overlooked in the literature, which has instead focused on the benefits of, and threats to, community gardens as a whole. I examine the role of women in urban community gardens and more generally the relevance of community gardening as a women-centered model of community organizing. This research was conducted in 2003 and 2005 in the two inner city neighbourhoods of Spence and West Broadway in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Semi-directed interviews were carried out with 12 inner city gardeners, nine of which later participated in open-ended video interviews. I also interviewed three community garden facilitators and a municipal politician who represents the West Broadway neighbourhood. The women discussed how their community gardening enabled them to address neighbourhood concerns that included safety, limited green space and sense of community, and did indeed reflect the women-centered model of community organizing in both style and content. The network building and empowerment of these seemingly marginalized women reflected the style component of women-centered community organizing, while the focus on the relationship between green space and the neighbourhood children suggested the content component of the women-centered model of community organizing. By using their gendered roles as mothers to frame the gardens as green spaces necessary for the neighbourhood children and community building, many of the women were prepared to mobilize around their gardens. The outcomes of this research shows that these women and their gardens play a vital role in the lives of many in their communities, and that they represent an important locus for further social change in these lower income, inner city neighbourhoods.*

INTRODUCTION

In North America, urban neighbourhoods have been responding to years of disinvestment by mobilizing around issues that include affordable housing, community services, and crime. Before this process of mobilization can occur however, the community has to organize, which involves bringing people together to explore common

interests and build relationships (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). Community organizing is often considered pre-political action because it occurs before any movement exists (Stall and Stoecker, 1998), whereas community activism, as the name implies, involves the more political and public sphere, and thus more highly visible work. That men often take on the public and political activism often gives the appearance that community work is male-dominated (Dominelli, 2006). Community organizing plays a fundamental role in social and political change, but generally receives relatively little attention. The immense effort required to build connections and gain support for campaigns or causes usually goes unnoticed and thus is often regarded as less important. This point was illustrated in Susan Ostrander's (2004) survey of feminist organizations, many of which cited community organizing as their number one priority, but chose not to include this work in their grant applications because philanthropic organizations did not consider it a priority. As Stall and Stoecker (1998) point out, community organizing is often the invisible labor behind any given movement but is rarely acknowledged, perhaps because women largely dominate such work. Thus the importance of women and their role in organizing and social and political changes goes largely unrecognized.

Models of Community Organizing

Community organizing has been most often portrayed in two different models. The Alinsky model was named after Saul Alinsky, a well-known American community activist often referred to as the father of community organizing (Thomson, 2005). Before publishing his book *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) Alinsky started his community organizing career in the poor Chicago Back-of –the-Yards neighbourhood during the

1930's, where he adopted similar methods used in trade unions to get residents to relate to one anther through their shared grievances (Thomson, 2005). The Alinsky model is considered confrontational and conflict-based by nature, where gaining power in the political sphere is the primary goal (Martin, 2002) and based on Alinsky's perception of "society as a compromise between competing self-interested individuals in the public sphere…the organizer's job is to prepare citizens to engage in the level of public conflict necessary for them to be included in the compromise process" (Stall and Stoeker, 1998:738). One of Alinsky's tactics was to focus on an outside enemy that could build a sense of community amongst the group and eventually lead to action, particularly nonviolent conflict which he regarded as the only real negotiating tool of the powerless (Reitzes & Reitzes, 1987). The Alinsky model often depends on trained community organizers to help build a sense of community and win immediate small victories to help the organization gain momentum and credibility.

In contrast to the "adversarial, oppositional, obstructionist, polarizing, overly concerned about cooptation and repression, confrontational, and conflict-based" (Ostrander, 2003:53) nature of the Alinsky model, the women-centered model is based on different priorities. Where Mizrahi (2007) describes the Alinsky model with a " focus on issues and instrumental strategies for social action in the public arena (43)", she described the women-centered model as process oriented and making the personal political. Unlike the Alinsky model, there is no one woman responsible for this style of organizing, rather it comes from a long history of women's community work, often rooted in private sphere concerns (Martin, 2002).

Major contributors to the women-centered model of organizing include the work

of African American women during the 19th and early 20th centuries who organized for certain services like day cares and orphanages, as well as against civil atrocities like lynching and rape (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). Also contributing to the women-centered model during this same time period was the separate work of many white, middle class women who were organizing around urban reforms, based on their roles as protectors of family and neighbourhoods (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). Where the Alinsky model is based on conflict, the women-centered model is based on an ethic of care that stems from women's traditional caretaking roles (Stall and Stoecker, 1998), and organizing is based on network building and empowerment (Martin, 2002).

The compromise Alinsky saw between self-interested individuals is not reflected in the women-centered model, rather justice is understood "as a practical reciprocity in the network of relationships that make up the community" (Stall and Stoecker, 1998: 739). Where the Alinsky model is focused on *community organizing*, the women-centered model is focused on *organizing community* (Stall and Stoeker, 1998). Although the women-centered model is based on over a century of women's community organizing work, Ostrander (2003) highlights the relative lack of attention women have received for their style of organizing in her review of *Civic Innovation in America* by Sirianni and Friedland (2001) when she states "Sirianni's and Friedland's analysis of the new movements for civic renewal emphasizes the very same approaches that characterize women's community organizing: sharing power, finding common ground, building relationships, and developing collaborative alliances (53)."

Neither the Alinsky nor the women-centered model is understood to be biologically determined; rather they both reflect different histories of organizing, as well

as women and men's gendered experiences (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). These models are gendered in terms of style and issues. Women often "use accepted gender roles of wife and mother to take action on behalf of their families and immediate communities (Kaplan, 1997 cited in Gittell, Ortega-Bustamante, Steffy, 2000: 128)," and their community work can be seen as a reflection and extension of their roles as mothers (Abrahams, 1996). The social expectations placed on women affects their community work by shaping what issues are given importance (i.e., those concerned with the private sphere) and informing how they should be addressed (i.e., non-confrontational approaches) (Mizrahi, 2007). Traditionally, women have had strong ties to the community and are often responsible for upholding social relationships (Mansbridge, 1995), which, in turn, influence their organization campaigns. Maintaining and campaigning for neighbourhood resources that reflect their roles as mothers or caregivers, such as daycares, has thus long been a focus of women's community work (Gittell et.al., 2000).

Community Gardening and Women's Community Work

Community gardening is one form of community work where women play a central role (Patel, 1991; Glover, Parry & Shinew, 2005; Hynes, 1996). This is the process of reclaiming derelict and abandoned properties for the purpose of growing food, flowers and indeed relationships and possibilities for themselves, their families and their communities. One of the immediate and most tangible benefits of community gardens is the transformation of physical environments from vacant and garbage-filled lots into visually appealing green space (Keller, 1994; Warner, 1987). Community gardens

symbolize that residents care about their neighbourhoods and are making a better home for all, human and non-human alike. They diversify urban ecosystems by introducing a wide range of plants, which, in turn attract a corresponding diversity of wildlife (Gaston, Warren, Thompson & Smith, 2005). Moreover, they decrease water run-off and soil erosion and often integrate composting facilities that are used by both gardeners and neighbours. These spaces also facilitate the growth of social relationships along with plants (Glover, 2004; Kweon, Sullivan & Wiley, 1998), and economic benefits from gardening range from cost savings on food to increases in neighbouring property values (Been and Voicu, 2007). Associated educational benefits are also a widely recognized asset, as gardeners learn different growing techniques, and how to work together when responding to garden-related challenges (Glover et al., 2005). These benefits, in turn, can help local residents organize by recognizing their shared community hopes and ideals that can potentially lead to mobilization on any number of community issues.

Roles of women in community gardens

Historically, community gardens increased in popularity during times of depression and war, and women's roles in these gardens was given little if any attention. Motivations underlying community gardening are now recognized as more diverse. Yet the role of women is still largely overlooked even though studies generally indicate that women are, at least, equal participants in this activity in North America (Glover et al.; 2005, Patel, 1991; Schmelzkoppf, 1995; Warman, 1999). That gardens provide many social, nutritional, educational, and economic benefits for their surrounding neighbourhoods reflects the socially constructed caregiver role of women, which

"provides resources for community members and promotes values regarding the needs and meaning of 'community'" (Abrahams, 1996: 769). As outlined by the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA, 2006), the values and issues these gardens are seen as addressing reflect those of women-centered organizing and are based on "community building, collectivism, caring, mutual respect and self-transformation" (Barnett, 1995 cited in Stall and Stoecker, 1998 p.733). Yet, the ACGA similarly fails to make any explicit gender link with these activities. In contrast, it can be argued that community gardens represent women-centered models of community organizing because of their ability to create opportunities for network building and empowerment, and their common association with women-centered issues involving children, food, and the environment.

Although women's contributions to grassroots campaigning is increasingly acknowledged (e.g., Brown & Ferguson, 1995; Bystydzienski, & Sekhon, 1999; Kaplan, 1997; Pardo, 1990), and the role of community gardens as grassroots community building initiatives is well documented (e.g., Hynes, 1996; Landman, 1993; Riddell, 1993), the combined roles of women as community organizers and community gardeners continues to be overlooked. Furthermore, community gardening has yet to be looked at through the lens of the women-centered model of community organizing, despite evident congruence.

My goal in this chapter is to address the ongoing absence of women's voices in the community garden movement, and the lack of focus on community gardening as a manifestation of the women-centered model of community organizing. I will explore how some Winnipeg women living in the inner city portray their community gardening as community organizing, and assess to what extent the community gardens represent an

opportunity for women to address broader community issues they identify as important. Finally, I will examine the implications community gardening has for community development and community organizing as a whole.

METHODS

This study presents the findings from interviews with women who community garden in the inner city neighbourhoods of West Broadway and Spence in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Three additional interviews were also conducted with community garden facilitators in Spence. Community gardens are not a new initiative in Winnipeg, but date back to the World War II era as "victory gardens" that generated food for local families. However, the city is presently experiencing a boom in community gardens. Over the last 10 years the popularity of community gardens, especially in the urban centre has grown substantially, and by 2007 I counted 14 community gardens in the inner-city. The increased interest is associated with community revitalization efforts that many inner city neighbourhoods are currently undertaking.

The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into women's community gardening motivations, experiences, and values in order to better understand how women perceive their community gardens and gardening and their role in the broader community. It is part of a larger study that focused on the experiences of both urban and suburban gardeners (Lind, 2008).

Participants

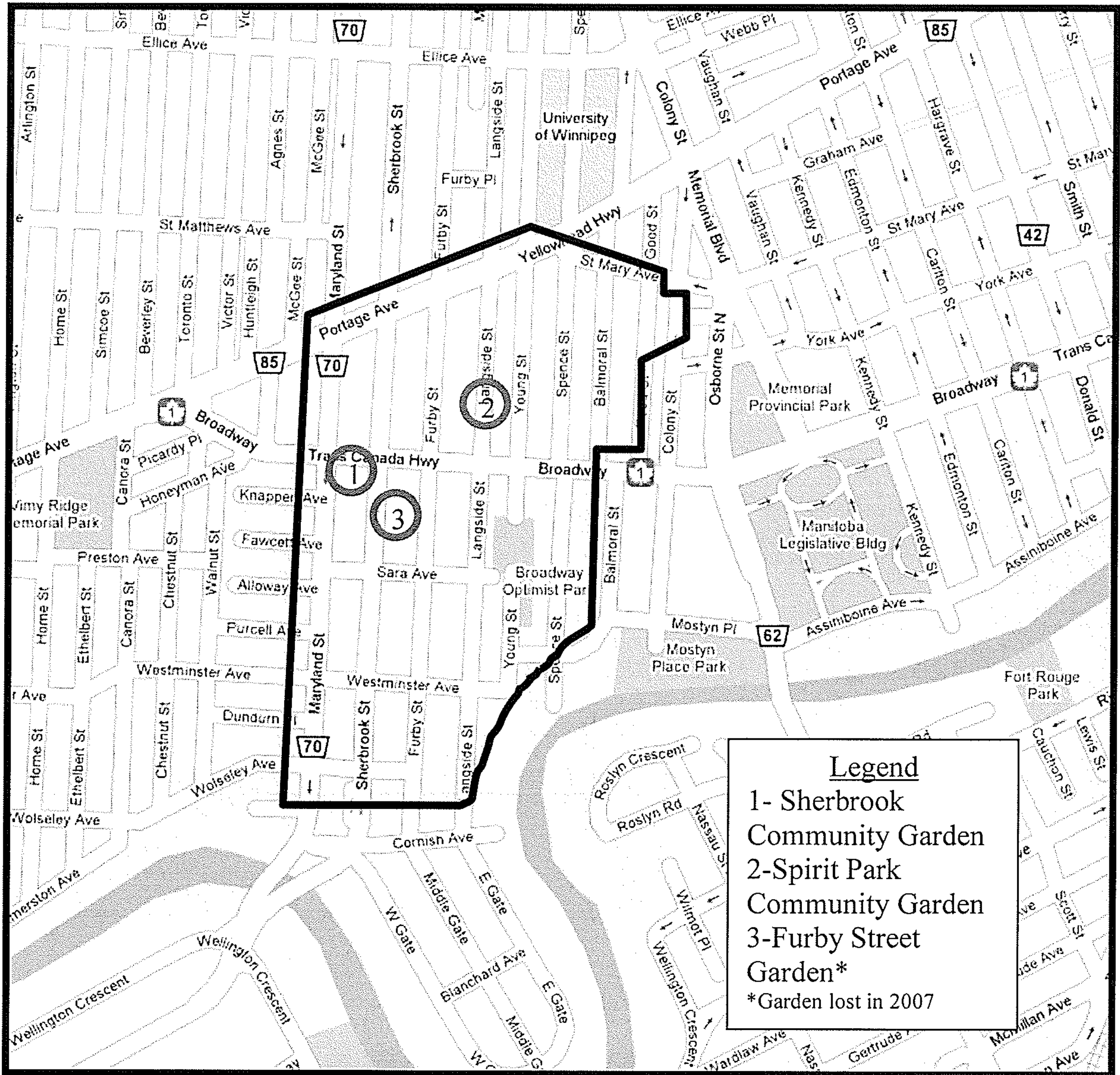
In total, I interviewed 12 women from six community gardens. Three gardens were from West Broadway: Sherbrook community garden (3 gardeners), Spirit Park community garden (3) and Furby garden (1). The other three gardens were from Spence neighbourhood: McGee St community garden (3 gardeners), Maryland Street community garden (1), and Langside community garden (1) (See Maps 2.1 and 2.2 for garden locations).

The average age category for the 12 women was between 40-49 years of age. All participants had annual family incomes below $40, 000; four indicated it fell between $10, 000-$19,999; six indicated between '$20,000 - $29,999'; and one indicated "$30,000 - $39,999', while one women chose not to answer this question. Four held college or university degrees, three women indicated they had taken some college or university level courses, and three had grade 12 or less. Six lived in apartments; five lived in detached houses, and one in a rooming house. Three women self identified as Aboriginal, one as Sri Lankan, one as French-Canadian, and the rest as being of Western European descent. All the women indicated they had children.

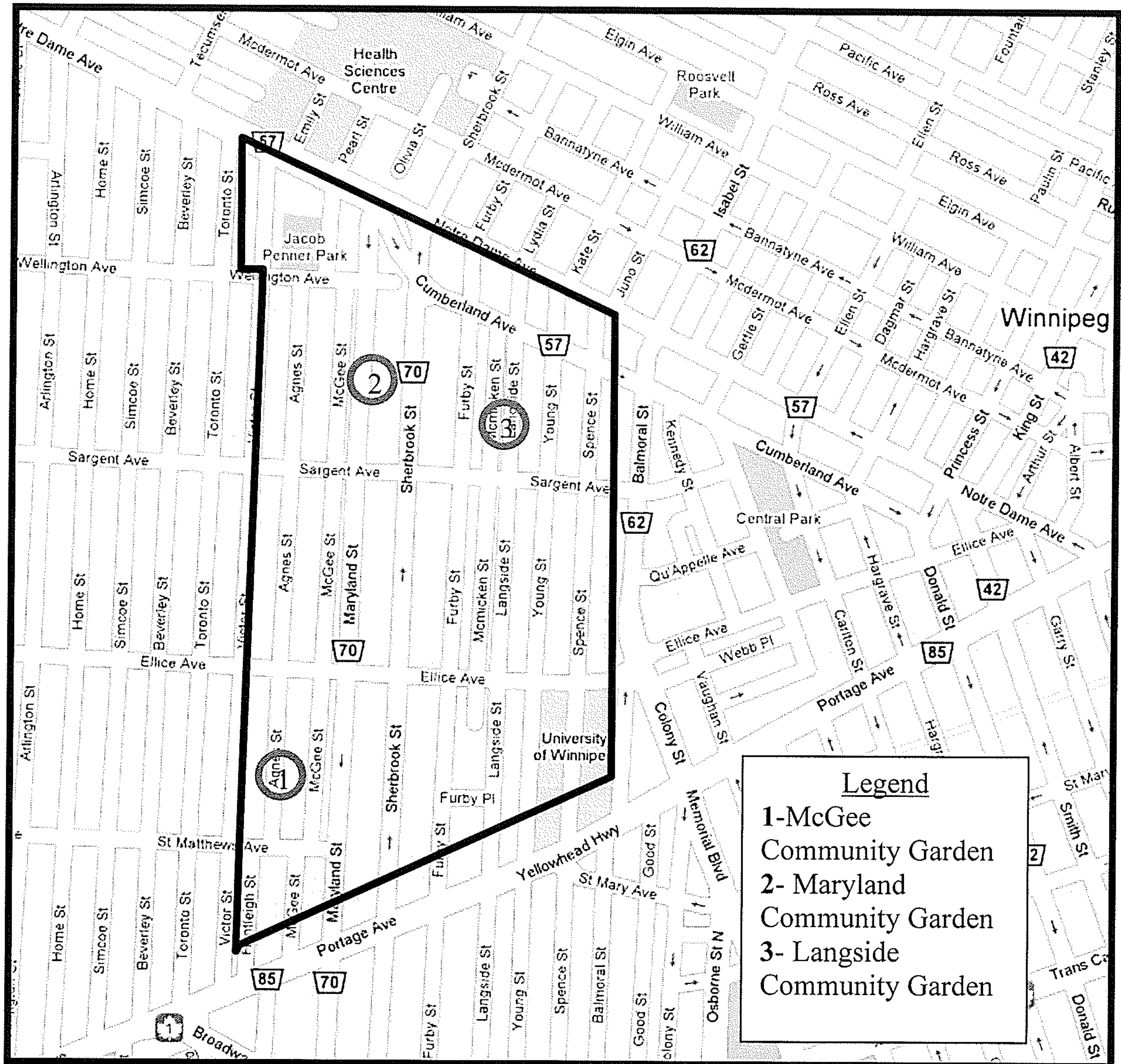
Setting

Spence and West Broadway are adjacent to one another in Winnipeg's inner city (see Figure 2.3). According to the latest neighbourhood profile (City of Winnipeg, 2001), West Broadway and Spence had populations of 5, 045 and 3,750 people, respectively. Over 95% of residents in both communities spoke English. In total, 32.3% and 27.5% of residents in Spence and West Broadway, respectively, identify as Aboriginal, in contrast to 8.6% of Winnipeg's total population. In Spence, 34% of the residents are visible

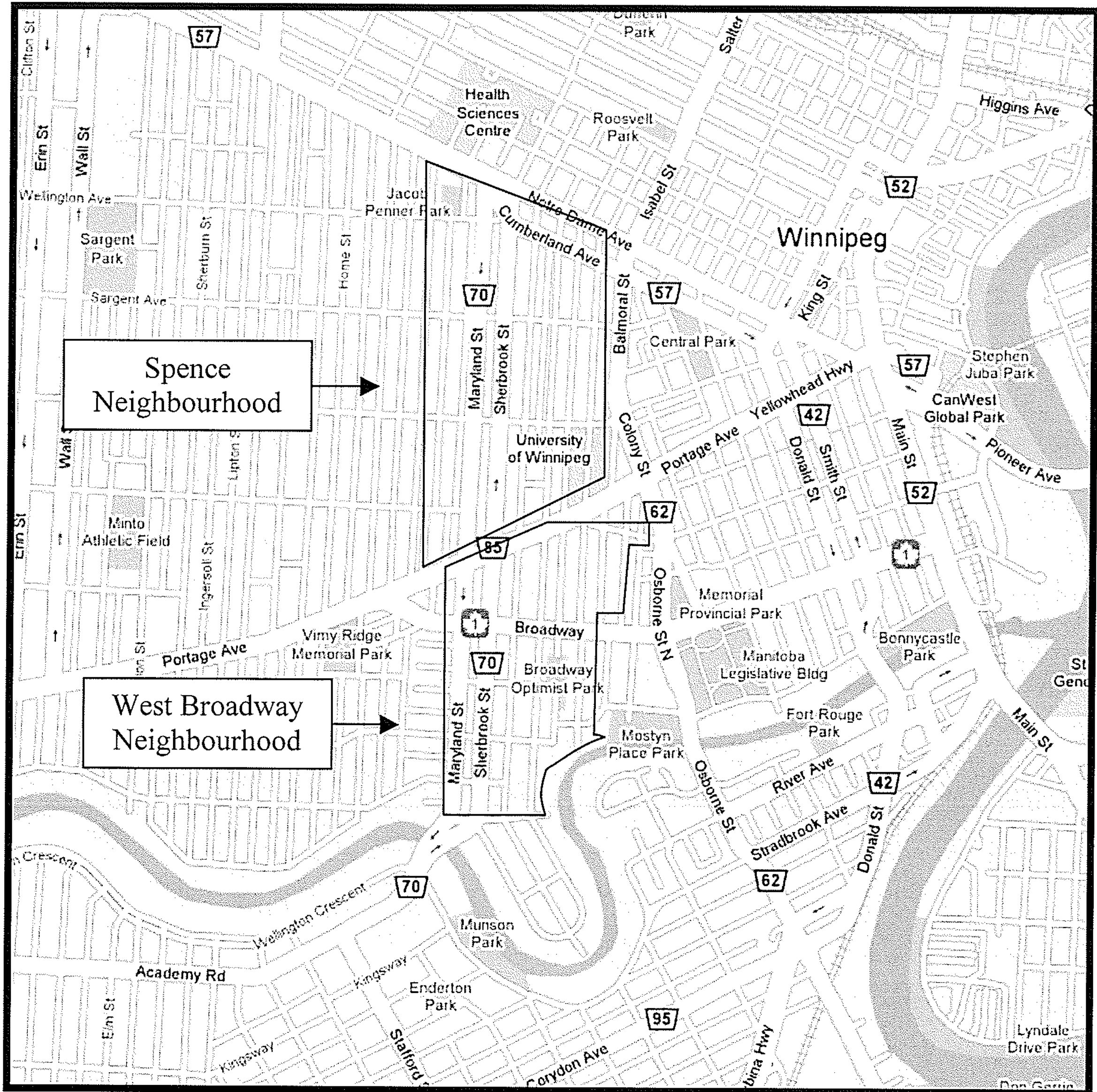
minorities, in contrast to 15% and 13.4% of West Broadway and Winnipeg, respectively. The average employment income, including full and part time employment, for West Broadway was $16, 590 and $14, 039 for the Spence neighbourhood, compared with an average of $29, 145 for the city as a whole. One-parent, female-headed families were the most dominant family structure in both neighbourhoods.



Map 2.1: Location of participating inner city community gardens situated within the boundaries of the West Broadway neighbourhood, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.



Map 2.2: Location of participating inner city community gardens located in the Spence Neighbourhood of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.



Map 2.3: Location of inner city neighbourhoods of West Broadway and Spence in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

The community gardens were all located on city-owned property, except for the Sherbrook garden, which was situated on land owned by the West Broadway Development Corporation. Most of the gardens were small and situated on single or double city lots and were started within the last 10 years.

Procedure and Analysis

In June 2003, I contacted neighbourhood association greening coordinators whose role was to facilitate the neighbourhood community gardens, by telephone and email, giving a summary of my intended research and requesting that my contact information be forwarded to any women gardeners. The gardeners would then contact me if they were interested in participating in the research. In 2005, a second round of interviews was conducted with women who had participated in the initial phase of the research. I directly contacted the community garden facilitators through the Spence Neighbourhood Association, a community development organization focused on neighbourhood renewal and revitalization, and St. Matthew's/Maryland Community Ministry, a joint ministry of the Anglican and United Churches that runs various community outreach programs and social justice campaigns.

The initial interview schedule had both open and close-ended questions, focusing on community gardening history, motivations, experiences, and perceived challenges. The interviews on average lasted between 90-120 minutes, and each interview participant received a $20 honorarium. Participants were then handed a sheet of paper focusing on demographic information and asked to fill it out on their own, which I collected before I left. These first twelve interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in their entirety.

The second round of interviews focused on issues relating to community and community organization and were conducted with nine gardeners, all of whom had been interviewed in the first phase, as well as three community garden facilitators and one city counselor, using an non-standardized interview approach. These interviews served two purposes, the first was research based, while the other was meant to contribute to a public awareness video I was making, therefore all interviews were video recorded and downloaded onto the computer in their entirety. I also attended a number of garden meetings, events and frequently visited the sites and interacted with gardeners and neighbours, all of which acted to inform my analysis.

The 12 transcriptions from the first phase of interviews were reviewed and read over in detail, where the following themes were identified: community challenges, community garden benefits and challenges. The transcriptions were then imported into the Atlas-ti program (Muhr, 1997), and using a thematic analysis framework I reviewed the transcriptions line by line and used an open coding format to create many sub-themes to the initial broad themes (Berg, 2001). The second phase of video interviews were analyzed using the editing software 'Final Cut Pro:4' (Apple, 2003). Because these interviews were informed by the first phase, they expanded on already identified themes. The video interviews were analyzed by creating a series of 'bins', which were labeled with the previously identified sub-themes from the first phase of analysis. I then reviewed each interview and placed sections of video into the bin/theme that reflected what the women were talking about. If a new theme came out through this process of analysis I created a new bin for that theme, but labeled it a different color so as to identify it as a new theme that was not represented in the first phase of analysis. By keeping the

original interviews intact, the information stored in the 'bins' could easily be located within the larger context of the interview. Both forms of interviews informed the results of this chapter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Lack of Community

It was important to understand how these women first perceived their neighbourhoods in order to assess the implications of the gardens. I remember Lisa-Marie* discussing what a negative impression she had of West Broadway when she first moved into the neighbourhood. She discussed how guarded many of the community members seemed to be; few people appeared interested in engaging in a conversation to the degree that she was never confident people would return her 'hello'. Many of the women from both neighbourhoods indicated that residents were hesitant to interact with one another, and as Sara from Spence said, "some people don't want to talk because they are afraid." The absence of informal social connections amongst neighbours may stem from a sense of mistrust, which is thought to be higher in low-income neighbourhoods that experience more problems with crime, incivilities, litter, and vandalism because they are interpreted by residents as a breakdown of social control and order (Ross, Mirowsky &Pribesh, 2002). On the other hand, that women generally show greater feelings of trust in their neighbourhood, despite their relative vulnerability (Ross et al., 2002), may signify

* All names used in the presentation of results are pseudonyms

the importance of informal social connections and network building.

Lisa-Marie also recalled how her street used to be known as 'Gangside', as opposed to 'Langside'. Friends from her old neighbourhood warned her about moving there, reflecting its reputation during the 1990's as "Murder's Half Acre" and one of the most dilapidated neighbourhoods in Winnipeg (Anderson, Butler, Chorney, Funk, Grant, Platt &Skelton, 2004). Beth, a gardener from Spence also talked about the degradation of her community. Thirty-five years before it had been a decent working class neighbourhood, but because of poor housing conditions and declining economic opportunities the neighbourhood had deteriorated. Indeed, some local media have reported that Winnipeg's inner city should be considered a national embarrassment, adding that "our core area ought to be considered a federal emergency disaster zone" (Hansen, 2006). Both Lisa-Marie and Beth felt people within and outside their neighbourhood carried negative stereotypes of the inner city that prevented people from wanting to move in and that encouraged people to leave. The executive director of the Spence Neighbourhood Association explained how these negative perceptions prevent the building of community because people tend to escape as soon as they are able, and, further, are less likely to work at reversing the decline. This "defeatist attitude" compromised any ability to improve the neighbourhood that was otherwise characterized by boarded up houses, vacant lots, gang problems, addiction issues, and poverty. Lisa-Marie described this state and the implications it had for residents,

> "When you drive down an area that has not been taken care of – how do you feel? You feel unsure, some people feel scared, you want to get out of there. Well, how do you think the people who live there feel?!"

Signs of decay "snowball" by increasing resident withdrawal and contributing to further

neglect (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). A decreased sense of community can compromise women's community work, by increasing the likelihood that women will focus their energies on familial rather than community priorities, and isolating them from like-minded neighbours who might, in turn, affect change (Brodsky, 1999)

Community Safety

Another issue the women discussed was that of neighbourhood safety. One participant had been robbed twice in her community, the second experience resulting in a more serious assault and thus affecting her sense of security. Winnipeg has the second highest homicide rate in Canada at 3.08 homicides per 100, 000 people and a total population of 648, 400 (Li, 2007). The majority of these homicides occur in the inner-city (Fitzgerald, Wisener & Savoie, 2004). The fear of violence, including sexual violence, is more often a fear for women and can affect women's mobility within the community (Keane, 1998; Mehta and Bondi, 1999). This insecurity is aggravated by fear for the safety of their children or dependants. One garden facilitator spoke of a young girl who was on her way home when a car stopped and was asked if she was working, to which she replied 'no' and went home to ask her mother what this man meant by 'working'. Although many issues factored into children's safety, one of the most basic problems was the lack of safe public play areas. This situation was aggravated by long blocks and busy streets, and the reluctance of some parents to let their children play without supervision. As Lisa-Marie highlights:

> "...for people in this immediate community there was nothing, not a thing for the kids to play on without having to cross Portage or Broadway*. And the parents

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* Portage Avenue and Broadway are busy, multi-lane, high traffic roads.

didn't want kids going very far."

The goals of community development, for many of these women, needed to include addressing issues that affected the local children.

Housing

The focus on affordable housing and business development as a means to revitalize neighbourhoods reflects a conventional, often male directed, attitude towards community development (Gittell et al., 2000). Housing is understandably a top priority for many inner-city neighbourhoods having experienced years of disinvestment. The Executive Director from the Spence Neighbourhood Association described the situation in this manner:

> "The housing was so poor there were a lot of houses being caught on fire or getting to the state where they were being shut down by the health department and nobody was prepared to put in the money to open them back up because what you could get for a house was so low… homeowners would put their houses up to try and sell them for five thousand, ten thousand dollars and couldn't get a buyer - they were just abandoning properties."

Moreover quality housing is often too expensive, forcing many to live in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Although the need for housing was flagged as a top priority amongst many of the community members I spoke with and while many were glad to see the improvements to the housing and house values in their neighbourhoods, there was an associated downside. Many of the women identified that access to affordable housing was starting to decline as renters were evicted so building owners could take advantage of the increases in property values. Some also criticized that much of the focus for the recent housing development has been on home ownership, which in effect excluded many low-income people, particularly women, who were unable to access the funding programs or

to handle mortgage and maintenance expenses.

This traditional view of neighbourhood development often gives priority to housing and potential spaces for housing over green space. Yet, many of the participants emphasized that housing and green space need to be simultaneously considered, and, as Linda from West Broadway indicated, "what they don't realize is that they are creating a habitat which is unfit for humans to live because it is all a built environment." Although the focus on green space was most often framed in terms of the needs of the neighbourhood children, it was also seen to be necessary for everyone (Lind, 2008). The right to access green space regardless of one's neighbourhood represents an issue of environmental justice, a movement where women have long played a dominant role (Kirk G, 1997).

LINKING THE WOMEN-CENTERED MODEL OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING TO COMMUNITY GARDENING IN BOTH STYLE AND CONTENT

Finding Common Ground through Community Gardening

One of the primary challenges facing these inner-city neighbourhoods was the lack of community spirit or sense of community, which many of the women felt prevented residents from taking steps towards improving their neighbourhoods. The primary benefit many of these women associated with community gardens, however, was their ability to help create a greater sense of community. One simple, but very effective way community gardens can help build community is by creating a common subject for people to discuss. When Lisa-Marie now talks about her community, she highlights her frequent conversations with neighbours,

> "I can walk down the street and I've got five or six, if not more people that will stop me in the summer time to talk about plants or this or that – I've missed more busses that way…it provides that sense of neighbourhood."

She also mentioned how conversations with other community members would often start out about the garden, but evolve into other issues, particularly those of broader concern to the neighbourhood. The increase in these informal social connections plays into the network building that is paramount to the women-centered model of organizing.

Not only can community gardens build community by providing common subject matter for discussion, they can also help people identify common values. Linda, another gardener from West Broadway, saw the potential of community gardens to help gardeners identify with one another,

> "There's a lot of different people with different beliefs, but what holds us all together is we all believe the garden is a good thing and that's our core value that we all share."

She recognized her community garden as a neighbourhood feature that many people identified as an asset. It provided a common bond and helped to build community through common values. This is a defining characteristic of community (MacQueen, 2001). The ability to see commonality with neighbours enables an exploration of other values and concerns, regarding, for example, housing or safety. Not only can the recognition of commonalities beget the identification of other commonalities, but they can also enable people to identify possible solutions to these concerns. Amber, a gardener from Spence, recognized the ability of her garden to facilitate community mobilization, the goal of community organizing, by acting as an opportunity and place to meet with others interested in achieving similar ends,

> "It was an avenue toward getting to know people and seeing if we have the same values and who is interested in the improvement of the area and [community

gardening] was an activity that promoted that spirit."

Judy, a West Broadway gardener, also reflected on the building of community through common values:

> "This park is such an uplifting place, and it adds value to the neighbourhood because this is something you would expect to find in a nicer area of the city, and to have it in the inner city, it makes people who live here feel like maybe they deserve something a little more."

Judy implied that her garden enabled people in her community to see their neighbourhood in a more positive light, and helped them redefine what they deserve. This would, in turn, inspire neighbours to get involved in improvement initiatives. Lisa-Marie also recognized how her community garden, the same one as Judy's, inspired neighbours to get involved. Before their garden was established, many community members voiced concerns that it would just be vandalized. However, Lisa-Marie pointed out the surprising support that community members showed for the garden soon after it was established, like the neighbours who got together in the winter to shovel a path so people would not trample over the flowerbeds. And in the summer, before governmental support was in place to help maintain the grass, neighbours would come over and cut it if it was getting too long. These volunteer acts of maintenance signified to Lisa-Marie a real change in her community, and a real sense of investment,

> "The beautification of our neighbourhood, people are now taking pride in it and this [garden] really kicked it into high gear because people do respect it. I've seen people give others heck for stepping on a plant or something because they feel that they own it too, which they do."

Both women discussed how their community garden represented a change in the neighbourhood. It provided a new perspective for community members, especially once

they saw that it had not been vandalized. Providing the neighbourhood with an opportunity to experience how the green space made them feel about themselves and their community, also increased their desire to protect it against threats of development, providing a tangible opportunity for residents to take action and thereby reflecting the ultimate goal of community organizing.

These community gardens thus played an important role in raising pride within the community. Annette from Spence shared how her garden helped build a sense of pride and community,

> "We noticed that the people are planting more flowers, they are taking better care of their lawns...I know a couple of springs ago was the first time I really heard the noise of spring, when people are raking and they are outside in the front yard on the Sunday afternoon. And then the people in the rental properties are planting flowers...taking care of their yard and stuff like that."

She described a relationship between the neighbourhood community gardens and community members putting more effort into their individual spaces. This renewed interest in their properties signified a desire to improve the look of their neighbourhood, providing a common perspective that helps to build community. Increasing neighbourhood aesthetics can also build networks because it helps to counteract the mistrust people feel towards one another in a neighbourhood in decline (Ross et al., 2002).

Building community also meant addressing issues of safety, which many of the women felt could be partially addressed through their community gardening. Many women discussed how their own sense of safety benefited from the gardens because they felt more secure just knowing more of their neighbours. Annette, who had been criticized by other community members for talking to known gang members discussed how getting

to know neighbours, regardless of whether they were in a gang or not, helped her feel more safe, and how these connections potentially increased the safety of her garden,

> "People tell me I'm crazy to be talking to that guy because he is in a gang, but you know a couple of times he will come to me and he will say there were some punks there last night in the garden and they were sitting on the bench and drinking beer and I kicked them out."

Many of the women agreed that the gardens were generally respected places and that people felt protective of them, and how that created an informal "neighbourhood watch". Many also mentioned how gardening throughout the day contributed to their sense of security regarding the garden – but also for the larger neighbourhood, "by knowing that there were "more eyes on the street". As Kaplan (1982) suggests these safe places allow for development, transformation and growth, and these increased feelings of safety, in turn, increase trust, which encourage people to interact with and provide for one another.

Building Relationships through Community Gardening

Many of the women felt that their community gardens were inclusive spaces that encouraged use by their larger neighbourhood. Their community gardens attracted a diverse group of people because they provided a place for a variety of social, contemplative, physical, and spiritual experiences. Some gardeners facilitated this use by including benches, which according to Sharon from the Spence neighbourhood brought people together,

> "You know you can go sit in the garden and that brings a lot of different community members together that maybe otherwise would never cross paths…it builds a sense of green space in a community where it is just not, you know - sod park, there is actually growth and life, so it gives you a sense of an immediate kind of circle with people and who kind of take ownership of a community garden

> as theirs; 'our path over there, our garden over there'...so you bring people together, even some that wouldn't come out of their doors sometimes come."

This inclusive use, in turn, facilitated connections amongst neighbours who did not garden. Nancy, another gardener from Spence further illustrated how community gardens can attract a variety of people they might not normally interact with, thereby expanding their community network,

> " I didn't think at the first the community gardens really attracted that much of a variety of people…(but) you would be surprised how much diversity there is. You know we have one fellow that lives in a rooming house and he will come and plant his potato peels so he can grow his potato plants, but I never would have thought that he would come and plant in the garden."

Gates are often used to prevent theft and vandalism in community gardens (Kurtz, 2001), yet none were used in the gardens in this study. Although the participants were frustrated by theft at times they resisted installing locked gates, in large part because they wanted the physical space to remain open to all community members. Other studies have shown that non-gardeners then come to view gated gardens as excluding (Kurtz, 2001), thus undermining the community building potential of these spaces beyond that of the gardeners themselves.

Indeed, many of these women in this study helped plant community plots to make the food-based benefits accessible to the larger neighbourhood. I recall visiting Lisa-Marie's garden and witnessing her solicit community members strolling through the garden for their ideas on what to plant in the public plots. She later explained to me how she felt it was important to ensure what was planted reflected the preference of the community so they felt more included.

Community gardening enabled these women to recognize their ability to affect desirable change in their neighbourhood, change that was at once respected and

appreciated by their neighbours. This ability in turn boosted the self-confidence of both these women and the community as a whole. The process by which people gain control over their own lives and their communities through the ability to affect change that is important to them is known as empowerment (Page and Czuba, 1999). That these women understood the significance of their community gardening to the improvement of their neighbourhood is empowering, which is also an important component of the women-centered model of organizing. Community gardening has the potential to further contribute to gardeners empowerment through the skill building associated with the gardens. These gardens are vehicles for learning, both in terms of gardening and in terms of working collaboratively to address problems facing the gardens. More general skills, including network building, conflict resolution, and problem solving, in many cases are directly transferable to political action (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). The self-confidence that comes from the variety of skills acquired through community gardening coupled with the increased self-esteem gardeners experience from having a place where their knowledge is valued (Lind, 2008) may increase their likelihood of getting involved in, or initiating other issues they believe the community needs to address.

Organizing Around Women's Issues

Community organizing is gendered in both style *and* content, and many of the issues that the women-centered model focuses on reflect the socially constructed expectations of women's community work, these often relating to mothering and caregiving (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). The strength of this model is that it can raise issues that are traditionally understood to be areas of women's concern and create a

community that can take action around them.

One of the primary benefits the women interviewed in this study associated with their community gardening was the creation of safe green spaces where local children could play, in effect supervised by any of the gardeners. Lisa-Marie thus indicated, "that's why this garden was so important because parents know where the kids are and they know the people that live right across the street, and they know the gardeners always keep an eye out on the place too." And as Beth from Spence mentioned, "without these gardens the children would be playing in the street", which in effect shifted the focus from a place that they could personally cultivate to one that belonged to the all children in the neighbourhood.

Some of the women addressed how their community gardens represented green spaces where the neighbourhood children could interact with the "natural" world. The importance of witnessing and learning about wild and domestic plants and animals was particularly important, given how inaccessible most green space was to these communities. As Linda from West Broadway indicated,

> " There are children in this neighbourhood who have never known anything except this garden being here, this might as well be like Yellowstone Park to them…they don't have cottages at the lake and they have very little opportunity to experience any type of nature and although this is not really nature, it is as close as they're going to get to nature."

Many also saw these experiences with natural processes as carrying over into larger life lessons. As Lisa-Marie explained,

> "It teaches the young kids respect for life because once they see that little seed get bigger and bigger, then they bring it out here and see it grow, they learn to respect the flowers and then they learn from that to respect the bigger things and it leads up to respecting other people, other people's work".

Moreover, she emphasized that the gardens exposed children to processes that were

beyond their control:

> "...even in the garden you're going to have negative things happen, but it teaches them that it's ok, you can plant something else. So it teaches them how to cope with that negative aspect, which helps them accept other things in their life and learn how to accept those things without causing themselves the stress of thinking they did something wrong, because sometimes mother nature just didn't want it to happen."

The gardens were also described as necessary places for the youth because they provided an opportunity to be valued. Judy, from West Broadway emphasized:

> "Unfortunately in our society, we teach [kids] that money is valuable and they can't make money so therefore they have no value, they are valueless, but the fact that they can help you, kids aren't given that opportunity very often to be a helper, to feel useful, so when they do that, that is an important feeling, that's a good feeling to feel like they've affected somebody else's life positively."

For Judy, the gardens provided places where the youth were able to feel like active and important participants in their community and represented an alternative to gangs. That community gardens provide a sense of belonging for the youth where they can increase their sense of self-worth and develop new skills, creates opportunities for healthy personal growth, thereby increasing their abilities to deal with life's challenges (Seita, Mitchell, and Tobin, 1996, cited in McCluskey and Torrence, 2003).

The gardens also provided an opportunity for the youth to learn where some of their food comes from and how to grow it. Shirley, who worked with homeless youth in West Broadway co-maintained a couple of plots in Spirit Park with some of these youth, and indicated how the exposure to the garden was often the only opportunity some had for fresh, high-quality food:

> "...this gives them the ability to be able to understand how to grow their own vegetables and how delicious they are. The difference between growing a tomato in your garden and getting one at [a large supermarket], it's not even the same fruit and they say 'wow, I didn't know tomatoes tasted like this' because they've

never had the chance to eat a tomato out of the garden, so it's so eye opening."

Thus the community gardens were places of empowerment for the neighbourhood youth as well, by providing opportunities for skill building, increased self-esteem, and education.

Through their community garden work many of the women became more attentive to the issue of food within their neighbourhood, and in particular the need for good quality produce at an affordable price. Annette, for example noticed how the neighbourhood children were 'starving' for fresh vegetables, which she believed to be a result of the fact that their parents were often unable to afford the fresh produce,

> "You'd be amazed with the kids just grabbing raw vegetables, they are just starving for fresh vegetables and I guess their parents are just spending every single dollar on third rate low income housing and of course they are not going to buy the fresh fruits and vegetables."

Although the gardens were limited in their ability to directly address community food security needs because of their limited size and Winnipeg's short growing season, many discussed how they could contribute to a more food secure community. Some of the future projects gardeners suggested included a neighbourhood based garden market where gardeners could sell fresh locally produced vegetables at a reasonable price (and create an economic opportunity for the growers) or subsidized food box programs, where a household would get a box of garden vegetables at a reduced cost.

The gardens also provided an opportunity for youth to communicate with and learn from seniors. Thus Brenda, from West Broadway, suggested

> "It fills a gap, it fills that gap between youngsters and seniors because seniors have so much to offer and they're stuck away in their little

> apartments or their little rooming houses without this ability to have a garden and youngsters that have no real playgrounds or things to do, and it brings them together to talk about the plants and the old teach the young all about it, so I think it's a very fortunate thing to have in a community."

Much like youth, seniors are often devalued in our society, but Brenda saw her garden as a place where intergenerational connections and mentorship opportunities could grow.

The significance of the women's focus on how their community gardens improve neighbourhood children's play experiences, educational opportunities and self-esteem reflects their gendered roles as mothers and caregivers. Framing their community garden work as a contribution to the livelihood of the neighbourhood children can be considered a manifestation of what Naples (1992) terms 'activist mothering'; an extension of women's mothering roles beyond their own family, which in turn enables women to take action that supports this role. Indeed many women made it clear that they would fight for the gardens on behalf of the neighbourhood children, like Alice from the Spence neighbourhood:

> "If we turn all our gardens into houses the children will have nowhere to go, but nobody is talking about that. I think that is why we have to make sure these gardens can stay longer than just a year or two, they need to be more permanent"

In this sense, community gardens fulfill the gendered content of the women-centered model of community organizing because the significance of the gardens is framed in the context of what is considered gender appropriate. By appealing to the gendered expectations for women these community gardeners may be able to garner more support and mobilize around the security of the gardens if they are seen to represent an extension of women's nurturing roles.

FROM ORGANIZING TO MOBILIZING

For most urban community gardeners, spring is met with one part enthusiasm and another part anxiety. In Winnipeg, many plan and prepare for the upcoming gardening season as a means of coping with the long cold winters, but that anticipation is often checked by the fear that their garden might be eradicated in the upcoming growing season. Unfortunately, these gardens are not often seen as a long-term development goal, unlike housing or business, and few land owners will commit to any explicit land security contract, even if there is only a remote chance that they would be able to profit from selling the land. The city, one of the largest landowners of vacant property, is motivated by land sales because of the immediate income and future revenue generated through taxes. Yet most community organizations cannot afford to buy the land or keep up with the annual taxes. That there is generally substantially less green space in low-income neighbourhoods than those that are middle and upper-class implies it is a luxury, even though studies indicate how these spaces can help improve the livelihoods of those that are low income, through better health, a greater ability to cope with poverty, and decreasing crime and violence, and building social capital (de Vries et al., 2003; Glover et al., 2005; Kuo, 2001; Kuo and Sullivan, 2001a and b). Over the course of this research, four community gardens were lost to development and I heard countless community members speak to the frustration of not knowing whether their hard work and years of commitment would be secure.

The gardeners of the Toronto Street garden in Spence were faced with the loss of their garden in June of 2005. No one from the garden had been given any notification that the city-owned land had been sold to a developer. Yet the response was immediate and

spoke volumes about the importance of this site to the community. Those living on the street, as well as other gardeners and neighbourhood residents, were on the phone to their city counsellor demanding to know why it had been sold without any consultation. The sale ultimately turned out to be the result of miscommunication between two city departments within the city bureaucracy (those responsible for real estate and for short-term lease agreements with communities). Although the garden was ultimately still lost, the city relocated the garden at no charge, and eventually initiated a Winnipeg Community Gardening Policy, in an attempt to find a balance between green space and housing development.

This reasonable outcome is an exception, however, as illustrated by the loss of the Central Park garden in 2005. Although there was a similar lack of communication with the gardeners over the sale of their land, there was no comparable organized concern that challenged the sale. The differences in community response reflect that these gardens in-of-themselves do not mobilize a community. Differences in timing may have contributed to the lack of concern, as Toronto was sold during the gardening season unlike Central Park, which was sold during the winter before gardeners were actively engaged – with the garden and one another. Moreover, the Central Park garden was not affiliated with any neighbourhood association, and though identified with a local daycare, neighbourhood children were more likely to frequent the large park across the street. It is thus unlikely that the Central Park garden was viewed quite as much of a neighbourhood asset, and therefore community members were less motivated to resist its closure, again emphasizing the importance of the surrounding community in shaping and protecting the gardens.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding community gardens by exploring the relationship between community gardens and the women-centered model of community organizing. (Stall and Stoecker, 1998). My results highlight how the women from Spence and West Broadway inner city neighbourhoods use their community gardening as a form of community organizing. Not only do these women appear to use their community gardens as tools to community organize, but they also identify with their traditional roles as mothers and caregivers when extolling the virtues of their gardens and responding to threats to their gardens.

They were far less likely to justify the need for their community gardens in terms of the individual benefits and much more in terms of how the neighbourhood community, particularly the children, benefited from the presence of the gardens. The overwhelming response from the community over the loss of the Toronto garden in the Spence neighbourhood highlights the role of these gardens as "flashpoints" for community organizing and mobilizing. The ongoing threats to these gardens may provide an impetus to mobilize that is similar, for example, to that in Pardo's (1990) study of the Mexican American women protesting the establishment of a toxic waste incinerator in their neighbourhood. In both cases, the activists drew upon their traditional roles as community caretakers and mothers to take action around an issue they perceived to threaten the health and wellbeing of their families and communities. Like the experiences of women who have involved themselves in anti-nuclear or anti-toxic waste campaigns, their activism makes private sphere concerns public, and introduces

politicians and other officials to women as a political force (Culley and Angelique, 2003). In my study, this was certainly the case during the community consultation meeting with the city, where all but two out of thirty inner city gardeners were female and where city employees recognized how it was women who wanted to ensure that the community garden policy reflected community needs and priorities.

The loss of the Central Park garden highlights the benefits of constructing these gardens as neighbourhood places, where community members feel connected to them and are willing to mobilize and save the gardens. These results also have implications for suburban community gardens, which are much more likely to be isolated, both in space and in spirit, from the surrounding community (Lind, 2008). This segregation may limit the potential for suburban community gardeners to build their community beyond the gardeners themselves, which in turn may limit their ability to mobilize and to protect them from development pressures. Should suburban community gardens involve the surrounding community, particularly the children, the potential for these gardens to build a larger network may work to increase their security.

Ultimately, it is the dedication and work of the gardeners that makes community gardens an effective community organizing tool, and these results highlight the central role these women play in the inner city, within and outside the community gardens. That the city had initiated a policy to find a balance between housing and green space development based largely on the feedback they received from the Toronto Street garden incident speaks to the impact of urban community gardeners, most of who are women, on the development process.

It is my belief however that by initiating the policy the city inadvertently took

away potential opportunities for these women to gain experience in the political sphere as the momentum to mobilize and lobby the city was quickly growing amongst the gardeners. In one respect the policy is cause for celebration, as gardeners in other North American cities have struggled for years to get a community garden policy in place. However, the downside to Winnipeg's situation is that gardeners and community members did not acquire the skills and experiences like the people in other cities who had to work to get a policy on the table. This absent process of lobbying the government for a policy also denies many of the politicians and other bureaucrats the opportunity to realize the gardeners organizing work and recognize these women as agents of change. However, the fact that green space and housing are starting to be viewed as compatible and of equal importance is a change for which the gardeners deserve much credit.

Although this policy was adopted by the city council in June 2006, it is relatively vague with respect to tangible action steps that ensure municipal support of existing and future community gardens in Winnipeg. Had community gardeners and other citizens played a more active role in the development of this policy it would likely be a stronger document and a more educational experience for both the involved citizens and municipal employees. On a more positive note, the relatively recent establishment (2006) of the Winnipeg Community Garden Network is helping to broaden the community organizing that has occurred at the neighbourhood level to the city level by facilitating networking opportunities through a listserve, workshops, training sessions, tours and support for community gardeners throughout the city. As an active member of the Winnipeg Community Garden Network I am pleased to report that our goal is not only to support the present and future community gardens and gardeners, but to facilitate opportunities

for gardeners to grow new skills, like teaching/training, fundraising, event planning, etc. Furthermore, the Winnipeg Community Garden Network has a specific mandate to ensure the city takes responsibility for supporting these green spaces.

Community gardening can thus be seen as a way for women to address some of the challenges that confront their communities, while sharing similar properties with the women-centered model of community organizing. These community gardens at once organize community through their ability to find common ground amongst neighbours, create new relationships and empower gardeners through new skills and increased self-esteem, and potentially involve people that may otherwise not engage in community mobilization efforts. Incorporating both the women-centered and Alinsky model of community organizing diversifies how communities organize and what issues are addressed, whether it is based on appealing to community members to join together and fight against a common experience or target, such as a poor quality housing or slum landlords, or whether it is a process of network building and focusing on concerns traditionally associated with the private sphere. While both the Alinsky and women-centered model serve the same purpose, to improve the lives of community members, this research shows how community gardening reflects the women-centered model of community organizing and enables community members to better their lives and those of their children and the environment as a whole.

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CHAPTER 6 FINAL DISCUSSION AND OUTCOMES

Research Outcomes

This research focused on addressing women's voices that remain largely absent from the North American community garden literature. Although much of the "gender and development" research in the Global South has focused on the role of women in community gardens, particularly with respect to food security, little such research has been conducted in North America. That women play a significant role in the North American community garden movement, but continue to be overlooked has meant their experiences, contributions and challenges have too long gone unrecognized.

My first objective was to characterize and contrast suburban and urban women's community gardening experiences, in large part by focusing on wellbeing and health. While the community gardens provided a therapeutic landscape experience for both suburban and urban women, there were meaningful differences between these two groups. The urban women's therapeutic experiences were more affected by the neighbourhood changes associated with their community garden, such as increased socialization, sense of safety, and neighbourhood pride. In contrast, the suburban gardener's therapeutic experiences were not based on neighbourhood improvements because most of the gardeners lived elsewhere. These women showed greater appreciation for the community experience within the garden, particularly the support from companion gardeners. However, both suburban and urban women discussed at

length how they personally benefited from the act of community gardening in terms of their physical and mental wellbeing and, ultimately, their health.

These results also highlighted how the shared feelings of wellbeing and health arising from their community gardening experiences and their community garden as a place might enable the urban and suburban groups to better connect with one another. Some of the barriers to better communication reflect the very different needs that were being met through the gardens - where the urban gardens improved inner city neighbourhoods and suburban gardens provided leisure spaces. While the gardens did serve different purposes, these differences could potentially be eclipsed by the shared values these women attached to their community gardens as places of health and healing. This linkage is particularly significant for Winnipeg's Community Garden Network that to date has focused primarily on urban gardens, but which has a desire to include and represent the interests of all community gardens and gardeners.

The second main objective of this research was to assess the role of community gardens in neighbourhood revitalization for the inner city and to explore the role of these gardens as a women-centered form of community organizing. The community gardens in Spence and West Broadway helped address various neighbourhood concerns identified by the women gardeners and did indeed reflect the women-centered model of community organizing in both style and content. The network building and empowerment of these seemingly marginalized women reflected the style component, while the focus on the relationship between green space and the neighbourhood children suggested the content component of the women-centered model of community organizing. By using their gendered roles as mothers to frame the gardens as green spaces necessary for the

neighbourhood children, many of the women were prepared to mobilize around any threats to their gardens.

Implications Of The Research For The Community

Another important goal for the research was to increase the visibility and public awareness of the gardens in Winnipeg. These outcomes were particularly important to me because they reflected the more practical outcomes of my project and were, by far, the most meaningful to the gardeners I worked with.

Having spent an entire summer scouring the city for community gardens because no comprehensive, updated list of community gardens existed, I thought one of the best ways to increase visibility would be to create a regional map of all community gardens. However, I soon concluded that a map alone was not going to significantly increase the visibility of Winnipeg's community gardens[*], but a map and an organized tour might be suitable. Working with eight different gardens, we launched Winnipeg's first Community Garden Celebration Week, where we hosted guided tours and provided maps for people who preferred a self-guided tour. For three nights in July 2004, urban gardeners explored suburban gardens, suburban gardeners explored urban gardens, and city counselors as well as the general public were introduced to some of Winnipeg's community gardens and gardeners for the first time.

The tours were deemed a great success, especially by the various community gardeners who had an opportunity to connect with one other and to share their stories and even seeds; but the tour was only attended by 120 people. While these tours increased

[*] It should be noted that a few suburban gardeners were quite concerned that a map was only going to increase garden theft

general awareness of the city's community garden activity for a limited few, it did not really allow for the broader public to understand the impact community gardens were having in their neighbourhoods, specifically in the inner city. It was for this reason that I wanted to do a supplementary video.

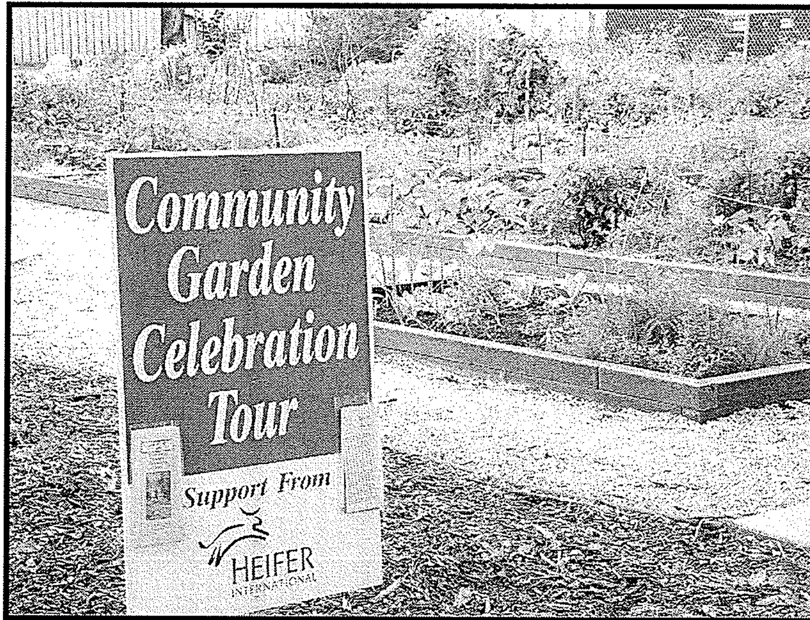

Figure 2.1: Community Garden Celebration Tour Sign in Spirit Park Garden, West Broadway, Winnipeg (Photo Credit: Corey Toews)

Figure 2.2: Touring the Furby Garden in West Broadway during the Winnipeg Community Garden Tour, July 27-29, 2004 (Photo Credit: Julie Price-Henderson)

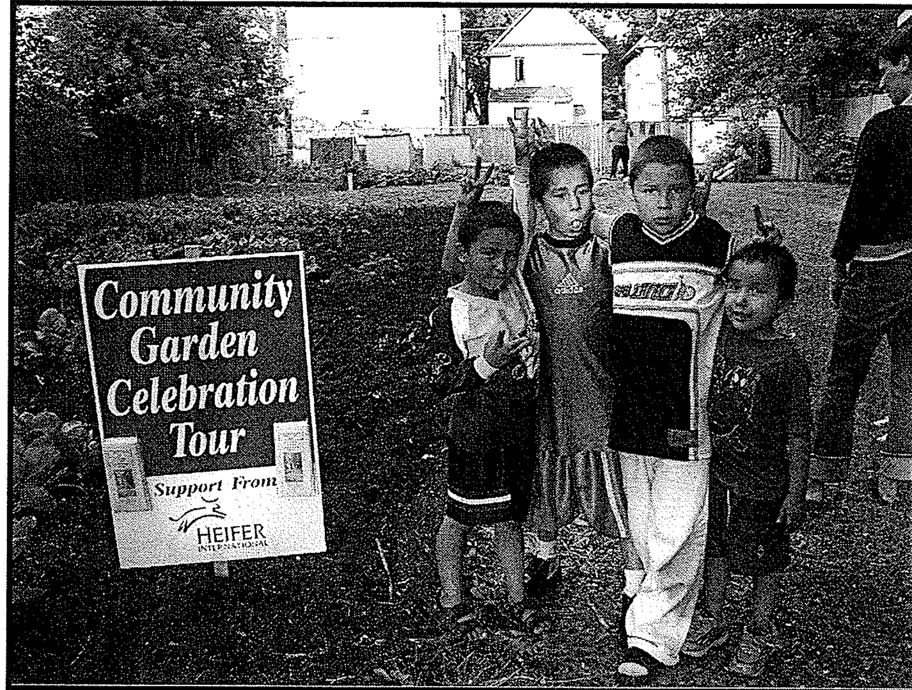

Figure 2.3: Spence neighbourhood children playing in the Maryland Garden during the Community Garden Celebration Tour (photo credit: Julie Price-Henderson).

After discussing the idea of creating a community garden video with some of the gardeners with whom I had previously worked, we set out to brainstorm key issues and topics the video should include. I recorded over 30 hours of interviews and footage in an attempt to include as many voices as possible and to ensure the video was as comprehensive as we had initially outlined. As I struggled to make sense of the footage, it became clear that I had lost the stories that made such a powerful impression. Although I questioned whether investing any more time or energy into this project was practical or even feasible, I discussed my frustration with Audrey**, who had played a key role in the video from the onset. We decided to take a more focused approach and instead of trying to tell it all, decided to focus on her stories, particularly how her community garden had affected her personally and her community. And to this day,

** This is not a pseudonym and her name also appears in the video

every time I see the clip where Audrey discusses the lack of support for gardens in the inner city and states, "If someone told you, you weren't worth a flower, how would you feel?" always manages to bring tears to my eyes.

While the video is an accessible promotional and educational tool, it is not, in of itself, capable of lobbying the city for support or bringing gardeners together. The need for a renewed community gardening network became apparent over the course of this research, and I, Kathryn MacKenzie (the greening coordinator for Spence Neighbourhood) and Margaret Brook (past education coordinator at Assiniboine Park Conservatory) began creating a network with the overall goal of promoting and supporting community gardening in the city. We would achieve this by linking gardeners together, lobbying the city for resources, and facilitating various workshops, as well as seed and tool swaps. To date, the network is approximately 140 members strong, with both suburban and urban representation, and is continually growing.

Personal Outcomes Associated With The Research

I can still remember the anxiety that washed over me as I began to realize that food security, as I understood it, was not what brought many of these women to their community garden, or what they took away from their community garden. This anxiety, in large part reflected my difficulty in admitting that my own assumptions had prevented me from really listening to how these women valued their community gardens. I had assumed food security was going to play a much larger role for these women, particularly those in the inner city where food insecurity is often more prevalent. And as I battled with the data and my agenda, it became clear that I was, at some level, undermining the

experiences and values these women had shared and entrusted with me. It was at this point that I realized my role was not to direct the data, but rather allow the data to direct me.

The opportunity for the data to direct the course of this study came primarily from the qualitative nature of this research. My original plan had been to carry out a more quantitative research project, reflecting my undergraduate training in environmental science. Indeed, my first research instrument was a questionnaire made up of likert scaled questions that I was initially reluctant to abandon. Had I pursued this course of research, I am certain I would not have learned all that I did from this experience; personally or academically. Although I struggled with the idea of using words instead of numbers, especially when it came to influencing policy where numbers seem to count for so much, it was the best decision I could have made. Mark Francis (1995: 20) made an important comment in an article entitled *What Good is Greening* that helped me understand the ramifications of depending only on numbers when he stated "*Let's let stories people tell about the benefits of greening speak for themselves. They have a strong impact that often makes the difference with decision makers. It isn't always facts – politicians resonate with more than just data.*"

And now, when I share with other people the personal and community effects of community gardening, I am no longer talking about 'them', but include my own insights as I have since taken a plot at the Spirit Park community garden in my neighbourhood of West Broadway. This journey from being an outsider to becoming an insider has been extremely rewarding, as I experience the joy of gardening my own plot, learning from my

gardening companions, and feeling a much stronger attachment to my neighbourhood. Now when I come to the garden I always have to remind myself to take off the 'researcher' hat so I can cultivate a new relationship with Spirit Park.

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APPENDIX A: Phase 1 Interview Schedule

"Throw-away" questions:

A. Including all forms of gardening, approximately how long have you been gardening?

B. Have those years been consistent, or did you take breaks from gardening?

Motivations:

1. What motivated you to community garden?
2. How did you get involved with your current community garden?
3. Is your current community garden the only community garden you have participated in?
    a. If not, how did you get involved in other gardens?
    b. What influenced your decision to join your current community garden?
4. How long have you been community gardening?
5. Have your motivations changed over time, and if so could you please explain how they have changed?

Food Security:

6. Does your community garden impact your diet? If so, please explain.
7. Do you feel your community garden affects how much money you spend on food?
8. What are your other sources of food?
9. How do you compare the produce you grow in your garden to the produce you acquire from these sources?
10. Do other people beside the gardeners have access to the produce grown in the garden?

Sense of Community:

11. What does the idea of community mean to you?

12. In your opinion, what are the most important aspects of community?
13. Do you feel that your community garden fits into your idea of community, and could you please explain?
14. Has your participation in your community garden changed your perception of community?

Community Garden Experience:

15. Overall, how would you describe your community gardening experience? Follow up with:
    a. How would you describe the social experience associated with you community garden?
    b. How would you describe the cultural experience associated with your community garden?
    c. How would you describe the management experience associated with your community garden?

Community Garden Challenges:

16. In your opinion what are the greatest challenges to community gardening?
17. Have you experienced any difficulties or problems community gardening?
    a. How were the problems dealt with?
18. Has your community garden as a whole ever faced any difficulties or problems? If so, could you please explain?
19. Does your community garden interact or communicate with other community gardens in the city?
    a. If so, could you please discuss these interactions?
    b. If not, is there a reason why your garden does not interact with other gardens?
20. How do you see your community garden in the future?

Knowledge:

21. What have been the most valuable sources of gardening knowledge for you throughout your gardening experience?
22. In your opinion, what makes a knowledgeable gardener?
23. How would you best describe your gardening knowledge?
24. Do you feel you have passed your gardening knowledge onto other people?
25. Do you feel that gardening in a group setting like a community garden encourages the exchange of gardening knowledge? If so, could you please explain?

Methods/Practices:

26. How do you manage your community garden plot with respect to:
    a. Weeds
    b. Insects
    c. Nutrients
    d. Pests/Rodents
    e. Water
    f. Disease

27. How do you feel about the use of chemicals in your community garden?
28. Does your community garden have any rules or regulations around the use of chemicals in the garden?
29. What plants do you most commonly grow in your community garden plot?
30. What are the main influences for your choice of plants in your community garden plot?

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Project Title: **The Experiences, Practices and Knowledge of Female Community Gardeners in the Winnipeg Region**

Researcher: Karen Margaret Lind

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.

Project Description:

The purpose of the proposed research is to describe a wide variety of Winnipeg's community garden initiatives, and to identify the cultural and socio-economic influences on community gardeners' perceptions and experiences. The research is dedicated to examining female community gardeners' motivation, practices, and experiential horticultural knowledge. The focus of this research will relate to how experienced female community gardeners' horticultural knowledge is acquired, valued and transferred. Furthermore, the research will allow us to recognize the qualitative and quantitative benefits of community gardening, acknowledging not only the barriers women gardeners face, but also their accomplishments.

This research will involve a semi-directed interview lasting between one to two hours, depending on the availability of the participant. The location and time of both the individual and group interviews will be unanimously agreed upon by the participants and researcher. The interviews will be recorded on paper and if permitted by the participant will be tape recorded. Both forms of original interview records will

later be transcribed. At no point will the names of the participants be identified with their corresponding interview data, therefore, remaining confidential at all times. The raw data received through this research will be stored in a locked cabinet on campus and accessible only to the researcher. All tapes and original interview hard copies will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. The interview data will be reviewed by the interview participant for verification and the resulting information will be summarized and presented to interested participants at a conveniently arranged meeting time to allow for feedback and discussion. Hard copies of the summarized research will also be made available in order to increase accessibility to all participants. Community gardener participants will be offered a twenty dollar compensation for their time. This compensation is NOT dependent upon full completion of the interview and participants should feel no obligation to continue with the interview beyond their level of comfort.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any 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.

Principal Researcher: Karen Margaret Lind , or

_______________,

Research Supervisor: Dr. Stephane McLachlan (204-474-9316) or mclachla@cc.umanitoba.ca)

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

____

Participant's Signature ***Date***

____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature Date

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umlindkm@cc.umanitoba.ca

Project Title: Community Gardens: People, Plants and Possibilities

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION ONLY

Please indicate the recording method you approve for the purpose of this interview:
Audio Recording
Video Recording
Both Audio and Visual Recording

Researcher: Karen Margaret Lind

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.

Project Description:

The purpose of the proposed research is to explore how Winnipeg community gardens contribute to participants' personal and community experience. The focus of this research will relate to how participants value community gardens, the role they play and how they perceive public community garden support. Furthermore, this research intends to identify perceived barriers preventing further community garden initiatives and recommendations for overcoming such barriers.

This research will involve a semi-directed interview lasting between twenty to forty minutes, depending on the availability of the participant. Participants will consist of active community gardeners,

non-gardening community members and the general public who have demonstrated an interest in Winnipeg community gardens. Already established community garden contacts will be informed of this additional research and invited to participate. New contacts will be established by distributing a project summary with contact information to community gardens, neighborhood associations and other interested organizations. Some participants will have already participated in the initial interview phase; therefore this interview will serve as a follow-up exploring general themes identified from the original series of interviews.

The location and time of the individual interviews will be unanimously agreed upon by the participants and researcher. The interviews will be either audio or video recorded as permitted by the participant. Both forms of original interview records will later be transcribed. At no point will the names of the participants be identified with their corresponding interview data, therefore, remaining confidential at all times. The raw data received through this research will be stored in a locked cabinet on campus and accessible only to the researcher. All audio and visual recordings will be destroyed once they are transcribed. The interview data will be reviewed by the interview participant for verification and the resulting information will be summarized and presented to interested participants at a conveniently arranged meeting time to allow for feedback and discussion. Hard copies of the summarized research will also be made available in order to increase accessibility to all participants.

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Principal Researcher: Karen Margaret Lind or

Research Supervisor: Dr. Stephane McLachlan (204)-474-9316 or mclachla@cc.umanitoba.ca

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Participant's Signature ***Date***

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Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature Date

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Project Title: **Community Gardens: People, Plants *and* Possibilities**

RESEARCH AND VIDEO PARTICIPATION

Please indicate the recording method you approve for the purpose of this interview:

- **Audio Recording**
- **Video Recording**
- **Both Audio and Visual Recording**

Researcher: Karen Margaret Lind

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.

Project Description:

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This research will involve a semi-directed interview lasting between twenty to forty minutes, depending on the availability of the participant. Participants will consist of active community gardeners, non-gardening community members and the general public who have demonstrated an interest in community gardens/gardening. Already established community garden contacts will be informed of this additional research and invited to participate. New contacts will be established by distributing a project summary with contact information to community gardens, neighborhood associations and other interested organizations. Some participants will have already participated in the initial interview phase; therefore this

interview will serve as a follow-up exploring general themes identified from the original series of interviews.

The location and time of the individual interviews will be unanimously agreed upon by the participants and researcher. The interviews will be either audio or video recorded as permitted by the participant; however, both audio and visual recordings may be used for video purposes. Both forms of original interview records will later be transcribed. The raw data received through this research will be stored in a locked cabinet on campus and accessible only to the researcher. All audio and video recordings not used for the purpose of the video will be destroyed once they are transcribed. The interview data will be reviewed by the interview participant for verification and the resulting information will be summarized and presented to interested participants at a conveniently arranged meeting time to allow for feedback and discussion. Hard copies of the summarized research will also be made available in order to increase accessibility to all participants.

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____

Participant's Signature ***Date***

____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature Date

PERSONAL VIDEO RELEASE FORM

Name: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________ **Ph:** ____________________

______________________________ **Fax:** ____________________

The purpose of this video is to promote the importance of community gardens to gardeners, policy makers, and society as a whole. It is being developed in partnership with a number of gardeners and will feature interviews with gardeners and garden organizers, representatives from both government and non-government organizations, and highlight some of the histories of gardens, primarily in Winnipeg.

Broadcasters and others showing the video require that all participants have given their permission relating to the "producers" use of their interview footage. We would therefore be most grateful if you would please sign the bottom of this letter and return it to us. By doing so you confirm your permission allowing us to: record the interview of you; edit, translate and modify the recording of your interview for use in the Program tentatively entitled *"Community Gardens: people, plants and possibilities"*; and to advertise, broadcast, distribute and publish the recording of your interview and the Program throughout the world forever. You also agree to waive your "moral rights" in the recording of your interview, and acknowledge that we may assign or license the benefit of the foregoing permissions.

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, please feel free to contact Karen Lind at the Environmental Conservation Lab) or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you again for your contribution to our program.

Yours truly,
Karen Lind

Name____________________ Signature____________________
Interview Participant
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