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**IDENTITY, CULTURE AND POWER:
TOWARDS FRAMEWORKS FOR SELF
DETERMINATION OF COMMUNITIES AT THE
MARGINS**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Massey University Albany, New Zealand.

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Abstract

The thesis inquires into how communities at the economic and cultural margins can become self-determining, increasing control over health and well-being. Community development as a method of agency in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Canada is investigated. The inquiry has been precipitated by a number of factors, all of which remain salient features in shaping contemporary conditions in both countries. Among these are increased inequities in wealth and health status between population groups in both countries that have accompanied globalising processes. The economic and cultural dominance of particular sectors in these societies means that public policies often fail to reflect the needs, aspirations and cultural systems of marginalised communities. In engaging with these issues, public health discourse in both countries proposes community development as a key strategy whereby disadvantaged communities might address their needs, thus realising increased levels of health and well-being. However in both countries community development remains under theorised, and the potentialities of some communities unrealised.

The research is based upon the traditions of participatory and action research methodologies, within which a variety of qualitative methods are drawn on. The fieldwork was conducted with members of marginalised communities (predominantly low-income, migrant women) participating in community development projects and community developers working with these initiatives. The New Zealand component formed the initial and most substantive part of the investigation, after which these findings were tested in Canada.

The results suggest that 'identity' and 'culture' are key elements within agency dynamics, their significance partially associated with and increased by globalising processes. Analysis of the findings reveal 'power-culture' dynamics (the various combinations of power and culture that are operative within any context) to play a central role in constituting agency relations. The critical post-modern conceptualisation of power theorised, views power-culture relations to be unstable and changing at the interpersonal and community levels of relating. Structural forms of power progressively influence power-culture relations as transitions to institutional contexts are made. The research findings have important implications for community development and public health practice within both countries. A 'power-culture' approach to community development is explicated that conceptualises a number of practice frameworks for those

undertaking community development. These are articulated from three perspectives: (1) community development methodology as practiced by communities, (2) organisational capacity to undertake development work with communities, and (3) practice issues for community developers.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

This thesis investigates issues of agency for economically and ethnically marginalised communities resident in the core industrialised nations of Aotearoa/New Zealand¹ and Canada. The initial and most substantial part of the investigation is carried out in Aotearoa. These findings are then further elucidated in Canada. The central question addressed by the research is: *'how can economically and culturally marginalised communities act to shape and determine their futures?'* The inquiry poses a number of sub questions theoretically informed by a critical post-modern perspective of agency relations. The specific practice under scrutiny as a method of self-determination is 'community development'.

My dissertation question is answered by exploring processes of agency in relation to such communities participating in community development initiatives in Aotearoa and Canada. Initially, a case study and participatory action research approach is taken to investigating these issues with one community development initiative comprised primarily of Samoan and Tongan immigrant women living in a New Zealand city. In tandem with this, a number of interviews are conducted with members of another community development initiative, (similarly comprised predominantly of low-income people who have migrated from Pacific Island nations) and Pacific women² community developers. Findings from the New Zealand component of the inquiry are then tested through a series of interviews with members of Canadian-based community development initiatives, similarly aimed at building the capacities of economically and ethnically marginalised communities to determine their own futures. The perspectives researched are both those of members of communities at 'the margins' as well as community developers working with these communities. In some cases, community developers are also members of marginalised communities.

Background

The impetus for this inquiry into self-determination has been provided by a number of factors, all of which remain salient features of contemporary conditions that shape the agency landscapes of communities at the economic and cultural margins. The first of these has been widening income inequalities between sectors of New Zealand society (Easton, 1995; Waldegrave & Frater, 1997) since the mid 1980s. These income inequalities are associated with health disparities between these communities, with those of lower socio-economic status having significantly poorer health levels than their wealthier counterparts (National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998). Similar patterns of growing wealth and health inequities between communities have been identified in other economically developed countries including those of North America and Europe (National Council of Welfare, 1997; Wilkinson, 1996). These trends have continued (Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000, September; National Council of Welfare, 1999b; Wilkinson, 1999b), accompanied and accelerated by processes of economic globalisation (Health Canada, 1999).

Democratic participation has also been eroded as governments have ceded some of their political sovereignty to transnational corporations and global decision making forums, invariably controlled by powerful nation states and business interests (Griffen-Cohen, 1996; Kelsey, 1997; Kelsey, 1999). As a result of these global shifts in power and wealth, some communities have been, and remain recognisably disenfranchised. Throughout developed countries such as Aotearoa and Canada, poverty levels of children, women, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and differently abled people, are disproportionate and in some cases have increased relative to other sectors of these populations (Blaiklock, 2000; National Council of Welfare, 1999a; Waldegrave, 1999). Among these communities are also migrants who have both responded to and in part constituted globalising processes. This has occurred through their migration from nations at the economic peripheries to core industrialised countries such as Aotearoa and Canada. These migrations are primarily motivated by aspirations for 'higher standards of living' and access to Western educational systems.

Conceptually, a number of significant developments within the poverty research and health fields shape the investigation. Over the past few years, reports documenting poverty have discussed the decreased ability of these communities to participate socially and politically in society (Clarke, Chilcott, Smith, & Ivory, 1992; O'Brien & Briar, 1997). Poverty discourses

have begun to articulate concepts such as “social exclusion” (Beresford & Croft, 1995), maintaining that to be ‘poor’ also means to be socially excluded. The obvious cultural marginalisation of indigenous and migrant people in conjunction with their low-economic status within these countries has also pushed the conceptual boundaries of marginalisation. Cultural marginalisation has tended to become a sub-text of more recent reports published by government ministries in Aotearoa (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999; Te Puni Kokiri, 2000). Documenting the low socio-economic status of Maori and Pacific communities, these reports have also hinted at the cultural aspects of marginalisation, advocating for the involvement of these communities in determining solutions. Thus as economic marginalisation has and continues to take on new meanings, its multi-dimensionality becomes apparent.

Public health dialogue in both Aotearoa and Canada has begun to concern itself with the social, economic and cultural determinants of health (Health Canada, 1999; Health Funding Authority, 2000). As some researchers have drawn the connections between income inequalities and health, social, cultural and economic factors have come to be viewed as important health determinants. Within Aotearoa, ‘culture’ (still predominantly applied solely to distinguish between ethnic differences in populations) is also being increasingly recognised as an important health determinant, apart from economic factors. For example, a recent report by the Health Funding Authority³ (Health Funding Authority, 2000) recognises the connections between Maori conceptualisations of health, public health policy and “health gain” for this sector of the country’s population. Public health commentators’ (Health Canada, 1999; Wilkinson, 1999b) more recent concerns with relative poverty within core industrialised countries and associated experiences of power within these societies, have also lent credibility to the multi-dimensional nature of economic marginalisation. Growing evidence testifying to the impact of relative inequalities on health through psychosocial pathways has begun to articulate the subjective aspects of these processes (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996; Wilkinson, 1999b).

More recent public health discourses concerned with the determinants of health have begun to move beyond their initial focus on inequality to one more concerned with equity (Public Health Association of New Zealand, 2001) (to be published). This has begun to alter the conceptual parameters of these debates to encompass notions of diversity or difference. Proponents of equality within the public health sector have been primarily concerned with the equal distribution of resources as a means of achieving optimal health and well-being among populations. Such discourses of equality however, have tended to mask dominant paradigms

and cultural systems. Based on the notion of the achievement of optimal health as individuals and communities define this (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999), discussions concerning equity are beginning to push the conceptual boundaries of public health. They are doing so particularly with regard to what the achievement of optimal health and well-being for different communities might mean in practice.

Preceding and continuing to parallel these developments has been the articulation of community development as a central public health strategy within Aotearoa and Canada. Within both countries the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (World Health Organisation, 1986) has played a significant role in the inception of community development within public health discourses. Phrasing health promotion as the “process of enabling people to increase control over, and improve, their health”, the Ottawa Charter articulates the heart of this process as comprising “the empowerment of communities, their ownership and control over their own endeavours and destinies” (p.ii). The poor health status of Maori in Aotearoa and the emphasis of The Treaty of Waitangi on tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty or self-determination) in partnership with the Crown has also arguably lent credibility to community development as a public health strategy in Aotearoa.

However, within both Aotearoa and Canada, the meaning of community development remains unclear. While the term ‘community development’ encompasses a diverse range of theories and practices, the implications of which vary widely, many policy makers and practitioners within both countries fail to make these distinctions or articulate its varying practice dimensions. Hence, as a method of self-determination and public health strategy intended to promote optimal health and well-being within communities, community development remains largely under-theorised territory.

My own interest in ‘community development’ as a method of agency began to crystallize within the first few months of the research. In some respects the surfacing of this interest seemed contradictory as at that time my surveys of the globalisation literature largely spoke to me about the concentration of wealth and power amongst particular communities around the globe and the increasing poverty and associated powerlessness of other communities. The global-local relationship predominantly appeared to be a ‘one-way highway’ the traffic of which thundered relentlessly in a global-local direction. While I observed and read much evidence concerning the impacts of globalisation on local experiences, there was little written about the impacts of localised initiatives on global structures and processes.

However, a few months before, when visiting some North American cities I had been struck by how people on the streets who were either homeless or asking for money appeared to be socially invisible to the rest of us. As the rest of us ‘got on with our busy lives’, window shopping, or briskly walking the streets, I couldn’t help but notice the people on the sidelines, at ‘the margins’. I noticed that there were people on the edges of the sidewalk, often either staring at the pavement or straight ahead of them, saying very little, but with their hands out. They seemed to be waiting very patiently to be given some spare change by we ‘passers-by’. I would think to myself ‘*could this be me?*’

My experience of their experience⁴ seemed to convey a kind of muteness or invisibility. Some people with signs around their necks (often explaining their particular sensory impairment and plight) sitting by the road-side, saying nothing, typified this experience for me the most strongly. Others included women with babies to feed, immigrants and members of ethnic minority groups, and older people who often hauled along bulging rubbish sacks. Some would be sitting on the pavement next to their ‘sleeping cartons’. Sometimes people would appear to have ‘dozed off’ – either through sleep-deprivation, alcohol or the cold I supposed. From many I sensed a kind of numbness: numbness to whatever the weather was doing, numbness to whatever was going on around them and a numbness to their situation. In addition to lack of money, I also sensed a loss of power - a loss of ability to act. My observations and own life experiences led me to question whether for these people, the loss of agency that I observed (not complete absence) was also coupled with lack of belonging, voice and place?

Since that time, my own conceptualisations of power and agency have changed somewhat and the communities that I have worked with (and my experience of them) during the course of the research have also been different. These initial experiences have however, stayed with me and coupled with the fore-mentioned developments within the public health and social policy sectors, have influenced my own evolving conceptualisations of agency. My own personal experiences of marginalisation and past professional roles of social worker, therapist, researcher and more recently community developer have also shaped these conceptualisations.

All of these developments led me to posit the significance of both subjectivity and materiality in constituting agency dynamics at the micro personal and the macro structural levels of relating. Sometime ago, I began to think of agency as a layered process that was more than simply having access to economic resources. It also necessarily involved people having a voice and giving expression as to who they are both individually and as members of communities. This

necessarily included access to economic resources and decision-making processes that impacted on their lives. (The decision-making processes include those of policy development at the national and local levels of government as well as decisions taken at the level of local community).

As a methodology that focuses on both changing public policy to better reflect communities' needs as well as building their capacities to influence the development of such policies, I felt that community development potentially had something to offer as a method of agency. In particular, I saw its potential to engage with the development of people's subjectivities as well as their material circumstances, in ways that are meaningful to them. Being passionate about this area of inquiry, I wanted to know for myself how agency and self-determination in this fuller sense could really come about for communities at the economic and social peripheries. I also thought it important that people benefit directly from the research and that perhaps such benefits might include increased agency and control over resources for health and well-being on the part of participants. Thus community development as a ground-up process of social action and critical inquiry seemed to have potential.

Focus of the inquiry

The inquiry seeks to understand agency relations in both a subjective and material sense. It engages with six theoretical questions, (all of which were developed as the inquiry progressed) that relate to the overarching research question posed earlier. Broadly, these questions, outlined below, inquire into agency enhancing and agency constraining dynamics:

- How do dominant social structures and institutional behaviours structure minority communities' choices for agency (in relation to dominant Western, male cultures) within their everyday lives and in processes of social action/public policy debate?
- How do issues of culture (gender, ethnicity and religion) impact on the agency of communities at the economic and cultural margins?
- How does work on more agentic identities influence the capacity of members of marginalised communities to influence public policy debate?

- How might individuals become more active in constituting their own subjectivities, identities and subject positions within processes of community development?
- How might community - organisational partnerships assist communities at the economic and cultural margins to increase self-determination, repositioning themselves outside of dominant policy discourses?
- How do the subject positions (identities, cultures and professional status) of community development workers impact on the agency of marginalised communities within community development processes?

The first two questions focus more on factors that constrain the agency of the investigation communities, both within their everyday lives and within community development initiatives. The influence of social structures such as ethnicity, class, gender (both existing in people's consciousness and grounded in material power relations⁵) on the agency of economically and culturally marginalised communities in the Westernised democracies of Aotearoa and Canada forms an initial focus within the inquiry. The institutionalisation of social structures and belief systems representative of the interests of economically and culturally dominant communities within the behaviours of 'mainstream' organisations is also investigated, as is their impact on the ability of low-income and ethnic minority groups to be self-determining within their new host countries. In this sense the research inquires into how dominant social structures and the behaviours of institutions that support or challenge these, mediate people's material realities as well as their subjectivities and experience of the world.

The issue of 'culture' as a constraining or enabling influence on agency is also explored. Culture is viewed to be both nurturing and inhibitive of agency and is argued throughout the thesis as potentially playing an important role in supporting the development of agentic subjectivities. The way in which the inquiry has evolved, however, draws attention to the more problematic aspects of the cultural systems of these communities, particularly as cultural protocol and differences in structural power within communities, constrain the agency of some members.

The remainder of the theoretical questions (three – six), explore the ability of these same communities to be self-determining in acting upon and transforming dominant social structures and institutions. Overall their focus of inquiry concerns: *'how marginalised individuals and communities might come to more consciously construct their world views and identities (and*

relationship to dominant discourses or construct more agentic discourses) and act collectively to increase their control over conditions for health and well-being'. This involves transformation at several levels, with each remaining theoretical question pertaining to different levels of this transformation. Transformation at both the individual and collective levels of consciousness requires that people re-position themselves in relation to dominant discourses in ways that are more agentic. Increases in individual and community agency also require the transformation of existing power relations between economically and culturally dominant communities and those at 'the margins', as well as within the latter. In this sense the agency question focuses on the capacity of these individuals and communities to act.

The investigation defines 'agency' as the ability of individuals and communities to "live lives that they have reason to value" (Sen, 2000). Within the context of the inquiry, this definition of agency includes the ability of individuals and communities to authentically express themselves through consciously constructed subjectivities, identities and cultural systems. This includes chosen forms of subjectivity that are sufficiently supported by access to economic resources, social structures, and decision-making institutions. Where life circumstances do not support people's subjectivities, identities and cultural systems, agency necessarily entails the ability to bring about the desired changes. Within this context 'authentic expression' refers to chosen forms of expression that are self-defined as being congruent with people's sense of self and identity.

The investigation takes a view of agency relations as being significantly influenced by power-culture dynamics. Therefore the concepts of power and culture feature prominently within the investigation. Power is conceptualised at the individual, group and institutional levels. Culture is viewed as the totality of people's collective expression of their subjectivities including both non-physical (shared world views, systems of meaning and norms) and physical (architecture, clothing or food) properties. Cultural systems include those of ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, religion, and age. To different extents these cultural systems will be embedded and reflected in social structures, public policy content and institutional behaviours. The various combinations of these cultural systems and the three levels of power mentioned earlier, all constitute the 'power-culture-agency' relationship within the investigation.

The thesis contains two levels of argument. The first of these is theoretical and posits a critical post-modern approach for understanding the various facets of power-culture dynamics. The second argument draws from the first and advocates the value of community development

approaches to agency that actively engage with power-culture dynamics in working with economically and culturally marginalised groups. The focus of this second argument is on three key hinge relationships that bridge micro-community relations with more macro-structurally orientated relations. These three key hinges are: community-community development methodology, community-organisational and community–community developer relations.

The thesis challenges and extends the conceptual frameworks of community development and public health in some significant ways. Its concern with power-culture dynamics as being significant to agency dynamics, carries some important implications for community development practice. In so far as ‘equity’ is concerned, it takes public health debate onto new ground. It goes beyond the meaning of equity as the fair distribution of resources for health and well-being and extends more recent notions of equity as individuals and communities being able to achieve optimal health outcomes as they define them. It is concerned with ‘equity of expression’, both within dominant-marginal community relations and within marginalised communities themselves, thereby concerning itself with process, both as this occurs at the micro, interpersonal and macro, institutional levels of relating. This requires that public health practitioners bring increased awareness to their practice, thus developing greater insight into their own and others’ participation in community development activities.

The inquiry assumes agency and social change through democratic processes. Analysts (Cheyne et al., 2000; Kawachi et al., 1999) argue that increasing wealth and power disparities within democratic societies risk undermining human rights (such as rights to health, education and so on), and marginalising large segments of the population from participatory forms of democracy, relegating them to periodic representative expression (voting) only. Community development is one strategy long used to increase participatory democratic expression.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis proceeds with an introduction to the key theoretical constructs and their respective relationships to agency dynamics within the investigation. **Chapter two** lays out the conceptual cornerstones of the inquiry. **Chapters three and four** provide an overview of the main factors considered to influence the agency capacities of the investigation communities as these are discussed within existing literature. **Chapter three** deals with the broader influences exerted by processes of economic and cultural globalisation. **Chapter four** discusses the localised impacts of economic and cultural globalisation on the Pacific communities within the investigation

based in Aotearoa. It outlines the impacts of these on the material agency capacities of the research communities such as income and housing as well as the influence of these on more subjectively based capacities such as self-esteem or cultural identity. This chapter also includes a discussion of traditional Tongan and Samoan cultural systems (as these influence the subjectivities and cultural identities of the investigation participants) and subsequent issues of cultural change as members of these communities negotiate agentic ways of being in their new cultural contexts of Aotearoa.

Chapter five lays out the conceptual framework of critical post-modernism. It does so with respect to how this theorises agency relations and theoretically informs community development as well as the particular community development methodology that evolved as a result of the New Zealand research component. It then outlines existing community development literature, focusing the discussion around the three key hinge relationships of community-community development methodology, community-organisations and community-community developer. The methodological aspects of the research are discussed in **chapter six**. This iterates a social constructionist epistemology, participatory action research methodology and a range of qualitative data collection methods. An overview of the research process, data sources and methodological issues encountered within the research is given.

Chapter seven marks the beginning of the empirical part of the inquiry. It details the community development methodology that evolved out of one part of the fieldwork that comprised the major portion of the New Zealand component. It also discusses the conceptual development of the overall research inquiry as it was shaped by this part of the investigation. Material regarding significant methodological issues (in so far as these concerned validity tensions within the power-culture framework of agency dynamics) is also provided.

Chapters eight and **nine** address the six theoretical questions of agency that underpin the empirical part of the inquiry. In addressing the first three theoretical questions, **chapter eight** focuses on the inter-connections between identity, culture and agency dynamics. **Chapter nine** focuses the discussion more specifically on community development as a method of agency with communities at the economic and cultural margins. **Chapter ten** draws together the main thesis arguments as these relate to the overarching research question. It provides a summary of the investigation's emergent theoretical story of agency relations while positing some tentative agency frameworks in so far as these relate to communities, community developers and large organisations.

¹ Hereafter Aotearoa/New Zealand will generally be referred to as Aotearoa, the name originally given to this country (still commonly known as New Zealand) by its indigenous Maori peoples. In cases where the usage of Aotearoa is grammatically clumsy, the term New Zealand, or its derivatives are used.

² The term 'Pacific women' describes women living in Aotearoa who have migrated from Pacific Island nations (such as Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Tokelau, Rorotonga and Fiji for examples) or who culturally identify with the Pacific Islands because of their ancestry or heritage. Thus the term represents the plural identities and cultures of the Pacific Islands. Also note that the term 'Pacific' is also applied to 'Pacific children', 'Pacific families' and 'Pacific communities'. As with the case of Pacific women these terms refer to children and members of families and communities who have either migrated from Pacific Island nations or who culturally identify with the Pacific Islands because of their ancestry or heritage.

³ Health Funding Authoritys no longer exist in New Zealand. In recent re-structuring of the country's health system previous functions of Health Authoritys have largely been absorbed into those of the Ministry of Health.

⁴ I refer to 'my experience of their experience' because I cannot presume to know other people's experience and nor am I presuming to know the areas of their lives in which people with few resources do exercise agency.

⁵ The term 'material power relations' refers to the dominance of one group over another through the ability to ground and embed supporting discourses within social structures and institutional behaviours due to access to a strong economic base.

Chapter Two

Theorising the agency landscape: key constructs

Introduction

This chapter introduces key theoretical constructs as these pertain to the agency of the communities within the investigation. It outlines the agency landscapes of these communities, laying out the cornerstones of agency dynamics as these are conceptualised and subsequently demonstrated throughout the inquiry. To repeat, the central question within the inquiry into agency is *'how can economically and culturally marginalised communities act to shape and determine their futures?'* This necessarily involves the capacity for agency. *Agency* is defined as the ability of individuals and communities to live lives that they have reason to value (Sen, 2000). Within the context of the inquiry, this definition of agency includes the ability of individuals and communities to authentically express themselves through consciously constructed identities. This includes chosen forms of cultural expressions, world views and systems of meaning that are sufficiently supported by access to economic resources, social structures, and decision-making institutions. Where life circumstances do not support people's identities and cultural systems, agency necessarily entails the ability to bring about the desired changes. 'Authentic expression' refers to chosen forms of expression that are self-defined as being congruent with people's sense of self and identity.

This definition of agency draws upon Sen's (Sen, 2000) view of development as an "integrated process of expansion of substantive freedoms that connect with one another" (p.9). Attention is therefore paid to the expansion of the capabilities (or agency capacities) of people to lead the lives they value – and have reason to value. This view of agency emphasises "positive" rather than "negative" freedoms (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2000). Discourses of negative freedoms are now prevalent in market driven economies and emphasise the right not to be impeded in the realisation of one's wants by any formal legal barrier or constraint. Positive freedoms emphasise the capacities to realise goals and are concerned with outcomes as well as processes. In addition to any external criteria that might be applied, agency is evaluated according to the values and objectives of individuals and particular communities. Agency

capacities can be enhanced by public policy and the direction of public policy can be influenced by the effective use of participatory capacities of the public (Sen, 2000).

Individual and group empowerment is at the heart of this inquiry. Within the bounds of this investigation, both are viewed as the ability of people to reach their full potential⁶ individually and as members of community. Implicit within this definition of ‘agency as empowerment’ is that collective and individual expressions of consciousness by people at the margins are enabled by sufficient access to the resources necessary, whether economic, social, or cultural. Therefore existing social structures, institutions and decision-making forums must be able to accurately represent and respond to the needs and aspirations of these communities.

As stated earlier, the thesis posits that culture and power are closely related to the reproduction of social systems and the agentic capacity of various groups. The agency of communities is closely related to their various positionings (by themselves and others) in relation to these same social systems. The theoretical concepts of agency outlined in this chapter relate to the overarching power-culture dialectic. The power-culture dialectic is not intended as a duality. While some of the agency concepts to be outlined shortly may be more closely aligned with one of these overarching concepts, it will become apparent that the majority of the agency concepts have elements of both culture and power within them.

The following sections outline the key theoretical constructs within the investigation. The final sections in the chapter begin to theorise agency by drawing the linkages between these constructs and providing an explanatory framework for their dynamic interaction in producing various agency relations.

Key agency constructs

Agency and consciousness

An important tenet of the thesis is that capacity for agency necessarily involves the conscious constitution of our identities and subject positions in relation to discourses and social structures. This entails processes of critical inquiry into the life circumstances of ourselves and others as well as an awareness of the mind itself. The unconscious aspect of mind was present in all participants throughout the investigation and is considered to be an important aspect of agency. Although the unconscious itself is not directly investigated within the research, it is theorised as

having a critical place in the agency of individuals and communities as striving to bring what exists within the unconscious fully into consciousness.

Agency as consciousness is conceptualised as including “a being’s unique interiority, depth, spontaneity and creativity” (Spretnak, 1991, p.29). Consciousness as connectedness to the interiority of one’s being from which one acts as an initiating and directive subject of action, constitutes a crucial part of the ‘internal agency terrain’. Briefly, ‘agency terrain’ (which is explained more fully later in the thesis) refers to various factors such as income or self esteem that structure the agency landscape of any individual and thus determine his or her capacity to act. ‘Internal agency terrain’ refers to a person’s internal world or psyche as it influences a person’s capacity to act.

Agency as a process of becoming conscious is also linked to the ability to be able to critically inquire into the process of life itself and the various positionings of individuals and communities within that. Within the thesis the connection between agency and consciousness is also extended to community developers and representatives of other organisations engaged in development work with communities. It is posited that community developers and organisational representatives will be at their most agentic, when they themselves are fully conscious actors. It is also proposed that critical inquiry along with other processes of becoming conscious are particularly crucial for minority culture communities which tend to be positioned unagentially by dominant discourses and social structures. The relationship between agency and consciousness is elaborated on under ‘Theorising the agency-structure dialectic’, later in the chapter.

Agency and identity

Identity is considered to be a key aspect of agency. Identity can be defined as sense of self and sense of belonging and relationship (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) to other individuals and communities. This includes one’s identification with particular discourses and positionings within social structures. Identity can be applied both at the individual or group levels (self-identity and group identity). It is closely tied to subjectivity as it involves the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of “who we are” (Woodward, 1997). These subjectivities are experienced within a social context where language and culture give meaning to our sense of self. Culture both mediates identity and is mediated by it. For example just as gender roles and norms pertaining to a particular ethnic group will impact on and constitute a woman’s sense of

self and who she is as a woman; so too will her own identity as a woman (which may be influenced by experiences of gender roles within other ethnic groups) have a part in (re)shaping the gender cultures within her own ethnic community through her interactions with others. Likewise, people's subjectivities both construct discourses and are constructed by them (Weedon, 1987). Within the social context, people are subjected to various discourses and position themselves in relation to these- agentially or unagentially.

Identity implies a largely (although not totally) conscious sense of self (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). An important premise of the thesis is that a strong sense of self and identity that is consciously constructed is a critical aspect of the personal power that agentic people are able to access. At a collective level, the agency of marginalised communities increases when there is a strong collective sense of cultural identity (Durie, 1999) that is sufficiently cohesive and yet not so rigid as to constrain the subjectivities and actions of people in ways that limit their ability to exercise agency. When people are marginalised by existing discourses their sense of identity and capacity for agency may be weakened (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) or alternatively they construct new discourses (Hooks, 1990) in order to preserve and strengthen their identity and advance their interests.

The ability to construct discourses more supportive of community identities and interests is related to a sense of shared experiences, common understandings and connectedness in addition to positioning within social structures. As economically and culturally marginalised communities tend to have little access to structural power, relationships with institutions that do, are seen as being key to re-positioning more agentially in relation to discourses. As well as assisting to strengthen identity and capacity for agency, contact with institutions can also compromise identity at both the individual and community levels (Cheyne et al., 2000). This most frequently happens when the culture and interests of the institution are either different or in conflict with those of the community. (It is a given that the structural power relations will be unequal). Therefore the qualities existing within partnerships between institutions and marginalised communities become critical in determining whether they assist communities in maintaining and developing agentic identities.

Agency and culture

Culture features strongly within the investigation into agency. The place of culture in configuring power relationships at the individual, interpersonal or community and structural

levels is explored. Also explored, is the ability of communities and individuals to position themselves agentially in relation to dominant discourses and to be creative in expanding upon the roles and practices normally assigned to them within their own cultural group. Within the research, culture refers to shared systems of meaning, symbols and world views (Helman, 1990) by a particular collective. Culture both shapes people's subjective experiences and actions upon material reality and is reciprocally shaped by both. In this sense culture refers to "a signifying system through which necessarily (among other things) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored" (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p.8). A 'signifying system' refers to the communication of things about ourselves (either through language, the way we dress, what and how we eat and how we socialise etc). Such systems of communication carry encoded meanings for members of the same cultural group (or those who can understand them). As a social order that is communicated, produced and reproduced, culture is subject to change, in a process of continual evolution.

The thesis argues that cultural systems can play a pivotal part in processes of development designed to increase the agency and well-being experiences of economically and ethnically marginalised communities. In theory, cultural systems that permit diversity may enable greater agentic capacity because they allow a greater number of potential subject positions and identities for individuals to choose from. It is argued later in the thesis that cultural systems will be at their most agentic when they are fluid and open to change, consciously created and re-created to serve people in different contexts.

Culture as a 'source of agency' carries with it particular challenges for communities at the margins. As culture is a dimension of all organisations and institutional practices, this creates obvious tensions for those communities at the margins in having their cultural systems adequately reflected within the practices of institutions (Durie, 1999). The second area of challenge relates to the creative or agentic use of cultural systems which requires the holding of some tensions between social structures and institutional practices as 'preservers of culture' and new and creative cultural practices as precursors of change. Cultures 'under threat' such as those of minority communities run the risk of becoming "static" (Harrison, 2000) or non-changing as an act of preservation. The thesis argues that such cultural systems sometimes impede the agency of their members, as they are confronted with changing external conditions.

The term 'culture' is not limited to different ethnic groups. Rather, the term culture is applied more broadly (Hall & Neitz, 1993; Sardar & Van Loon, 1999) to include collective systems of

meaning, expression (such as consumerism) and experience as applied to gender, class, sexuality, age, ability and religious groupings in addition to those of ethnicity.

Agency and subject position

‘Subject position’ is a key theoretical construct throughout the inquiry. It refers to the meaning people attribute to their experiences and the subsequent modes of subjectivity they adopt among those available. It is a key aspect of identity. People’s experiences occur within, and are constituted by signifying practices. People are either “active subjects who take up positions from which (they) can exercise power within a particular social practice or (they) are subjected to the definition of others” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p.11). However the extent to which people are free to adopt particular subject positions or identities is circumscribed by social power relations (Weedon, 1987). Dominant discourses tend to reproduce the values and cultural systems of economically powerful communities, their reproduction ensured by a strong material base and their institutionalisation throughout society. The extent to which an individual is able to adopt a new subject position will be partially reliant on her/his ability to become a more active agent in directing or shaping the signifying practices that she/he is part of.

Although the term ‘subject position’ implies mainly subjective properties (the modes of subjectivity people adopt), it is viewed as also having material properties. The realisation of new and more agentic modes of subjectivity must be supported through signifying practices in the material world that are constitutive of these subjectivities. For example, a low income and less educated woman with pre-school children may consider going back to high school as she is exposed to new modes of subjectivity that position her as an ‘adult learner’ and she begins to identify with this subject position. However, full realisation of this new subject position requires its enactment through signifying practices associated with being an adult student such as attending classes. Among other things this requires the woman to have access to the economic resources necessary to afford childcare for her children. Thus, being able to exercise choice over which signifying practices one is part of requires access to structural, institutional, economic and more material forms of power.

Agency and community

One’s experience of community is key in determining capacity for agency. In broad terms ‘community’⁷ refers to people with some shared interests, some common experiences and sense

of connectedness (Robertson & Minkler, 1994) and shared actions (Labonte, 1996b). The term may be applied to people who live within a defined geographical area, people of common gender, ethnic or class identities or a collective of people who come from quite diverse backgrounds and experiences, but share a common interest around a particular issue (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999).

An important component of community is social cohesion (Wilkinson, 1996). Social cohesion refers to the non-material resources of communities such as networks, norms and trust (Wilkinson, 1996) that enable members of communities to be in relationship with each other. Shared values and norms are those that permit co-operation with each other and therefore enhance the agency of members within that community.

The second sense in which the word community is used is in the context of an advocacy or activist community. This refers to a collective of individuals or groups who share common interests in relation to particular advocacy goals and who choose to take some co-ordinated action. Here community constitutes a clearly defined purpose within the dynamic act of people coming together to share their experiences and act upon transforming these (Labonte, 1996b). It is more “community as action” (Labonte, 1996a) whereby communities are formally engaged in processes that are intended to transform power-culture relations, such that individuals and communities are able to live lives that they have reason to value (Sen, 2000).

Activist communities may be diverse in their membership with regard to identity, culture and belief systems. They may also be comprised of horizontal and/or vertical interpersonal and inter organisational networks. Broadly speaking, the former constitute networks more between communities at ‘the margins’ and smaller organisations representative of these communities, while the latter, describes relationships with larger organisations that tend to be representative of culturally dominant communities.

The thesis proposes that these different facets of community are all necessary for effective action and advocacy for self-determination on the part of marginalised groups. While a strong connection to identity and culture is a necessary starting base for economically and culturally marginalised communities as actors for self-determination, the thesis proposes that advocacy communities need to work across identity, geography and social structures to be at their most agentic (Kennedy, Tilly, & Gaston, 1990; Ledwith & Asgill, 2000). They need to do this while maintaining authentic identity spaces for members and equitable power relations within the

activist community. The maintenance of these is most challenging within advocacy or activist communities in which there is a diversity of identities and cultures represented and differences in structural power. This is most likely to be the case in advocacy or activist partnerships between large organisations (whose practices are constituted by culturally dominant discourses and their associated institutions) and communities at the economic and cultural margins.

Agency and power

Within the thesis power is viewed as operating at the individual, group and institutional levels. The individual level corresponds to the personal exercise of power or power within (Starhawk, 1987; Wartenberg, 1990). The group level of power, or power with (Labonte, 1996b; Starhawk, 1987; Wartenberg, 1990) refers to the “energy, optimism and strength people create when they act together” (Labonte, 1996b, p.7). It is the greater strength people develop to oppose the practices of power over when they pool their different abilities and learn from one another (Labonte, 1996b). The institutional level of power largely corresponds to power over (Lukes, 1974; Starhawk, 1987; Wartenberg, 1990), or the ability to enforce particular behaviours or influence ways of thinking. This may be achieved either through legislation, ability to shape discourse such as policy debate for example or access to a substantial resource base.

This view of institutional power draws on Lukes (Lukes, 1974) “three dimensional view of power”. It highlights the ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and organisational practices or through individuals’ decisions. Importantly, the biases of a system can be “mobilised, recreated and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously chosen nor the intended result of particular individual’s choices” (p.21). Within this explanatory framework, the bias of a system is not sustained so much by a series of individually chosen acts, but by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups and practices of institutions. These biases may be maintained by an individual’s inaction. Moreover, even when the exercise of institutional power is against the interests of those over whom it is exercised, this may occur in the absence of conflict. Institutional (dominant) discourses shape the perceptions, cognitions and preferences of people in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things (hegemony), or because they cannot see or imagine any alternative to it (Lukes, 1974). This latter view of power inherent within institution-agency relations is particularly insidious because of the absence of apparent conflict.

Depending on how they are exercised, all three levels of power (power within, power with and power over) can operate to either increase or decrease the agency of individuals and communities. Power at the level of the individual can manifest as personal power or as degrees of powerlessness inherent in internalised negative identities. Just as group power can be supportive and inclusive, so it can also be used to exclude or coerce. While institutional power can be used to include marginal discourses and enforce legislation that supports disenfranchised communities, it can also be used to frame policy debate so as to exclude particular discourses. There is no value judgement inherent in each level of power. Rather this lies in the use of the power and whether or not it is used transformatively (Labonte, 1996a; Wartenberg, 1990). This means that those who have more power, use it in ways that increase the power of those who possess less so as to enable such individuals and communities to exercise greater agency within their lives, thereby having a greater role in determining their own futures.

The thesis draws upon a critical post-modern perspective of power relations and community empowerment. While discourses are seen as constituting people's subjectivities and vice versa, the same discourses may be used by different communities and will have varying implications for the agency of different communities or individuals at different times. Power is viewed as being fluid and dispersed throughout the social system, exercised under specific and local conditions (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Agency is configured and reconfigured across different cultural contexts and actors. It varies from situation to situation depending on the gender, ethnic class and other identities of the actors and particular social structures and institutionalised norms. This is not to say there are no differences ever in the relative influence of some social structures and cultural norms over others within any agency matrix. Therefore a structural analysis of power relations (Ife, 1995) is seen to be important in tempering more dispersed views of power and comprises part of the critical post-modern perspective.

Agency and spirituality

Agency and spirituality is conceptualised within the thesis as having two main dimensions. The first dimension of agency and spirituality that bears relevance to the investigation has to do with the inherent universal inter-connectedness of all individuals, communities and beings. This view appreciates the holistic nature of the universe we live in and the vast web of relationships that connect peoples and their thoughts and actions with one another as well as with the natural world (Spretnak, 1982; Spretnak, 1991; Starhawk, 1987). The perception of interconnectedness is a widespread cross cultural phenomenon that has been experienced by an enormous number

of people living in very different circumstances from one another for thousands of years (Spretnak, 1991). According to theorists of human evolution and cosmology (Myss, 1997; Spretnak, 1991), the perception of interconnectedness has long been a part of the core spiritual insights of the “wisdom traditions”⁸. It is important to distinguish between the practices of these spiritual forms and the institutions that have grown around them, (which are often oppressive and underpinned with patriarchal and Eurocentric social structures).

This first dimension of spirituality and agency (the perception of our universal interconnectedness) forms an integral aspect of previously mentioned concepts of ‘agency as community’ and ‘agency as power with’. It relates to our ability to ‘be in community’ and in relation to one another in ways that are mutually agentic. ‘Mutually agentic’ refers to the constant appreciation of our interdependencies and mutually impacting thoughts and actions so as to produce the most agentic processes and outcomes for all. It is posited that appreciation of interconnectedness between peoples is important for dealing with conflicts within development work. While ‘separatism’ may be an agentic position for individuals and/or minority groups for a period of time, it is proposed that our ultimate development as peoples is underpinned by a deep sense of connectedness across cultures, differences and species.

The second dimension of agency and spirituality extends the notion of ‘interconnectedness’ to the community development (and investigation) context. It is proposed that as humans we are ‘of the universe’ (Spretnak, 1991), not apart from it (and each other). This position is somewhat different from the predominant view in Western societies (which has come into being through the associated knowledge cultures of patriarchy and modernity) that ‘man is separate from his environment’. This view of separateness that has dominated Westernised consciousness means that we often live as if we are ‘apart from our environments and from each other’. Conversely, the investigation context is viewed as one in which “the world and everything in it is alive, dynamic, interdependent, interacting and infused with moving energies” (Starhawk, 1982, p.9). Starhawk (Starhawk, 1982, p.9) refers to this view of the world as “immanence” while Spretnak refers to it as a “state of grace”. According to Spretnak (1991, p.24) (and I would agree):

When we experience consciousness of the unity in which we are embedded, the sacred whole that is in and around us, we exist in a state of grace. At such moments our consciousness perceives not only our individual self, but also our larger self, the self of the cosmos. The gestalt of unitive experience becomes palpable.

In patriarchal Western societies, a predominant way of being in the world includes the perception of people as separate from each other and the environment. The investigation context

and methodology of development proposes a relationship of connectedness between these, recognising our multi-sensory capacities and inherent relatedness as human beings, and locating humanity within a dynamic cosmos. While this inquiry has not directly investigated spirituality either theoretically or empirically, it remains important to the thesis for two reasons. Firstly, my own personal position is that the unfolding of human potential, both individually and in relationship with community is best realised when informed by these two dimensions of ‘agency and spirituality’. Secondly, various aspects of these dimensions also influenced the community development work undertaken by many of those interviewed within the investigation. I know this because of secondary references made by investigation participants during our informal conversations.

Agency and (social) structure

Social structures are conceptualised as having two aspects in so far as their relationship to agency is concerned. The first aspect refers to the *shared conventions, understandings and routine actions* that both constitute and are constituted by social systems (Giddens & Pierson, 1998). Structure is primarily expressed in the things that people do in routine ways and according to particular conventions or rules. Such behaviours include the mobilisation of allocative resources (command over objects, goods or material phenomena) and authoritative resources (command over persons or actors) in routine and regularised ways (Giddens, 1984). While some types of resources do have a materiality, these only produce material effects as determined by their allocation according to the shared conventions and routine behaviours or people.

The second aspect of social structure refers to the *structuring effects* of shared conventions and routine actions within particular contexts of power-culture relational dynamics that result in unequal outcomes for different groups. Shared conventions, understandings and routine actions that become institutionalised within particular organisations or contexts will have different outcomes for cultural groups depending on which groups the predominating social structures are more representative of.

Within New Zealand society, those social structures that are expressed through institutional norms and practices are largely European, male, middle class, heterosexual and presumptive of ‘normal’ physical and intellectual capability. Examples of this are the structuring of social assistance programmes based on cultural norms that pertain to European nuclear families and

that fail to take account of Maori or Pacific peoples'⁹ extended families and associated 'household economies'; or the non professional status of traditional Samoan healers within the New Zealand medical system. Within both these cases shared understanding and routine behaviours on the part of institutions that are predominantly representative of Western cultural systems are likely to produce structured (inequitable) health and wealth effects between the mentioned ethnic minority groups and culturally dominant European society. The unequal outcomes for groups produced by these structuring processes in turn affects the relative capabilities of cultural groups to exercise equal influence or agency in subsequent social structuring processes.

Giddens (1984) proposes that social structures are both constraining and enabling. Similarly the thesis posits that both aspects of social structures (shared conventions and rules and their inequitable structured effects) outlined here are neither constraining nor enabling in themselves, but will be contingent on the power-culture relations that they recursively organise and produce from context to context. Social structures are more likely to be enabling of agency to those groups whose norms, conventions and systems of understanding they reproduce. For example, a wealthy person has the ability to use discourses in ways in which a low-income person does not. Similarly, the structured effects produced by institutionalised conventions and rules are more likely to be enabling to groups for whom they produce better outcomes relative to other groups in producing a kind of 'spring-board' for agency.

Agency and institution

Society can be understood as a complex of re-current practices that form institutions (Giddens, 1984). Institutions are conceptualised as an extension of social structures in which the extensive repetition or reproduction of beliefs, conventions and practices eventually form institutions. Conventions become established or institutionalised in organisations or cultures. Therefore, in any society, some organisations and cultures will be more institutionalised than others to the extent that they are representative of dominant practices and belief systems. Examples of institutions are those of religion (as embodied in the practices of church organisations) or those of 'social welfare' and citizenship (as reflected in the practices of government departments). Institutions also include professions such as medicine (as expressed through the practices of medical establishments) or social work (as expressed through the practices of social service institutions). Within the context of the thesis, the word 'institution' is distinct from

‘organisation’. For example, the institutions of medicine and religion are embedded and reproduced within the practices of large organisations such as hospitals or churches.

The capacity for agency provided by any institution and the organisation/s within which it is reproduced, is determined by the power-culture dynamics that it constitutes in relation to a particular community. Institutions and large organisations commonly reproduce those social structures and cultural systems that are dominant within any given society, thus constraining and/or enhancing the agency of individuals and communities as influenced by their particular social, economic, and cultural locations. Therefore institutions enhance the abilities of individuals and communities to be agentic, to the extent that their policies and practices coalesce with the formers’ identities, cultural systems and social structures.

Agency and religion

The term ‘religion’ refers to the Semitic traditions of Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) and Islam. As such, it is conceptualised as particular systems of faith and worship and deference to a superhuman or higher authority. God is largely believed to be outside of oneself and authority is externally rather than internally based. Subjectivities and behaviours tend to be structured by religious discourses and group norms and value bases. Agency and religion is distinct from agency and spirituality (discussed earlier in the chapter), in the sense that semitic religions are founded on patriarchal institutions of male dominated hierarchical relations, whereas spirituality as used here is not (Spretnak, 1982). According to Spretnak (Spretnak, 1982):

.....patriarchal religion and society are built on the notion of hierarchical control:
 God the father – Jesus – man – women – (and where applicable) other ‘not full beings’
 such as people of colour – children – animals – nature (p.xiv).

The thesis does not argue that religious systems and institutions of faith and worship are unagentic for their followers or incapable of useful social action. Nor does it argue that they do not have elements of spirituality in them; indeed they do. It is rather that the relationship between agency and religion is problematic because of the latter’s hierarchical nature of relationships and the privileging of particular cultural systems (predominantly Eurocentric and patriarchal) over others.

Agency and globalisation

Globalisation is theorised as a key contextual factor that shapes the agency capacities of the communities within investigation. A distinction is made between economic and cultural forms of globalisation. Economic globalisation refers to the increasing flow of capital, goods and labour across national boundaries. Cultural globalisation refers to the globalisation of perception and consciousness, the transmission of cultural symbols and systems and the actual movement of peoples across national borders. Both these processes are significant for the agency of economically and culturally marginalised communities because of the global shifts in power, consciousness and democratic space that have occurred as a result (Griffen-Cohen, 1996).

The globalisation of consciousness and cultures via innovations in transport and communication technologies potentially afford new kinds of opportunities for individuals to reconstitute their subjectivities. People within many parts of the world are now exposed to a multitude of discourses, cultural systems and subject positions as never before. Giddens (Giddens & Pierson, 1998) argues that today's world is "post traditional" in the sense that countless traditions, beliefs and customs now mingle with each other via processes of globalisation. He proposes that in a globalised, cosmopolitan world of intersecting cultures and lifestyles, traditions, customs, beliefs and expectations are "adaptable, bendable, plastic resources for people to draw on" (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p.15). In a world that transports culture through mediums of electronic communication and migration, social and cultural identities have become unglued from their contexts. According to Giddens, within a globalised context people's subjectivities and identities are no longer circumscribed by their immediate physical contexts. The modern world brings both risks and opportunities for people:

In this world, all individuals must strive to reconcile the modern paradox for themselves by undertaking a 'reflexive project' of the self: each person is required to steer his or her own, individual course between the threats and promises of modern society (Giddens & Pierson, 1998, p.19).

Globalisation thus appears to offer an increased potential for exercising agency in constructing one's own subjectivities and identities. However, the thesis posits that an important part of individuals and communities being able to more pro-actively constitute their own subjectivities, identities and subject positions is being able to influence the development of the same cultural systems and discourses that also structure their subjectivities. (One avenue for this is public policy). Any account of the potentialities for increased agency capacities that globalisation

offers (particularly for communities at the margins) must take account of the power relations inherent in globalising processes.

Significantly, in considering these power relations, the thesis draws an association between economic and cultural dominance throughout globalising processes as the ability to produce and disseminate culture on a large scale is closely tied to access to economic resources (Hall & Neitz, 1993). The thesis posits that globalisation during colonial and late capitalist times has perpetuated the economic and cultural dominance of some nations and communities over others throughout the world. In a broad sense, these forms of globalisation have promulgated Western, patriarchal, capitalist interests and their associated cultural systems at the expense of others. Power has become increasingly concentrated economically (Boyer & Drake, 1996; Kelsey, 1997; Korten, 1995), politically (Griffen-Cohen, 1996; Kelsey, 1999) and culturally (Korten, 1995; Sardar & Van Loon, 1999; Shohat & Stam, 1996).

The inquiry views the impacts of globalisation as being very different for wealthier nations who sit nearer the core of world economic development than for those that are relegated to the peripheries of the world economy. (The distinction here, is that nations positioned around the core of the world economy are considered to be central actors in determining the development of global economic relations, while those at the economic peripheries are less active in this sense. Consequently, they tend to be more vulnerable to the ill effects of economic globalisation). This thesis does not attempt to make any comparisons in relation to the agency of low-income and ethnic minority groups across this core-peripheral economic divide. However, the link between core and peripheral countries is important within the thesis because of increasing migrations between them. A consequence of the economic disparities between core and peripheral economic countries is migration or mass movements of people in which many people leave their economically poorer homelands for economically wealthier countries in search of new opportunities and a better quality of life.

Processes of globalisation are theorised as impacting on the agentic capacities of the communities within the investigation in both historical and contemporary senses as well as in material and subjective ways. Their current material resources (namely wealth and health) and subject positionings in relation to systems of Western economic and cultural dominance are partly constituted by their homeland's historical location in relation to the development of capitalism. Westernised, male discourses of capitalism and development have continued to be strongly grounded in a powerful economic base through processes of economic globalisation.

The coupling of these discourses with economic prosperity by Westernised nations exerts a strong pull to the economic centres for many members of nations on the peripheries of the world's economy. Processes of Western capitalist hegemony (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999) tend to intensify as immigrants move to their new host countries in search of better economic opportunities and are confronted with dominant social structures. However their new cultural environments also offer some opportunity to increase agency through the integration of subject positions and world views into their existing cultural systems. Alternatively, these new environments afford them a cultural space within which to outwardly express subject positions that would not have been acceptable within their home country (Afkhami, 1994). This is particularly true for women as they migrate to Westernised democracies.

Globalisation and associated increasing poverty levels in both Aotearoa and Canada has meant that competition at the local level over jobs, land and other resources has increased. This competition is often expressed as some form of cultural or identity discrimination (ethnicity, gender), particularly towards members of communities at the economic and cultural margins. Processes of cultural globalisation coupled with the advent of new communication technology also means that people are increasingly exposed to competing discourses at the local level (Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996a). The multiple appropriation of discourses to serve various agendas means that the proactive constitution of subjectivities and subject positions (which are important aspects of agency) requires the application of a critical consciousness and inquiry. More agentic individuals and communities means the successful negotiation of a complex web of discourses and power relations generated through global-local dynamics of power and culture as discussed.

However increased levels of critical consciousness and more pro-actively constituted subjectivities and subject positions are insufficient on their own for communities at the margins to be able to shape and determine their futures. This requires shifts in institutional behaviours so as to be reflective of minority groups cultural systems, in addition to ensuring an equitable allocation of resources to enable agency. Therefore globalisation offers some increased opportunities for agency at the micro-interpersonal relations level via the intermingling of cultural systems. At a macro level it tends to produce increasingly inequitable structured effects between communities at the margins and those at the centre of economic and cultural life. The thesis posits that significant changes in institutional behaviour (in the fore-mentioned directions) are required if communities at 'the margins' are going to find foot rather than toeholds of agency.

Agency and health

The ability of individuals and communities to exercise agency, (that is to shape and determine their lives in ways that realise their many potentialities) requires access to health determinants. These health determinants include good housing, adequate income, a healthy environment and access to social systems and institutions that nurture and support culture and identity (Evans, Barer, & Marmor, 1994; National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998; Te Puni Kokiri, 1998). Sufficient access to such health determinants can be conceptualised as providing a firm platform or base that supports the individual to go about her/his daily life. Conversely, agency, or the power to act and express one's identity, culture and values whether it is through access to appropriate systems of healing, through house design, or within one's employment situation for example, is also an important determinant of health (Kawachi, Wilkinson, & Kennedy, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996). For example in their introductory discussion on income inequalities and health, Kawachi et al (Kawachi et al., 1999) cite a 1997 study by Bosma et al that identifies "sense of control" as being among a number of psychosocial pathways through which health status is influenced. Thus the capacity to act and make changes that one values, is both influenced by health determinants and determines health itself.

Health related aspects of agency are closely linked to increasing wealth inequities throughout the world. This is particularly so in economically developed countries such as Aotearoa or Canada where relative rather than absolute poverty has become the focus of concern. Increasing income inequalities in developed countries has created inequities in health and well-being between different communities (Kelsey, 1997; Kelsey, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996). Public health commentators (Kawachi et al., 1999; Wilkinson, 1999b) note that within economically developed countries gross national product per head has ceased to be an important determinant of mortality; the focus must now be on relative inequalities in wealth and power as determinants of health. Research supports this view, showing that steeply hierarchical distributions of power and wealth in a community will be reflected in discrepancies in health status. There is a smooth gradient along the social hierarchy with high income groups having significantly better health status than middle income groups who have better health status than low income groups (Evans et al., 1994; Wilkinson, 1996; Wilkinson, 1999a). Indeed, health is posited by theorists (Kawachi et al., 1999) as "being one of the most sensitive indicators of social inequality" (p.xii).

Relative inequalities in wealth and power are important for agency in two respects. Firstly inequalities in incomes are important in that by virtue of having 'less' some sectors of the

population are excluded socially and materially from the life of society. This creates inequities in communities' capacities for meaningful participation. Secondly (as already touched upon), relative inequalities have been shown to impact on health through psychosocial pathways such as stress, self-esteem and associated feelings of powerlessness (Brunner, 1997; Wilkinson, 1996; Wilkinson, 1999a):

.....people at the bottom of the hierarchy internalise the unfairness of their social situation and blame themselves. This self-blame leads to lower self-esteem and greater isolation and psychological stress. Studies have shown that persistently circulating stress hormones increase hypertension and decrease immune system functions (Brunner, 1996; Berkman, 1986; House et al, 1988; Cohen and Syme, 1985). This, then, is one pathway through which hierarchical power inequities create structural inequities that become physical pathologies (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999, p.14).

Key agency dynamics

The agency-structure dialectic

Theorising agency pertinent to the economically and culturally marginalised communities that took part in this investigation must be based in part on a theoretical account of the relationship between agency and structure in reproducing social systems. Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984) (cited earlier) refers to an explanatory framework for the conditions governing the transmutation of social structures and therefore the reproduction of social systems. He presents structure and agency as two interdependent given sets of phenomena, mediated by the recurrent nature of social practices. The structural properties (rules and conventions) of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise. Structure is not only external to individuals (as in the internalisation of social practices or rules); it is both internal and external to individuals. Likewise Giddens views agency as not just contained within the individual, but also as being external as a flow of people's actions in relation to each other and structures that are connected with attributes of self consciousness (Giddens, 1984; Giddens & Pierson, 1998).

For Giddens the reproduction of social structures and systems (reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organised as regular social practices) occurs through people (as actors or agents) reflexively going about their day to day activities in relation to what has occurred before. Giddens (1984) posits that the reflexive capacities of the human agents comprise two aspects of consciousness:

The reflexive capacities of the human actor are characteristically involved in a continuous manner with the flow of day to day conduct in the contexts of social activity. But reflexivity operates only partly on a discursive level. What agents know about what they do and why they do it – their knowledgeability as agents – is largely carried in practical consciousness. Practical consciousness consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to go on in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression (Giddens, 1984, p.xxii).

For Giddens this practical knowledge or consciousness is embedded in the day to day actions or interactions of people living out their lives. It connects their everyday knowledgeability with the structure of social systems and the recursive ordering of social practices. Here the recursive ordering of social practices refers to the repeated application of rules or conventions to successive results of the process. Social practices build on each other with each being ordered or constituted in part by what has gone before. For Giddens people use this practical consciousness agentially without really thinking about it.

Theoretically this investigation concurs with Giddens' distinction between discursive and practical consciousness. It also posits that Giddens' (Giddens, 1984) "practical consciousness" is not necessarily agentic for members of culturally minority communities. This is because practical consciousness in its operative sense actually becomes disabling if norms and rules that position these communities unagentially are not named, but rather tacitly agreed to (for example 'common sense'). For communities at the margins, the ability to name and bring aspects of practical consciousness into Giddens discursive form is critical to agency.

For Giddens it is the specifically reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices:

Reflexivity should be understood not merely as self consciousness, but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. To be a human is to be a purposive agent who has reasons for his or her activities.....Human action occurs as a duree, a continuous flow of conduct, as does cognition. Purposive action is not composed of an aggregate or series of separate intentions, reasons and motives. Thus it is useful to speak of reflexivity as grounded in the continuous monitoring of action which human beings display and expect others to display (Giddens, 1984, p.3).

Reflexivity and the continuity of practices (that comprise social structures) are bound up in each other. Continuity of practices presumes reflexivity, but reflexivity is possible in turn only because of the continuity of practices and their institutionalised features that makes them distinctively the same across space and time. Giddens (Giddens & Pierson, 1998) argues that the possibility of change is there in every moment of social life; however, social reproduction is a key part of life. In this sense change and constancy are somehow directly bound up with one

another. The interactions between people that reproduce conventions and social practices are like the “circuit switches” for relations of transformation and mediation that underlie conditions of system reproduction (Giddens, 1984).

It is the observation of these circuit switches or points of influence that will begin to give us theoretical information about how relations of power and culture configure relationships of agency (or not) for people through the production of social systems via interactions between people. The thesis proposes that as the reproduction of social systems and institutions are a key part of life, members of low-income and ethnic minority groups marginalised by such processes must apply more than practical consciousness to their everyday activities. The agency of these groups requires the application of a critical consciousness at the nodes of interaction between actors. For it is at these point of influence or nodes of interaction that various cultural systems and social structures connect. However, critical consciousness in itself is not enough to constitute fully agentic actors. This is due to the institutionalisation of culturally dominant systems and their tendency towards reproduction in social structures through the predominantly practical knowledgeability and consciousness of actors.

Giddens’ (Giddens, 1984) theory of “structuration” is important to the investigation in that it provides an explanatory framework that links subjectivity to materiality through the (re)production of social structures, that eventually result in various structured effects for communities. The significance placed on people’s everyday interactions in the reproduction of social structures is important for understanding some of the dynamics of agency relations and the potential ‘windows of opportunity’ within these whereby marginalised communities might come to exercise increased levels of agency. These theoretical insights into agency relations are further built on in the following two sections that discuss the dynamic interaction of key agency constructs and elements previously outlined.

The agency terrain

The thesis uses the term “*agency terrain*” as a descriptor for the landscape of elements that exist both within and outside of individuals whose dynamic interaction constitute an individual’s or community’s capacity to exercise agency. As used within the thesis, the phrase *internal agency terrain* refers to the more subjective elements of agency. These are consciousness, identity and culture. Consciousness and identity consists of several sub elements. Consciousness includes knowledge, skills, ability to think critically and intuition. Identity

includes one's sense of self, belonging and self esteem. The internal agency terrain is conceptualised as the internal world that people carry from one locale to another. The ways in which these elements combine begins to structure the internal agency terrain and thus agency capacities of the individual. The phrase *external agency terrain* refers to the more outwardly orientated, material elements and relational aspects of agency. These are: physical and other economic resources (such as housing and income), social structures, discourses, community social networks and community cohesiveness and strategic partnerships that one may have access to. Globalisation is also considered to be an important element that currently characterises the external agency terrain and that has very real material effects on the lives of people. The combinations of these elements structure the external agency terrain. The expression of agency is conditioned, (constrained or enabled) by the elements that constitute both agency terrains.

Neither the external nor the internal agency terrains exist independently of one another. Both are mediated by the other and constituted by the flow of actions between actors. For example discourses are articulated within print media and policies and also internalised by people. Subject positions are reconstituted via the mediating influences of internal agency terrain elements (such as consciousness, self-esteem, knowledge) on the external elements and vice versa. Some agency capacities appear to be more clearly located either within the internal or external agency terrain. Examples of this would be access to public health services that are institutionally supportive of one's culture, (external) or a strong sense of culture and identity (internal). However an interdependent relationship exists between the two. Each exists within the other's sphere of influence and neither are located exclusively within either the external or internal terrains. For example, a strong sense of identity assists one in accessing culturally appropriate health services and, in turn, is nurtured by those same social structures. Some agency capabilities even more clearly span both the internal and external worlds of subjects such as an alliance with another group, which may be both formalised (institutional aspects) and also have subjective elements (the felt relationship as in sense of connection). Table one on the following page, outlines key elements that comprise the internal and external agency terrains respectively.

Table one: key elements that comprise the internal and external agency terrains

Internal Agency Terrain	External Agency Terrain
Consciousness -Knowledge, critical thinking, spontaneity & intuition	Economic globalisation -The global movement of capital & goods
Identity -Sense of self & herstory/history, self-esteem, sense of belonging	Cultural gobalisation -The globalisation of culture via migration, electronic & print media
Culture -Internalised systems of meaning, world views and symbols shared by a collective	Economic & other physical resources such as housing, access to health care Dominant social structures (rules, norms, conventions) & institutions (democracy, neo-liberalism, religion, professions) that transmit cultural systems Social networks & interorganisational networks

The agentic capacity of individuals and communities to act and make changes of their choice is undermined by deprivations within any of the agency terrain elements mentioned. For example unemployment undermines agency capacity through loss of income, self-reliance, self-confidence and psychological and physical health. Sen (Sen, 2000) refers to this process as “capability deprivation”. Such deprivations in agency capacities are often linked to health determinants such as income or housing conditions, to inequities within populations of wealth and power and to health itself.

Agency and power-culture

The term ‘power-culture’ is used as a descriptor for the dynamics produced during the interplay between various forms of power and culture that are operative within any given context. Different power experiences (such as power within, power with and power over) are brought into dynamic interaction with different cultural systems (ethnicity, gender, class), resulting in varying forms of agency relations. Within this context the term ‘culture’ encompasses the subjectivities of individuals who occupy a range of subject positions in relation to these cultural systems.

Power-culture dynamics are constituted by various elements of the internal and external agency terrains that are operative within any context. These agency terrains will be contingent upon who is present (and the internal agency terrains they bring with them) and the context (external agency terrain). Power-culture dynamics and ensuing relations of agency will vary from situation to situation. Theoretically this conceptualisation of agency rests on the post-modern (Williams, 1996) tenets of particularism, relativism and contingency wherein the ensuing power-culture dynamics are unstable and shifting, contingent upon the relative natures of agency elements operative within particular locales. It also bases its account of agency relations on post-structural (Ife, 1995; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) and structural (Ife, 1995; Lukes, 1974) conceptualisations of power. These theorise power to be dispersed throughout the social system (agency terrain), fluid and unpredictable (particularly at micro, interpersonal, community levels), yet also more deterministic in nature at macro levels. Thus at community levels, power-culture dynamics will be influenced by the differential access of individuals and communities to structural power, whereas at the macro, institutional level the relationship becomes more deterministic. Large amounts of structural power are leveraged through the institutionalisation of discourses and practices that reproduce particular cultural systems, representing the interests of those communities.

A tangible example of the shifting, unstable, and structured nature of agency relations and their constitution by power-culture dynamics is provided in the following fictitious case. In this situation, a group of Tongan women confront a Palangi¹⁰ male employed by a government-housing agency in Aotearoa about his refusal to allocate their friend a state house. The employee of the government-housing agency has institutional power, and knowledge of the Palangi based cultural norms of the organisation's procedures. However the collective power of several Tongan woman is likely to produce a different set of agency relations (power with) than if there was just one of them. If the Tongan women have good self-esteem and are educated and have knowledge of Palangi bureaucratic structures (power within), the power-culture dynamics and ensuing agency relations will alter again. If they take their case to the media and receive sympathetic treatment than they will have been able to access the institutional power of the media. However, their treatment by the media will probably be contingent upon who is reporting the story and which discourses influence the way the story is told and how the Tongan women are positioned as subjects. Therefore the power-culture relations are fluctuating from situation to situation, although consistently influenced by dominant social structures and cultural systems.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of key agency elements and dynamics that shape peoples' capacities for agency. Agency capacity is enhanced or constrained by the power-culture relations in any given context. Power-culture relations are in turn constituted by the ways in which agency terrain elements are activated within a situation. The agency dynamics produced as a result of interaction between internal agency terrain elements such as consciousness, identities and cultures and those more externally located such as institutions, social structures, economic and physical resources change from context to context. In part these are contingent upon the cultures and identities of peoples present, whose cultural systems are represented within dominant social structures and people's varying abilities to exercise personal, collective and institutional power, thus representing the interplay between various forms of power and culture. In providing an account of how social structures may be reproduced or transmuted throughout the interactions between people, Giddens' (Giddens, 1984) theory of structuration elucidates potential points of change, whereby agency dynamics (and power-culture dynamics) may be influenced. As agency often largely concerns the capacity to bring about change, such points of change or "circuit switches" warrant closer observation and appropriate action. It is with these 'potential' points of change that the empirical chapters of the thesis largely concern themselves.

⁶ As it is used here, the term 'full potential' is consistent with Sen's (Sen, 2000) definition of "agency" offered earlier

⁷ Many definitions of 'community' exist. Some definitions cohere with a static, geographically based view of community while others emphasise a more fluid version, stressing relationships rather than locale. In recent years the term 'community' has become more contested, in part due to a romanticised use by some sectors that ignores power inequities between people and its appropriation by governments as a means of avoiding financial responsibility and justifying cutbacks in the name of 'community control'. For discussions of these issues see Robertson (Robertson & Minkler, 1994), Labonte (Labonte, 1996a; Labonte, 1996b) and Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999).

⁸ The term "Wisdom traditions" are the four major spiritual practices of the world as identified by Spretnak (1991). She has identified these as being the practices of Buddhism, those spiritualities that honour an intimate connection with the natural world as often practiced by indigenous peoples, the various forms of Goddess spiritualities and the core teachings and practices of the Semitic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

⁹ The term 'Pacific peoples' describes the same ethnic groupings included in the term 'Pacific women' (previous chapter) and applies to all genders within these categories. There is no officially sanctioned term to describe this group of people in Aotearoa. For the past five years the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs has used the term "Pacific peoples" to refer to this group (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999).

¹⁰ Palangi or Palagi means European. These terms are commonly used by Tongan and Samoan people respectively when referring to Europeans. For the most part the term 'Palangi' is used as the majority of

the participants in Aotearoa were Tongan. However, when a Samoan participant in speaking the term 'Palagi' is used.

Chapter Three

Agency, globalisation and power-culture

Introduction

Disputes exist among theorists regarding globalisation's origins, nature and dynamics. While the term 'globalisation' has tended to be associated with forms of late capitalism, some writers (Amin, 1997; Minyard, 1997; Robbins, 1999) have argued that the world economy has been global for some time. Richard Robbins (Robbins, 1999) has argued that globalising processes have occurred throughout history via such means as global mercantilism in the 1400s and expansion of access to raw materials on the part of industrialising nations through colonisation. Certainly Western imperialist expansion during colonial times constituted a form of globalisation as Western systems of economy and government were established throughout 'the colonies'.

With respect to contemporary forms of globalisation, there appears to be considerable agreement within the literature (Boyer & Drake, 1996; Giddens, 2000; Giddens & Pierson, 1998; Larkin, 1999) about some of the ways in which globalising tendencies manifest themselves. In its current form, globalisation is understood as a multi-faceted and sped-up process of change, which transcends and interconnects people and places across national boundaries. The interconnectedness is seen to be achieved through trade, financial, technological and communication flows, expanding cultures of consumerism and the growth of international regulatory bodies and agencies (Larkin, 1999). These processes are drawing more and more regions and peoples of the world into a web of shared interdependencies. In this sense the process of globalisation is understood as essentially reflexive (Giddens & Pierson, 1998; Larkin, 1999). This means that increasingly we reference events in relation to the global, and through increasing flows of communication we are able to monitor, reflect upon and alter our activities. For many writers it is this reflexive quality that distinguishes it from earlier globalising processes (Larkin, 1999).

This chapter sets out some of the main implications of globalisation for the agency of the communities within the investigation. In doing so, it concentrates on two globalising processes, those of economy and culture. The primary question posed by the chapter is *'how might the globalisation of economy and culture enable or constrain the agency of communities at the economic and cultural margins?'* Both historical and contemporary forms of globalisation are relevant in answering this question.

The majority of research participants have migrated to Aotearoa and Canada from countries located within the more peripheral economic regions of Pacific Island, American, Eastern Europe and African nations. Their present day agency capacities will therefore have some material and subjective grounding within their homeland contexts. The 'starting blocks' for people's capacity for agency (control over resources for health and well-being) are related to their historical, economic, social and cultural locations in relation to the development of capitalism. This will be contingent upon their country of birth and nationality, (and its subsequent relationship to the development of capitalism), cultural identity and how they are positioned in relation to discourses of 'development'.

In order to establish how globalising processes might shape the agency terrains of communities at the margins, it is necessary to locate them both historically and contemporarily with respect to their subjective and material experiences of globalising processes. This chapter outlines those contemporary globalising processes of economy as they are relevant to the communities within the investigation, concentrating primarily on their impacts on material agency capacities such as income. The social and economic context of capitalism's development is briefly outlined in so far as this provides a background for present-day centre-peripheral economic global relations and the context for recent policy reforms in Aotearoa and Canada. Neo-liberalism is briefly discussed as a primary discourse under-pinning contemporary forms of economic globalisation. The focus then shifts to the impacts of globalisation (both colonial and contemporary forms), on the subjectivities of the communities within the research, primarily on the experiences of the Tongan and Samoan participants. The discussion then widens to briefly discuss the globalisation of ethnic, gender, and religious and cultural systems as these relate to agency.

Given that agency is a cultural construct, the study does not attempt to assess the agency capacities of the participating individuals and communities in any formalised or exacting sense. This task is better done by communities themselves, who standing at the centre of their own worlds, have more intimate knowledge of their localised contexts, cultural milieu, current

community issues and of the community's positionings in relation to social structures and institutions. Therefore, the statistics presented here and in chapter four are intended as approximations to the agency capacities of the research communities.

Economic globalisation

The globalisation of the economy stands as a major dimension in the emerging reconfiguration of the world and the globalisation of human affairs. Broadly speaking, globalisation of the economy, refers to the increasing free flow of capital, goods and to a lesser extent labour across nation states. The globalisation of the economy has been underpinned by an ethos which asserts that economic growth as measured by unlimited production and consumption is both desirable and possible (Daly & Cobb, 1989). Economic globalisation has been marked by the deregulation of world markets and the increasing subjugation of welfare orientated policies to those which do not inhibit market forces or interfere with the interests of transnational corporations (Petrella, 1996). Korten, (Korten, 1995) refers to this latter process of welfare needs subjugation as being one in which the rights and freedoms of corporations have been placed above the rights and freedoms of individuals.

The development of late capitalism into its globalised form is problematic for the communities within the research. Global movements of capital, the resignation of nation state sovereignty to transnational corporations, de-regulated markets, flatter tax rates and decreased government intervention and decreased availability of social assistance programmes (Epstein, 1996; Kelsey, 1999; Rice & Prince, 2000) affect the agency capabilities of communities in particular ways. These processes increase inequalities in wealth between populations in developed countries such as Aotearoa and Canada (Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000, September; National Council of Welfare, 1999a) and also weaken democratic systems of governance (Griffen-Cohen, 1996). This undermines the ability of particular communities to participate in social and political life, due to resulting lacks in basic agency capacities such as housing, employment, health services and education.

The social and economic context of capitalism's development

Present day global economic relations are the result of successive phases of development, shaped by specific social and economic conditions (Amin, 1997; Robbins, 1999). In his writing on the evolution of capitalism into its globalised form, Amin has identified two such phases,

each characterised by particular world conditions. The first is a period of prosperity (1945-75) and the second, a period of crisis starting in 1975.

Amin (Amin, 1997) has written that the prosperity of the first thirty years following World War II, often attributed to capitalist development, was in fact founded on the “complementary nature of three social projects” (p.17), two of which are directly relevant to the present investigation. These are: (1) the national social-democratic project of the Welfare State, basing its action on the efficiency of interdependent national systems; (2) the project of third world modernisation and industrialisation involving national bourgeois construction at the periphery as the ideology of development. According to Amin, the expansion of first world economies and their guarantee of adequate standards of living for their constituents (vis a vis the development of the welfare state), was based on the opening of third world markets and unlimited access to raw materials within these countries.

Policies carried out by institutions were either to support capitalist expansion or to help it adapt to the conditions imposed on it by the social relations specific to the period. Within contemporary global economic relations, wealthier industrialised countries such as the United States of America, Germany and other OECD countries enjoy the benefits of being centre stage in today’s relations of production and consumption. These central economies gradually took shape in favourable conditions that cannot be repeated today. Examples of such favourable conditions include unlimited access to raw material and the safety valve of mass immigration via colonisation of the Pacific by European nation states (Amin, 1997).

This initial period of “prosperity” speaks to a time of government intervention and regulation of capitalism in the form of protectionist economic policies and the development of the welfare state in economically developed countries such as Aotearoa and Canada to mitigate the effects of a capitalist economy. At the same time governments of many economically developed nations also instituted foreign policies of development that arguably both assisted and exploited nations on the economic peripheries¹¹.

Amin, (Amin, 1997) has described the second period of post World War II capitalist expansion that has resulted into today’s form of globalised capitalism as one of “Crisis”. This period has been marked by a huge upsurge in speculative (rather than productive) investments and the multi-nationalisation (the transfer of resources, especially capital and to a lesser extent labour from one national economy to another) of the world economy. The global movement of capital

has become the nerve centre for the globalisation of the international economy as individuals and corporations have gained the means to lever huge amounts of capital, in and out of nations. As a result, commentators (Amin, 1997; Kelsey, 1999; Petrella, 1996) on economic globalisation have noted unprecedented capital flows between wealthier regions, while lessening flows between those on the peripheries of the world economy. Given this scenario (in part shaped by powerful nation states via free trade agreements), the welfare of people in many countries has become secondary to the attraction of foreign capital for governments. Within countries such as Canada and Aotearoa, this has primarily shown itself throughout public policy development legitimating market deregulation and privatisation.

Market (de)regulation and privatisation

Nation states have traditionally played a critical role in the development and regulation of capitalism. This was particularly evident with the development of the welfare capitalist state following World War II within which post-war stability was based not on the extension of unfettered markets, but made possible by institutional reforms that constrained the ill effects of markets on society (Boyer & Drake, 1996; Kelsey, 1999). The view that markets need regulation in order to function efficiently and effectively enhance (rather than undermine) the agency capabilities of populations is one that is shared by the majority of writers (Boyer & Drache, 1996; Daly & Cobb, 1989; Sharp, 1994) critiquing neo-liberal market reforms. Such writers have been critical of the successive withdrawal of some governments throughout the world from the regulation and financing of public welfare and health systems (Donaldson & Gerard, 1993).

Despite these views and the previous successes of market regulation (Boyer & Drache, 1996; Kelsey, 1999), policies of market de-regulation were implemented throughout the 1980s and 1990s by many nation states (Boyer & Drake, 1996; Kelsey, 1997; Kelsey, 1999; Rice & Prince, 2000). At the domestic level the promotion of the global free-market meant drastically reducing the size, cost and regulatory role of the nation state. For many governments throughout the world, the competitiveness of the nation had become a primary concern and policies that ensured the nation's ability to attract and retain capital within its territory became a priority.

Over recent years, both Aotearoa and Canadian governments have lessened their regulatory roles considerably in the areas of economy, health and social welfare of their citizens. From 1984 onwards New Zealand governments undertook a series of policy reforms designed to

“open up the economy” (Kelsey, 1999) and fully embrace the world economy in its globalised form. Aotearoa’s Fourth Labour government (1984-1990) implemented an agenda of market deregulation that included relaxing foreign investment rules and privatisation of state assets. During the 1990s the National government continued to relentlessly pursue the agenda of economic globalisation through changes in labour and welfare laws and flattening tax rates. (These changes are expanded on further in chapter four). Similarly in Canada, monetarist policy designed to promote economic competitiveness on global markets became the “new conventional wisdom for federal governments” (Rice & Prince, 2000 p.138). During the 1980s and 1990s an agenda of policies was pursued that included free trade pacts, deficit reduction, the de-regulation of certain markets, the privatisation of some public services, the limitation of collective bargaining and union powers, the transformation of the tax system and the restructuring of local governance structures. The downsizing of the state accompanied a “rightward shift in the dominant discourse of policy and policy making generally towards promoting markets” (Rice & Prince, 2000 p.109).

Both countries responded to the economic recessions in the 1990s, with the retrenchment of social policy. As unemployment started to climb in Canada, more people out of work and lower tax revenues resulted in higher budget deficits (National Council of Welfare, 1997). Successive federal governments responded to the challenges of the 1990s with huge cuts in social spending programme leaving provincial governments to shoulder the load of unemployment and low-paid work (National Anti-Poverty Organisation, 1996). In Ontario¹², the election of a Conservative government at the provincial government level in 1995 heralded a renewed wave of neo-liberal fervour and market force solutions to the declining welfare of citizens. Welfare rates were cut by 21.6% for all recipients aside from people with disabilities and seniors (National Council of Welfare, 1997). Children whose parents were on welfare were the main victims of the cuts. The cuts were quickly followed by plans to force able-bodied recipients back into jobs under mandatory “work for welfare” programmes. In Aotearoa, successive National governments in the 1990s responded to the economic crisis with substantial cuts in social security benefits and the introduction of legislation to radically deregulate the labour market (O'Brien & Kelsey, 1995). In the delivery of the 1991 Budget (which signalled substantial cuts to publicly funded health, housing, education and social welfare provision) the “redesign of the welfare state” was described as being “integral” to the country’s strategy for economic growth (Boston, Dalziel & St John, 1999, p.v). The impacts of these and subsequent policy reforms are described more fully in chapter four.

Correspondingly, both Aotearoa and Canada have witnessed increased poverty levels following courses of 'less government' (Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000, September; National Council of Welfare, 1997; National Council of Welfare, 1999a). Primarily among those affected by increasing poverty have been migrants, women and ethnic minorities. This suggests that the agentic capacities of many members of the research communities were negatively affected through decreased state assistance and associated high levels of poverty. For example, within the Ottawa-Carleton region (where some of the research took place), lone parent families headed by women were recorded to be living on an income of 51% below the average family income within that area in 1996 (Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton, 2000). Also at this time 59% of immigrant youth were living in poverty compared to 23% for the entire youth (0-19yrs) population in this region. Similar evidence demonstrating the negative impacts of welfare reforms on the communities within the Aotearoa component of the investigation is presented in chapter four.

In summary, the recent increase in the globalisation of capital is responsible for the erosion of the welfare state in Western countries and seriously weakening the economies of peripheral countries (Amin, 1997; Giddens, 2000; Kelsey, 1997; Petrella, 1996; St John, 1994b). Today's economic globalisation proceeds against a backdrop of stagnation as world-wide patterns of production and consumption are radically out of balance, with modes of production unable to absorb labour in both core and peripheral countries (Amin, 1997; Rifkin, 1995).

Discourses of economic globalisation

The processes previously described have resulted in the economic dominance of particular communities in core industrialised countries over others and of largely Western countries over those occupying more peripheral positions in the global economy. This dominance is supported by particular discourses that constitute a kind of cultural imperialism. The values most associated with this cultural dominance are Western, male, individualist and consumerist, and tend to be most aligned with the interests of global capital. Largely premised on neo-liberal¹³ tenets, these discourses have been used to justify the introduction of the previously described public policies of market deregulation and privatisation in Canada and Aotearoa. They are often perpetuated by individuals, corporations and particular nation states who stand to benefit from such economic arrangements¹⁴.

As the crisis of globalised capital (Amin, 1997) began to erupt throughout the economically developed centres in the 1970s and 80s, the ideology of neo-liberalism offered governments a seemingly coherent package with which to mend the economic ills. Premised on the rights and freedoms of individuals over the collective good, neo-liberalism also includes an all embracing perspective on the physical, intellectual and moral well-being of people (Haworth, 1994). It combines an intellectual tradition and a moral philosophy with a political interest, whose consequence is to place the rights and freedoms of big business ahead of the rights of people. As a discourse of globalisation, neo-liberalism represents a powerful alignment of interests that Korten (Korten, 1995) has referred to as the “corporate libertarian alliance”. Comprised of economic rationalists, market liberals and large corporations, this alliance has had unprecedented success in pursuing an agenda of globalised capital.

An example of this alliance was provided in Aotearoa in 1998 with the introduction of “The Code of Social Responsibility”. Proposed by the National government in 1998 the Code advocated particular economic, social and moral responsibilities that all people living in Aotearoa should meet in order to ‘earn’ their citizenship rights. During the public consultation period, it was signalled by the National government that the Code would potentially be used as a bench marker to ensure that “state dependants” (welfare beneficiaries such as single mothers) were meeting their responsibilities to society (Desmond, 1998; Laxon, 1998). The draft Code contained 11 “expectations” (Hubbard, 1998) or responsibilities, that adults were expected to conform to regardless of their means to meet these¹⁵. Examples of formal expectations proposed in the Code were: “people will manage their money to meet the basic needs of themselves and their family” and “people will do all they can to keep themselves physically, mentally and spiritually healthy” (Hubbard, 1998, p.F3). With the threat of officially imposed sanctions (such as loss of benefit) if people failed to meet the outlined expectations, the Code potentially undermined people’s agentic capacities. It did so with respect to the exercise of choice (for example self-definitions of health and well-being and appropriate courses of action to achieve this) and the loss of material agency capacities through the retraction of state welfare entitlements.

The Code represented an alliance of business, government and some religious sectors that primarily represented a collectivity of Western, capitalist patriarchal interests. Premised on neo-liberal tenets of individual rather than collective responsibility, it is a tangible (and quite extreme) example of a government’s attempt to subjugate the needs of citizens to those of global capital. The National government was forced to abandon this project due to the high level

of public protest when the Code was introduced for public consultation (Laxon, 1998). However, it is a very telling example of how the discourses of economic globalisation can be appropriated to achieve the economic and cultural dominance of the wealthy elite.

While neo-liberal discourses represent particular interests, their hegemonic power to secure the co-operation of those marginalised by them is also evident. Their emphasis on increased freedoms and prosperity for all (even if some will be more free and prosperous than others) combined with the materialistic desire created by consumerism, exert powerful influences on the subjectivities of people. The power of such discourses to co-opt is in the seemingly agentic subject positions they offer to the public at large, most of whom are also economically marginalised by their adoption within public policy. (Empirical evidence concerning the presence and impact of such discourses on the lives of many of the research participants is presented under theoretical question one, chapter eight). The important connection to be made here is the relationship between economic power and the ability to produce and disseminate discourses that support the continuance of an economic system whose core values and world views are most closely aligned with the primary benefactors of that system. This gate keeping mechanism of *'power-culture'* is important within this investigation into agency as it lays out key dynamics of exclusion that work to keep some communities at the margins, economically and culturally.

Cultural globalisation

Historically, initial contact with Western cultural systems for members of the investigation communities occurred through processes of colonisation, primarily motivated by Western, capitalist interests. Such processes of cultural domination by Western economically developed countries continued long after the retreat of European imperialism from the colonies. In more recent times, economic and cultural colonisation (Shohat & Stam, 1996) has occurred through structural adjustment programmes, foreign investments and the transmission of particular world views (for example fiction, movies, knowledge systems) and cultural systems of consumerism. Whereas culture was formerly transmitted by the movements of people and goods, technological advances now mean that cultural systems (or elements of them) can be transmitted across the globe in seconds. The globalisation of consciousness in its latest form via technology means that human consciousness and subjectivities are potentially exposed to a multitude of cultural imageries and discourses.

This section discusses the transmission of three cultural systems. These systems are Christianity, modernity and consumerism. The transmission of the first two of these cultural systems is discussed within the context of colonisation, through which capitalist, male and Eurocentrically based cultural systems came into contact with those traditional to the Tongan and Samoan societies. This is followed by a discussion that provides an explanatory framework for the contemporary promulgation of these interests and associated cultures through 'consumerism'. The third part establishes the migratory context, primarily as it relates to the Tongan and Samoan communities within the investigation. The ordering of these sections describes a sequential process of the replacement of old methods of "colonising subjectivities" (Sarup, 1996) with new ones (via technological advances in telecommunications) and the subsequent migration of recipients into the economic centres. Following this, the globalisation of several cultural systems relevant to the investigation are discussed in turn. These systems are ethnicity, gender, religion and socially orientated movements. The first three of these have largely occurred as a part of capitalist expansion, (Ongley, 1996; Robbins, 1999; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996a) and result in processes of cultural assimilation and resistance (as cultural systems come into contact with each other). All four forms of globalisation provide opportunities for the re-constitution of cultural systems in a more proactive way for individuals and communities as they come into contact with new world views. Although the emphasis is on the impacts of cultural globalisation on people's subjectivities, these effects are based in material relations of culture and power.

Colonisation

Although all colonised societies were irrevocably altered by imperialist expansion, colonising processes were not imposed or uniformly felt across the societies from which members of the research communities originate. While Aotearoa and Canada draw immigrants from previously colonised (and now economically peripheral) countries, the impact of colonisation on their contemporary agency capacities varies. As the subsequent research data relates to the impacts of colonisation on contemporary subject positions adopted by some members of Pacific peoples' communities within the investigation, the intention here is to focus on the colonisation of the Pacific nations of Tonga and Samoa. The cultural colonisation of these peoples during imperialist expansion is significant because the subjectivities that comprise the internal agency terrain of people generally have their roots in historic processes as well as contemporary processes.

The indigenous societies of the Pacific Islands were 'discovered' by the West during the era of European exploration and imperialist expansion. Following discovery, traders and merchants moved into the region looking for sandalwood, trepang (sea cucumbers) and other items to exchange for Chinese spices and tea in the flourishing trans-Pacific trade. Whalers came to the islands, seeking oil and other whale products for the European and American markets. Not long after, Europeans seeking to establish plantations (sugar, copra, coffee, tea and cotton) and evangelic Christian missionaries arrived in significant numbers (Lockwood, 1993).

Traders and missionaries arrived in both Tonga and Samoa during the 1800s. Neither country was fully colonised (as has been the situation with Aotearoa and Canada), but both countries underwent periods of colonial rule in one form or another. In the case of Western Samoa, Germany annexed the larger islands Upolu and Savai'i in 1899. The colony subsequently fell to Aotearoa forces at the onset of World War I. For over four decades Western Samoa was a territory of Aotearoa. This period of colonial rule came to an end in 1962 (O'Meara, 1993; Shankman, 1993). In response to the anticipated intrusion of foreign powers during the period of Western imperialist expansion, Tupou I of Tonga made a treaty with foreign powers to secure formal recognition of Tonga's political independence and declared Tonga a constitutional monarchy in 1875 (Marcus, 1993). For several decades during the 1900s Tonga was a British protectorate.

During these times many Western institutions became embedded within both societies. Western political institutions, legal codes, and systems of property rights were introduced (or imposed) as the Europeans incorporated the islands into their various colonial empires. To peoples whose economies were based on reciprocity, redistribution by chiefs and ceremonial exchange, Westerners introduced market exchange and capitalist relations of production. The indigenous inhabitants of the islands throughout the Pacific began to participate in the commercial production of cash crops and other commodities sought by Europeans. As these rural exchange economies were transformed into cash ones Pacific Island socio-economic life took on a new theme: the search for money (Lockwood, 1993). In addition to entering into capitalist relations of market exchange and production, acquisition of Western material goods often meant participation in the European institutions of religion and education (Lockwood, 1993).

However, Samoan and Tongan societies were not passive recipients of the colonising practices of the European traders, missionaries and state representatives. For example, according to Morton and Marcus (Marcus, 1993; Morton, 1996) the self proclaimed first king of Tonga,

Tupou I, or King George, helped to stave off the formal colonisation of his country by promulgating European-style codes of law and a constitution. During this period of the first three Tupou monarchs, Tonga developed a “compromise culture”, an “early stable complex of institutions, ideas and practices which integrated Tongan culture with a version of European culture”. As elsewhere in Polynesia (such as Samoa), during this period “older institutions and customs were censored, reorganised and re-traditionalised” (Morton, 1996, p.21). It was during this time that much of the current official definition of *anga fakatonga* (the Tongan way) was established. The designation of what was true Tongan custom and what was abandoned, was the outcome of selective and highly interested negotiations on the part of leading Tongans and Europeans alike. This was similarly the case for Samoa. Meleisea (Meleisea, 1987) has noted that conflict between Samoans and colonial administrators were the result of clashes between two cultural systems that fundamentally had very different notions of authority. Aspects of culture discontinued by Samoans during colonial rule were not arbitrary, but again the result of selective processes.

Western knowledge

The imposition of two cultural institutions in particular throughout these processes of colonisation appear to have had a strong influence on the subjectivities of many Pacific communities, even into contemporary times. The first of these is the institution of Western Knowledge founded on the Enlightenment period in European history, known as “modernity” (O'Brien & Penna, 1998). In short, this system of knowledge is based on rational scientific reason as a repository of truth. Within this system of knowledge, reason and science can be applied universally to uncover truth in the interest of human ‘progress’ (O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Colonisation was viewed as a natural progression of modernity in which this “superior” Western knowledge would be taken out to the un-industrialised, uncivilised areas of the world. Tuhiwai Smith, (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) makes reference to this “superior knowledge” in her commentary on the colonisation of knowledge of indigenous people’s through imperialist expansion in her book “Decolonising Methodologies”:

The nexus between cultural ways of knowing, scientific discoveries, economic impulses and imperial power enabled the West to make ideological claims to having a superior civilisation (p.64).

The belief in a superior Western identity and system of knowledge meant that many Western men and women believed they had an obligation to impart Western knowledge and rule the

“inferior” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) peoples of the pre-industrialised societies. At the same time colonialism tried to plant deep into the minds of “native” populations the idea that before the advent of white rule their history was dominated by barbarism (Sarup, 1996). (Supporting data under theoretical question one, chapter eight), suggests this has been achieved quite successfully amongst some sectors of Pacific communities). The desire to access the material products of the industrial revolution brought by the colonisers only strengthened the position of these Western knowledge discourses. In summary, European colonisation attempted the submission of the world “to a single regime of truth and power” (Shohat & Stam, 1996) in which “knowledge and culture were as much as a part of imperialism as raw materials and military strength” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.58).

Christianity

In both Aotearoa and the Pacific Islands of Tonga and Samoa, a major way of imposing this superior Western knowledge has been through colonial forms of missionary or religious schooling. The colonisation of all three nations brought with it Christianity in both Protestant and Catholic forms. As carriers (albeit sometimes unintentionally) of this superior knowledge, both Catholic and Protestant Christian missionaries throughout the 1800s began proselytising, introducing a foreign God and legislating what they considered to be appropriate forms of family life, male-female relations, personal attire, and behaviour. In most Pacific societies, missionary influence permeated virtually every aspect of island life, becoming a major force in the transformation and Westernisation of indigenous society (Lockwood, 1993).

The association of Western material goods with enlightenment and religious discourses presented the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands of Aotearoa, Samoa and Tonga with a powerful ideology that was underpinned through promised access to the fruits of industrialisation. When ideology proved insufficient to ensure conversion to Western institutions, force was used (Lockwood, 1993; Walker, 1990). The implicit message was that conversion to the Western ideologies guaranteed access to a better way of life for which indigenous peoples should be grateful. Adherence to the European morals and associated social and economic structures would be rewarded by God (i.e., a better way of life via access to material goods). Post-colonial theorists (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999; Sarup, 1996) have argued that imperialist expansion was not only a territorial and economic project, but also inevitably a “subject constituting one” in which colonial representations of ‘the colonised’ came to dominate their self-identities. The influence of these colonising discourses are still apparent in the

constitution of many people's subjectivities as discussed in chapters eight and nine. Many of the colonised peoples (particularly those of Tonga and Samoa who unlike Maori did not have policies of cultural genocide levied against them throughout colonial expansion) are grateful for the opportunities visited on their ancestors by the carriers of Western knowledge and religion. As later demonstrated by data under theoretical question one, chapter eight, these sentiments are often expressed by some Samoan and Tongan migrants living in Aotearoa.

Consumer culture

In some respects the tendencies towards the universalisation of Western culture¹⁶ has been propelled forwards by the globalising processes of late capitalism, exerting significant impacts on the lives of virtually all peoples throughout the world today. As a culture, capitalism is devoted to encouraging the production and sale of commodities. For capitalists, the culture encourages the accumulation of profit; for labourers, it encourages the accumulation of wages and for consumers it encourages the accumulation of goods (Robbins, 1999). The capitalist system has been so successful in encouraging the accumulation of goods amongst consumers, that today many of the world's peoples live in a society in which pre-occupation with the acquisition of goods tends to be the norm (Korten, 1995). As used here, "consumer culture" refers to cultural systems that place a high value on the acquisition and consumption of goods.

Korten (Korten, 1995) asserts that the media, in particular television, has been wholly colonised by corporate interests. He notes that large corporations have become increasingly skilful in creating desire for their product, using techniques centred on the manipulation of cultural symbols in which our individual and collective identities and values are anchored. The more time we spend immersed in the corporate controlled and packaged world of television, the less time we have for the direct human exchanges through which cultural identities and values were traditionally expressed, reinforced and updated. Therefore, increasingly those who control mass media control core culture. According to Korten (Korten, 1995), evidence of this has been found in the fact that growth in advertising expenditure has far outpaced increases in education spending.

As American and other economies have searched for and located new markets within the peripheries, the associated consumer cultures have also expanded into the economic and cultural peripheries. For these peoples the impacts of Westernised consumer cultures dominating various communication mediums is often doubly layered. Firstly the transmission of such cultures are

often very successful in manufacturing desires for products and even lifestyles associated with those products amongst these communities. Secondly, still having a largely Western orientation, such advertising often creates the desire for access to Western cultural systems. Western capitalist discourses, therefore often successfully structure many people's subjectivities to equate personal and group power with a high consumption of goods and services. As supported by data under theoretical question number one, chapter eight, such processes have relevancy to the investigation context. This is because the search for increased opportunities for education, employment and housing in core industrialised countries on the part of groups from peripheral nations (such as Samoa and Tonga) also becomes associated with a desire for consumer goods.

Migration

The migratory context is discursively constituted by discourses of consumerism which are inexplicably intertwined with those of Westernisation. Since the end of World War II, Pacific Islands societies have become increasingly integrated into regional and international markets (Lockwood, 1993). This major economic transition involved a shift from subsistence agricultural production to cash-earning activities. These shifts have been achieved through the adoption of cash cropping (commercial agriculture), other forms of commodity production (for example crafts), or Pacific peoples having become wage earners. Lockwood, (Lockwood, 1993) has noted that the greater integration into the market system of Pacific peoples has also involved an increasing consumption of manufactured goods and consumer items from the industrialised countries. According to Lockwood, today indigenous technologies, crafts, and material culture have been largely replaced by imports, the acquisition of which is based in the cash economy.

However, while the traditional economies of the Pacific Islands have been eroded by the intrusion of capitalism, the capitalist sector has been unable to develop to a level at which it can sustain the living standards of growing populations (Ongley, 1991). Economic opportunities for the majority of Pacific Islands are limited. Many of their inhabitants nevertheless aspire to the material standard of living of the rich West, introduced during the colonial era (Lockwood, 1993). Imports of manufactured items (radios, automobiles, electronics, and even food) have increased sharply in recent decades, creating huge trade deficits in many island nations and promoting an even greater dependency on foreign aid. For Pacific Island inhabitants, capitalist expansion from the centres has brought widening economic differentials between the less-developed rural and urban areas, between the small marginal islands and the larger richer islands, and between the Pacific Islands in general and rich, Western nations. These trends have

promoted widespread population migration since the end of World War II (Lockwood, 1993; Ongley, 1991). Many Pacific peoples are abandoning rural areas in favour of towns and cities overseas where they seek greater employment opportunities, higher earning potentials and a more Westernised lifestyle.

These trends in migration are equally true for the island nations of Tonga and Western Samoa. In his description of the contemporary migration patterns of Samoans, Shankman (1993) noted that migration from villages is a recent trend that reflects the increasing incorporation of rural areas into the national and international economy. Apart from increasing monetization and urbanisation, there have been four convergent trends over the last several decades that have encouraged migration by Western Samoans: (1) population growth, (2) education, (3) the stagnation of the island's economy, and (4) the lack of opportunities for young people in villages.

Like most other colonised countries the Western based Samoan education system is a by-product of colonialism. The curriculum implicitly teaches students to aspire to wage-labour jobs, which only tend to be available in urban areas: "When asked what they want to become, [Samoan] high school students overwhelmingly desire 'white collar' employment. They do not want to return to the village agriculture where, by comparison, the work is hard, dirty, and not financially rewarding" (Fairburn-Dunlop cited in Shankman, 1993, p.159).

Yet the reality is that many young people will have to remain in or return to their villages. Western Samoa does produce some agricultural exports, but these are not enough to meet the nation's costs of importing processed foods and manufactured goods. The latter has assumed much more importance through the undermining of local economies by Western capitalist expansion during both colonial and contemporary times. In his 1993 exposé of changing Samoan customs in the wake of capitalism, Tim O'Meara (1993) noted that the value of imports had reached six times that of exports. While agriculture provides adequate subsistence for villagers as well as some cash, it does not provide the income levels that Samoans want and need as consumers in an increasingly cash-based economy. The Samoan educational system and the cultures of consumerism as transported through Western based media has helped create a set of expectations that the island's economy cannot meet (O'Meara, 1993; Shankman, 1993)

This is similarly the case for Tonga. According to Marcus (Marcus, 1993), the contemporary period of Tongan history and development can be seen in terms of two internationalising trends.

These are (1) the monarch's search for foreign capital to fund Tongan development and (2) the extensive immigration of Tongans overseas and the establishment of international family networks. Both internationalising processes are motivated by the search for increased standards of living and the associated access to consumer goods. They have opened the Tongan State and people to multiple linkages with particular larger and richer societies, most of which border on the Pacific. Like Samoa, Tonga's "subordinate integration" (Marcus, 1993) into the world wide political and economic system, has stimulated a flow of emigration.

During the past century, Tonga has remained principally an agrarian economy, which has become increasingly dependent on cash crop production and money (Marcus, 1993). The present day economy is fragile (having been weakened by globalising processes) and is dependent on external injections of aid from patron states, on remittances from large numbers of Tongans working overseas, and on direct investment by overseas church organisations seeking to develop their Tongan missions. As is the case with Samoa, the education system has its roots in colonialism. Even in contemporary times the education system privileges Western-based knowledge and is often strongly affiliated with or based in religious institutions.

With exposure to Western cultures, the perceived need for better educational and occupational opportunities, and the vision of a better future for their family and future generations, Tongans and Samoans are emigrating. As supported by data under theoretical question one, chapter eight, they realise they can help their families by migrating and remitting, with often their families having carefully weighted the benefits and the costs of migration too. Common destinations tend to be Aotearoa, the United States of America and Australia (O'Meara, 1993; Shankman, 1993). In 1966 roughly 8% of the Western Samoan population were abroad; by the mid 1970s this percentage doubled, and doubled again by the mid 1980s, at which time one third of those born in Samoa were living abroad (Shankman, 1993). The trend is similar for Tongans. It is estimated that after nearly three decades of migration during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as many Tongans were living abroad as at home (O'Meara, 1993).

The global project of Western imperialist expansion and its associated migratory processes has also meant that migrants have been similarly drawn to Canada in the search for increased standards of living and quality of life. According to the 1999 Statistical Report on the Health of Canadians (Statistics Canada, 1999), in 1996 17% of the Canadian population consisted of first generation migrants. Earlier flows of immigration from Europe have been replaced with those from Asia and the Middle East – 57% of immigrants arriving in the country between 1991 and

1996 being from the latter two regions (Statistics Canada, 1999). While not being populous enough to feature within the fore-mentioned report, the investigation at hand also explores questions of agency with Hispanic and East and West African migrants living in Canada. All of these countries have been subject to Western capitalist expansion during the 200-300 years and associated processes of cultural imperialism.

Globalisation of ethnicity and agency

Globalisation of ethnicity refers to the transmission of cultural systems pertaining to distinct ethnic groupings through migration, print and electronic media. Within Aotearoa and Canada, the research takes account of minority ethnic communities' experiences in striving to determine their own futures within their new host country. In relation to agency, cultural globalisation means ethnic minority communities come into contact with the cultural systems of other ethnic communities (prior and post migration), particularly those that are dominant within the new host country. In an abstract sense, this provides potential opportunities to integrate cultural systems of other ethnic communities into one's own. However, as the cultures of dominant ethnic communities are usually more institutionalised than those of ethnic minorities, ways of being, thinking and acting for marginalised groups tend to be constrained and structured within these. The agency of ethnically marginalised groups is inherently in danger of being expressed as a form of resistance in which their own culture is held static. One of the inferred findings of the investigation (theoretical question number two, chapter eight and chapter ten), is that the ability to articulate a cultural system that is cohesive, with form, but still fluid and able to incorporate elements from other cultures, is important to the agency of ethnic minority groups who often inhabit the "diaspora space" (Sardar & Van Loom, 1999).

Globalisation of gender and agency

Alongside the migration of ethnic groups, the globalisation of gender cultures also features within the thesis. Both within and between ethnic groups various gender cultures exist in relation to prescribed behaviours, roles, systems of meaning and world views. Globalisation of culture exposes communities to different systems of thinking, behaving and meaning, potentially increasing their repertoire of gender roles. This is relevant to the agency of groups at 'the margins' (particularly women) as they migrate to Westernised democracies, where they are confronted with more opportunities for change with respect to gender roles.

Gender identities and subject positions are both constituted in discourse and in relation to shifting contexts that are made up of economic and social conditions, and various cultural and political institutions and their associated ideologies (Lamer, 1996). However, as is also the case with ethnicity and globalisation of culture, whether or not individuals and groups move into new ways of thinking and being is influenced by existing structural power relations. The globalisation of ethnic and gender cultural systems can prove to be both agentic and non-agentic for subjects at the same time. The relationship between agency and globalisation of culture is a dialectical one, largely influenced by the particular forms of power relations operative within one's particular context. The empirical evidence provided under theoretical question two, chapter eight, supports these agency dynamics.

Globalisation of alternative systems of development and agency

Corresponding to the globalisation of economy and culture has been the proliferation and globalisation (or at the very least regionalisation) of cultural systems that propose alternative means of development to the capitalist, patriarchal and Western model that predominate within the world today. These cultural systems include spiritual traditions of development (Myss, 1997; Spretnak, 1982; Spretnak, 1991) and new social movements (Carroll, 1992; Tarrow, 1998), both of which exercise varying degrees of activism. These movements serve to advance the causes of a number of groups such as indigenous peoples, women, children, differently abled people, lesbians and gays, environmental activists. They articulate common languages in the areas of human rights, culture, identity, democracy and attention to process.

In particular, social movements often take the position of oppositional cultural forms that give voice to the conditions of these communities in which the local has re-emerged as a site of resistance and struggle for liberation. This often finds expression in the so-called "politics of difference" (Carroll, 1992) in which marginalised communities exercise agency and power that draws on their members' identities, values and beliefs in counter-cultural and counter-hegemonic movements. Within such movements meta-narratives such as class oppression have been replaced by a variety of stances which contest the discourses of capital, patriarchy, industrialisation, racism and colonisation and heterosexism. Such movements de-stabilise identities and create new ways of thinking about the world and those around us (Carroll, 1992).

I want to make a distinction here between social movements as discussed and other identity-based movements that have emerged. These other movements are fundamentally nationalist and

essentially advocate the reversal of previous unequal power relations between groups. For these communities the ends justify the means and often their sole aim is to advance their particular cause regardless of the human consequences for others. The former “new social movement group” is important within the thesis as it is both consistent with the value base of the community development methodology utilised and is a potential space of agency through partnership for communities at the economic and cultural peripheries.

Globalisation of religion and agency

The globalisation of religious cultural systems (in particular Christianity) has already been introduced as a process of colonisation. As such it forms an important part of the historical context of the thesis. Conversion to Christianity appears to have had mixed effects on the agency of ethnically and economically marginalised groups both within their homelands and new host countries. It is posited that in particular for women, the globalisation of Semitic (Judasim, Christianity and Islam) religious cultural systems is problematic because of the patriarchal institutions that comprise them (Spretnak, 1982; Spretnak, 1991). This has been apparent throughout processes of colonisation, in which patriarchal religions have reconstructed traditional women’s roles in Pacific societies so that they are subordinate to those of their male counterparts (James, 1995; Schoeffel, 1995; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In contemporary times sexist language and religious traditions continue to subjugate female identity to patriarchy in most places where Semitic religious institutions have been established (Spretnak, 1982). However, as supported by data under theoretical question two, chapter eight, religious affiliations are considered by many to enhance their capacity to exercise agency. Therefore demonstrating a more paradoxical and contradictory role played by the Church within many of the investigation participants’ lives. Globalisation of the Semitic religions is important within the context of the thesis because of its central position both historically and currently in structuring the subjectivities of participants and its engagement as an institution in community development work with the same groups.

Conclusion

It has been argued that the globalisation of economy and culture both enhances and constrains the agency of the communities at the economic and cultural margins. The agency landscapes of these communities, are shaped in both subjective and material senses by processes associated

with the expansion of Western capital during colonial and contemporary times. In many respects late capitalism and the associated globalisation of Western consumer cultures have continued from where colonisation left off. Where Western, capitalist, male dominance was once perpetuated through the colonisation of people's subjectivities and material circumstances via the institutions of religion, modernity (Western, scientific, rational knowledge), and the military, today's colonising processes are arguably just as pervasive. Within contemporary agency relations particular nations and communities continue to dominate others economically and culturally. In its unregulated form, capitalism enables individuals and multinationals to leverage large amounts of capital and transfer resources from one economy to another with negligible concern for the health and well-being of people. Western, capitalist, patriarchal discourses continue to exert powerful influences on the subjectivities of individuals both within the economic centres and peripheries. The State's reduced regulatory roles in many economically developed countries such as Aotearoa and Canada, and the associated increasing inequities in these countries, suggests that late capitalism has undermined the agency capacities of many people within them.

Originating from countries in the economic and cultural peripheries, the impetus for migration to the economically developed countries of Aotearoa and Canada for many members of the communities within the investigation is provided by the potential for increased agency for themselves and their families through accessing basic agency capacities. Such agency capacities include higher incomes, better houses and access to Western education systems. Discourses of consumerism associated with Western, capitalist cultural systems also constitute powerful pulls to these countries.

For many members of the research communities, exposure to new cultural systems potentially increases the number of agentic subject positions and identities they are able to access. However, the transmission of cultures is closely tied to relations of power. Which elements of cultural systems are transmitted and predominate within particular settings, why and by whom, are influenced by power relations within a given setting. Ways of thinking and being in the world will be structured by institutions and their associated practices, largely representative of culturally and economically dominant communities. The ability to realise particular modes of subjectivity will be influenced by people's access to material and other forms of structural power. This once again brings into focus the "power-culture" dialectic as a means of discerning the dynamics that constitute relations of agency for communities at the margins.

In concluding this chapter, I am aware that, as it has been presented here, globalisation (particularly its economic forms) may give the impression of being a “totalising” (Featherstone, 1996) process in which people are subsumed within the homogenisation of world systems by capitalist, Western, patriarchal interests. With respect to globalisation’s impacts on the ability of communities at the margins to exercise increased levels of agency, this paints a fairly ‘bleak’ picture. This assumption, in particular that those on the economic and cultural peripheries are passive recipients of globalising processes, still tends to predominate within globalisation literature, much of which has concentrated on its economic aspects (Kelsey, 1997; Korten, 1995; Petrella, 1996). However, this does not discount the possibility that those at the peripheries of economic and cultural life can (Shohat & Stam, 1996) and do (Robbins, 1999; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996a) resist and exercise agency at the local level. (In itself migration is an act of agency). Nor does it discount that those on the peripheries exert some influence into the global sphere. Processes whereby the latter occurs are in need of further research, a point taken up in the final chapter of the thesis.

The globalisation of cultural systems and alternative systems of development has opened up new and more agentic modes of subjectivity to many people. What remains crucial to the adoption of new subject positions and increased agency capacities within a globalised world is finding ways for power-culture relations to enable such capacity, rather than disable this. Having briefly explored the types of influences exerted by globalising processes on the agency capacities of communities at the economic and cultural margins, the next chapter outlines their localised impacts on the agency capacities of the communities within the investigation living in Aotearoa.

¹¹ From the 1950s through to the 1970s, successive governments in Aotearoa implemented a number of labour and immigration policies that permitted the free flow of people from Pacific Island nations such as Tonga and Samoa to make up shortages in the country’s manufacturing industry (Pilato, Su’a, & Crichton-Hill, 1998). These policies were complemented by the implementation of various ‘modernisation’ projects by governments in Aotearoa that included the provision of education and work opportunities for Tongans and Samoans in this country. However economic recession in Aotearoa from the mid 1970s caused these immigration policies to be curbed, thus reducing the flow of these migrations (Ongley, 1996). During the course of the research, I also learned that the ‘off cuts’ from the meat industry in Aotearoa were exported to Tonga and Samoa regularly. These ‘off cuts’ included mutton flaps (the fatty meat tissue from sheep) which form a staple part of many Pacific people’s diet. Indeed some of the Tongan and Samoan research participants reported that upon their arrival in Aotearoa, they were surprised to learn that in this country they are considered ‘undesirable’ or as ‘waste’.

¹² Canada is a federation of ten provinces of which Ontario is one. Provincial governments are generally responsible for most health, education, welfare, housing and environmental policies with certain cost-

sharing programmes with Federal government; thus the significance of the election of a conservative government in Ontario.

¹³ There are many different neo-liberal discourses but in the main they all share certain core elements. These include an ideological commitment to the rights and freedoms of individuals over the collective good, reduced state function, a commitment to free markets, deregulation and privatisation.

¹⁴ Radical neo-liberals (who have been particularly influential on nation state policies in recent years) have argued that governments interfere too much with private liberties and are constraints on the development of capitalism and on prosperity itself (Haworth, 1994). A central message is that the State need only to ensure that people have equal opportunities to succeed financially, and the market should be left to regulate all other all other economic, social, and political relations. Kelsey (Kelsey, 1994) has pointed out that neo-liberalism does not require equality amongst the population itself and that egalitarianism is seen to stifle initiative and institutionalise democracy. However, what is important, is that individuals rise to “dominance” by their own enterprise, not by inherited or ascribed social status.

¹⁵ The Code of Social Responsibility made no mention of government obligation to develop policies to enable people to meet their social responsibilities.

¹⁶ The expression ‘tendencies towards universalisation of Western culture’ is used to convey that while many of the most visible cultural expressions of globalisation are Western (and often American such as Coca Cola or McDonalds), the situation is somewhat more complex than this. For example, commentators (Giddens, 2000; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996b) argue that a new world space of cultural production and national representation is emerging that is simultaneously becoming more homogenised (around dynamics of capital) and differentiated as localised responses to globalising processes vary.

Chapter Four

Aotearoa: agency relations in a localised context

Introduction

This chapter grounds the broad globalising influences of economy and culture within the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It establishes some of the important factors that constitute the localised agency terrains of the participants as Pacific peoples (particularly Tongan and Samoan women) who have migrated to Aotearoa. In doing so it applies the *power-culture* dialectic of agency relations as impacted on by processes of globalisation to the local level.

The material within the chapter is initially organised to establish the ways in which the colonial history of Aotearoa might shape the agency landscape for Pacific peoples living in this country. This is followed by an overview of the impacts of contemporary globalising processes on the country as these relate to the role of the State and changes in economic and social policy since the mid 1980s. The implications (structured effects) of these policy reforms for the agency capacities of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa are then outlined. As in chapter three the selection of key determinants of health within this discussion are intended as approximations of agency capacities.

The chapter then changes its focus to the impacts of globalising processes on agency capacities associated with the internal agency terrains of the research communities in Aotearoa. It does so by establishing how traditional cultural values of hierarchy, authority and gender relations might structure the agency terrains (subjectivities) of the Tongan and Samoan research participants. The implications of this for the agency dynamics produced as a result of participants' interactions with dominant Western, patriarchal social structures in Aotearoa are then discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on issues of cultural change for members of these communities as they seek ways to engage with their new cultural environs that enable them to live agentially.

In writing this chapter on the current situations and experiences (including their traditional cultural values and practices) of Tongan and Samoan peoples in Aotearoa, I have sought to represent their experiences as directly as possible. This means literature on Samoan and Tongan experience by Samoan and Tongan people. While, the majority of literature on traditional Samoan and Tongan cultural systems is still authored by Palangi men and women, some written by Samoan and Tongan men and women exists from which I was also able to draw. Finding literature that gave ‘voice’ to the experiences of the research communities in Aotearoa proved more problematic. As the great majority of the research participants in Aotearoa were women and migrants, I particularly sought out research by members of these groups. However, emerging literature pertaining to the experiences of Samoan and Tongan women (both New Zealand born and migrant) in this country is still scarce and mainly by Samoan women born in Aotearoa. This leaves substantial gaps in the literature on the experiences of Samoan and Tongan communities in Aotearoa, in particular migrant women.

Therefore, where it has been possible, I have drawn directly on the voices of Tongan and Samoan women and men in this chapter. Where there is insufficient information I have used the material of academics of other ethnic cultures who have written on the experiences of Samoan and Tongan people in Aotearoa. Much more material exists on the status and experiences of Samoans relative to Tongans as they have been establishing themselves within this country for longer. Where there are gaps in literature on either group, I have used material that relates to the wider community, commonly identified as Pacific peoples.

Colonial history in Aotearoa and the citizenship of Pacific peoples

The contemporary nation state of Aotearoa as a Westernised liberal democracy is founded on the imperialist expansion of the British Empire during the nineteenth century (Kawharu, 1989) and the establishment of ‘colonial rule’ over Maori, the indigenous inhabitants of the land. The legacies of colonial Maori-Pakeha (European) relations and the effects of the colonisation of Maori lands, economies, language, cultures and spiritualities are still very evident in Aotearoa today.

The Treaty of Waitangi was the first formal agreement of Maori-Pakeha relations and structures of governance and was the precondition to the Annexation of Aotearoa to the British Crown in 1840 (Oliver, 1991). As the founding document of Aotearoa, the Treaty establishes the fundamental basis of the contractual relationship between Maori as tangata whenua (people of

the land) and the Crown (Kawharu, 1989; Orange, 1987). Signed in 1840 by a crown representative and over 500 Maori chiefs throughout the country at that time, the Treaty is a declaration conveying Maori rights of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty) over Aotearoa and kawanatanga (governorship) to the Crown (Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand, 2000). Essentially the Treaty established Maori and the Crown as equal partners in shaping the futures of two peoples, Maori as tangata whenua (people of the land) and European settlers as tauwiwi (foreigners), living side by side in the same land.

However, since shortly after its inception, the Treaty has had minimal status in determining constitutional and legislative decisions, and therefore in protecting Maori sovereignty. Within contemporary New Zealand society, the consequences of colonisation and the cultural, social, economic and political subjugation of Maori are borne out within the social indices of education, employment, income, housing and health. All of these demonstrate the disadvantage of Maori relative to non-Maori (Te Puni Kokiri, 1998; Te Puni Kokiri, 2000; Walker, 1990). While governments during the 1980s and 1990s have passed some legislation in attempts to rectify Maori disadvantage, Treaty rights still remain largely unaddressed. At a fundamental level Treaty principles and rights are neither valued nor well understood by many people. While at government levels Treaty principles are largely agreed upon, their implementation within legislation remains problematic, often contentious and for the most parts 'uncharted territory'. Under increasing pressure to recognise Treaty rights, government policies have been in the direction of bi-culturalism rather than multi-culturalism (Spoonley, 1997) during the 1980s and 1990s, as they have grappled with how these are to be interpreted within legislation.

As recent migrants to Aotearoa, Pacific peoples have had to 'make a place for themselves' in so far as the recognition of their needs within public policy has been concerned. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs was established in 1997 to assist with this process. Partly as a result of this, the profile of Pacific peoples as a disadvantaged group has risen over recent years with some areas of disadvantage paralleling those of Maori (Health Funding Authority, 2000; National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998). Today, Pacific peoples are commonly identified by government bodies as the second highest priority group for special economic and social assistance as is testified by the government's "Closing the Gaps"¹⁷ programme, unveiled at the last budget (Cullen, 2000). However, government and public recognition of Pacific peoples' needs and citizenship rights (Bedford, 1985; Shankman, 1993; Tupuola, 1998) still appears to be hard won at times, tending to 'pale' alongside issues of Maori sovereignty, particularly within a political environment of tightly capped government spending.

This was evident at the most recent Public Health Association of New Zealand conference whose theme was “achieving equity in health”, at which a prominent Tongan public health physician made a plea to the Prime Minister for greater government recognition of Pacific peoples health needs alongside Maori (Finau, 2001).

In summary, the colonial history of Aotearoa appears to shape the agency terrain of Pacific peoples in several important respects. Firstly, it is likely that government attention will necessarily be focused on the issue of Maori sovereignty and the implementation of the Treaty of Waitangi for some time. The increasing Maori population and the continuing deprivations amongst Maori call for strong government counter measures. Secondly political pressure is being increasingly applied to successive governments in Aotearoa to recognise Treaty rights through the growing critical mass beginning to press for Maori sovereignty as evidenced in growing Maori activist literature and media reports. This means that Maori sovereignty issues will most likely take precedence over the issues facing other disadvantaged communities in Aotearoa such as Pacific peoples, children, differently-abled people, women or migrants. While Pacific peoples and Maori share some similar statuses with respect to economic and social well-being, their claims to citizenship are often treated as being substantively different by government.

Restructuring economic and social policy in Aotearoa

Until the 1980s, Aotearoa had a comparatively advanced welfare state to other core industrialised nations (O'Brien & Kelsey, 1995). The main characteristics of this included the provision of a wide range of social services that were free of charge at the time of use, with access based on the ethos of universal entitlement rather than ability to pay (O'Brien & Kelsey, 1995). For several decades “a solid bipartisan support for the principles underpinning the welfare state” (Boston, 1999, p.3) existed amongst most sectors of Aotearoa society.

This support began to erode as the restructuring of global capital during the 1980s and 1990s continued to place the country's economy under pressure. Over this time, governments responded to challenges posed by economic globalisation (and the associated problems of rising unemployment, mounting international debt and increased government spending) (Ongley, 1996) with a series of radical economic and social policy reforms, (Kelsey, 1997; O'Brien & Kelsey, 1995). In part designed to attract foreign capital, these measures were particularly radical relative to other Western industrialised countries (Kelsey, 1993; Kelsey, 1997). The

introduction of these policies was largely underpinned by neo-liberal discourses that promulgated powerful and organised business interests (Boston, 1999; Cheyne et al., 2000; Haworth, 1994). Imbedded during the decade earlier in the policies of the Fourth Labour government (Cheyne et al., 2000), the predominance of neo-liberal ideologies within the country's politics increased in the 1990s. During this time, a sustained and organised critique of Aotearoa's Welfare State took place (Boston, 1999).

Policy reforms undertaken by the Fourth Labour government 1984-1990 included the substantial flattening of the tax rate scale and a greater reliance on indirect taxes, the removal of subsidies in agriculture and manufacturing, and the reduction in import tariffs (Boston, 1999; Kelsey, 1997; Kelsey, 1999). The size and regulatory role of the State was also "rolled back" in many sectors (Kelsey, 1993) as many state services including those of telecommunications, postal and banking services were commercialised and corporatised, often coming under foreign ownership (Cheyne et al., 2000; Kelsey, 1993; O'Brien & Kelsey, 1995). Governmental legislation also began to reach more directly into the country's welfare infrastructure as tertiary fees were dramatically increased and charges for medical prescriptions were introduced (O'Brien & Kelsey, 1995).

In 1990 the newly elected National government re-launched the economic restructuring programme begun by Labour. Changes focused on cuts to government spending and radical labour market reform (Kelsey, 1997). Due to their high participation in the unskilled and semi-skilled workforces (Krishnan, Schoeffel, & Warren, 1994; Spoonley, 1996) and high usage rates of publicly funded income, housing and health services (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999; Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994), Pacific peoples were particularly affected by these policy reforms. Changes in these key policy areas are iterated briefly below.

Changes to labour policy in Aotearoa took the form of the New Zealand Employment Contracts Act 1991. Introduced in response to demands from neo-liberal elements within the country's business sector for increased "workforce flexibility" to fit with newly emerging domestic and international modes of production (Walsh & Brosnan, 1999), the Act primarily moved the balance of power in favour of the employer. It did so by giving employers licence (not with standing the minimum wage) to determine wages and working conditions on a case by case basis. In an economic environment of declining income levels per capita and rising unemployment, the bargaining power of many workers was sharply reduced.

The National Government also began a series of changes that resulted in the transformation of many aspects of Aotearoa's welfare state. Substantial cuts in the value of most benefits were made. Major shifts were made from a state welfare system based on the ethos of universal entitlement to a tightly targeted approach (Boston, 1999; St John, 1994b; Stephens, 1999). Stricter entitlement rules were introduced, longer stand down periods and more rigid eligibility rules were applied for each benefit category. The emphasis that the benefit system was "a hand up" rather than a "hand out" (Stephens, 1999), foreshadowed the introduction of the Community Wage. Under this scheme all recipients became obligated to seek work or receive employment-related training as a requirement of receiving a benefit (Higgins, 1999).

Changes to housing policy introduced in 1991 "were designed to radically alter the nature of the State's involvement in housing" (Murphy, 1999, p.218)¹⁸. Following a review of the State's role in housing assistance in 1990, the government took several steps to remedy perceived deficiencies in the system and ensure value for tax-payers money (Murphy, 1999). State-house rental costs moved through a series of steps to "market rental" value (an assessment of the rental value of the property as reflected by property market values) (Cheyne et al., 2000). In August 1992 the Housing Restructuring Act transferred state-owned rental properties to a Crown-owned entity Housing New Zealand (HNZ). Housing New Zealand was charged with operating in a commercial manner while assisting the government to meet certain unspecified objectives. Mortgage assistance was abolished (Murphy, 1999). In 1993 the Accommodation Supplement was introduced to replace all existing housing benefits. Under the new legislation those tenants unable to afford market rates could apply for the Accommodation supplement. This effectively established a maximum amount of government assistance that could be paid to any individual towards housing costs (Milne, 1998). This change was very significant in that it led to a much higher percentage of income being paid in rent by the majority of low-income tenants (Cheyne et al., 2000; Murphy, 1999).

Continuing cost containment issues and perceived inefficiencies within the health sector saw the National government continue to make cost-cutting changes to the provision of public health services as had Labour governments in the preceding decade (Cheyne et al., 2000). A series of changes were introduced that included "managed competition" (Fougere, 1994), the privatisation of some services, part charges for hospital care and tighter targeting of health care assistance (Boston, 1999). The most significant feature of these changes was "the tighter targeting of subsidies towards lower-income groups" (Ashton, 1999, p.135). Growing dissatisfaction amongst the public at subsequent decreased access to public health services

(particularly for middle and lower income communities) (Ashton, 1999), resulted in the newly elected coalition government of 1996 increasing the funding for Vote Health. A number of comparatively insignificant (to those that had preceded them) changes to the provision of public health services were made. These included General Practitioner subsidies for children under six years of age and the removal of pharmaceutical part charges (Ashton, 1999).

Recent government initiatives In December of 1999, nine years of National-led structural reform drew to a close. A public backlash resulted in the election of a Labour-led coalition government. The new government's major election promise had been to re-dress the increasing polarities in income and well-being levels between communities in Aotearoa. The Labour government has taken some steps to redress these imbalances. These include the restoration of rent setting at a maximum of 25% of state-housing tenants' incomes, increases in taxation for high income earners and initiatives aimed at closing the gaps between Maori, Tagata Pacifica (Pacific peoples) and the rest of the population (Cullen, 2000). New Health legislation has been enacted that increases democratic decision-making and iwi (Maori tribes) partnerships in health governance. A new Employment Relations Act 2000 has been passed that restores some bargaining power to employees. So far the changes have not been wide-sweeping, (although they have had some substance), in so far as any radical departures from previous policy.

The impact of policy reform on Pacific communities

A plethora of reports (Dann & Du Plessis, 1992; Jackman, 1993; O'Brien, 1998; Poverty, 1999; St John, 1994a; The Wellington Benefits Forum, 1996; Waldegrave & Frater, 1997) exist documenting the devastating effects of the economic and social policy reforms implemented in Aotearoa on its populations. Today widespread agreement exists (Boston, 1999) that the impacts of the social and economic policy reforms have "accentuated income inequalities, have intensified the incidence and severity of poverty and have contributed to a greater sense of social exclusion and alienation" (p.16). This has particularly been the case for communities already at 'the margins' such as Maori, Pacific peoples, women, children and people with disabilities. These communities have disproportionate levels of poverty relative to other sectors (National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998; O'Brien, 1998; Stephens, 1999; Waldegrave, 1999).

As has been the case with other cultural minority communities in Aotearoa, the previously described policy changes have created a much more rugged social and economic environment

(external agency terrain) for Pacific peoples. The impacts of these changes for Pacific communities in Aotearoa are discussed below with respect to four key agency capacities. These are income, employment, housing, and health. (Where statistics have been available, data relating directly to Tongan and Samoan immigrant communities has been utilised). As proposed earlier in the thesis, the agency or ability of individuals and communities to authentically express themselves through consciously constructed identities and chosen forms of cultural expressions, world views and systems of meaning, requires sufficient access to economic resources. This also includes access to other agency capacities associated with the determinants of health such as employment, education and health status itself. Lack of access to these capacities present research participants and their families with considerable barriers to exercising agency.

Employment

The previously described changes to economic and labour policies¹⁹ and the reductions of the public sector workforce hit Pacific peoples in Aotearoa particularly hard relative to other groups, resulting in rising rates of unemployment from the mid 1980s onwards (Ongley, 1991; Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994; Spoonley, 1996). In 1991 unemployment rates were 21.5% and 20% for Pacific men and women respectively, having risen from 6.9% and 7% percent for these two groups in 1986 (Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994). New Zealand 1996 Census figures showed a reduction in unemployment from their 1991 levels, but still remained high relative to other sectors of the population at 15.1% and 15.6% for men and women respectively (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999).

These trends²⁰ are reflected in both the Tongan and Samoan communities. At the time of the 1996 census, 18% of Tongan people in the labour force were unemployed. This was substantially higher than the rate for Aotearoa as a whole at eight percent. Overall Tongan women were more likely to be unemployed and actively seeking work than Tongan men with the unemployment rates being 19% and 17% for each respective category. The unemployment rate for all Tongan people has declined since 1991 when 22% were unemployed (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b). The 1996 New Zealand Census showed similar unemployment trends for Samoan peoples. In 1996 16% of Samoan people were unemployed. These rates had decreased from 1991, but show an overall increase since 1986. Seventeen percent of Samoan women identified as being unemployed and actively seeking work while the rate for men was 15% (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a).

Income

The decline in real incomes for Pacific peoples since the mid 1980s has been associated with rising unemployment and associated increases²¹ in Pacific peoples receiving welfare benefits during this time (Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994). Cuts to welfare benefits in 1991 and tightening of eligibility criteria subsequently hit Pacific communities in Aotearoa particularly hard (Macpherson, 1996). Nineteen ninety six New Zealand Census results showed personal median and household incomes of Pacific peoples to be below those for all other ethnic groups in the country (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). At the time of the Census, 48.3% of Pacific families earned less than \$30,001 compared with 29.2% of European and 46.3% of Asian families (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999, p.16).

In 1994 the Public Health Commission (Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994) noted that Samoans and Tongans tended to be concentrated in the lowest income groups of Pacific peoples. These trends were shown to have continued for Tongans. According to 1996 New Zealand Census results Tongan adults had a personal median income of \$9,900. This was less than two thirds of the median personal income of the total adult population (\$15,600 per annum) and lower than the annual median income of all Pacific adults (\$12,200) in Aotearoa (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b). For Samoan adults the median income in 1996 was \$12,800, 25% lower than the income of the adult population as a whole. For both the Tongan and Samoan communities living in Aotearoa, the inflation adjusted median income was significantly lower than in 1986. However, for Samoans this had shown a rise in 1996 from the 1991 levels (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a).

As is consistent with other ethnic groups in Aotearoa, income statistics show significant gender differences. Pacific men have a considerably higher personal median income (\$14,987) than Pacific women (\$10,725). Within the 35-44 year old age group the gender income gap for Pacific peoples widens with males receiving an annual median income of \$22,851 compared to \$14,227 for women (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). The 1996 New Zealand Census data showed that the median income of Tongan women was approximately two thirds that of their male counterparts (\$8,400 compared with \$12,200). Women's median incomes were lower across every age group up to 64 years. Similarly personal incomes were lower for Samoan women than for Samoan men. Only seven percent of women received more than \$30,000 compared to 15% of men. Welfare beneficiary rates have been shown to be highest for migrant Samoan and Tongan women and second highest for Samoan and Tongan women born in

Aotearoa relative to other members of their ethnic communities (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a; Statistics New Zealand, 1998b).

These statistics suggest that migrant Tongan and Samoan women face additional barriers to earning adequate incomes compared with male or other members of these communities born in Aotearoa. It is likely that this is due to barriers such as language, educational status and lack of familiarity with Palangi-culture. Dominant social structures associated with the structuring of the labour-market and gender norms that define womens' traditional roles as 'carer' make it very difficult for these women to successfully enter the labour market. Such barriers suggest that migrant Tongan and Samoan women have been particularly ill-positioned in relation to Aotearoa's policy reforms. Their locations in the cultural (ethnicity and gender) and economic margins of New Zealand society (as reflected within public policies and the structured effects of these), has meant that they have been particularly prone to the policy changes previously described.

Housing

Pacific communities were particularly vulnerable to the housing policy changes implemented by the National government in the early 1990s. This was due to low income, their high reliance on public sector housing (Milne & Kearns, 1999; Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994) and poor housing status²² at the time of the reforms. Changes to housing policy effectively decreased the proportion of household income available for non-housing expenses such as food, clothing and health care. The 1996 New Zealand Census figures revealed that housing statuses and standards of living for both the Tongan and Samoan communities were negatively impacted on by the 1991 housing reforms. In 1996 48% of the Tongan population living in rental accommodation were paying between \$150 and \$199 per week. A further 31% were paying \$200 or more. This was above the percentages recorded for the overall population of 30% and 28% for these categories respectively (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b). The New Zealand Census data corresponding to Samoan peoples in these areas indicated that they were even more disadvantaged than Tongans within the housing sector at this time (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a).

It is now widely recognised that the increases in state rental prices to market rates have increased the level of "serious housing need" amongst Pacific Families (Milne & Kearns, 1999). Housing affordability (rental and owned) and crowding are now considered by Pacific peoples

to be key well-being issues (Milne & Kearns, 1999; The Otara Housing and Health Local Solutions Project, 1999). In turn affordability of housing is a major contributor to overcrowding (Milne & Kearns, 1999; The Otara Housing and Health Local Solutions Project, 1999; Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997). Consequently over crowding and substandard housing remain key issues which undermine the agency capacities of many members of these communities²³.

An abundance of research (Milne & Kearns, 1999; National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998; The Otara Housing and Health Local Solutions Project, 1999; Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997; Tukuitonga & Robinson, 2000) has claimed that overcrowded, sub-standard housing generates health problems amongst Aotearoa's Pacific communities. It has been widely agreed that crowding is a major factor in undermining the health of individuals and households (Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000, September). Over 40% of Pacific peoples lived in households containing six or more people in 1996. This rate is much higher than for the total population of Aotearoa (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). Overcrowding is associated with respiratory infections and meningococcal disease as well as to contributing to stress and mental ill health (National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998). Hospital admission rates between 1992 and 1997 show that Pacific children were almost six times as likely to be admitted for pneumonia and influenza as other children (Tukuitonga & Robinson, 2000).

Health

Available evidence suggests that the social and economic policy reforms within Aotearoa have had a negative impact on the health of many Pacific peoples in the country. Consultations with Pacific communities following many of the policy reforms outlined earlier, revealed that they perceived their health status within Aotearoa to be deteriorating (Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994). The 1992-1993 Household Health survey showed that Pacific peoples were the largest group to rate their overall health as poor (Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997).

Pacific children have poorer health status than other children. Hospitalisation rates for respiratory conditions, infections and parasitic diseases, burns and unintentional injuries all exceed national rates (Tukuitonga, 1997; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). Current epidemics of meningococcal diseases are a particular problem for Pacific children. Incidence rates reported for 1995 were 77.7/100,000 compared to 30.4/100,000 for Maori children and 7.9/100,00 for European children (Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997). Hospitalisation rates recently

released by Tukuitonga (Tukuitonga & Robinson, 2000) showed these trends to have continued. During the 1992-1997 period Pacific children comprised 17% of the paediatric population but accounted for 22.5% of all admissions. Tukuitonga emphasised that reasons for discrepant hospitalisation rates of Pacific children relative to other ethnic groups reflect differences in health status and socio-economic circumstances. At the time of the study, a newspaper report substantiated these claims. During the winter of 1999, Auckland Healthcare, the largest healthcare provider in the Auckland region, reported that the highest admission rates for under five years old with respiratory ailments such as asthma, bronchitis and lung infections were from Glen Innes and Point England areas (Newth, 1999). These are low socio-economic areas with a high percentage of Pacific families.

Measurement of socio-economic deprivation in Aotearoa (Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000, September) also confirms the marginal health status of many Pacific peoples. Reflecting eight domains of deprivations (some of which are now widely accepted as determinants of health such as income, employment or living space), the NZDep 96 index (Health Funding Authority, 2000) shows Pacific peoples to have considerably higher levels of deprivation than most other ethnic groups in Aotearoa. These results are hardly surprising given the previously iterated positionings of Pacific peoples within the labour and housing markets and the consequent impacts of policy changes on these communities.

Tongan and Samoan communities in Aotearoa: contemporary demographics and agency landscapes

Today, Tongan and Samoan communities of Aotearoa are ethnically diverse (Milne & Kearns, 1999; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999; Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994). Not only do these communities include people of mixed Pacific ancestry (such as Samoan/Niuean for example), but also people of other ethnic groups (such as Tongan/Palangi or Samoan/Maori for examples). Contributing to the heterogeneity of these communities is their composition of Tongan and Samoan born migrants as well as Tongan and Samoan people born in this country (Krishnan et al., 1994; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). Some notable differences between members of these communities born in the Islands of Tonga and Samoa and Aotearoa are evident in recent census data. Those born in Tonga and Samoa are less likely to hold post-school qualifications and own their own houses, than their-counter parts born in Aotearoa. The latter are also more likely to have unskilled jobs and higher rates of government

income support assistance (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a; Statistics New Zealand, 1998b). These differences are important as they indicate the further weakened position of immigrants with respect to these lacks in basic agency capacities.

At the time of the 1996 New Zealand Census, Pacific peoples comprised 6% of the total population and were estimated to number 227,000. Of these, 50% and 15.5% identified as Samoan and Tongan respectively (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). Pacific peoples are among the fastest growing ethnic populations in Aotearoa. The crude birth rate for Pacific peoples is more than double that for the country as a whole (Tukuitonga & Robinson, 2000). The Pacific population is also a youthful one. Demographic data relating to Tongan and Samoan communities within Aotearoa reflects these trends. In 1996 29% and 32% of Samoan and Tongan populations respectively were under 10 years of age. This compares to 16% for the total population of Aotearoa at this time (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999; Statistics New Zealand, 1998a; Statistics New Zealand, 1998b; Tukuitonga & Robinson, 2000)

In so far as the ability of these communities to exercise agency is concerned, the previously described policy reforms undertaken by governments have undoubtedly undermined materially based agency capacities such as housing, income, employment and health status. This has effectively created rather rugged agency terrains for many members of these communities. However, the picture is also potentially more complex than this. Analysis of the NZDEP 96 index (Health Funding Authority, 2000), suggests that there are factors associated with ethnicity that have a significant influence on health status. (The NZDEP 96 index shows trends towards higher mortality for Pacific peoples than for Europeans across all socio-economic groups, indicating that cultural factors impact on health). Such factors may include language barriers or “unique cultural experiences” (Health Funding Authority, 2000) as a member of an ethnic minority community.

This suggests that the poor health status of Pacific peoples relative to most other ethnic communities in Aotearoa (Health Funding Authority, 2000; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999; National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998; Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997; Tukuitonga & Robinson, 2000) has both socio-economic and cultural links. This research signals the relevance to agency of factors that structure the internal agency terrains (such as culture and identity) of members of these communities, and their dynamic relationship to dominant social structures and cultural institutions within Aotearoa. For example, the impact of relative inequalities on health through psychosocial pathways such as stress, self-esteem or

feelings of powerlessness (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) indicates that the 'experience' of marginalisation is important with respect to possible impacts on agency capacities. Data from the present investigation (Chapter seven and theoretical question one), supports the significance of internal agency terrain capacities and their dynamic relationship to context in influencing agency.

The discussions in the remainder of the chapter begin to take greater account of the ways in which subjectively based agency capacities such as the identities and cultures of the New Zealand based research communities might impact on their ability to exercise agency within this country. Firstly those aspects of Tongan and Samoan cultural systems that have particular relevance within the investigation in structuring the identities and cultural systems (internal agency terrains) within the investigation are discussed. Subsequently the following discussions on intra cultural and inter-cultural issues take account of both materially and subjectively based agency capacities of the New Zealand based investigation participants.

Traditional Samoan and Tongan cultural systems: hierarchy, authority and gender relations

As Tongan and Samoan migrants who came to Aotearoa from young adulthood onwards, the traditional cultural values (including those concerning hierarchy, authority and gender relations) in these societies are formative in constituting the identities and cultures of these participants. While the participating communities in Aotearoa no longer physically reside in the Island nations of Tonga and Samoa, they never-the-less carry their cultural systems with them in a subjective sense.

Tonga and Samoa share a number of commonalities. Broadly speaking, the cultural systems of both societies comprise many similar key values. Fa'a Samoa (Samoan culture) encompasses those of caring, respect, reverence, service and sense of belonging to one's aiga (extended family), village and ancestors (Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Tamasese Efi, 1997; Tupuola, 2000). Similarly anga fakatonga (the Tongan way) encompasses values of love, respect, obedience, sense of belonging to one's famili and Kainga (extended family and kinship groupings) and "eiki"²⁴ (chiefliness) (Finau, 1982; Marcus, 1993; Morton, 1996). Both are highly stratified societies, Tonga having a highly powerful centralised kingship and Samoa with its chiefdoms or Matai system (Lockwood, 1993). Christianity is also deeply embedded into the cultural systems of both societies. Writers (Gailey, 1987; James, 1995; Meleisea, 1995;

Schoeffel, 1995) tend to be in agreement that of all the factors contributing to the historical transformation of *anga fakatonga* (the Tongan way), and *fa'a Samoa* (Samoa culture) was the adoption and adaptation, of Christianity by these societies. This wrought the deepest and most pervasive changes – so much so that the categories of tradition and Christianity are now inseparable in the minds of many Tongans and Samoans.²⁵

The cultural systems and their respective expression within various institutions in both these societies also have some significant divergences, particularly in the expression of cultural values within various social institutions. While differences between Tongan and Samoan cultures exist²⁶, the following discussions focus on their commonalities insofar as the issues of hierarchy, authority and gender roles are concerned. This is for two reasons. Firstly, I researched the impact of these cultural issues on the ability of the Pacific participants to exercise agency within the Aotearoa context. I did not research distinctions between Samoan and Tongan cultural systems regarding these values and their expressions. Secondly, available literature regarding cultural values of hierarchy, authority and the expression of these values within gender relations within Tongan and Samoan societies draws sufficient similarities between Tongan and Samoan societies with respect to these issues.

Implications for the agency of Tongan and Samoan migrants living in Aotearoa

In contemporary times, both Tongan (Gailey, 1987; Marcus, 1993; Morton, 1996) and Samoan (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Meleisea, 1987; Tupuola, 2000) societies remain quite stratified. While Westernised systems of education and contemporary globalising processes have had some levelling effects on Tongan and Samoan societies (Marcus, 1993; Meleisea, 1987; Schoeffel, 1995), these cultural systems (as practised within Tonga, Samoa and Aotearoa) remain hierarchical in nature (Finau, 1982; Tupuola, 2000).

Cutting across the ranking systems within both Tonga and Samoa is social differentiation based on status. Status is calculated in context and is relative. In any given context a person's status is relative to that of whoever else is present (Meleisea, 1987; Morton, 1996), being primarily determined by seniority (chronological or genealogical), gender and kinship relations. Generally modernity appears to have introduced greater flexibility or mobility within Samoan and Tongan social structures as status may now be enhanced by factors such as education, wealth, generosity and involvement in church-related activities (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Morton, 1996).

However, social structures, peoples places and power relations within these (in both Tongan and Samoan cultural systems as practised within these Island nations and in Aotearoa) are still relatively hierarchical and fixed. New Zealand born Samoan writer Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) has made the point that culturally specific intricacies associated with public speech mean that many Pacific peoples do not believe in the right for any member of their ethnic communities to speak for and about them. Cultural protocols apply with the “right to speak” being determined by the relative statuses of those present. Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) gives the following account of the exercise of power and authority at Samoan and Pacific people’s health fonos (meetings) in Aotearoa:

These gatherings tend to reinforce the authoritative and hierarchical social structure of fa’a Samoa and are in many instances disempowering for subordinate members – the youth and the young women. In general there is an unspoken expectation at these meetings for youth, in particular young women to listen and defer to the perspectives of those in positions of authority – the older and the elite members of the communities (p.62).

Mulitalo-Lauta (albeit less critically) confirms this position in his writings regarding the role of fa’a Samoa in Social Work in Aotearoa (Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). He points out that because of the hierarchical structure of aiga (family), the matai, elders and parents often speak and make decisions on behalf of the members of their aiga. He cites an example in which the grandmother of one Pacific Island patient at Middlemore Hospital in Auckland took the leading role in the admission process. According to Mulitalo-Lauta (Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998), she did this because she had the authority, the experience and the duty to show her daughter the manner to respond and the type of decisions to make. Such situations are not uncommon in Pacific societies.

Socialisation norms for children growing up in Tonga and Samoa teach deference to authority (i.e., parents, teachers, elders) (Morton, 1996; Tanielu, 2000). In Traditional Tongan society, submissiveness as a sign of respect and obedience is a positively valued quality. Morton (Morton, 1996) writes “children who are submissive are pleasing to their parents. Children’s lives should be “mo’ui fakaongoongo (a life of waiting for instructions)” the expectation being that “they should carry out orders unquestioningly” (p.91). Similarly young people growing up in Samoa are generally expected to be “obedient and dutiful....[Whilst] individuality is not encouraged” (Shankman, 1993. p.159). In both societies, children and young people are taught not to question or assert their opinions and feelings (Morton, 1996; Tanielu, 2000).

Underpinned by hierarchical relations, the *famili* and *aiga* remain important mechanisms of social control in both Tongan (James, 1995; Morton, 1996) and Samoan (Shankman, 1993; Tupuola, 2000) societies. While the authority of the *aiga* is increasingly challenged as a result of its members exposure to Western cultural systems that prize 'individualism', its power to control (in particular youth and young women), is still very significant (Shankman, 1993; Tupuola, 2000).

Within Tongan and Samoan societies hierarchical relations are promulgated through the institution of religion (Morton, 1996; Tanielu, 2000). As a significant reference point for many people's conduct and their perceptions of the world, the Christian bible is an important source of external authority for many members of Samoan and Tongan communities. For example, Tanielu (Tanielu, 2000) has referred to the "almost fanatical belief in biblical phrases" (p.51) adhered to by Samoan parents as a to guide child rearing practices associated with corporal punishment. Within contemporary Tongan and Samoan societies pastors also serve as a powerful form of external authority. They are held in high esteem and are honoured because of their religious position and knowledge (Morton, 1996; O'Meara, 1993; Schoeffel, 1995). The pastor is owed respect as the representative and servant of God and is shown deference by the congregation he serves irrespective of his rank or status in other contexts (Morton, 1996; Schoeffel, 1995).

However, Christianity (particularly as it is practised in Aotearoa) also offers an important source of social status and mobility (Fusitu'a, 1992; Tanielu, 2000), that members of these communities otherwise might not have access to. For Tongans and Samoans who cannot claim authority or social status through other means (education, wealth, descent lines or chiefly titles), the Christian church offers an important means of social mobility through participation and promotion within the church. Given that the Christian church is still largely a patriarchal institution, this is less so for women.

Educational institutions in Samoa and Tonga tend to promote traditional values of submissiveness and deference to authority and external sources of knowledge (Morton, 1996; Tanielu, 2000). Available literature (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Fusitu'a, 1992; Morton, 1996; Tanielu, 2000) suggests that the colonial dominance of Tongan and Samoan education systems²⁷ may tend to promote the continuance of hierarchical relations with regard to social structures in Westernised contexts. Access to Western knowledge and cultural systems is viewed by some members of these communities as the way to a 'better and more civilised life'.

For many Samoan and Tongan people, Westernised systems of knowledge and culture appear to have partly dislodged their traditional cultural systems as central sources of identity and strength. While exposure to new cultures and knowledge systems may increase agency, what is deemed to be problematic here is the privileging of outsider (Westernised) knowledge above their own by some Tongans and Samoans. (Although documented evidence of this among Tongan and Samoan migrants in Aotearoa today appears to be scarce, these issues presented themselves within the investigation and are discussed within theoretical questions one and two, chapter eight). The comments of one young Samoan male to a New Zealand Herald journalist are suggestive of such deference to Western authority. Speaking of his experience as a reporter in this country, the journalist referred to his difficulty of asking confrontational questions of ageing (mostly Palangi) councillors. This was because “anyone white and in a tie is right” (Gamble, 2000).

Within the Westernised context of Aotearoa, the ability of individuals and communities to exercise agency within their lives often requires independence, the assertion of individual thought and will and challenging institutional anomalies or practices perceived to be unfair. The ability to question, critique, analyse and to assert one’s points of view is valued. While these are more traditionally male identified behaviours, they nevertheless comprise the central values on which the country’s institutions are based. Inevitably within the New Zealand context, Tongan and Samoan migrants will be in positions of needing to assert themselves to health, welfare and political authorities who are invariably white and educated. Such individual assertions by subordinates are actually counter-cultural. The forementioned power-culture relations in which Western cultural systems embodied in the practices of institutions and (often) Palangi officials add another problematic layer to these agency relations. Thus some Samoans and Tongans (particularly migrants) can be prone to positioning themselves as having subordinate status to government authorities or other persons in which authority is embodied such as men, Palangis, and educated professionals.

Implications for the agency of Samoan and Tongan women migrants living in Aotearoa

Within contemporary Samoan and Tongan cultural systems (as they are practised in both these countries and in Aotearoa) relations are stratified along lines of gender, with women generally having subordinate authority and status to men (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Finau, 1982; James, 1995; Morton, 1996; Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998; Schoeffel, 1995; Tupuola, 2000).

Studies (Gailey, 1987; James, 1995; Schoeffel, 1995) suggest that in both pre-colonial Tonga and Samoa, relations between women and men were of a more egalitarian nature. Women's power was of a sacred nature while male members held secular power. Christianity and the formation of the State transformed gender values and roles within both societies so as to reflect patriarchal cultures²⁸. While the nature of pule (or secular power) was transformed to fit with European structures of governance within both societies, men nevertheless retained it. Although remnants of women's traditional sacred power remain (James, 1995; Schoeffel, 1995), today this power is significantly diluted.

Therefore in contemporary Samoan and Tongan cultural systems, authority or secular power remains predominantly with men. For example in Samoa, 99% of Matai titles have been recorded as belonging to men (O'Meara, 1993). Mulitalo-Lauta also notes that in cases where Samoan women may have access to secular power via a Matai title, there is a tendency for males to object to the "pule (secular power) of a woman in a family" (Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998, p.42). In writing about the contemporary Tongan family (family), Finau (Finau, 1982) also acknowledges women's "political inequality", as the "authoritarian control of the family lies in the hands of the father" (p.881).

Even though Tongan and Samoan women often take on paid employment in Aotearoa, child-rearing and nurturing is still considered to be very much the duty of women in these societies. Research with Samoan and Tonga women born both in the Islands and Aotearoa demonstrated that the former were much less likely to challenge key aspects of the sexual division of labour (Larner, 1991). Significantly, some of the Samoan woman born in Aotearoa expressed their reluctance to marry a Samoan man because of traditional expectations:

Because I was brought up fa'a Samoa, I could only ever marry a Samoan. But the other side of me didn't want to marry a traditional Samoan man who would expect me to be at home. A lot of the time if the woman is working, it is because she has to, but then she has to come home and do all that work as well. At home that was OK but here in New Zealand lots of women are doing two jobs. Some couples brought up the traditional way have had to change, but for the majority, the woman carries a heavy load (Larner, 1991, p.62).

Thus the agency of many Pacific women is constrained in a very real sense by traditional gender roles and the authority of male and senior relatives to make decisions about what are and are not appropriate roles for them. It is important to note here that from the anecdotal reports I have heard (cited in research data in chapter eight), power relations between women and men in both Tongan and Samoan societies are changing, with some women coming to hold greater authority

within their families. It tends to be the case that women with higher levels of education are often more successful in achieving such gains for themselves and their families. While power relations between men and women may be changing, inequitable power relations between them remain very significant in the lives of the communities within the Aotearoa component of the present investigation.

The gendered and hierarchical nature of Samoan and Tongan societies appears to implicate women as tending to adopt subordinate status to those they perceive as having more authority, namely male and older relatives, church clergy, educated or wealthy people, Palangis as carriers of 'Western knowledge' and officials of varying sorts. It is posited that the adoption of inferior social and authority statuses by Tongan and Samoan women within Aotearoa undermines their agency capabilities. This is problematic to the realisation of their potentialities as well as that of their families and communities to which they belong. These issues are taken up further in chapters eight and nine.

Dominant social structures, institutional behaviours and the agency capabilities of Tongan and Samoan peoples

This section begins to bring the subjective and material aspects of agency into relationship with one another. It does so by discussing how dominant social structures of ethnicity, class and gender in Aotearoa and their associated discourses might structure both the subjective and material worlds of the investigation communities within everyday spheres of action. The promulgation of these dominant social structures within the New Zealand context through the behaviours of institutions and the individuals within them, with whom members of Samoan and Tongan communities often have contact within their daily lives is iterated. Given that this chapter predominantly focuses on the exclusionary aspects of dominant social structures in Aotearoa in continuing to lay out some of the contextual factors of the investigation, this discussion mainly concentrates on the marginalising influences of these institutions on the agency capacities of the research communities.

Ethnicity

Dominant social structures and institutional behaviours within Aotearoa often serve to marginalise Pacific peoples economically, socially and culturally. At an institutional level, some of the reasons for this may be attributed to the 'invisibility' up until recent years of Pacific

peoples to policy makers in Aotearoa (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). In cases where government departments and other institutions have recognised Pacific peoples, they have often clumped these ethnically diverse communities together under the label “Pacific Islanders” (Anae, 1997), without distinguishing between these communities.

Such clumping has tended to perpetuate the construction of these diverse peoples as a homogenous ethnic group (Pilato et al., 1998). Whilst researching the identity construction of New Zealand born Samoans, Anae (Anae, 1997) notes that the “pan ethnic” terms Polynesian or Pacific Islanders are not indigenous terms but Papalagi (meaning European or stranger) constructions and ones which arose out of the colonial context. Within Aotearoa, these constructs (invented by European colonisers, and later used by anthropologists) continue to be appropriated by the State, academics and other dominant groups (including Pacific elites). Anae (Anae, 1997) points out that the use of such pan-ethnic constructs by outsiders have also acquired a forced ethnic salience in that Samoans and other people from the Pacific use these labels to refer to themselves in some contexts. These practices of pan-ethnic labelling serve to “distort the realities of peoples caught within these identities” (Anae, 1997, p.128).

Thus the situation in Aotearoa is often one in which the powerful (elite and culturally dominant communities) often give definition to the cultural systems, identities and experiences of those who are ethnically “other” (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999). Therefore the construction of policies and their associated frameworks tend to perpetuate the economic and cultural dominance of these same identity communities. Such world views and associated positionings of Pacific peoples are then reproduced within organisational practices and the actions of individuals.

Pacific peoples’ relationships with the media and housing sector provide pertinent examples of these marginalising practices. Writers (Anae, 1997; Macpherson, 1996; Shankman, 1993) have noted that media constructions (which have been crucial in creating public perceptions) of Pacific peoples resident in Aotearoa have undermined the position of these communities. Being in the minority, Pacific peoples’ cultures are often not well understood by journalists or the majority of the population in this country. As a result negative stereotypes of Samoans and Tongans are common among the majority:

.....the majority (of New Zealanders) sometimes think of Samoans as part of a Polynesian “brown peril” that they fear will overrun their country. Tabloids in New Zealand portray Samoans as dangerous, as rapists, as drunks, and as noisy and violent, even though many in the majority have Samoan neighbours who are every bit as quiet and law-abiding as they are (Shankman, 1993, p.161).

Pacific peoples also face significant marginalisation within the housing sector. At an institutional level, lack of culturally appropriate and affordable housing has been identified as an issue by Pacific communities in Aotearoa (Milne & Kearns, 1999; The Otara Housing and Health Local Solutions Project, 1999). While the government has re-introduced income-related rents for state-housing tenants, the provision of State housing is still predominantly structured according to Palangi cultural norms and conventions.

Discrimination in both the public and private housing sectors also remains a problem (Clever, 2000; Human Rights Commission, 1993; Lynch, 1999). The majority of families within these communities continue to rent from the State rather than the private rental market due to the belief that tenure will be more secure and that they will face less discrimination as Pacific peoples (Human Rights Commission, 1993; Lynch, 1999). However Pacific peoples as tenants are still subject to negative stereotyping within the State rental housing sector as demonstrated by a recent television documentary entitled “When the Landlord comes to call” (Woolley, 2000). Filming the live interactions between Housing New Zealand (HNZ) employees and tenants, this documentary recorded a confrontation between a Tongan family and a HNZ employee. On film the HNZ worker angrily referred to some of the extended family members of this household as “just a bunch of women sitting at home on the dole with nothing to do” (Clever, 2000, p.3). According to the reporter, it was later established that none of these women were on the dole, all were carers for children and had partners who worked.

Class

The recent policy changes in Aotearoa mean that the concept of class now necessarily occupies a more central position in any discussion on Pacific people’s relationship to dominant social structures in Aotearoa. While available evidence indicates the negative impacts of these policy reforms on the material agency capacities of Tongan and Samoan communities, other research is also suggestive of the undermining influences of the neo-liberalist discourses underpinning such policies, on the subjectivities of many members of these communities.

Whilst researching welfare reform in Aotearoa and associated social constructions of welfare beneficiaries, Kingfisher (Kingfisher, 1997) observes that the discourses that promulgated these policy changes reformulated the concept of “dependency” as individual pathology. Referring to a speech made by the then Minister of Social Welfare, Kingfisher (Kingfisher, 1997) writes “the

dependency of those who rely on the state for financial support is constructed as total; they are parasitic on the system, providing nothing in return” (p.75).

As a result of such discourses, unagentic constructions of beneficiaries have often predominated within government welfare organisations in recent years. Duncan et al’s (Duncan, Kerekere, & Dinah, 1996a) survey of the experiences of Maori, Pacific and Pakeha²⁹ women living on low incomes provides testimony of this. Many of the research participants spoke about experiencing being unfairly treated by or looked down upon as beneficiaries by staff from government welfare organisations such as the New Zealand Income Support Service or Housing New Zealand. The participants in this particular study reported feeling intimidated, being talked down to by staff and feeling stereotyped as “dole bludgers” (Duncan, Kerekere, & Dinah, 1996b, p.8).

Significantly, the study also demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of marginalisation for members of the research communities. The study (Duncan et al., 1996b) reports that as women with children, the participants perceived they got mixed messages about paid work from representatives of welfare organisations. They felt they were put down because they were not working, but lack of affordable childcare and inflexible workplaces meant that they could not care properly for their children and work at the same time. The study also iterates that the Maori and Pacific women faced the additional problem of cultural barriers (such as language or being the recipients of state assistance programmes designed for mainstream Palangi families) and racial discrimination in their relationships with government departments, educational institutions and health services.

Gender

While the experience of the research participants and women in Aotearoa generally varies according to wealth, ethnic community, sexual identity, and ability-status for example, membership of the same gender group ensures a set of collective issues faced in relation to male derived and dominated institutions, policies and practices. In so far as the research communities are concerned, two prominent institutions that structure their agency capabilities along lines of gender are those of government-welfare organisations and the Christian church.

The feminisation of poverty following policy reform in Aotearoa has persisted despite increasing rates of female participation in the workforce and educational institutions (Briar,

1997; Duncan et al., 1996a; National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability, 1998). This is in part due to gender biased labour and welfare policies (Briar, 1997). Women who want to earn an income often have difficulty combining paid and unpaid work due to childcare and household responsibilities. The limited hours available to women for paid work mean that they can only take shift work, part time or casual positions, with lower rates of pay, diminished prospects of promotion, and less job security (Briar, 1997).

Similarly welfare policies have also marginalised women. State drives to decrease numbers of welfare-dependent recipients³⁰ in the 1990s have been based on assumptions that people living on state benefits (for example women caring for children) are using the nation's resources without making a contribution and should be deterred from doing so (Briar, 1997). Such constructions of worthwhile contribution (as in paid work) are predominantly male-centred, ignoring the traditionally female values and roles of caring and nurturing. Therefore many dominant social structures inherent in State policies negatively impact on women's agency capabilities in a material sense in addition to undermining an agentic sense of identity as a contributing member of society. (At an organisational level, this latter point was demonstrated within Duncan's research quoted previously).

As women, the Christian church structures the agency of many of the New Zealand based research participants in quite significant ways. In a general sense, Christianity continues to play a major influence in the lives of Pacific communities post migration to Aotearoa (Anae & Fuamatu, 2000; Fusitu'a, 1992; Pacific Star, 2000)³¹, and is an influential institution in so far as the agency capacities of both Pacific men and women. As a physical locale, the church is a place to meet, socialise, worship and celebrate events. It also provides the investigation communities with educational opportunities and leadership roles (social status) as adults (Fusitu'a, 1992), spiritual direction and practical assistance such as access to additional food or other forms of social assistance. For example, confidence may be built for Samoan and Tongan women through attending educational courses or taking up leadership roles. Thus the Church also plays a pivotal role in shaping the values and subjectivities of the research participants. Adherence to church teachings and a strong commitment to church activities are seen as having worldly as well as spiritual rewards, particularly among Pacific peoples migrant communities (Fusitu'a, 1992). However, the implications of church affiliation for Pacific women and men's agency capacities have some important differences. As a patriarchal institution, "it is (still predominantly) built on the notion of hierarchical control" (Spretnak, 1991, p.xiv), promulgating men's power over women and the dominance of male cultural systems. In doing

so, it offers women and men often quite different subject positions, whose implications for agency differ significantly.

Weedon (Weedon, 1987) has written about the particular forms of subjectivity offered to women by the Catholic church as including “norms of ‘selflessness’, which imply compliance to and fulfilment of the wishes and needs of husbands and children” (p.96). These views have been somewhat substantiated in Anae et al’s research (Anae & Fuamatu, 2000) into the roles and responsibilities of Samoan men in reproduction. They noted that most of the Catholic Samoan women they had interviewed maintained strong Catholic beliefs about not taking contraception and about the role of the women in the home as focusing on domesticity and raising children. While these comments relate directly to the Catholic church (of which many of the participants in Aotearoa were members), such traditional feminine modes of subjectivity are also promulgated by some other Christian churches, particularly those affiliated with Pacific communities.

As an integral part of the lives of the investigation communities, the Christian church, is an important mechanism for sense of identity, belonging and community as well as social control. The church both appears to enhance the agency capabilities of the investigation communities as well as detract from them. As an institution the Church also continues to be a channel for ‘white knowledgeability and authority’, and Eurocentric social structures associated with Christianity – particularly in cases in which those in authority (church ministers and leaders) are Palangi.

Implications for agency

As predominantly Samoan and Tongan women living on low incomes, some of the organisational examples presented demonstrate that many of the investigation participants in Aotearoa may potentially experience simultaneous marginalisation along two or more of these dominant social structures. Duncan’s (Duncan et al., 1996a) research in which Pacific women simultaneously had to grapple with institutional norms based on Palangi, male cultural systems, as well as racist and sexist positionings of themselves by some government workers, illustrates this well. Such constructions and racist stereotyping potentially ‘chip away’ at even the most resilient of cultural identities. Stereotyping of Pacific peoples by economically and culturally dominant communities potentially undermines agency capabilities such as self-confidence, or a strong and positive sense of cultural identity and belonging. Policy constructs whose cultural frameworks exclude Pacific peoples undermine agency capabilities in a material sense (such as

not being able to access affordable and appropriate housing) as well as in a subjective sense (such as not having one's identity supported and reflected). Such issues are likely exacerbated by the maintenance of previously mentioned traditional Tongan and Samoan values that preserve hierarchical relations by members of these ethnic communities.

Intra-cultural issues of transition for Samoan and Tongan communities living in Aotearoa

Pacific communities resident in Aotearoa, generally face many issues to do with the successful maintenance and development of their cultures within a society whose values and institutions are predominantly structured to support Eurocentric, male, capitalist interests. Aspects of culture that have strengthened the agentic capacity of individuals and communities within the Tongan and Samoan contexts (such as respect and obedience towards those they perceive to have greater authority or social status), may actually serve to detract from these capacities within Aotearoa. Therefore, the ability to exercise agency within the new context requires the strategic adaptation or transformation of culture to the new environment by Pacific peoples in such a way that it continues to support and nurture their particular identities and well-being.

Among cultural transition issues faced by Pacific peoples is the impact of individualist and capitalist values on their communities as they grapple with Palangi styles of education, child rearing norms, or different cultural protocols around respectful behaviour (Gamble, 2000). Others include the continuance of traditional weddings, funerals and other extended family events in a cash-based society and the practice of sending remittances home to the Islands (Milne & Kearns, 1999)³². As the investigation communities negotiate different ways of being within Aotearoa, some of the previous traditional roles, statuses and patterns of relating within their communities are in a state of flux. This is a source of tension and uncertainty for members of these communities (Krishnan et al., 1994; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999):

I feel strongly about keeping our Tongan ways even though we are living in Aotearoa. We grew up with clearly defined roles for men and women. They were traditional roles – the boys worked in the bush and the garden, and the girls were in the house doing the dishes and making the beds. I support those traditional roles. If you change them then you're not sure who you are, or what you should do. You're breaking down a tradition (Finau, 1990, p.97).

The issues of cultural change and transition most prominent for the Pacific communities within the investigation were those of authority, hierarchy and gender relations. These issues are rarely

dealt with within the literature pertaining to Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Perhaps two of the most seminal works in these areas are those of Anae et al (Anae & Fuamatu, 2000) and Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000). Anae's (Anae & Fuamatu, 2000) study of the roles and responsibilities of Samoan men in reproduction show some changing expectations around gender roles amongst younger Samoan women and men in relation to childcare and domestic duties. However, these changes are relatively new within these communities, being among the younger generations. These processes of change are often tension-filled and conflict-ridden.

Tupuola's (Tupuola, 2000) research on contemporary views of fa'a Samoa and female sexuality with Samoan women born and raised in either Samoa or Aotearoa raises these tensions. She observes that many participants in her study critiqued the androcentric and ethnocentric principles of fa'a Samoa and attitudes of some elders towards young Samoan women. In their view fa'a Samoa epitomised moral contradictions, old-fashioned expectations and gender-biased philosophies. Participants suggested a need for traditional fa'a Samoa customs to acknowledge modernity and Westernisation. However, Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) also indicates that exposure to Western cultural systems and associated shifts in world views and subject positions on the part of Samoan women invariably involved considerable tensions. This is because the negotiation of such identity shifts often meant becoming "tangled in the webs of power relations" (p.66).

As Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) implies processes of change within cultural systems are often structured by existing power relations. Dominant social structures within most ethnic groups mean that males often have more economic power and social status than women, thus having greater capacity to exercise 'power over' or to force particular choices on the part of women. Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) has pointed out that for many young Samoan women, the risks of initiating change within ones own thinking and behaviours (and thus in fa'a Samoa) are great. For example, in some cases, young Samoan women living in Aotearoa have faced the situation of an arranged marriage. Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) writes that these women face various predicaments. "Do they disobey the expectations of their aiga and face the severe consequences or defer to those in authority, escape reprimand and conceal their true feelings?" (p.68), thus abandoning the possibility of a potentially more agentic subject position for themselves. Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) writes "their struggle to obey their aiga and traditional fa'a Samoa is particularly great as many want to be as independent as they perceive their Western female peers to be" (p.69). For the women Tupuola (Tupuola, 2000) interviewed, fears of ostracism from the aiga (an important source of identity, belonging and perhaps material security) were

great. Significantly, she also notes that for Samoan women from rural Samoa or traditional Samoan households participating in the study, fears of ostracism from the aiga were even stronger.

Overall, new patterns of community and interpersonal relations are emerging within Pacific communities (Lockwood, 1993). While issues of cultural transition are challenging for the investigation communities, it is these same issues that also demonstrate the nature of the *dynamic forces* operating within these (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999) that potentially give rise to opportunities and spaces for agency. Pacific communities will be best positioned to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Aotearoa context, by taking cognisance of the dynamic cultural forces that are in operation and acting to influence them. A significant challenge for Tongan and Samoan communities within the process of moving forward in Aotearoa is to maintain the fluidity and strength of their cultural systems (as they are subject to pressures of change within this context) and avoid the 'rigidity of resistance' as they review the expression of these. These issues of cultural change and agency are later taken up under theoretical question two, chapter eight.

Conclusion

The localised impacts of globalising processes appear to have mixed implications for the agency of the research communities in Aotearoa. Globalisation potentially provides opportunities for increased agency capacities through access to higher education and standards of living via migration to Aotearoa. However, post migration to Aotearoa, many members of these communities have marginal economic, political and cultural status, as migrants from nations at the economic and cultural peripheries. In many cases the already marginal statuses of Pacific communities have been exacerbated by policy reforms (and their associated discourses) undertaken by successive governments in response to the globalisation of capital. The employment, income, housing and health statistics previously quoted demonstrate the devastating impacts of these policy changes for the New Zealand investigation communities. Many Pacific peoples (particularly migrant women) have been pushed further to the economic and cultural margins of life in Aotearoa.

Exposure to new cultural systems potentially increases the number of agentic subject positions available to members of these communities, particularly women. However dominant power-culture relations both in respect to Western cultural systems and within those of Tongan and

Samoan societies appear to prescribe the adoption of more agentic subject positions by the research participants. Furthermore, aspects of their traditional cultural systems such as hierarchy, authority and gender relations may actually constrain agency within the new cultural context of Aotearoa. The successful negotiation of globalising processes for the investigation communities in Aotearoa appears to suggest the need for at least two courses of action. Firstly it signals a need to be proactive with respect to organising collectively to increase their ability to exercise agency via the inculcation of their cultural systems into public policies. Secondly, it is suggestive of the benefits of members of these communities reviewing and changing aspects of their cultural systems that are no longer agency-enabling within the new cultural context. These issues are further explored in chapters eight and nine.

This chapter has also begun to signal a distinction between individual and community-orientated or collective notions of agency. For example traditional values within Samoan and Tongan cultural systems such as hierarchy and submissiveness to authority may be orientated towards more collective expressions of agency. These are very different from individual notions such as ‘speaking one’s truth’, with the possibility of conflict and disrupting (at least temporarily) collective agency. The distinction between individual and collective forms of agency begins to emerge later again within the thesis, in the form of tensions between individual and community expressions of agency. These are not so much the result of changes in cultural environments, but related to processes of increasing agency within research communities.

¹⁷ “Closing the Gaps” is a government initiated programme, aimed at increasing the socio-economic status of Maori and Pacific peoples in Aotearoa so that it is equal to that of European peoples.

¹⁸ Previously, State-housing assistance was provided to those in need, in the forms of subsidised state rental housing at below market rents, low-interest mortgages and tenancy advocacy. Significantly, the majority of people living on low-incomes paid a maximum of 25% of their income in rent. This was achieved either through the provision of State housing (with rental costs set at this threshold) or through the provision of an accommodation benefit to Social Security beneficiaries whose housing costs exceeded 25% of their income (Cheyne et al., 2000; Milne, 1998).

¹⁹ Research conducted by the University of Auckland (Crothers, 1993) for the City of Manukau indicated that Pacific peoples were particularly hard hit by the 1991 Employment Contracts Act relative to other population sectors in Aotearoa. The research found that 52% of the Pacific peoples surveyed said they had been affected by the Employment Contracts Act, compared with 22% of European respondents.

²⁰ New Zealand Census data relating to unemployment does not exist for each Pacific ethnic group prior to 1991.

²¹ The 1991 New Zealand Census showed that since 1986 the proportion of Pacific peoples receiving a welfare benefit in the 20-39 year age group rose from 40% to 68% (Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994).

²² In 1988 half of all households in Central and South Auckland categorised by the National Health Commission as having “serious housing need” were headed by Pacific peoples (Milne & Kearns, 1999; Public Health Commission of New Zealand, 1994). The term “serious housing need” referred to situations in which households were living in overcrowded, substandard or unaffordable housing.

²³ The significance of these issues for Pacific peoples is demonstrated within the present investigation in that both housing advocacy groups were predominantly comprised of members of Pacific communities and WAG (Women's Advocacy Group) selected housing as their priority issue for policy advocacy.

²⁴ In both Tonga and Samoa, "chiefiness" is an idiom for characterising virtuous behaviour and a formally correct presentation of self....Particularly as it extended to the base of society, chieftainship was not only a position of local leadership and collective symbolic focus, but also a generally employed idiom for evaluating and controlling common behaviour (Marcus cited in Morton) (Morton, 1996, p.25).

²⁵ This inseparability is encapsulated in the mottos of Tonga and Samoa, both of which have strong Christian elements. Tongan writer Fusitu'a (Fusitu'a, 1992) observes that the "Tongan motto 'Otua mo Tonga Ko hoku Tofi'a – God and Tonga are my inheritance' inspires in Tongans the belief that they are 'kakai lotu', literally praying people" (Fusitu'a, 1992, p.39) Samoa has similarly embraced Christianity as part of their motto within their constitution which reads "Fa'avae ile Atua Samoa – Samoa is founded upon God" (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000, p.29)

²⁶ Fuller discussions of the values inherent within the cultural systems of both Tongan and Samoan societies are documented else-where (Marcus, 1993; Morton, 1996; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Tamasese Efi, 1997; Tupuola, 2000), as is their expression within traditional social institutions. Discussions concerning the inculcation of traditional values within the institutions of chieftainship/aristocracy, extended family, religion, education, and within gender roles can be found in the following literature. Discussions regarding the Matai and No(m)pele (Chieftainship and aristocratic systems) can be located in (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Finau, 1982; Marcus, 1993; Meleisea, 1987; Morton, 1996; O'Meara, 1993). Information concerning the institutions of the aiga and Famili (extended family systems) can be found in (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Finau, 1982; Morton, 1996; Shankman, 1993; Tupuola, 2000). Other literature discusses the expression of traditional values within religious (Fusitu'a, 1992; Meleisea, 1995; Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998; Tanielu, 2000) and educational institutions (Fusitu'a, 1992; Tanielu, 2000), and within gender roles (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Fusitu'a, 1992; James, 1995; Meleisea, 1987; Morton, 1996; Schoeffel, 1995; Tanielu, 2000).

²⁷ While in some instances there appears to be a revival of Pacific culture within schooling systems (Morton, 1996 182), 'Western knowledge' and culture still occupies a superior position for many within the knowledge hierarchy.

²⁸ See Gailey (Gailey, 1987), James (James, 1995) and Schoeffel (Schoeffel, 1995) for accounts of the subordination of women's traditional sources of authority through the introduction of colonial practices and Christianity to Tonga and Samoa.

²⁹ Pakeha is the Maori word for European. This term is now used by many New Zealanders of European decent to refer to themselves and is often used in official reports.

³⁰ In 1995 over 91% of those receiving a domestic purposes benefit were women (Duncan et al., 1996a).

³¹ The 1996 New Zealand Census showed that approximately 94% and 92 % of Tongans and Samoans were members of a religious group. The vast majority of these religious organisations are the Catholic, Methodist or Presbyterian churches.

³² Milne and Kearns (Milne & Kearns, 1999) provide a good discussion of the complexities involved for Pacific communities regarding the practice of sending remittances back to the Pacific Islands. The practice enhances agency in the sense of strengthening sense of identity and belonging, whilst also constraining agency through undermining materially based capacities such as economic wealth.

Chapter Five

Theorising analysis and practice: critical post-modernism and community development

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and discuss the theories that inform the analysis and practice of the investigation. **Part one** addresses the contribution feminist, post-modernist and post-structuralist theories make towards understanding how communities at the economic and cultural margins might exercise greater agency. In doing so, it reviews the theoretical contributions critical post-modernism makes in explaining processes whereby agency is enabled and constrained.

The critical post-modernist framework offered here represents the various intersections between post-modern³³, feminist and post-structuralist discourses. These are presented under the rubric of 'Critical Post-modernism'. The critical post-modernist form of theorising is politically activist and praxis orientated (Rosenau, 1994). It draws on post-modernist forms of deconstruction³⁴ and feminist emphasis on subjectivity and the 'subject as agent'. Post-structural analyses of power-culture dynamics in turn take account of the structural elements of agency³⁵. This enables a critical post-modern critique that is orientated towards transforming power relations. Those working within a critical post-modernist framework, argue that while deconstruction is the first step, it must ultimately lead to reconstruction (Rosenau, 1994; Spretnak, 1991). The thesis uses elements of each theory to construct an analytical and conceptual framework that has practical application regarding relations of agency for communities at the economic and political margins.

Part two of this chapter focuses on community development as a method of agency. Initially the emphasis is on approaches to community development that are informed by critical post-modern theories, with strategies and practice ethics being outlined. This is followed by a discussion of critical post-modern and other aligned theories that informed the evolution of the community development methodology in the fieldwork with the Women's Advocacy Group.

Finally, existing community development literature is outlined as it relates to the three key hinges of community-community development methodology, community-community developer and community-organisational relations researched within the fieldwork.

Part one: critical post-modern theorisations of agency relations

Liberal humanism

The dominant cultural and political discourses of the past 150 years have been liberalism and humanism. While liberal-humanism is not subscribed to as a useful means of analysing agency relations, it is none the less a very pervasive world view in contemporary times that has provided the political context out of which post-modern, post-structural and feminist theory has arisen. Humanism dates back to the early Renaissance, and has been closely interconnected with the development of liberalism, which is a more recent philosophy. The defining tenet of humanism is the belief in an essential human nature (based on European, male norms) and in the power of reason to bring about human progress. Liberal philosophy is characterised by a belief in the inalienable rights of the individual to realise him or herself to the full (Jordan & Weedon, 1995; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Western forms of democracy and capitalist economic and social relations rely on humanist-liberal concepts of the sovereign, rational individual and on the concept of free will. Liberal humanism views human history as a history of progress and enlightenment based on rational planning.

Jordan and Weedon (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) posit that together these world views have given rise “to a powerful theory in which culture plays a privileged role in the development of the individual” (p.24). For them liberal humanism is a double edged sword – a politics of freedom and a mechanism of control, a rhetoric transcending social divisions and a policy upholding the elite, an ideology of universalism and a practice of Eurocentrism.

The liberal-humanist assumption that the individual subject is the source of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world can easily serve as a guarantee and justification of existing social relations. Weedon (Weedon, 1987) observes:

.....the structural and institutional oppression of women disappears behind the belief that if I as a rational sovereign subject freely choose my way of life on the basis of

rational consciousness which gives me knowledge of the world, then I am not oppressed (p.84).

Power relations are masked and oppression is reduced to a subjective psychological state. In the lives of the research participants, this tends to perpetuate a climate of self-blame rather than looking to structural issues of power as a cause of oppression.

Liberal-humanism is also significant within the investigation in that the education systems of the research communities (and myself) were based upon Western enlightenment meta-narratives of human (read Western, male) progress. As is explored in chapter eight, the subjectivities (or internal agency terrains) of the research participants have been constituted (at least in part) by discourses that equate human development (or agency) to Westernisation and capitalism. Meta-narratives (despite their unfashionability within some academic circles) still hold enormous power in the minds of many people, as they subscribe to ideas of 'one God', or one view of 'human progress'. I do not argue that such meta-narratives are necessarily 'all bad' or 'all lacking in capacity' for the research communities. There may be times in which investment in these is agentic. Rather, I argue that we need to recognise the significance of the ways in which meta-narratives still influence and constitute our subjectivities. This is particularly important in the area of self-determination.

Post-modernism

Post-modernism refers to a collective of social theories that centre around current debates regarding the nature of knowledge. It is distinct from social post-modernisation (O'Brien & Penna, 1998) or post-modernity (Giddens & Pierson, 1998) (although has arisen from within this context) as a condition that refers to "a set of changes, transitions and processes perceived to be taking place at the social, political, economic and cultural level" (Williams, 1992, p.204). A central theme of emergent post-modern theories has been to challenge the legitimating power of meta-narratives (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Seidman, 1994) that have served as the foundational theories of knowledge upon which the enlightenment project (O'Brien & Penna, 1998) and Western society have been based. As grand stories of social progress, meta-narratives have been central to the legitimation of modern knowledge, the dominance of Western, patriarchal cultures and their associated social institutions. Post-modernism confronts the "European view of history as the unilinear progress of universal reason" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p.294).

Post-modernism is itself heterogeneous, ranging over disciplines as diverse as literary criticism and geography. Williams (Williams, 1996) summarises the conceptual markers of post-modernism as: particularism, difference, relativism, contingency, fragmentation and de(constructionism). Post-modern theories pose a major challenge to social and political theories rooted in the enlightenment in five major ways. (1) Rather than understanding the subject as conscious, rational and coherent (as assumed within modernist theory), post-modernism emphasises the role of the unconscious and the fragmented nature of the self, pointing out that there are a myriad of different subjectivities and realities. (2) Post-modernism challenges the emphasis on universalism by emphasising both the relativity and the constructedness of knowledge or so-called truth. There are no overarching truths, only partial knowledges exist constructed in the specifics of time and place. (3) Post-modernism represents a shift away from fundamentalist or essentialist thinking towards an exploration of meaning of social phenomena and how they constitute themselves through those meanings. The emphasis is not on facts or evidence but upon representation, symbols and language, as it is through these that meaning is constructed. (4) Whereas the social and political theories of the twentieth century anticipate the development of societies in a stage by stage movement of progress, post-modernism emphasises the specifics of time and space, the contingencies and constellations of specific movements. (5) Post-modernism shifts away from dualist thinking towards an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of identities and phenomena. The emphasis is not so much on the differences between subjects (man/women) but on understanding how those differences are constructed and how the categories (man/woman) are themselves constituted through difference. Identities are not seen as fixed, but as ambiguous, fluid and unstable, changing with the shifting power relations of time and space.

The emancipatory potential of post-modernism has been questioned both within black (Hooks, 1990) and feminist (Butler, 1994; Spretnak, 1991) politics. Hooks has pointed out that as a discursive practice it is dominated primarily by white male intellectuals and/or academic elites who “speak to and write about one another with coded familiarity” (p.24). Post-modernism is easily associated with intellectual nihilism (Butler, 1994) in the minds of many activists and some academics, as many post-modern writings have tended to emphasise its deconstructive elements. Such post-modern theories do not move beyond deconstruction, claiming that the ‘unreal’ has replaced the ‘real’, that there is nothing but ‘cultural construction’ in human experience (Spretnak, 1991). At their most extreme such theoretical positions posit that oppression only exists in the minds of the oppressed, thus undermining the legitimacy of claims

on economic, cultural and political sovereignty/self determination by those communities at the margins. These forms of post-modernism do little to challenge and change the status quo of economic and cultural power relations. They run the risk of being appropriated by neo-liberal, capitalist interests and discourses that emphasise negative freedoms (Cheyne et al., 2000), such as freedom of speech and the right to non-interference (particularly in the market), perpetuating capitalist, white, male dominance.

Notwithstanding these cautions, post-modernism has several important contributions to make in theorising agency. Its emphasis on partiality, fragmentation and contingency provide a means of thinking about the investigation context in which the globalisation of cultural systems (via migration and advances in communication technologies) exposes the investigation communities to multiple world views and systems of knowledge. The condition of post-modernity (Giddens, 1984; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) gives rise to peoples (including the investigation participants) experiencing speeded up processes of change, shifting roles, group memberships and sometimes statuses.

Post-modernism's emphasis on subjectivity and partial, localised knowledges rather than grand theories or meta-narratives of 'truth' contributes to the investigation in at least three important ways. Firstly as Rosenau (Rosenau, 1994) points out, post-modernism holds emotion, intuition, the spiritual and intangible as having equal knowledge value to reason and science. Such an analytical lens allows the felt and intuited experiences of the research participants (including myself) to be an integral part of theorising the power-culture dynamics of agency. Secondly, post-modernism's pluralistic inquiry into subjectivity and identity (beyond meta-narratives of any one 'grand oppression') widens the analytical lens to begin to theorise how ethnic, gender and class cultures both mediate and are mediated by dominant social structures of capitalism. Finally post-modernism's emphasis on subjectivity (de)construction (how we know) enables me to place myself within the analytical conundrum as a subject who analyses, intuitively and acts from her own subject position throughout the research process.

Post-structuralism

Like post-modernism, post-structuralism represents a rejection of the major tenets associated with enlightenment theories and philosophical traditions that envisage a universal subject, an essential human nature and a global, linear unfolding of human progress and destiny (O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Post-structuralism encompasses a diverse range of theories. These include

deconstructive criticism³⁶ practised by literary critics concerned with the 'free play' of meaning in literary texts; radical-feminist re-writing of the meanings of gender and language in the work of some French feminist writers and the detailed historical analysis of discourse and power in the work of Michel Foucault (Weedon, 1987). Post-structuralist theories share an understanding of individual consciousness, social meaning and organisation as being constituted within language (Fausett, 2000; O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Weedon, 1987). Post-structuralist conceptions of language suggest that meaning is plural and shifting. Any one meta-narrative or discourse gives rise to an interpretation of the world we live in, not the ultimate truth. Some post-structural theories, such as those developed by Foucault, explain how some discourses are marginalised in favour of others through the exercise of institutional power by economically and culturally dominant communities in society. This links the constitution of subjectivities, language and discourses to material-power relations. Foucault developed the concept of the discursive field to help understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. Different discursive fields (or discourses) offer competing ways of giving meaning to the world, reflecting different realities. Various discourses reflect particular values and will reflect the interests of different groups and communities (Fausett, 2000). The ways in which discourses constitute the minds and bodies of individuals is part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases.

For Foucault (Foucault, 1980) power is not located within individuals, communities or institutions. Rather:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or a piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power....In other words individuals are vehicles of power, not its points of application (p.98).

His analyses of reason, discipline and sexuality³⁷ posit three theses of power (O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Sardar & Van Loon, 1999; Weedon, 1987) that are significant with respect to theorising agency relations within the investigation and are taken up later in the chapter.

Post-structuralist appropriations of psychoanalytical theory also bear some significance to the inquiry because of the contribution they make in theorising the unconscious in the constitution of people's subjectivities, language and identities. (While the research data cannot get directly at the unconscious, it is none the less theorised that the unconscious is influential in people's

speech and behaviours and that a critical part of agency is the process of actively constituting one's subjectivities).

Kristeva's work for example, (Weedon, 1987) draws on Freud's theory of the unconscious and Lacan's psychoanalytic model of subjectivity and language. Kristeva's work is important to the theorisation of agency relations. Her conceptualisation of the "subject in process" (Weedon, 1987) refers to the post-structural construction of subjectivities/consciousness as being unstable, and constituted in language. Modes of subjectivity are therefore open to change. Her theory of signifying practices ("significance") explains how this might occur. It emphasises the disruptive and potentially revolutionary force for subjectivity of the marginal and repressed aspects of language³⁸.

Feminist theory

Feminist theory like other contemporary approaches, validates difference, challenges universal claims to truth and seeks to create social transformation in a world of shifting and uncertain meanings. It seeks to analyse the conditions that change women's lives and to explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman (Jackson & Jones, 1998). Being initially guided by the aims of the Women's Movement (Jordan & Weedon, 1995), feminist theory has strong pragmatic elements. Jackson and Jones (Jackson & Jones, 1998) write: "theory for us is not an abstract intellectual activity divorced from women's lives, but seeks to explain the conditions under which those lives are lived" (p.1). Feminism has been described as a "plural movement" (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). I prefer to describe it as a plurality of movements that are theoretically informed by a number of culturally diverse communities of woman (such as lesbians, indigenous, and differently abled women), who occupy a range of subject positions in relation to dominant social structures and discourses. These communities experience a diverse range of *power-culture* dynamics and associated relations of agency, particularly in relation to dominant social structures. Feminism is informed by a number of divergent (and sometimes competing) theories that represent the interests and experiences of quite heterogeneous communities. Such theories include liberal, marxist, post-colonial, lesbian and post-modern feminist theories. Feminist theories make several specific contributions to the analytical lens of the thesis.

Feelings and experience as a guide Much feminist theory infers agency through its traditional emphasis on feelings and experience as a guide to knowledge about the world (Weedon, 1987; Chapter 5

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Weiler, 1991). The ‘personal is political’ has become a well-established tenet of feminist theory as women have gathered in consciousness raising groups and increasingly articulated their private experiences into public spheres. Weiler (Weiler, 1991) underscores the agentic potential of “deep feelings as a guide to analysis” (p.463) and subsequent challenging of dominant narratives. Feminists emphasise women’s role in society and processes of socialisation as constructing subjectivities.

Professional power and self-help Feminism is concerned with the subjugation of (women’s) lay knowledge, particularly in professional – lay people relations. Feminist psychoanalytic theory (Ernst & Goodison, 1981) aims to counter the power imbalance between therapist and ‘client’ inherent in more traditional Freudian-based models. As a political movement feminism has traditionally been concerned with power imbalances and has often championed women’s expertise, advocating self-help approaches as means of increasing women’s agency.

Theoretical tensions in subjectivity Women’s subjectivity is an issue of contention within feminist theory (Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Jordan & Weedon, 1995; Weedon, 1987). This theoretical tension can be summarised as essentialism versus constructionism. The former posits an ‘essential true femaleness’, a singular “feminine identity which women should attempt to reclaim” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p.203). Social constructionism on the other hand problematises women’s experience and places emphasis on how we know what we know. The social constructionist view of subjectivity (put forward here), views women’s experiences, self-perceptions and identities as being produced in relation to discourses and social practices. The feminist social constructionist approach to subjectivity makes a vital contribution in theorising agency relations by emphasising the feeling and intuitive aspects of consciousness and women’s knowledgeability of the world through everyday experiences (particularly those associated with the private, domestic sphere), while also inquiring how these knowledgeabilities are constructed.

Feminism, agency and structure Women’s agency, or our ability to actively constitute our worlds and live our lives in ways we have reason to value, has always been the central concern of feminism. Indigenous, lesbian, differently abled feminist theories have been traditionally constructed around the notion of women’s agency (Jackson & Jones, 1998). Lather (Lather, 1991) argues that feminism is the “cultural site most effectively disruptive of the alleged impotence of the subject in the face of social /political forces and situations” (p.28). Despite the varied strands of feminisms (that include both constructionist and essentialist approaches), all

appeal to the powers of agency and subjectivity as necessary components of socially transformative struggle.

Agentic notions of the subject Feminist theories posit an agentic subject. Feminist post-modernist theorists (Frazer & Lacey, 1993; Weedon, 1987) argue that socially given identities are precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted each time we speak. The subject is actively creating itself, and struggling for new ways of being in the world through new forms of discourses and new forms of social relationships (Lather, 1991; Williams, 1996).

Gender is one cultural component of the power-culture dynamics that constitute relations of agency within the investigation. A feminist analysis, foregrounds the fact that the majority of the investigation participants face layers of marginalisation within their lives both materially and subjectively. They are positioned within the economic and cultural margins of Eurocentric, male, capitalist societies as well as within their own ethnic communities. As women who have predominantly migrated from nations on the economic and cultural peripheries to those at the core (Aotearoa and Canada), black and indigenous feminist (Hooks, 1990; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) theories also have relevance in theorising power-culture relations. These theories sharpen the focus around the marginalisations that the research communities deal with as indigenous and women of color.

Critical post-modernist explanations of agency relations

Much has been written (Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1987; Williams, 1996) about the intersections between feminist and post-modern and post-structural theories. Lather (Lather, 1991) claims that “feminism is the paradigmatic political discourse of post-modernism” (p.27), while Weedon (Weedon, 1987) proffers post-structuralism as contributing to feminism a “useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities of change” (p.10). While each constitutes a range of theories, aspects of which are disparate from one another, various elements exist that are complementary. It is this composite (critical post-modernism) that theoretically informs how power relations may be transformed. This section outlines the relationships between the key concepts that are central to the critical post-modern theory of agency relations. It then offers critical post-modern theorisations of processes whereby agency is enabled and constrained.

Language as discourse A critical post-modern framework for understanding agency relations views language as the common factor in the analysis of social organisation, social meanings, power and individual consciousness. Language is the site where our subjectivity is constructed (Weedon, 1987). Rather than theorising language as the expression of unique individuality, as in humanist or essentialist terms, critical post-modernism proposes that language constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways that are socially specific. Language is viewed as a system that exists within historically specific discourses, not neutral, but embedded within a discursive context and ensuing power relations. Discourse theory emphasises the fusion of mental phenomena such as beliefs, concepts and categories with social phenomena like institutions and practices (Frazer & Lacey, 1993). The term discourse emphasises the non-neutrality of language, its role in the construction of reality and the maintenance and reproduction of society. Discourses are not neutral but are tied to political interests and have social implications (Weedon, 1987).

The discursive field Foucault's (Foucault, 1980) concept of the discursive field is useful as a way of understanding the relationships between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. A discursive field consists of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and organising social institutions and practices (Weedon, 1987). Social structures and processes are organised through institutions and practices such as the law, political system, the church, the family, the education system, and the media, each of which is located in and structured by a particular discursive field. In any one society, one set of discourses is dominant and it reflects particular values and class, gender and racial interests.

To be effective and powerful, a discourse needs a material base in established social institutions and practices. For example Weedon (Weedon, 1987) points out the way in which gender is understood and acted upon in the context of the nuclear family is central to the reproduction of the sexual division of labour and current norms of masculinity and femininity. At the same time the enactment of gender relations within the domestic sphere are influenced by powerful discourses that define the family and are located within institutional practices. The institutions of law, social welfare provision, the media and churches have powerful material bases and thus the capacity to structure subjects into particular ways of being through the subject positions they offer.

Power and the discursive field Power is viewed as being dispersed (unevenly) throughout the discursive context (Weedon, 1987). This draws on Foucault's (Foucault, 1980) thesis of power

which posits that multiple systems of power are instituted not by openly coercive or repressive state regimes, but by a very wide miscellany of institutions (O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Sarup, 1996). These are systems of power (or micro-power) that are inculcated into the behaviours, habits and practices of an entire society of people with the consequence that the rules, codes and procedures of regulation and control are experienced as normal features of institutional and everyday life.

The critical post-modernist view of agency relations offered here proposes that power is intimately connected with knowledge (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Weedon, 1987). For example, Jordan and Weedon (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) point out that "the power to name, the power to represent common sense, the power to create official versions and the power to represent the legitimate social world" are four major areas where power can be realised by some groups more than others (p.13). This view of power-knowledge operating within the discursive field views the investigation communities (largely immigrant women of colour living on low-incomes) as having less institutional power to give prominence to their world views than more economically and culturally dominant communities. Their knowledges are subjugated to the 'official views' of the world and events, which tend to be those discourses legitimating white, male and middle class interests.

Subject position Subjects may take up or be allocated particular positions within any discursive field. Constituted of both subjective and objective properties, the term implies elements of choice or agency as well as those of structural determinism. Assuming the position of a thinking, speaking signifying subject involves attributing meaning to experience and opting for one mode of subjectivity amongst other available (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). However, the degree to which individuals can choose forms of identity or subject positions is circumscribed by social power relations (Weedon, 1987).

All signifying practices within and between cultures (that is all practices that have meaning) involve relations of power. They offer us particular subject positions and modes of subjectivity which more often than not involve relations of domination and subordination (Weedon, 1987). Within the investigation contexts of Aotearoa and Canada (as Western, industrialised countries), low-income immigrant women from peripheral nations are subjected to culturally dominant discourses and institutional practices that often position them unagentially. Accessing health-related services, for example, often means being subjected to (and constituted by) institutional practices based on white, male cultural norms that position these women as being ignorant of

'common sense' practices, such as those involved in Western ideas of caring for children. Discourses shape and influence the parameters of people's thinking and experiencing while institutional and material power relations can make it much harder for people to adopt particular subject positions relative to others. The adoption of a feminist subject position on contraception within her marriage by a Samoan or Tongan woman who had little economic independence would probably be more difficult than for a women who had more economic choices.

In summary, to varying extents, people are active subjects who take up positions from which they can exercise power within a particular social practice, or are subjected to the definition of others (Weedon, 1987). Critical post-modern theorists who have sought to provide theoretical explanations of agency dynamics have done so from a number of perspectives. These may be organised under two broad categories. The first of these are theoretical explanations of processes whereby people's agency is constrained, whilst the second category relates to processes within which people's agency is enhanced. Both categories are useful for understanding agency dynamics and ultimately 'how people come to exercise increased levels of agency within their everyday lives'. The following sections offer some theoretical perspectives within these two categories.

Agency: theorising dynamics that constrain

This section largely focuses on the exercise of 'power over'. This refers to the ability to enforce particular behaviours or influence ways of thinking on the parts of others, through means such as greater access to economic resources, legislation, or the ability to control the parameters and context of public discourses. The critical post-modern view of agency relations discussed in this section focuses primarily on three theses of power produced within the work of Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Sarup, 1996). These are: the connection between power and knowledge, the dispersal of power within contemporary social systems and the increased capacity for the surveillance of people through institutional behaviours.

In his work, Foucault (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) problematises the relationship between *pouvoir-savoir*, power and knowledge, viewing the production of official knowledge as the direct result of particular sets of power relations. O'Brien and Penna (O'Brien & Penna, 1998) write that Foucault used the term power/knowledge to explain the development of processes of "normalisation", the techniques and the systems of classification that organise and define deviance and difference. The very techniques of classifying and defining:

.....were developed within and persist through hierarchical and socially exclusive institutions (such as universities, research institutes, hospitals,). Foucault theorised that such institutions consist of actors who have vested interests in codifying the methods, for normalising deviance, constructing identity, regulating sexuality or the body, defining and controlling madness and so on....to the extent that institutional systems exclude and include, centralise and marginalise ways of seeing, knowing and acting, they comprise a cultural politics that is pivotal to the legitimation / proscription of modes of understanding, self expression and self identity (O'Brien & Penna, 1998, p.109).

Knowledge and power are inseparable, as each enables the existence of the other. Foucault's theory of power-knowledge offers an explanatory framework for the subjugation of the investigation communities to male, Western and capitalist cultural systems – both historically and in contemporary times. His insistence on knowledge being created as a product of competing discourses and their associated power relations, located in specific historical and cultural circumstances, is useful as a critique of the dominance of Western knowledge that arose within the enlightenment period. Foucault's linking of the dominance of particular discourses as a product of material power relations also provides an explanatory framework that accounts for the privileging of Western knowledge (and some aspects of culture) in the minds of many of the research participants even in contemporary times.

Foucault's (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) second thesis on power (the dispersal of power throughout contemporary social systems) theorises the displacement of one type of power for another in which exclusive and arbitrary forms of power have been replaced by general and continuous forms. Exclusive and arbitrary forms of power refer to power that is the providence of a restricted rank of authoritative persons and where there is no necessary correlation between crime and severity of punishment. General and continuous forms of power refer to power that is the providence of a very large number of officially sanctioned social authorities and continuous in that there is in every institution a rational calculation of power and how it can be most effectively used. Examples of general, continuous (and I would add dispersed) forms of power within the investigation communities are the power invested in government housing and social service employees to make decisions about whether and whom should be entitled to government housing or social assistance. Power is operative within the act of granting or withholding a benefit or housing assistance on the part of a government official. According to Foucault (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998), these actions are based on the recipient being judged as deserving/undeserving according to 'rational' criteria or institutional policy. While it is true that institutional policies are based on 'rational criteria', their actual implementation within Western democracies often includes the exercise of discretionary power.

(The use of discretionary power within policy implementation has come about through demands for local autonomy though the localised expression of policy within different communities, as well as being driven by neo-liberal agenda of fiscal savings within Aotearoa and Canada). Subjectivity therefore, also plays a significant role in the exercise of institutional power by individuals.

Foucault's (O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Sarup, 1996) third thesis on power, proposes an extensive and increasingly penetrating system of monitoring and surveillance, socialisation and normalisation. According to Foucault, from birth to death (and beyond) the populations of modern societies are recorded, coded, categorised, classified and chronicled. Discipline is implanted into the operating framework of modern institutions such as schools, prisons, factories and religious organisations for example. These institutions are characterised by regimes of "disciplinary" power which subject their charges to surveillance, training, normalisation and subordination (O'Brien & Penna, 1998). People become caught within the various regulations, time-tabling and examinations by which disciplines are imposed. As a result, the subject becomes an internally self-monitoring entity. Expressed another way, people's subjectivities are constituted by the discourses and signifying practices of the institution, which they then internalise, adopting inner forms of surveillance.

Applied to the investigation communities, Foucault's thesis on power could include various codes of discipline regarding what constitutes a 'good woman' or a 'good mother' – both externally imposed by institutions such as the church and family and internalised by the research participants. Pertinent examples of this would be women's abstinence from contraceptive methods, or expressions of deference and politeness. These behaviours are encouraged by dominant discourses within both institutions of the family and Catholic church. Discipline is implanted through the confessional role of the priest or nun, for example, or within the behaviours expected at church activities. Promotion to church leadership roles may come about through the individual's successful internalisation of religious discourses and their expression within 'appropriate' behaviours and speech.

Foucault's theorising of institutional surveillance and subsequent inner surveillance on the part of individuals speaks to the exercise of 'power over' and emphasises the less agentic aspects of inner surveillance. His analysis of institutional power as 'training and making docile and obedient subjects' (Sarup, 1996) implies a lack of consciousness on the part of the individual – people are positioned and position themselves as subjects without exercising conscious choice.

Relations of power in modern capitalist societies are often sustained with the consent (however unconscious and/or tacit) of those who are dominated. The concept of ‘hegemony’ was originally developed by Antonio Gramsci to explain the historical and contemporary processes that structure any given society, whereby economic power is supplemented by intellectual, moral (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999) and cultural leadership. Hegemony can be understood as a “historically specific organisation of consent that rests upon – but cannot be read off a practical material base” (Carroll, 1992, p.9). Gramsci recognised that in modern capitalist societies, where class and other inequalities exist alongside the formal freedoms and electoral rights granted by the bourgeois state, relations of domination are typically sustained by the consent of the dominated. Carroll (Carroll, 1992) points out that:

This consent does not arise spontaneously; rather, it is won through ideological struggle [however covert] and material concessions, which together serve to construct a ‘general interest’ and collective identity uniting the dominant and subordinate alike as members of a political community (p.9).

Importantly, the power maintaining hegemonic relations is not centralised within any one sector. Power is both located within state apparatuses and diffused across other institutional sites such as the church, the family and the school (Grossberg, 1996).

Hall (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996; Sardar & Van Loon, 1999) extends Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to include issues of race, gender, culture and consumerism, meaning and pleasure. Hall emphasises two characteristics of advanced capitalism, mass communication and consumption, (economic and cultural globalisation), as being particularly associated with hegemonic relations. The link made by Hall between hegemony and global patterns of consumption and production is relevant to the present inquiry. As the investigation data later demonstrate, for those who migrate from the peripheries to wealthy, Westernised democracies, access to greater economic wealth invariably involves both consent and negotiation with economically and culturally dominant groups. Access to material resources often involves a process of consent whereby those from the margins align themselves with dominant discourses (constructed by economically and culturally dominant groups), that may position them less agentically than those pertaining to their own cultural systems. However, by incorporation into dominant social structures, those at the economic and cultural margins are able to access resources for agency that they would not otherwise have been able to. Hall (Hall, 1996) observes that “cultural hegemony” is never about pure victory or pure domination. It is about the shifting balances of power in the relations of culture. In his exploration of cultural strategies

to interrupt cultural hegemonic relations, he acknowledges the inherent difficulties of inclusion of marginal cultural systems into dominant social structures and institutions. In reality, the balance of power to construct, categorise and position subjects still remains with those groups economically and culturally dominant in that particular society. Importantly, within the context of the present inquiry, such processes of negotiation and consent may or may not be conscious.

Agency: theorising dynamics that enable

The critical post-modern approach to theorising increases in agency on the part of individuals and communities draws on all three aspects of power outlined in chapter one. Personal power, group power and institutional power are all viewed as playing significant roles whereby individuals and communities come to more consciously choose more empowered subject positions and successfully challenge dominant discourses to increase their control over health and resources for well-being. The critical post-modern view of agency relations posited here views language and other signifying practices as constructing people's subjectivities and identities in ways that are socially specific. It also emphasises the significance of power relations in determining which discourses are dominant in particular societies and in influencing those subject positions that are more readily available to individuals relative to others.

While the critical post-modernist approach to agency holds that subjectivity is fragmented, and made up of unconscious as well as conscious elements, subjects also have the ability to hold multiple and even conflicting views and interpretations of life events without total disintegration (Frazer & Lacey, 1993). While discourses transmit, produce and re-inforce power, they also undermine and expose power (Weedon, 1987). Resistance to and challenging dominant social structures and discourses at the level of the individual subject is the first stage in the production of alternative forms of knowledge. Creating new discourses or claiming new subject positions in relation to existing discourses is an important step in individuals and communities increasing their social power.

Butler's (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1994) theory of "performativity" appears useful in theorising how more agentic subject positions might be adopted through the repetition of speech and actions. Her emphasis on "performance" and "repetition" provide some illumination on processes whereby people repeatedly enact particular roles that, seeming separate- even disparate from their own identities, play a significant part in people's experience of new, more agentic subject positions. The internalisation of these experiences (thoughts, feelings, new

actions learned) influences the subject's capacity for agency within the next situation. Her theory, however, does not account for the more conscious construction of identity and subjectivity (which I have also called intent) that I discussed as being a crucial part of agency earlier in the thesis.

Benhabib (Benhabib, 1999) proposes a "narrative" model for conceptualising identity and agency. She contends this model has the virtue of accounting for that "surfeit of meaning, creativity and spontaneity" that is said to accompany iteration in the performativity model, but whose mechanisms cannot actually be explained by performativity. This model proposes that people are born into webs of interlocution or into webs of narrative. These webs may vary from the familial, to narratives that are inculcated within dominant social structures such as gender, to the macro-narrative of one's collective identity. Benhabib (Benhabib, 1999) wrote:

We become who we are by learning to be a conversation partner in these narratives. Although we do not choose the webs in whose nets we are initially caught or select those with whom we wish to converse, our agency consists in our capacity to weave out of those narratives and fragments of narratives, a life story that makes sense for us, as unique, individual selves. Certainly the codes of established narratives in various cultures define our capacity to tell the story in very different ways; they limit our freedom to vary the code. But just as it is always possible in conversation to drop the last remark and let it crash on the floor in silence, or to carry on and keep the dialogue alive and going, or to become whimsical, ironic and critical and turn the conversation on itself, so too do we always have options in telling a life story that makes sense to us (p.345).

Benhabib's position is that people try to make meaning out of life – to make sense out of nonsense. It may even be that this desire sparks the movement towards more agentic modes of subjectivities or subject positions within people.

According to Benhabib (Benhabib, 1999), the ability to make meaning out of life relies on the psychodynamic capacity to go on, to retell, to re-member, to reconfigure. Processes of re-telling, remembering and re-configuring always entail more than one narrative as they occur in a web of interlocution (or dialogue), which is also a conversation with the others. Others tell their own stories which compete with one's own narratives. Often these narratives unsettle self-understanding. Benhabib's narrative view of identity regards individual and collective identities as being woven out of tales and fragments belonging both to oneself and to others.

To see subjectivity as a process open to change is not to deny the importance of particular forms of individual social investment and institutional power that are exercised through discourses. The adoption of subject positions by individuals and communities that challenge dominant

social structures and ultimately increases control over resources at the community level requires the exercise of collective or group power. Earlier on, this was referred to as “power with” in which the power experienced by the group is greater than the sum of the individual power of members, embodying the “energy and optimism created in collective acts” (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999, p.30). Feminist literature has traditionally emphasised group power in the form of mutual inquiry and self help groups as important methods of agency. In her narrative model of identity, Benhabib (Benhabib, 1999) has pointed out that:

Furthering one’s capacity for autonomous agency is only possible within a solidaristic community that sustains one’s identity through listening to one, and allowing one to listen to others, with respect within the many webs of interlocation that constitute our lives (p.350).

The ability to claim more agentic subject positions can be greatly enhanced within a group environment that supports and encourages the articulation of people’s feelings, experiences and questioning of the world in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Importantly, people are also encouraged to think about the subject positions from which they know and experience.

In writing about “encouraging resistance” or the adoption of more agentic subjectivities, Pease (Pease, 1999) also addresses the issue of ‘power with’. He provides a brief, but by no means exhaustive, summary of “resources” or conditions necessary for the adoption of alternative subject positions by individuals:

A definition of oneself as one who makes sense of the meanings within discourses; access to alternative discursive practices; access to means of bringing about alternative positionings; a belief in one’s capacity to reposition oneself and access to others who will support alternative positionings. (Davies cited in Pease) (Pease, 1999, p.105).

The second, third and fifth of these draw attention to the significance of ‘power with’ in theorising how individuals and communities might exercise increased levels of agency. In particular, “access to means of bringing about alternative positionings” also alludes to the significance of structural and material forms of power within processes designed to increase agency. Methodologically speaking, this points to the need to extend the necessary conditions for ‘resistance’ or the adoption of more agentic subjectivities to those that also place emphasis on material and institutional forms of power. This is taken up further in chapter ten where a number of ‘necessary conditions’ for increased levels of agency are iterated, that build on those offered by Pease.

Clearly critical post-modern conceptualisations of agency require more than individuals who are “subjectively motivated” (Weedon, 1987) to transform social practices and the power relations that underpin them. Increased ability to exercise agency requires access to particular resources and forms of power. For communities at the economic and cultural margins, one approach to this is through relationships with organisations whereby institutional power is used transformatively to increase their agency. A critical post-modern approach to understanding increases in agency for individuals and communities at ‘the margins’ theorises this as occurring through the production and dissemination of marginal discourses at the institutional level – through a broad miscellany of institutions through which power is dispersed (Weedon, 1987). Community development is one method whereby marginal discourses that support the interests of less powerful members of society can influence the development of public policies.

Part two: community development as a method of agency with communities at the margins

Introduction

Community development literature (Labonte, 1996a; Minkler, 1990; Shirley, 1982) identifies a range of approaches to working with communities. One’s theory of development determines the questions asked, categories for organisation of ideas, and scope of possible action (Shirley, 1982). Three commonly identified approaches to community development are those of locality development, social planning and social action³⁹ (Minkler, 1990; Rice, 2000; Shirley, 1982). Each of these perspectives of development has quite different implications for the agency of communities. The “social action” (Minkler, 1990; Shirley, 1982) or “community as action” (Labonte, 1996a) approach most closely aligns with the present investigation’s definition of agency, as it is concerned foremost with shifts in social power relationships (Labonte, 1996a). This definition includes the authentic expression of people’s identities and cultures, the ability to bring about the desired changes within the environment to support these and the capacity more generally “to live a life one has reason to value” (Sen, 2000).

New Zealand community developer and writer Wendy Craig's definition of community development reflects the community as action approach to increasing individual and community agency. She refers to community development as "working alongside oppressed groups in order to identify oppressive structures and transform these" (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001, p.5). The definition by Canadian-based community developers, The Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) similarly views individuals and communities as agents of change:

Community development is an incremental process through which individuals, families and communities gain the power, insight and resources to make decisions and take action regarding their well-being (p.20).

Within the thesis, community development refers to development by communities for communities in which the processes of the journey are just as critical in constituting empowerment as end results in control over resources or structural power. The "development of the people who comprise the community" (Rocha, 1997, p.37) is an important forerunner to social action. This approach draws on Torre's model of community empowerment (agency) (Rissel, 1994) comprising: (1) the development of individual agency capacities such as self-esteem or a positive sense of cultural identity for examples, (2) the development of individual and community capacities through group mechanisms or mediating structures whereby members actively participate, share knowledge and develop structural analysis of the issues they face and (3) collective action aimed at impacting on existing social structures. Community developers assist, resource and facilitate processes whereby communities identify desired changes and take appropriate actions.

Critical post-modern discourses: strategies, practice ethics and agency

Critical post-modern approaches to community development are based on the "community as action" approach to organising. They have arisen partly through the need to resolve various theoretical tensions that surround community development approaches to agency within the contemporary globalised context (outlined in chapters three and four) that have brought the relationship between inequities in wealth and (gender, ethnic and ability) cultures more sharply into focus. One contemporary theoretical tension exists around the agency-structure axiom. Posner (Posner, 1990) summarises this debate as existing between populists (who focus on the agency of activism) and Marxists (who focus more on the structural aspects of activism). The

former is more closely identified with post-modern theories of change while the latter is clearly aligned with critical theory. Posner (Posner, 1990) asserts that neither the new populist focus on theory that embeds popular resistance in communal loyalties and affections nor Marxist reliance on changing structural conditions to alter popular consciousness provide adequate theoretical frameworks for activism. The critical post-modern approach to community development outlined below integrates these two seemingly divergent approaches to community development, holding both agency and structure in dialectical relationship with each other. It takes account of the myriad identities, subject positions and power relations that constitute the experience of individuals and communities in development work. Power is conceptualised as being operative at the level of the individual (power within), group (power with) and institutional (power over).

Critical post-modern approaches to community development (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001; Rosenau, 1994) are foremostly informed by neo-marxist and post-modern theories of social transformation. Critical theory emerged from Marxist thought and emphasises the dominance of particular social structures in societies and the unequal power relations between groups. A critical theory perspective views the social world as being characterised by differences arising out of conflict between communities who have different amounts of power (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). This approach to social change emphasises that people must be able to understand their experiences as being constituted by power relationships that are located within broader social structures in order to act collectively for social transformation. The work of earlier critical theorists and activists such as Paulo Freire (Freire, 1968; Shor & Freire, 1987) and Antonio Gramsci (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999) emphasised the meta-narrative of capitalism and class in constituting power relations. More contemporary approaches to critical theory tend to be grounded in neo-marxist approaches to social transformation. According to Madan Sarup (Sarup, 1996) these approaches reject the “totalising, universal truth-claims” (p.56) of Marxism. The sole oppositional structure of capital and class are no longer relevant as power relations are diffused through other social structures and categories such as race, gender, ability, and sexuality.

This connects with post-modernism’s emphasis on difference, diversity and multiple subject positions from which we all experience the world. Importantly this “weak” form of post-modernism (Pease & Fook, 1999) acknowledges that some subject positions have more power than others (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). Its analysis of power draws substantially on the work of Michel Foucault outlined earlier in the chapter, viewing power as being operative in all

social relationships. Community development methods that are informed by critical post-modern development theory are concerned with struggles against racism, sexism, colonialism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism and so forth. Such methods work with communities who are marginalised from economic, social, cultural and political life in ways that take cognisance of agency and structure.

Critical post-modern methods of community development recognise that communities at the margins are affected by both subjective (internal agency terrain) and objective (external agency terrain) powerlessness. These methods address both forms of powerlessness through a process “based upon the transformation of the community from an object that is acted upon by outside forces, to a subject capable of acting upon and transforming its world” (Rocha, 1997, p.38). While Freire’s (Freire, 1968; Shor & Freire, 1987) work on the development of “critical consciousness” still constitutes an important foundation of these methods, other significant dimensions have been added. These include recognition of the role and authority of the ‘teacher’ or community developer (Weiler, 1991) and the significance of the subject positions or ‘locations’ (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001; Weiler, 1991) from which participants speak within dialogical methods.

Two community development theorists and activists, Robyn Munford and Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata draw on critical post-modern theory to outline several key principles of community development (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). While their publication frames these as “strategies for change in Aotearoa/New Zealand”, the majority are generally applicable to community development processes. They name these as “The Treaty of Waitangi, locating ourselves, power, social change, vision, working collectively, self determination and action reflection”. They form some of the basic tenets of the community development methodology utilised within the investigation and are summarised as follows.

Treaty of Waitangi The Treaty itself does not draw on critical post-modern theory (although its application within community development might) and as discussed in chapter four is specific to the New Zealand context and Maori-Tauitiwi relations. However, its principles of partnership, power sharing and self-determination are key to community development as a method of agency within any context. These principles are usefully applied in development methods with other communities at the margins such as women or ethnic minorities for example.

Locating ourselves Locating ourselves refers to understanding one's own background and position in society. This refers to coming to understand our own historical, cultural, social and economic position, the connection between our experiences, the experiences of others and wider social structures.

Power This principle of community development involves understanding the nature of power relations and how these can change. This necessarily entails the community worker working alongside individuals to understand from their perspective how power relations impact on their daily lives. Here, the role of the community development worker is to assist individuals and communities to identify and challenge power relations.

Social Change A key element of community development practice is to ensure that positive changes are maintained and can be extended to have other positive changes for other groups and communities. This requires the development of systems and working infrastructures.

Working collectively Working collectively refers to harnessing individual and group power to benefit the collective. This is at the core of community development practice and involves an overriding commitment on the part of individuals to come back to the group to make connections between issues and individual reflections. There must be a commitment to change for everyone.

Self-determination Munford and Walsh-Tapiata emphasise the importance of dignity and diversity as being key to self-determination. The community developer's role in working with communities towards self-determination is to work with communities to identify goals and assist them explore and challenge the factors that prevent the fulfilment of these goals.

Action Reflection Effective community development practice requires the ability to reflect on actions undertaken, using the reflective process as a catalyst or spring-board in shaping subsequent actions.

Methods of development that are guided by an ethical framework are more likely to be successful in assisting communities at the margins to increase their agentic capacity than those that are not. This is largely because ethical frameworks (or effective ones) are often closely tied to the prevention of the abuse of power and/or to enable its transformative use. The thesis proposes several values or principles upon which methods of community agency or development should be premised. These build on values already developed by community

development practitioners (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) and include those of respect, equity, participation, power sharing, meaningful process, hope and integrity. Respect entails a regard for the rights of others and includes the development of relationships that value the gifts and capacities of each person. Equity involves the quality of fairness and is closely tied to power sharing relations to reduce structural inequalities between people. Meaningful process involves participation by people within community development in ways that are meaningful to them. Hope refers to a sense of meaning in one's life and the belief that change is possible. Finally, integrity is referred to by the Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team as the ethical stance to one's practice. The development of trusting relationships and accountability to individuals, communities and agencies is emphasised.

The thesis extends and builds on the concepts of integrity and power sharing. An important aspect of becoming conscious is a continued commitment to becoming fully aware of our motivations for acting in particular ways. Motivations always underlie our actions. Actions that are consciously motivated by the ethical principles previously touched on constitute a 'conscious intent' grounded in the ethics of community development practice. When brought to bear on community development practice on the part of community developers, fully conscious intent on sound ethical principles can play a powerful part in constituting relationships of agency.

Community development as a method of agency within the investigation

The community development methodology utilised in the research initially drew its inspiration from the tradition of transformative populism (Kennedy et al., 1990). Transformative populism has its roots in critical post-modern theories of change and development and emphasises the agency of the subject as well as focusing on the more structural aspects of activism (Posner, 1990). It attempts to develop and link community based identities and/or culturally based constituencies to structural levels of oppression in ways that challenge the dominance of capital. In the process of organising around a common purpose, differences between individuals and communities are preserved and valued.

While valuing and drawing on current ideologies of participants, the development methodology sought to bridge the gap between traditional and derived ideology, linking immediate world

views to wider struggles in a process of mutual education. Within the research traditional ideologies (world views and beliefs commonly held by participants and wider society) were viewed as valuable sources of knowledge and partial truths that inform derived ideology. Here, derived ideology is defined as the result of mutual processes of education (sharing partial truths) between participants that deliberately seeks to link localised knowledges to wider structural issues and concerns.

The community development methodology used throughout the investigation also drew more directly on other critical post-modern approaches. Self-determination, analysis of power relations and a collective approach to change were key strategies. The methodology also drew inspiration from the works of critical post-modern writers such as Glen Jordan and Chris Weedon (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) and Bell Hooks (Hooks, 1990). These writers emphasise that the resistance to forms of domination for communities at 'the margins' is rooted in culture and our subjective experiences. The community development methodology within the investigation sought to work with people in more actively constituting their subjectivities, identities and cultural systems so as to increase the number of agentic subject positions available to them. This included "reclaiming the margin", so as to construct new and more "resistant identities", outside of the hegemonic constructions of dominant groups (Hooks, 1990).

The community development methodology developed within the New Zealand part of the investigation was quite unique with respect to its emphasis on culture and identity within story-telling to build agency. The method simultaneously encouraged participants to re-claim, re-articulate and reconstitute their cultural identities through story-telling, while at the same time opening themselves to the identities and cultural systems of others as they listened to their stories. The attention to deep feelings (Weiler, 1991) and experience encompassed elements of spiritual practice that was subsequently linked to political action, as participants engaged in articulating their experiences of social injustices at public forums many months later. I am not aware of any methodologies within the community development literature that articulate the links between the spiritual and political, subjectivity, identity, culture and agency in quite the same ways.

While theoretical literature exists on identity politics (Carroll, 1992), this appears to stop short of community development methodology. The literature regarding story-telling that I have come across develops it as a method of agency in so far as people story issues for therapeutic reasons, (Epston & White, 1990; Pitt, 1998), as a tool for structural analysis (Epston & White, 1990; Pitt,

1998; Shor & Freire, 1987; Weiler, 1991) or as a way of taking private happenings into the public sphere (Russell, 1996; Saul, 1996). I have not come across any attempts documented within the community development or health promotion literature of methods that engage people in reaching deeply into the interiority of their beings, identities and cultures, that subsequently links this to political action. Existing community development manuals (practical guides) such as Hope and Timmel's "Training for Transformation" (Hope & Timmel, 1984) make the links between private troubles and public issues but tend not to work directly with issues of culture and identity. While more recent community development literature does include issues of culture (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001), development methodologies in a practical sense that work with issues of culture and identity are not iterated.

Literature regarding feminist politics makes the connection between feelings, personal experience and political action (Weiler, 1991), but does not draw on identity and culture as methods of agency in the same way. Feminist writings that do explore cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman (Hooks, 1990; Jackson & Jones, 1998; Jordan & Weedon, 1995) tend not to articulate practical methods whereby communities might explore such cultural understandings for themselves and act to transform social structures. Furthermore, within much political activist, academic and community development work, there has historically tended to be an aversion to anything transpersonal or spiritual (Sen & Edwards, 2000). This is often seen as 'navel gazing' and self-indulgent. However, the thesis argues transformation within both agency terrains (internal and external) is vital.

Story-telling: culture, identity and agency

The story-telling methodology developed within the New Zealand component of the investigation was operative throughout three levels of social action. These were personal story-telling around issues of culture and identity, group story-telling relating to structural analysis and public story-telling about housing injustices. The development of the story-telling methodology is outlined in chapter seven as this arose as a result of the research and is therefore treated as part of the data. Its theoretical aspects are discussed here.

The transformative power of story-telling is widely acclaimed by many researchers and practitioners (James, 1996). Therapists (Epston & White, 1990) and social workers (Pitt, 1998) have written about its healing capacities with respect to individuals and families. Rappaport (Rappaport, 1993; Rappaport, 1995) emphasises its capacity to build community while other

writers (Razack, 1993; Shor & Freire, 1987) concentrate their efforts on story-telling as a method for challenging dominant social structures. The story-telling methodology developed within this study aimed at all three levels of transformation: individual, group and institutional.

Story-telling holds much empowering potential for communities at the economic and cultural margins for several reasons. Story-telling is acknowledged as a method for building trust and connection between people (James, 1996), thus lending itself well to the task of strengthening relationships in fragmented communities. Through telling their own stories, people may discover new self-perceptions and strengths that fall outside previous “problem saturated” (Epston & White, 1990) or negative constructions held either by themselves or others. Story-telling can build new communal narratives that challenge dominant narratives and (re)construct communities as empowered rather than disempowered collectives. Such communal narratives play an important role for individuals in sustaining changes within their own personal stories (Rappaport, 1995).

However, story-telling that emphasises subjectivities, identities and cultures does not necessarily give rise to more agentic subject positions for participants. Writers (James, 1996; Razack, 1993) have also noted some of the inherent problems of story-telling aimed at social change. James writes that unhelpfully framed stories or inappropriate responses can impede the story-telling process and the potential benefits of it. Razack (Razack, 1993) points out that stories run the risk of actually being disempowering in mixed sex, mixed race groups, particularly those in which members of culturally dominant communities are unaware of the subject positions from which they listen. She argues that sexist, racist (and I would add classist, heterosexist) constructions of stories by listeners effectively undermine the potential of stories to challenge structural power relations. Furthermore, “colonisation from within” (Razack, 1993) is a risk as the stories of those at the margins may be negatively shaped by dominant patriarchal, racist constructions, that have been internalised by the story-tellers.

Story-telling and the analysis of power-relations

At a structural level of change, story-telling can uncover knowledges that have been subjugated to dominant ideas, particularly when groups at the economic or cultural margins tell their stories (Pitt, 1998). The application of critical pedagogy or reflective processes in conjunction with story-telling is an important means of uncovering relations of domination and fostering critical reflection of everyday experience (Razack, 1993; Shor & Freire, 1987). The story-telling

methodology used within the thesis investigation also drew on Paulo Freire's (Hope & Timmel, 1984; Shor & Freire, 1987) methods of 'transformative education'. The overall goal of this process is to increase people's agency or their ability to act for change and transform social structures. Key elements include the relevancy of educative issues to people's lives, problem posing and genuine dialogue in ways that draw out existing knowledge and value the collective knowledge of the group.

Community-community development methodology relations

Community development and cultural change

A growing number of community development writers (Eade, 1997; Harrison, 2000; Sen, 2000) focus on the role of cultural values as facilitators of, or constraints on the agency of communities. Eade (Eade, 1997), emphasises the ways in which cultural, ethnic, gender and other identities "profoundly shape people's capacities and their scope for action to change their lives and societies" (p.51). Importantly, some aspects of cultural diversity may confer power and privilege on some by denying the rights and access to resources of others. Harrison (Harrison, 2000) discusses the growing number of development theorists whose writings have increasingly linked the underdevelopment of some nations and ethnic communities to issues of culture. Some of these writers (many of whom are from nations on the economic peripheries) are initiating community development initiatives aimed at cultural change within their own countries. 'Cultural change' refers to the process of challenging and ultimately aiming to change aspects of culture which are considered oppressive or to constrain the agency of some or all members of a community.

Issues of culture and community development are significant in three respects. The first of these is the way in which traditional cultural beliefs and values might affect the agency of communities at 'the margins' within Westernised, capitalist democracies. Some beliefs of a community may be counter-cultural to those expressed within the dominant social structures of society. For example individual freedom of speech might be counter cultural within a cultural system whose rules and conventions value the needs of the group over above those of the individual.

The second area of significance is the way in which some of these beliefs and values inherent in the cultural systems of communities at the margins might limit the agency of some of their

members. This occurs through greater ability to appropriate structural power (for example, economic power, social status or decision making authority) on the part of some members of communities relative to others. This is often the situation for women within all communities (as well as those at 'the margins') as "gender discrimination has been a remarkably consistent feature of most cultures" (Htun, 2000, p.189). Therefore, these communities are faced with choices about which elements of culture they wish to retain or change.

The third issue concerns the ways in which communities at the economic and cultural margins negotiate these decision-making processes. Sen (Sen, 2000) notes that it is important for societies to determine which aspects of their cultural systems they wish to retain, perhaps even at significant economic cost. Significantly, he also maintains that while there is no ready formula for this "cost benefit analysis", what is crucial to this decision making process is the ability of people to participate in public discussions on the subject.

Arguments of cultural relativism (that no cultural system can be evaluated against another) and the dangers of Western cultural imperialism have been levelled against community development initiatives that focus on cultural change (Harrison, 2000). However, according to Harrison, many of those involved in development initiatives (including those from economically peripheral countries such as Africa and Latin America) have "concluded that cultural change is indispensable and are taking steps to promote such change – in the schools, in the churches, in the work place, in politics" (p.xxi). An important premise of community development and cultural change within the thesis is that cultural practices which are damaging to some members should be challenged. All cultures have negative as well as positive aspects (Eade, 1997) Therefore, cultural change is an important component of development methods aimed at increases in agency.

Developing capacities for individual and community agency

Building the capacity of individuals and communities to exercise agency is a central concern of community development (Eade, 1997; Goodman, 1998; Rissel, 1994; Rocha, 1997). Community development practitioners and academics have identified a number of dimensions of community capacity that cohere with individual (power within) and collective (power with) experiences of power. According to Goodman et al (Goodman, 1998), these agency capacities affect the ability of communities to "identify, mobilise and address social and public health problems" (p.259). The community capacities identified within the literature (Goodman, 1998;

Thompson, Baugh Littlejohns, & Smith, 1998) include those of participation, the development of knowledge and skills, leadership and critical learning. Others are resources, social and interorganisational networks, sense of community, community power (how power is distributed within the community) and community values (that relate to a vision of agency and are decided upon by community members). Although not mutually exclusive, these groups of agency capacities cohere with the development of individual and collective power respectively.

Through socio-political processes of community development, individual community members are likely to reflect on their own roles and identities from time to time as participation necessarily requires them to engage with new roles and subject positions. Community development writers (Forrest, 1999; Kieffer, 1984) recognise the significance of inner transformation. Kieffer (Kieffer, 1984) writes that in becoming “empowered, individuals are not merely acquiring new practical skills: they are reconstructing and reorienting deeply ingrained personal systems of social relations” (p.27). In critical post-modern terms, Kieffer’s view of development requires individuals to reconstruct new subject positions for themselves that coincide with and assist their “increasingly self conscious awareness of self as a visible and effective actor in the community” (p.23). According to Kieffer (Forrest, 1999; Kieffer, 1984), individuals are assisted in their adoption of more agentic subject positions by three aspects of community development practice. The first of these is the availability of a mentoring relationship, whether with a community developer or some other member of community. The second of these is the presence of supportive peers within a collective organisational structure. The other critical aspect of practice is the cultivation of more critical understandings of social and political relations. The latter two of these connect with Munford Walsh-Tapiata’s (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) community development strategies outlined earlier.

The use of power within relationships between those involved in community development initiatives is a critical factor in determining the efficacy of community development practice as a method of agency. All signifying practices (all practices that have meaning) (Weedon, 1987) within any community development initiative involve relations of power. They “subject” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) participants to particular subject positions and modes of subjectivity. Within any community development practice or action, participants may take up a range of subject positions from which they can exercise varying amounts of power and have a range of associated power experiences. While the power relations inherent within a signifying practice may be in a state of equilibrium, they often involve relations of domination and subordination (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). Therefore within community development practice (particularly

where there are a range of power-culture dynamics between participants), it is important for participants to ensure that signifying practices are used in ways that do not reinforce status quo power-culture relations, but are transformative of them.

An example of this could be a Pacific people's health fono (gathering), in which the more senior members of the Tongan community who are present use their authority and social status to ensure that their youth are given the opportunity to speak. Alternatively, a further example could be a community developer who uses her/his institutional and professional power to ensure that members of a low-income community are 'heard' by politicians. In using their power transformatively, both the community developer and senior members of the Tongan community, ensure that those with less structural power are given the opportunity to experience new roles and subject positions in which they are able to exercise (and experience) more power than previously. Within community development, all signifying practices are potentially powerful means whereby new subject positions may be created. Signifying practices within development work that give rise to new subject positions, both change the external and internal agency terrains of individuals. For example, the external terrain may be altered through power sharing that enables members of marginalised communities' to take up leadership roles and be influential in policy change and the internal agency terrain is re-constituted through the experience of such roles.

Increasing agency capacities in relationship with community

Individuals taking part in community development projects are also engaged in a number of different roles and associated subject positions. They are also members of families, churches, sports clubs and school committees. These individuals occupy a variety of roles such as 'friend', 'welfare recipient', 'mother' or 'work colleague'. Such subject positions and relationships are imbued with a range of meanings and power relations. Some of these subject positions will be more agentic than others.

Many people who may be significant within the lives of project members, will not be a part of the community development initiative, nor share similar aspirations. Friends and family members may even have conflicting values. As a result of participating in community development initiatives, and making personal changes associated with increases in agency, individuals may experience tensions within their relationships with family members, friends and people in the wider community. Such conflict between individuals as a result of the adoption of

more agentic subject positions by some people may undermine community capacity dimensions that relate to the experience of 'power with' in people's wider communities, outside of the community development initiative. With the exception of some of the more feminist orientated community development literature (Dominelli, 1995; Eade, 1997; Htun, 2000), writings on community development tend to be largely silent on how people reconstitute their subject positions in relationship with significant others in the wider community.

Community development with diverse communities: conflict and agency

Critical post-modern approaches to community development are concerned with shifts in power-culture relations and are premised on theories of social conflict (Labonte, 1996a; Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001; Shirley, 1982). Theories of social conflict view inequities in power between different sectors of society as significant social conditions. Conflict within and between communities and organisations is a common occurrence in development processes aimed at the transformation of status quo power-culture relations. The ability of any community to transcend difference and bridge conflict will be closely related to the development and sustainment of agency capacities associated with individual and collective power experiences.

Cultural differences within communities add another layer of complexity to community development processes. Within culturally mixed communities tensions may exist between different factions that often makes work towards collective action difficult. Cultural differences within communities can negatively affect members' motivation to participate in development processes due to racial (Kennedy et al., 1990) or other cultural divisions. In some cases development work with communities at the margins may become a divisive force as members compete for scarce resources (Botes & Rensburg, 2000). This is even more likely to be the case in culturally diverse communities in which members may approach issues from quite different subject positions that are associated with their identities and cultures. Such potential barriers to development work may be further heightened by differences in structural power between participants. Botes and Rensburg (Botes & Rensburg, 2000) note that the "stratified and heterogeneous nature of communities is a thorny obstacle to promoting participatory development" (Botes & Rensburg, 2000, p.49), thus pointing to the potential of inequitable power-culture relations to hinder community development processes.

Given such difficulties, many communities of difference choose to organise separately around similar issues of interest, often limiting the efficacy of community development initiatives (Kennedy et al., 1990; Ledwith & Asgill, 2000). Community development theorists Margaret Ledwith and Paula Asgill (Ledwith & Asgill, 2000), discuss how communities of difference can organise together. They use the term “alliance of difference” to acknowledge the need for more sustained horizontal forms of relating within community activities aimed at transformation and social change. They propose that “critical alliances” across diverse communities must form an integral part of community development work, however, for such “critical alliances” to work effectively, the different identities that comprise them must be recognised. An increased sense of identity is more likely to result in greater autonomy from which people can engage more confidently in critical dialogue and negotiate border situations; they are more able to effectively negotiate the intersections of differing cultural systems.

Community-(large) organisational relations

An important premise of the thesis is that increased capacity for communities at ‘the margins’ to successfully engage in policy debate or in some other form of community action, will most likely involve various sorts of partnerships (Goodman, 1998; Labonte, 1996b) with organisations with seemingly compatible aims. Community development literature (Fawcett, 1995; Goodman, 1998; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) commonly identifies interorganisational networks or partnerships as important agency capacities for communities. ‘Partnership’ refers to collaborative relationships between marginalised communities and large organisations in which the intention is to assist the former towards increasing their agentic capacities

The thesis’ investigation of the capacity-building potential of partnerships between communities and organisations is largely from the perspective of inquiring into organisational rather than community capacity to undertake these. This does negate the significance of community capacity in contributing towards agency enhancing partnerships. Rather, it is to emphasise the potential capacity inherent in the additional structural power held by large organisations with respect to using this power transformatively to increase community agency.

Given marginalised communities’ objectives of influencing existing as well as creating new types of policy discourses, these partnerships or inter community-organisational relations are likely to be with organisations that have more ‘mainstream public identities’ and occupy

positions of greater structural power than low-income and cultural minority communities. Such partnerships potentially allow communities to access a power base that will ensure that they are better positioned to influence and structure policy-related discourses. This power base may include economic resources, 'inside' or policy related information and legitimacy (being associated with an established and respected organisation). Organisations may include both government and larger non-government organisations. (The latter are distinct from smaller and less resourced organisations more often representative of communities at 'the margins' such as 'language nests' for migrant or indigenous peoples, women's centres or youth clubs). In order to enhance the agency of communities at the margins, partnerships between large organisations and marginalised communities must ensure a genuine commitment to sharing power on the part of the organisation (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999).

Goodman et al (Goodman, 1998) identify such partnerships or inter-organisational networks as "vertical", referring to the differences in structural power between organisations. They point out that the mere existence of vertical inter-organisational networks does not necessarily strengthen a community's capacity for agency due to power inequities and possible abuses of authority on the part of the "agency". Clague (Clague, 1996) for example, claims that many government bodies undertaking community development work display a lack of understanding of the community development process and a reluctance to share power. He also notes that often the structures of government bodies are not designed for direct citizen participation. Moreover, large organisations and their associated institutions often fail to reflect and reproduce the cultural systems of communities at 'the margins'. As Eade (Eade, 1997) comments, "since they are embedded in, and reflect their societies, institutions, including NGOs (non government organisations), may well reproduce in their norms and practices the very prejudices they seek to challenge" (p.107).

Although often not explicitly couched in critical post-modern terms, the community development literature has begun to identify various problematics within organisational-community partnerships aimed at increasing the agency capacities of marginalised communities. Three areas relevant to the thesis are outlined below.

Schisms between discourses of community development and organisational behaviours

Organisational behaviour constitutes and is constituted by particular discourses (Giddens, 1984). These discourses are often representative of dominant social structures and cultural institutions. While large organisations that undertake development work with communities at 'the margins' may be working to mitigate the disempowering effects of such discourses, their practices will still in part be constituted by them (GermAnn, 2000; Labonte, 1998). For example, within both Aotearoa and Canada, religious organisations may undertake community development work. However, most religious institutions in these countries are traditionally patriarchal and founded on notions of hierarchical control (Spretnak, 1982). This is antithetical to community development practice premised on the transformative use of power over relations to enhance communities' experiences of power within and power with. Some religious groups undertaking such development work may be self-reflexively aware of these tensions while others may not.

The predominance of neo-liberal discourses within New Zealand (Kelsey, 1999; Sharp, 1994) and Canadian politics (Kelsey, 1999), also means that many publicly funded organisations are more tightly tied to producing quantifiable and measurable outcomes. These outcomes are aimed at service delivery rather than 'processes' and capacity-building activities associated with the development of communities. Due to its complex and evolutionary nature, community development is ill suited to 'effectiveness evaluation' based on the quantitative forms of measurement. Consequently, community development fits poorly with such forms of funding accountability mechanisms, often resulting in under-resourcing of community development initiatives (GermAnn, 2000).

Tensions may also exist between the institutionalisation of policy-making procedures and professional approaches to activities such as planning and the ethos of community development discourses that emphasise participation and shared expertise. GermAnn (GermAnn, 2000) points out that planning in community development processes diverges significantly from the bureaucratic planning processes of health organisations. Communities have their own rhythm and pace of participation in policy development and planning, with progress and changes in direction difficult to anticipate. To expect communities to meet organisationally defined deadlines created by bureaucratic budgeting and planning processes, reinforces an imbalance of power between large organisations and the community. Rocha (Rocha, 1997) similarly points

out that local levels of government often try to evoke the participation of communities through “social planning” approaches to community development that draw on more rational, analytical models of policy-making. Such approaches tend to be driven by organisational procedures and bureaucrats effectively proscribing participatory opportunities for more marginalised members of the public.

In summary, large organisations engaging in community development partnerships with communities are also likely to confront a number of contradictions between community development rhetoric and its actual practices and procedures. The significance of these kinds of schisms between discourses of community development and organisational behaviours is that they create different sets of expectations on the parts of organisational representatives and members of communities at ‘the margins’, creating tensions within these relationships.

The mobilisation of dominant discourses and (professional) institutions by organisational representatives

The behaviours of organisational representatives not employed as community developers, but with some role in the organisation’s community development approach and related procedures also influences community-organisational partnerships. This is a particular concern when organisational representatives position members of communities at ‘the margins’ unagentially throughout their interactions. This can occur in two ways. The first of these is the articulation of dominant beliefs by organisational representatives within signifying practices (Weedon, 1987) that represent the interests of culturally dominant communities (middle class, white and male). The second is the articulation of “professionalism” (Hunt, 1990; Ife, 1995) or beliefs that subscribe to the superior knowledge by organisational representatives within those signifying practices.

A recent example of “professionalism” (and of schisms between community development and organisational behaviours) is provided by Hiebert and Swan in an account of their experiences of a Canadian based participatory action project called “Positively Fit” (Hiebert & Swan, 1999). Positively Fit began as a government funded, community driven research project. Its brief was to investigate the impact of rehabilitation on the quality of life people living with HIV. Initially a participatory action research project, that had evolved out of a partnership between government, physicians and the HIV community, Positively Fit grew into a community controlled, community development project. As the project progressed, the HIV community’s

collective power strengthened and they began to question dominant discourses of 'rehabilitation', traditionally constructed by the medical community. As community control over the project strengthened, the physicians and government "interrupted this community development project" by sacking the participatory action researcher/community developer and withdrawing funding.

A schism appeared between the understanding of Positively Fit as a citizenship-enhancing, community-building, research project; and a client making, traditional, positivist, expert controlled research project (Hiebert & Swan, 1999, p.357).

The participatory and power sharing ethos of this community research/development project was countered by the organisational behaviours of government and lead agencies influenced in part by discourses of professionalism.

Issues of conflict and power in community-organisational partnerships

The third problematic of community-organisational partnerships addressed within the investigation is organisational capacity to share power so as to enable communities at 'the margins' to gain power or the capacities to determine their futures. Community development literature (GermAnn, 2000; Labonte, 1994; Labonte, 1996a) iterates that this requires organisations to give up, or at least share power and control with individuals and communities in identifying and resolving their own health issues.

However, Goodman et al (Goodman, 1998) note that partnerships across vertical relations of power have the potential for conflict because of the power differences and abuses of power (often inadvertently) that may occur. Labonte (Labonte, 1994) observes that successful community development partnerships require partners to establish their own power and legitimacy. He writes that "this often requires a period of conflict, and some enduring strain between powerful and powerless groups, and a transfer of resources from the former to the latter" (p.264). Within this context, conflict is viewed as "healthful". Kieffer (Kieffer, 1984) also posits that conflict is an implicit and necessary part of a community's development. He conceptualises conflict as an internally creative tension that propels the development process. As members of communities experience, reflect and engage in constructive or critical dialogue about their experiences, this may evoke new understandings, internal feelings of dissonance and provoke new and more effective actions that challenge status quo power relations. These observations are consistent with "community as action" (Labonte, 1996a) or critical post-

modern approach to community development (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) that view inequities of power between different sectors of society as significant social conditions. As these models are based on the transformation of status quo power relations, conflict within and between communities and organisations is viewed as a sometimes necessary and legitimate part of the process.

Other writers (Bar, 1995; Hiebert & Swan, 1999; Hunt, 1990) focus their attention on the difficulties large organisations and their representatives have in giving up power. Hiebert and Swan's (Hiebert & Swan, 1999) account of the "Positively Fit" describes the breakdown of a participatory action research and community development project as "those who had historically had the power (professionals and representatives of health organisations) felt they were being disenfranchised" (p.360). Hunt (Hunt, 1990) writes that such "anger and anxiety generated must be anticipated and identified early on and structures and processes set up for dealing positively with the emotional elements of community participation" (p.179). Hunt also draws attention to the difficulties professional groups sometimes have with community development, due to a lack of understanding of its basic precepts, feelings of having their professional territory invaded and some anxieties about loss of power. Alan Barr (Bar, 1995) suggests that aspirants of empowerment (particularly those more powerful such as professionals or large organisational representatives) need to honestly appraise their own attitudes to power. He notes that there are sometimes contradictions between the "apparent desire to empower, but an actual unwillingness to recognise and "own" the logical consequences in terms of power redistribution and disempowerment" (Bar, 1995, p.128). Such issues often contribute to conflict within community-organisational partnerships.

Power-culture relations between organisational and community representatives are also potential sources of conflict. Organisational representatives and members of marginalised communities commonly bring widely divergent historical and social relationships to dominant discourses. Each group may struggle to re-position self and other within the partnership in ways thought to be more agentic to its particular interests (Cleverly, 1999) (and if they are altruistic what they perceive to be the other group's interests). Such conscious and unconscious positionings potentially lead to conflict.

Conflict resolution is therefore a key aspect of community development, with processes for negotiating conflict needing to be established early on within community-organisational partnerships (Hunt, 1990). In its idealised state, conflict is a common, sometimes necessary and

even positive part of the community development process. If conflict is not resolved however, groups may disband or community development initiatives may end.

Agentic community-organisational partnerships

Despite the problematics just outlined, community-organisational partnerships remain invaluable because of their potential capacity to enable communities at ‘the margins’ to make the changes they desire. Community development theorists (Clague, 1996; GermAnn, 2000; Labonte, 1994; Labonte, 1996a; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) writing about organisational capacity to undertake community development work identify a number of organisational attributes that they consider important conditions for agentic community-organisational partnerships. GermAnn’s (GermAnn, 2000) study identifies four dimensions of organisational capacity (1) a supportive interpretive scheme, (2) organisational structures, (3) resources (material and human), and (4) behavioural processes.

A supportive interpretive scheme refers to organisational ‘buy in’ or commitment to the values, principles and processes of community development throughout the organisation, but particularly at board and senior management levels. According to GermAnn (GermAnn, 2000), these values should drive the organisation’s choices of structures and processes, allocation of resources and accountability mechanisms. Labonte (Labonte, 1996a) refers to this as an “expansive and legitimating rhetoric”, within which he claims community development practice must be grounded and organisationally supported. Such a rhetoric needs to be supported at state levels of government. This addresses the problematic outlined earlier of schisms between discourses of community development and organisational behaviours. German’s study (GermAnn, 2000) identifies a number of core values and beliefs to be inculcated into organisational behaviour that are reflective of these community development principles. Of these, critical thinking and the transformative use of power by organisational representatives feature within the present study. Clague (Clague, 1996) further notes that organisational commitment to community development means that “community work moves from the ‘brown bag’ lunch approach (it’s okay to do on your time, but make sure you do your regular work) to making it the heart of what they do” (p.6). Significantly, these values must be reflected and supported by the leadership within the organisation (GermAnn, 2000). People in positions of power within the organisation need to be active in ensuring that organisations ‘walk the talk’ of community development.

The second dimension of organisational capacity, “organisational structures”, includes flexibility in organisational (policy) planning processes so as to fit with the natural rhythms of communities. Other relevant aspects of this dimension are appropriate evaluation and documentation of community development activities, flexible job descriptions and manageable workloads.

The third dimension identified by GermAnn (GermAnn, 2000) is resources, both material and professional. These include the material resources needed to undertake community development work, such as adequate funding and recognition by large organisations that community development takes time. Professional resources referred to those undertaking community development work being sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled.

The fourth dimension iterated by GermAnn is behavioural processes within the organisation. This dimension refers to the extent to which large organisations model community development processes internally. This includes factors such as trusting relationships between management and frontline workers, staff participation in decision making, building and maintaining a sense of community within the organisation and critical reflection with respect to the role of the organisation in influencing community development processes and outcomes. A potential indicator for organisational capacity to undertake community development work might be the extent to which the community development worker and her/his organisation reflect on the impact of their own philosophies, processes and structures on the processes and outcomes of community development initiatives.

Community development theorists Sen and Edwards (Sen & Edwards, 2000) extend this dimension somewhat in their suggestion that the work with communities undertaken by large organisations would benefit through greater emphasis on personal change within these organisations. Sen and Edwards (Sen & Edwards, 2000) view personal change as being an imperative part of larger social change. Their vision is that the full potential of development and social transformation work can only be achieved when development workers engage in conscious processes of self-reflection about the values and purposes of their lives. To be enabling institutional representatives, people must fully understand their own inner being. They locate this self-transformation work within spiritual practice.

Community-community developer relations

Community developers occupy a variety of subject positions in their work with communities. These subject positions include a range of identities (Dibernard, 1996; Healy, 1999) and professional (Ife, 1995; Labonte, 1994) roles. Many people undertaking paid community development work are employed as 'community developers' by public health authorities, central and local government agencies or are 'professionals' employed directly by community groups. Professionals undertaking community development work with communities may include social workers, nurses, community psychologists (Ife, 1995) and health promoters.

With respect to identities and professional roles, community developers are simultaneously positioned (and position themselves) both in relation to communities at the margins and dominant social structures and cultural systems that oppress these communities. To varying extents, the identities, cultural systems and professional roles of community developers will be reflected in and reproduced by dominant social structures and institutions. These subject positions are imbued with a range of power-culture dynamics. Given that an overarching goal of community development work is the creation of equity within and between communities (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999), how the community developer 'works' with the power-culture relations inherent in these subject positions is critical. Whether, or to what extent, a person uses the power transformatively that is associated with their particular subject position/s in any given situation, has important implications for the extent to which communities at the margins may realise increases in agency as an outcome of community development work.

Identities, cultures and agency

The economic and cultural marginalisation of communities occurs through hegemonic discourses, the exclusionary practices of institutions and the discriminatory behaviours and attitudes of people. Oppressive attitudes, behaviours and policies limit the agency capacities of individuals and communities at 'the margins'. This occurs across a range of identities and cultural systems such as class, gender, ethnicity and ability.

Both community developer and members of communities bring different social and cultural herstories and subject positions pertaining to ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, ability and so forth. In their writing about empowerment research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) Ristock and

Pennell argue that whether or not the researcher pays attention to these power differences, they will reverberate through the interactions between researcher and the researched. Similarly, the community developer's identities and cultures and her/his skills in negotiating the differences and intersections between these with respect to the communities she/he is working with, may affect her/his ability to form relationships with these communities either positively or negatively. The Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) note that the different "locations" that a community developer occupies in relation to members of a particular community she is working with may create various practice tensions. They add that the community developer needs to "recognise the possible effects of this in her work and strive to integrate her learning about these experiences to achieve an understanding about how this will also affect others with whom she works" (p.33).

Critical approaches to community development and activist work (Freire, 1968; Healy, 1999) tend to dichotomise worker-community member identities. In writing about power and activist social work, Linda Healy (Healy, 1999) observes that the critical foundations of activist approaches to social work view identity as fixed and determined by overarching social structures. The self is stable from context to context. "Identities are associated with certain experiences and interests which are 'essentialist' in that they are said to be the necessary objective effects of pre-given social structure[s]" (p.119). It is assumed that different groups of individuals such as women, people of color or people living on low incomes, for example, share certain experiences by virtue of these major identity groupings. A critical approach to community development work presents these categories in dualistic ways such as female-male, non poor-poor, indigenous-non indigenous. The implications of this approach for the community developer tend to be that either she is 'in' or 'out' of a particular identity category and associated community.

Critical approaches to development work are undoubtedly potentially agentic for communities at the margins. The tendency of critical approaches to activist work towards dualism supports a politics of resistance and thus offers some protection against the hegemonic co-option of communities at the margins into culturally dominant institutions and social structures. Through casting as 'outsiders' community developers and other activists whose identities are more aligned with dominant social structures, critical approaches (Healy, 1999) also argue against their participation in work with marginalised communities and thus collusion in co-opting them. However, this negates any shared experiences between the 'outsider' community developer and

members of a marginalised community. It limits possibilities of critical alliances across communities in which community developers may draw on their identities and cultural systems in ways that are transformative of status quo power-culture relations.

Critical post-modern approaches to community development work (Freire, 1968; Healy, 1999; Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001), in contrast, recognise the diffusion of power relations through a variety of social structures such as ethnicity, ability, class, gender, sexuality and the myriad of ways in which these coalesce to form a range of power-culture experiences for individuals. These approaches seek to “identify and dismantle the oppositional identities on which activist politics have relied upon” (Healy, 1999, p.123), potentially avoiding the ‘impasses’ often created by the such oppositional constructions. The emphasis of critical post-modern community development methodologies, shifts to the importance of people locating themselves (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) in particular “historical, social, economical and cultural positions” (p.37). Similarly, recent approaches to identity politics within higher education (Mayberry, 1996) are more informed by post-modern and/or post-structural analyses that seek to break down the binary opposites between students and teacher and students, while still retaining a keen sense of the power inherent in these relations. Barbara Dibernard (Dibernard, 1996) is one teacher who has taught across cultures and the associated power relations. As an able bodied woman who taught literature written by women with disabilities to a culturally mixed class of differently abled (disabled) and normally abled students, her learning curve was steep. Reflecting on the experience Diberbard (Dibernard, 1996) concluded:

I feel my identity now not as a woman who happens to be ‘able-bodied’, but as a woman whose able-bodiedness is a location for which I need to take responsibility. I need to acknowledge it overtly as the place from which I experience the world and from which I do my work (p.133).

By locating herself culturally, economically, socially and historically a community developer may take cognisance of her location/s and seek to be aware how these inform her perspectives on which her actions are based. This opens spaces between members of communities at the margins and community developers who, by virtue of identity and cultural membership, are more located within dominant social structures. Such spaces enable the transformative use of power by the community developer.

Issues of professionalism and agency

Professionalism refers to the possession of “particular formal knowledge as a requirement for occupational remuneration” (Friedson in Labonte) (Labonte, 1996a, p.155) which is supported by membership within some sort of formal professional organisation. Such membership often requires commitment to a specified value base and adherence within one’s practice to a code of ethics. Professions traditionally involved in ‘assisting’ people include those of social work, medicine, law and psychology. Given the traditional ‘hallmarks’ of professionalism, and the disempowering ways in which those receiving professional assistance have often been positioned⁴⁰, the capacity of ‘professional-client/patient’ relationships to increase the agency of the latter is questionable.

Writings exploring the relationship between professionalism and agency are still somewhat under-developed. Some writers (Illich, 1977; McKnight, 1977; Zola, 1977), concentrate on the disabling effects of power exercised by professionals. These writers discuss the monopoly held by professionals over knowledge as “professionals assert secret knowledge about human nature that only they have the right to dispense” (Illich, 1977, p.19). Professional power is conceptualised as a form of “social control” (Zola, 1977), in which common “remedial practices” tend to isolate individuals from their contexts.

Participatory researcher John Gaventa (Gaventa, 1993) writes more broadly about the “knowledge elite” and the enormous growth within the professional and technical job categories over recent years. According to Gaventa, one’s place among the knowledge elite, is not simply determined by occupation, but by society itself; including other experts and ‘ordinary’ people themselves. Gaventa (Gaventa, 1993) observes that “lawyers, scientists and other experts are perceived as having more knowledge and are looked to by the people for directives, for answers as to what to do” (p.32).

A critical post-modern perspective of professionalism potentially breaks with the dualities inherent in modernist conceptualisations of power-relations in professional-lay person interactions. Healy (Healy, 1999) argues that her application of “critical post-structuralist” theory to activist social work brings out some of the complexities inherent within social practice that tend to be suppressed within critical foundations of activist theory. While considerable power is associated with a worker’s professional identity, this is one location among others within existing social structures. The category of ‘professional’ is complex (professionals

occupy a range of locations within social structures) and power relations are shifting and unstable, in part contingent upon people's respective social and cultural locations which comprise the professional-lay person relationship. Lay people can and do exercise power in these relationships.

Community development is not recognised as a 'profession'. However in both Aotearoa and Canada, community developers have begun to articulate codes of ethics and knowledge and performance criteria that underpin effective community development work (Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand, 2000; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999); also important hallmarks of 'professions'. Community development theorists (Ife, 1995; Labonte, 1996a) however, raise questions around the practice of community development as a profession. Labonte (Labonte, 1996a) points out that community development challenges the "legitimacy and power claims of formal knowledge" (p.151) associated with professions through ideologies that emphasise democratic decision making and the place of community knowledge. Similarly, Ife (Ife, 1995) argues that professionalism is contradictory to community development as ideas of "skill sharing, community empowerment and the 'community knows best' are not compatible with a professional model" (p.262) that sees knowledge and skills as the exclusive properties of the professional. Whether or not one regards community development as a profession, its current non-professional status in the eyes of large and often publicly funded institutions, as a credible method of increasing the agency of communities means that its practice is subject to wide interpretation. This issue is exacerbated by the assumptions sometimes made by those in semi-allied professions such as social work, religion, medicine or teaching, that they are able to practice community development without any specific training.

The degree to which community developers are able to use their power transformatively to enable increases in agency of communities at 'the margins', is determined both by the subject positions they adopt as well as by the ways in which they are positioned by others. The subject position of 'community developer as professional' (whether self positioned or positioned by others) is key to how a community developer might enact their role as link or hinge between institutions, organisations and communities, transformatively or not of power relations. In many senses, the community developer's ability to use his or her professional and institutional power in ways which are transformative of existing power relations is contingent upon how he/she conceptualises and activates her/his professional status. An agentic conceptualisation of the 'community developer as professional' entails seeing her/him as having partial, but valuable

knowledge and is actualised through the development of a “reflective contract” (Schon, 1983) with communities. Within this model the professional slowly gives up an initial claim to authority and begins to negotiate a shared understanding with the client. In referring to Schon’s model, Labonte (Labonte, 1996a) writes that: “The professional must not only play the role of expert, but must also from time to time reveal uncertainties, effectively undermining some of the initial claims to expert authority” (p.168). While the community developer brings professional expertise to the project, so also do community members bring other partial forms of knowledge. Community developer and community members engage in “dialogues for shared meaning” (Labonte, 1994) and authority around particular forms of knowledge is earned, not guaranteed. Social status is de-coupled from professional authority.

However, this does not mean that the community developer disengages altogether from the identification with possessing a unique body of knowledge and set of skills, or professional expertise. To do so could potentially mean ceding recognition of a specific set of “knowledge claims” (Labonte, 1994), and thus “professional power and legitimacy” that ensure the community developer does indeed have some power to use transformatively to enable communities to exercise increased levels of agency. This is important both with respect to the community developers organisational and community relationships. Schon (Schon, 1983) argues that professional status ensures that workers have the “voice” and authority to be able to establish such reflective contracts with those they work with.

Between organisation and community: the community developer as translator from multiple and changing locations

It will be evident from the discussion thus far that the community developer occupies a unique location with respect to her/his simultaneous accountabilities to the employing organisations, communities she/he work with and the burgeoning ethics and philosophies of community development itself. As intermediaries between large (often publicly funded) organisations and communities, community developers are embedded in unique sets of power-culture dynamics that change from context to context. Such power-culture dynamics are contingent upon the various combinations of organisations (the particular institutions, social structures and cultural systems they promulgate), community developer (identities, cultures and professional role) and the communities (identities and cultural systems) within any community development initiative. Positioned in between community and large organisations, the community developer plays a complex and ‘translatory’ role in working between and within these often diverse cultural

systems to use the power inherent in her/his locations in ways that transform status quo power relations. The challenges in using these locations agentically, to enable communities to exercise increased levels of agency, produces unique sets of tensions for the community developer.

This area appears to be still largely undeveloped within the existing community development literature. Those community developers and theorists (Clague, 1996; GermAnn, 2000; Ife, 1995; Labonte, 1994; Labonte, 1996a) who have given some attention to these issues have done so in a variety of ways. A common denominator of these writings is the emphasis placed on the community developer's ability to be clear about her/his locations, accountabilities and what she/he can and can't do with both organisation and community. Clague (Clague, 1996) cautions community developers employed by government to "know [their] mandate and what [they] can and can't offer to communities" (p.7). He tells community developers within these organisations to "expect an inherent tension between what the community requires – or perceives it requires and what [they] can and can't offer to communities" (p.7). Clague (Clague, 1996) encourages community developers within these organisations to be a strong advocate for the community within their systems, but to also recognise the inevitability of being associated with a system wherein "compromises and trade-offs are necessary between larger and particular interests" (p.7).

Ife (Ife, 1995) discusses these tensions in terms of the moral and ethical dilemmas a community developer may experience within her/his work. Among these he cites potential conflicts with employers or funding bodies when their assumptions about community development differ from those of the community developer, or when organisational interest is about maintaining political stability rather than genuine participatory processes that may transform existing power relations. Ife (Ife, 1995) takes the view that a "good community" worker should be able to avoid such conflicts of interest between community and organisation. Ife has written:

Often when a community worker is 'caught in the middle' in this way, it is as a result of the worker taking responsibility for what is really someone else's problem.....Part of the empowerment of a community must be to enable the community to take responsibility for its own actions, and the community worker who allows her/himself to become the scapegoat for such conflicts is in fact contributing to the community's disempowerment (Ife, 1995, p.258).

However, a critical post-modern perspective on the community developer's location/s between community and organisation potentially draws out a number of complexities inherent in the community developer's locations not iterated by Ife. A critical post-modern analysis potentially shifts the argument beyond 'dual accountability' as an ethical or moral dilemma. Instead, the

field of analysis or argument deepens to reveal the shifting and changing nature of the agency terrains (discursive fields) the developer must negotiate within the course of her/his work. These agency terrains are circumscribed by particular sets of (dispersed, changing and unequal) social power relations (Weedon, 1987), within which the subjectivities, identities, cultural systems and less conscious behaviours of various actors are engaged.

Probably one of the most sophisticated discussions surrounding some of these issues has been provided by Labonte (Labonte, 1996a). Labonte's doctoral dissertation inquired into how community development practitioners conceptualise the possibilities of community development as an empowering practice as employees within the public health sector. This investigation discusses the complex power issues that practitioners expressed about their location as "bridges" or "hinges" between state institutions and community groups, their dual systems of accountability to community groups and their issues, and to their employing organisation, the Toronto Department of Public Health. It inquires into the specific actions that community developers might take from this location to assist an empowering relationship between state and civil society within the context of community development.

Labonte's study highlights a number of tensions experienced by community developers from these hinge locations of dual accountability. However, the primary experience of dual accountability lay in community developer's "simultaneous identities with both the Department (employing organisation) and with community groups" (p.424). Community developers within the Department experienced some conflict within themselves regarding whether their primary allegiances lay with community or the Department. When the community developer was framed as the "primary instrument" in making relationships between state institutions and community groups more equitable, community developers still tended to view themselves as "having more the identity of the group" (p.425). This was thought necessary to offset organisational forces to prevent community developers and (subsequently initiatives) being co-opted by management's agendas, the implications being that the power over tendencies of large organisations could easily subvert the agendas of communities. Labonte (Labonte, 1996a) also suggests that identification with community groups is used to offset organisational powerlessness that front line community developers experienced within their jobs.

Significantly community developers also talk about "this split identity as the 'pain of community development'" (Labonte, 1996a, p.427). This refers to the struggle community developers experienced regarding "accountability back to [their] institutions versus [their]

accountability to community groups, groups which sometimes (saw them) as being representatives of institutions they (felt were) disempowering” (p.427). The community worker’s own split identities (or allegiances) between community and organisation were viewed by some community developers as adding to the pain. The study used the term “empowering rage” to refer to the anger of community groups as an outcome of initial differences in power relations. This stage was posited as “often essential to a community group’s development of its own power” (p.427). However, the study also recognised that development workers may go through their own “empowering rage” as they grappled with being caught between community rage and their experienced powerlessness within the bureaucracy:

Community development workers straddle two ‘cultures’, the culture of institutions and the cultures of community groups. There is a personal experience of pain that often accompanies this straddling, a pain that comes from being, yet not being, a part of either culture. Community development workers should expect this pain because it is inevitable. (p.430).

Labonte’s (Labonte, 1996a) argument touches on the significance of organisational and community cultures as well as the relationship of these to the community developer’s own identities or identification with either, from her/his “hinge” location. The reasons for the community developer’s identification with either are discussed in terms of power relations.

The critical post-modern approach taken to analysing the relationships between community developer, community and organisations taken in chapter nine, views these interrelationships more as a form of “cultural politics” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). This approach views the community developer’s locations and ensuing experiences of power-culture relations more as the effect of walking the interfaces between the clashing discourses and social structures of culturally dominant institutions and those of culturally marginalised communities. The community developer becomes a lens or prism whose own subject positions (subjectivities, identities and cultures) mediates these cultural politics and often divergent interests. The community developer therefore occupies various external locations in between organisations and community, and various internal locations contingent upon her/his own subjectivities, identities and cultures.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the theoretical paradigm that comprises the analytical framework for the investigation. The explanatory power of this critical post-modern framework lies in the

various intersections between post-structuralism, post-modernism and feminism in so far as these theorise agency dynamics. Post-modernist emphasis on fragmentation, partiality, contingency and the changing and multi-faceted nature of identity is potentially useful for its elucidation of the changing nature of people's subjectivities and the apparent contingencies and contradictions inherent in these. Also important are post-structural accounts of the dispersal of power and the discursive constitution of subjectivities. Feminism's traditional concerns with emancipation and subsequent engagement with subjectivity, and the relationship between agency and structure, whilst holding agentic notions of the 'subject' also makes vital contributions to theorising agency dynamics. The discussion in the first part of the chapter also laid the basis for material in part two regarding critical postmodern approaches to community development, the same theoretical framework that informs much of the community development methodology that comprised capacity-building activities within the investigation, therefore joining theory and action. The focus on the three key 'hinges' of development work in the latter part of the chapter is significant in that it has laid the basis for later discussions pertaining to agency and community development in chapter nine.

³³ Advocates of critical post-modern forms of theorising are generally careful to distinguish between what is sometimes referred to as "Ludic Post-modernism" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994) or "Anglo-American" post-modernism (Rosenau, 1992) from the former critical current of post-modernism with which we are concerned here. For those concerned with research or social theory for changing oppressive power relations, Ludic Postmodernism through its continual playfulness of the signifier and the heterogeneity of differences is considered to have little to offer (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Williams, 1998). Critical post-modernism brings to the Ludic critique a form of materialist intervention in which the differing slippage of signifiers is not taken as the result of the immanent logic of language but as the effect of the social conflicts traversing signification (Ebert, 1991).

³⁴ As used here, the term 'de-construction' refers to the partiality of knowledge based on numerous different subjectivities and realities, therefore emphasising the 'located' nature of knowledge or experience.

³⁵ The distinctive meanings of post-modernism and post-structuralism tend to be ambiguous within the literature. For example, writers have used the terms interchangeably (Jordan & Weedon, 1995; Williams, 1996), while other writers subsume one term under the other (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Rosenau, 1994). Each term covers a diverse range of theories whose practical applications have quite different political implications. Briefly, as they are used here, post-modernism emphasises the instability, difference and contingency of agency dynamics, while post-structuralism locates these within a network of material power relations. The use of the term 'critical' in the descriptor for the theoretical framework is deliberate for two reasons. Firstly, it is intended to convey the useful aspects of critical theory (Freire, 1968; Shor & Freire, 1987) that include the construction of marginalised knowledges for the purposes of critiquing power relations. While these constructions are necessarily temporary, they may be used as reference points in critically assessing the agency relations that are a product of power-culture dynamics within a given context. Secondly, critical theorists (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) concerns with structural forms of power are important because of the connections this draws between the subjective and material aspects of agency.

³⁶Deconstructive criticism will not be considered any further here because it fails to move to any form of re-construction and is of little use in theorising agency relations.

³⁷ These three theses on power are contained in Michel Foucault's works of "Madness and Civilisation" (1982), "Discipline and Punish" (1977) and "The History of Sexuality" (1981).

³⁸ For Kristeva's theory of "significance" see (Weedon, 1987).

³⁹ Locality development and social planning approaches to community development will not be dealt with any further in this chapter. Briefly, 'locality development' refers to the process of assisting individuals and groups to identify and meet local needs. This is based on the notion that community members have the capacity to solve their own problems. The community developer provides training and support to the natural leader so that they can form a group and work co-operatively. 'Social planning' is a rational, technical approach to community development in which the community developer uses research skills to identify and study social problems. It is often based on consultation with rather than participation from community members. Problems are often defined for communities in broad social service-sector terms (Labonte, 1996a; Rice, 2000). Both approaches assume consensual relations and a functionalist view of the state (Shirley, 1982). In contrast with this, 'Social action' or 'community as action' approaches are premised on forms of inter-group conflict and power inequities in society as significant social conditions (Labonte, 1996a; Shirley, 1982). The State reflects (and to some extent) reproduces inequities in power relations between groups in wider society (Shirley, 1982). The emphasis of this approach on shifts in social power relations as a part of community development, distinguishes it from locality and social planning approaches.

⁴⁰ Illich (Illich, 1977) claims a predominant conceptualisation of the professional's role as one that is "selflessly devoted to the good of the weaker and less knowledgeable members of society" (p.9).

Chapter Six

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I aim to explain the methodology and methods used to undertake the investigation. The first sections describe the epistemological and methodological perspectives brought to the inquiry and the reasons for my choices of these. Issues of generalisability and validity associated with these methods and the utilisation of these within the investigation are also discussed. An overview of the research process is provided, within which I locate myself and the major subject positions that informed my role in the investigative work. This is followed by an overview of the research questions, methods and ethical consideration.

The investigative work with the Women's Advocacy Group (WAG) comprised both research and community development activities. This synthesis of social action and reflective investigative practices means that in many respects research and development processes were 'one' and inexplicably entwined. To deal with the issue in a practical and manageable way, I separate the formal investigatory activities from the community development methodology derived as a result of WAG's activities and process. The latter is treated as research data and included in the following chapter, except in cases where it directly influenced the methods or validity (power) of the investigation.

Research as empowerment

An important objective of the investigation is that its processes and outcomes increase individual and community agency. The current study draws on the "Research as Empowerment" framework developed by two post-modern feminists Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Ristock and Pennell define research as empowerment as:

.....an approach to research that seeks to effect empowerment at all stages of the research process through critical analysis of power and responsible use of power (p.9).

Fundamentally, it is research that is committed to identifying, facilitating or creating contexts in which previously silent and isolated people (individuals and communities at the margins), those who are ‘outsiders’ in various settings, organisations and communities, gain understanding, voice and influence over decisions that affect their lives.

The current investigation draws on three methodological approaches underpinning Ristock and Pennell’s (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) framework. These are “alternative truths”, “inclusive communities” and “transparency and reflexivity”. The first constructs alternative truths through reflection on people’s diverse experiences. This approach fosters consensus among diverse people precisely because it affirms their connections while disrupting their assumptions. The second creates inclusive communities by involving people in research who are not conventionally thought of as having the knowledge and skills to design conduct or appraise research. Whatever role these people take, research as empowerment seeks to shift power relations so that their views are taken into account. This is consistent with the present investigation. Throughout I have sought to counter the subjugation of knowledges by including these people as active subjects. The third approach, transparency and flexibility, means that the methodological area is open to scrutiny and enlarged to include the power relations operating within the research process. This calls for transparency and flexibility on the part of the researcher. Transparency refers to revealing who one is and how one’s location shapes the research process. Reflexivity means including oneself in what is being studied. This is epistemologically consistent with the social constructionist approach taken within the research.

Social constructionism

The epistemological position of the methodological approaches to the investigation is social constructionism (also commonly referred to within the literature as constructivism). Underpinned by critical post-modern theory, constructionism’s central tenet is that there are no absolute truths about society, only partial knowledge claims organised as discourses (Guba, 1990; Schwandt, 1994; Schwandt, 2000; Wetherell, 1996). Discourse (or language) is understood as a range of activities in which we express and realise a certain way of being in the world. Subjects and their knowledges are constituted through discourses that are based upon particular assumptions.

Ontologically, social constructionism diverges from other inquiry paradigms (such as positivism, post positivism and critical theory) in that it proposes a relativist (rather than a

realist) approach to knowledge. Realities are multiple, local and specific in nature. They are dependent for their content and form on individuals or communities holding particular constructions. (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). “Epistemologically, the investigator and the participants (subjects) are assumed to be interactively linked so that ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111).

Constructionist approaches to inquiry impose a general set of methodological principles on all forms of experience. Guided by “fidelity to subject matter” (Schwandt, 1990) (versus primacy of method), investigations based on constructionist premises will adapt both design and method of inquiry to the nature of the phenomenon at hand. Fieldworker–respondent relations unfold, as does the fieldwork design and associated methods (Schwandt, 1990). Schwandt (Schwandt, 1990) provides an overview of the key features of constructionist approaches to inquiry:

First these methodologies are directly concerned with understanding as nearly as possible some aspects of human experience as it is lived or felt or undergone by the participants in that experience. Second, to achieve that aim of capturing the qualities of an experience, the methodologies encompass procedures for bounding an inquiry within a particular context, for it is only within some context that the experience has meaning. Third, these contexts must be naturally occurring as opposed to contrived or fabricated (hence the label naturalistic inquiry). Fourth, the inquirer follows procedures for considering the context and experience as a complex temporal, sociocultural, and geographic whole. Fifth, the inquiry is conducted using the investigator-as-instrument who employs ordinary fieldwork methods. Sixth the inquirer disavows a hypothetical-deductive paradigm in favour of forms of inductive analysis and, as a result of that analysis, produces not a technical report but a type of narrative (p. 266).

The present inquiry into agency draws on elements of critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) in so far as it focuses on issues of culture, power and agency, is concerned with the empowerment of individuals and communities and seeks to generate associated knowledge claims that have practical application in the interests of communities at the margins. The nature of knowledge however, remains relativist rather than realist (the traditional ontological distinction between critical theory and social constructionism), although robust enough to make some knowledge claims (however partial). The convergence of these two paradigms within the research inquiry is not unusual:

The synergism of the conversation between resistance post-modernism and critical theory involves an interplay between the praxis of the critical and the radical uncertainty of the post-modern. As it invokes its strategies for the emancipation of meaning, critical theory provides the post-modern critique with a normative foundation (i.e., a basis for distinguishing between oppressive and liberatory social relations). Without such a foundation, the post-modern critique is ever vulnerable to nihilism and inaction.....the post-modern critique can extend the project of an emancipatory democracy and the schooling that supports it by promoting new

understandings of how power operates and by incorporating groups who have been excluded because of race, gender or class (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 294).

Participatory action research

The methodology that formed the substantive part of the inquiry was participatory action research (PAR). Usefully conceptualised as a specific process that employs a range of methods, PAR draws on a number of traditions⁴¹ that continue to influence its theory and practice (Green, George, Daniel, Frankish, & Herbert, 1995). This methodology was applied to the longitudinal case study approach taken with the Women's Advocacy Group, that ran for approximately sixteen months and formed the basis of the overall investigation from which the other areas of inquiry emerged.

Participatory research is fundamentally "a process which supports the voices from the margins in speaking, analysing, building alliances and taking action" (Park, 1993, p. xvii). Its aim is the participation of people in the creation of their own world as thinking, feeling and acting subjects. The term 'action research' reflects a systematic approach to critically informed action in which investigators engage in a cyclic process of reflecting, acting and observing, reflecting, acting and observing and so forth. Each successive phase informs the next (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Action research involves learning about the real, material and concrete, including the particular practices of people in localised contexts (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

PAR is consistent with the principles of social constructionism and 'research as empowerment' outlined earlier. It employs strategies that overlap with 'research as empowerment' in that it seeks to create usable knowledge by involving the researched as researchers in social analysis and action. A primary goal of PAR is to bring about a more just society through transformative social change using a process of action and reflection in relation to the desired changes (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Park, 1993; Yeich, 1996). This method involves extensive collaboration between traditionally defined researchers and the community in each research stage from identifying the problem to applying and disseminating results. Other key components include a reciprocal educational process between the community and researchers and an emphasis on taking action on the issues under study (Green et al., 1995). Integral values of participatory action research are equality, participatory democracy, caring and inclusiveness (Martin, 1996).

PAR attempts to break down the distinction between the researchers and the researched, the subjects and the objects of knowledge production by participation of the people in the process of gaining and creating knowledge (Green et al., 1995). Traditional researcher and participants become co-collaborators and co-participants. PAR envisages the researcher's (outsiders) role as being a facilitatory and enabling one. Often ongoing negotiation of roles is needed as the group goes through changes (Green et al., 1995; Park, 1993).

PAR was chosen as the predominant research methodology within the investigation for the following reasons:

- A major objective of the research was that participating communities increase their capacities to be self-determining as a result of taking part in the research. It was envisaged that this would be achieved through increasing their capacities (such as adopting more agentic subject positions and learning practical skills such as media advocacy for example) in addition to influencing policy changes conducive to increased health and well-being. These objectives are consistent with the emancipatory and capacity-building aims of PAR. These include practices of critical reflection designed to assist people in understanding the interrelations and power dynamics between social structures, other people and themselves as individuals. Processes of critical reflection are then followed by phases of practical activities such as learning new skills or taking action on particular issues.
- The action research approach to the investigation is consistent with community development methodology. In addition to building capacity for agency, it allows changes to be measured over time (as is the case with longitudinal studies) and involves participants in assessing and measuring these changes.
- PAR methodology is concerned with power. It openly promotes the redistribution of power (Maguire, 1996) as an outcome of research and also recognises and deals directly with power relations within the research process (Martin, 1996). As empowering relations are an important objective of PAR, the research process itself becomes a method of agency.
- PAR methodology enables flexibility of research design – the research design unfolds as the participants' activities progress. This is consistent with the social constructionist emphasis on "fidelity to subject matter" (Schwandt, 1990), in which the emphasis is on the research design fitting around what is occurring in the field rather than the other way around. This

allows a variety of fieldwork methods to be employed, ranging from quantitative methods such as structured questionnaires along with qualitative methods such as focus group discussions, unstructured interviews as well as increasingly innovative methods such as body mapping (Martin, 1996).

Participatory action research and scientific rigour

Due to its participatory methods, the scientific rigour of PAR and methodological ability to produce credible or valid research findings is often called into question (Allison & Rootman, 1996; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Allison and Rootman (Allison & Rootman, 1996) note that to ensure a high degree of scientific rigour (that is the process of systematically understanding a phenomenon, using an appropriate design and methods for the problem, and often including the development or testing of a theory), investigators need to exhibit a certain amount of control over conditions affecting the research. However, involvement by the community decreases the investigator's control over various stages of the research process. This is problematic to the extent that loss of scientific control could result in loss of scientific rigour.

Kemmis and McTaggart (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) point out that in most PAR, the researchers sacrifice methodological and technical rigour in exchange for more immediate gains in face validity – whether the evidence they collect makes sense to them or not. Methodological sophistication is secondary to the timely generation of evidence that can be used and further developed in real-time process of transformation. Pragmatically, from my own experiences in the 'field', for researchers to 'stick rigorously to rigour' may also mean the loss of participants and therefore of one's research. This is taken up further in chapter seven under the section "Validity tensions and power-culture dynamics".

Validity and generalisability

Validity and generalisability criteria for constructionist/constructivist inquiry and PAR differ from those encountered in mainstream or conventional positivist research (Lather, 1991; Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Stiles, 1993). Constructivist/constructionist research's epistemological shift of focus from a singular, replicable and generalisable truth (as in positivist research), to that of understanding, multiple truths and the construction of knowledge itself, entails a shift in criteria for conceptualising and assessing validity and generalisability.

Literature regarding social constructionist approaches to community empowerment (Lather, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) distinguishes between two types of validity from which the present investigation has drawn. The first type of validity refers to the ability to “produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values” or in other words to “produce accurate results and to measure what is supposed to be measured” (Sarantakos, 1998). This is often referred to within qualitative research literature as “trustworthiness” (Lather, 1991; Stiles, 1993; Thomas, 2000b). The second type of validity is more concerned with the ethics of and power relations within the research process (Lather, 1991; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Are the processes and outcomes agentic or empowering for the participating individuals and communities? Both types of validity relate to the overall value and integrity of the research in that the former is aimed at ensuring accuracy, whilst the latter’s objective is to ensure community benefits, at the same time taking into account knowledge-power relations within processes designed to generate theory claims.

Lather (Lather, 1991) proposes three categories of validity (construct, face and catalytic validity) that are consistent with social constructionist (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) approaches to inquiry. The first two of these correspond to the first type of validity identified above – the ‘accuracy’ or ‘trustworthiness’ of the research. Construct validity requires that the researcher recognise and confront the theoretical traditions within which she is operating and be willing to change them. This requires a “systematised reflexivity” (Lather, 1991) or a self-critical attitude about how one’s own perceptions affect the research design and the weak points of the theoretical tradition within which it is located. Lather’s second category is “face validity”. Its purpose is to ensure that the information gathered reflects the diversity of voices among participants and “rings true” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) or resonates with their experiences. Validity is enhanced by diversity of opinions that overlap, the overlapped areas being the most ‘valid’ or ‘saturated’ (Labonte, 1996a). Face validity is operationalised by “recycling description, emerging analysis and conclusions back through at least a sub sample of respondents” (Lather, 1991, p.67) to ensure it makes sense and resonates with participants. Agreements about what may be accepted as truth may eventuate as a result of dialogue or negotiation between members of the same research community (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Face validity is related to construct validity, for a theoretical orientation that is inconsistent with the research material will most likely fail to produce findings that resonate with the experience of the participants.

However Lather (Lather, 1991) has also pointed out that the possibility of encountering false consciousness, (I prefer the term ‘unagentic subject positions’), amongst research participants can create a limit on how useful member checks are in establishing the trustworthiness of data. “Thus an analysis which only takes account of actors perceptions of their situations could result in research being wrongly termed invalid” (p.68). One answer to this is to include participants within the research from a range of subject positions, thus extending the number of saturation points (overlapping of research data) or view points. Another is for the researcher (as co-participant) to include her own critical analysis in the research findings, and to make this visible to participants (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). This way dominant ideologies within communities come to be reflected as partial knowledges.

Another effective strategy for dealing with some of the dilemmas and challenges posed in obtaining face validity is “triangulation” (Janesick, 2000; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). It encompasses the fore mentioned idea of expanding the range of subject positions from which the data is viewed. Ristock and Pennell (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) define triangulation as:

[the use of multiple methods] in order to obtain more thorough coverage of a subject by viewing it from different angles. This can be achieved in two ways: by using different methods for different questions about the same topic, or by using different methods to explore the same sets of questions (p.51).

Face (and construct) validity may be enhanced by the triangulation of multiple methods, data sources, and theoretical perspectives.

Lather’s (Lather, 1991) third category of validity “Catalytic validity” is achieved when research participants and the broader community affected by the research feel energised or re-orientated in some way by the project. The argument for catalytic validity lies not only within the recognition of the reality altering impact of the research process, but also in the desire to consciously channel this impact so respondents gain self understanding and ultimately self determination through research participation” (p.68). This final category of validity relates more to the capacity building objective of the investigation and as such is more strongly associated with the community development methods employed to increase agency with the women’s advocacy group. The impact of these methods on group members and the wider community are discussed in the following chapter as they are part of the research data.

Rather than referring to the generalisability of research, social constructionist approaches to research emphasise “transferability” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research results are transferable to other populations. Unlike generalisability (which aims to neutralise the effects of the research contexts and is premised on absolutist norms) transferability is relative, taking contextual conditions into account. The transferability of research results is contingent upon the degree to which salient or the most noticeable conditions match or overlap (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The use of “thick description” by researchers is important in establishing transferability, making transparent the limitations of the context, the shifting dimensions of the research and the particular biases of the researcher/s. Interpretations are therefore made with some “tentativeness” (Stiles, 1993). Investigators do formulate general interpretations and theories, but they do not claim that these will hold in all cases or that they can specify definitively when such formulations will hold or not hold. With respect to establishing transferability, the onus is on the constructivist researcher to provide “as complete a database as humanly possible in order to facilitate transferability judgements on the part of others who may wish to apply the study to their own situations” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242).

Ensuring the validity (and thus transferability) of the research results posed different challenges throughout each phase of the investigation. For example, some of the underlying challenges to face validity encountered in the work with WAG were due to members’ lack of ability to participate at times and thereby validate research results. These were different to those challenges to face validity that occurred with the Canadian based work, in which getting participants to check and verify transcripts was problematic. However, the most substantial challenges to validity (face, construct and catalytic) were encountered in the New Zealand component of the research with WAG. These challenges were in part connected to the participatory and empowering aims of the women’s advocacy initiative and were emergent as the project progressed. These are treated as research findings and are located in chapter seven. Otherwise, my efforts to ensure validity within the research design are iterated under the sections ‘data management’ and ‘data analysis’. The issue of generalisability or transferability is dealt with more generally throughout the investigation. Effort is made to maintain transparency throughout and to provide as full a data set as possible, thus facilitating assessments regarding the transferability of the research results by those with an interest in them.

Researching from culturally dominant locations

The significance of validity to dominant power-culture relations within the research as these pertain to my culturally dominant locations deserves mention. My middleclass and Palangi

identities meant that I belonged to two culturally dominant identity groupings that the research communities did not. While some of my own identities occupied marginal locations within existing social structures, (therefore giving me some knowledge of the processes whereby marginalisation occurs), these did not cohere with those central to the research. In this respect my experiences were outside those of the research communities.

Social constructionist and qualitative approaches to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) now widely acknowledge the importance of researchers being aware of the locations, subjectivities and constructions they bring to their work. The institutional power of the researcher (particularly if they are university-affiliated as I was) is often increased by their memberships of culturally dominant communities and associated locations within dominant social structures that research participants do not share.

Throughout the research I dealt with these cultural aspects of validity in the same ways I worked to ensure the validity of the research. I sought to bring the qualities of reflexivity and transparency (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) to the research and maintained as full a “data set” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) as possible. I sought to maintain an awareness of how my different identities affected the research, taking the appropriate steps to ensure that valid and transferable findings were produced. This was particularly important in relation to the New Zealand fieldwork component that involved a long and intensive period of contact with Tongan and Samoan participants. While I had not set out to investigate aspects of Tongan and Samoan cultures, I inevitably did so as I came to realise the relationship between culture and agency. In relation to this aspect of the research, I had regular supervision with a Tongan/Fijian woman for the purposes of discussing and increasing my understanding of issues pertaining to Tongan and Samoan cultures as these arose in the field.

Data sources

The research participants in all four components of the investigation reflect varying identities and cultural systems, and occupy a range of different subject positions in relation to dominant social structures in New Zealand and Canadian societies. Forty-five people took part in the research (excluding myself) as formal research participants. (‘Formal research participants’ refers to having read and signed consent forms). Ten of these were members of WAG and three others were associated with WAG through membership of its community advisory group. The remaining ten New Zealand-based participants were divided equally between those who were

interviewed as members of a housing advocacy group and those who were Samoan and Tongan women working with Pacific people's communities using community development related methods. The Canadian-based participants numbered twenty-two.

Research participants were predominantly women of varying ethnic identities, class memberships and with a range of educational levels. (The few men who participated in the research also reflected similar variation in these identity categories). All participants were engaged in social action work. Some had received formal training and had recognised professional status in their fields, others were paid workers with plenty of experience, but with no recognised professional status. Other participants were working in a voluntary capacity, had little training and were very new to social action work. These differences are important because they reflect varying subject positions in relation to the subject material of the research and relations of agency within the research process. These differences partly necessitated the use and adaptation of different fieldwork methods across the range of participants.

Women's Advocacy Group

WAG was made up predominantly of immigrant Tongan and Samoan women, all of whom were living on low incomes. These women who formed the core of the advocacy group were aged between 22 and 39 years. Most women had children, were engaged in voluntary work and some had low-paid work outside the home. The housing, income, employment and educational statuses of these research participants were consistent with the statistics for Samoan and Tongan communities living in Aotearoa outlined in Chapter four. All but two had partners, and one was a single parent. Occasionally, membership changed or others attended or participated. Advocacy group members had immigrated to Aotearoa between 12 and 27 years of age. Most had extended family members living in Aotearoa and/or were part of wider kinship networks that related to their village of origin in Samoa or Tonga. They had all received some formal education, the majority leaving school around the equivalent of the fourth form in Aotearoa. Post immigration to Aotearoa, some group members had also participated in community education and group work programmes run by the local clergy within their local community. These programmes included personal growth and self-esteem, sewing and crafts and cooking. English was a second language for all of them. Two women, both who joined the advocacy group midway through its activities had university degrees. Aside from those who were university educated, group members were unfamiliar with many community action research concepts. They did not have knowledge of formal research processes, were less inclined towards

abstract Palangi/Western concepts and were unfamiliar and appeared uncomfortable with the concept of advocacy.

Other participants based in Aotearoa

The remainder of the New Zealand based participants were predominantly other Pacific peoples who had immigrated to the country. Of these most were either Samoan or Tongan women, with the exception of one Samoan male participant. Nearly all had engaged in some sort of professional or vocational training post secondary school. With the exception of one participant, they had completed their secondary school education in their country of origin. These participants were more familiar with Palangi orientated social structures and institutions than WAG participants. A smaller number of other New Zealand based participants were Palangi, representatives of government funded health-related services, both women and men.

Participants based in Canada

These participants were based in the cities of Saskatoon, Regina, Toronto or Ottawa. They were all working as community developers (with the exception of one community researcher) with economically and ethnically marginalised communities. The majority of these participants were professionally trained women, some of whom were immigrants to Canada and/or members of ethnic minority communities. A small number of these participants were men and/or lived on low-incomes.

The first two cities are located in the sparsely populated province of Saskatchewan, while Toronto and Ottawa are in the most populous Canadian province of Ontario. The ethnic minority communities referred to by development workers in Saskatchewan, were primarily First Nations or Métis⁴² and migrants from the Ukraine, parts of Bosnia and Croatia. The ethnic communities comprising the development projects in the more urbanised centres of Toronto and Ottawa were from Western and Eastern Africa, parts of Asia and were also French Canadian.

While the focus of this part of the investigation was primarily on low-income, ethnic minority migrant women, many of the development projects did not work exclusively with these groups. Sometimes comments refer to low-income ethnic minority women who are not immigrants to Canada. Some of the projects were inclusive of low-income ethnic minority men. While these identity groupings are such that they do not always fit neatly on top of each other (rather they

intersect and overlap), they do allow some of the findings to be cautiously extended to other low-income groups experiencing various forms of cultural marginalisation.

Locating myself within the research

The constructionist approach taken to the inquiry necessitated that I include and locate myself in the research process. My fieldwork notes that recorded my observations, impressions and analyses of what took place within the research were influenced by my subject positions, as were the co-constructed narratives with research participants. My multiple identities and subject positions as New Zealand-born Palangi, feminist, lesbian, differently abled, researcher/community developer (to name a few) and associated experiences were significant with regard to their impact on the research process. Many constructionist and feminist researchers (Lather, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) maintain that awareness of how one's subject positions impacts on the investigation process constitutes both good quality (trustworthy) and empowering research. This ability is commonly referred to as reflexivity.

Lincoln and Guba (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) define reflexivity as "the process of critically reflecting on the self as researcher", the "self as human instrument" (p.183). This refers to including one's self in what is being studied (referred to by Ristock and Pennell (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) as transparency), and revealing who one is and how one's location has shaped the research process. Lincoln and Guba (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) propose that the researcher's multiple identities come into play during the research process (as they do elsewhere in life) affecting the entire research process from the definition and choice of problem, to interactions with participants and subsequent conclusions.

Ristock and Pennell (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) note that many academics consider self-reflexivity a self-centred, even unseemly, variety of navel gazing that diverts attention from the point of the research to the interior life of the researcher. Contrary to this argument, they assert that "the purpose of self reflexivity is to improve the quality of the research not to derail it" (p.66). Power issues are particularly important in community based research, where researcher-participant interaction is often intense and research outcomes are expected to serve as bases for action. Examination of the feelings that arise in the course of research is one way to begin to theorise power - by incorporating insights into the research analyses. Accordingly "this means being honest with ourselves, reflecting on the actions we take and attending to the range of

emotions we experience throughout the research process” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 69). The cautionary stance to reflexivity taken by some researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a) argues that reflexivity and the insertion of oneself as researcher into the text may also result in the silencing of participants’ voices. This can compound the often dominant power-knowledge (Martin, 1996) dynamics within researcher-researched relations, further marginalising the voices of the researched.

Drawing on the tenets of reflexivity within feminist and critical post-modern approaches to inquiry, I include and locate myself within the research inquiry throughout. However, I have also sought to check that by doing so I add to, rather than divert, attention away from the subject of the research inquiry – the self-determination of communities at ‘the margins’. Throughout, I consider how my multiple subject positionings may have impacted on the research process and the quality of the information produced. In order to be reflexive without silencing, I locate myself within the thesis as one source of data, recording my observations, feelings, experiences and own conclusions. These are discussed in chapter seven as part of the research findings.

Overview of the research process

The fieldwork for the investigation consisted of four roughly sequential and distinct components over a period of two years. A multi-method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a) research design was developed. This utilised individual, semi-structured interviews, recorded group narratives and focus group inquiry methods, ethnographic approaches to data collection and use of secondary data sources. Consistent with constructionist and PAR principles, the direction and methods employed within the inquiry evolved during the process of the investigation. These were largely informed by the research with the WAG that formed the initial and most substantive component of the research inquiry.

A case study approach to this component of the investigation drew on multiple methods of inquiry with data being analysed as the study with this group progressed. This ongoing analysis of data led to research being conducted with two other groups of research participants in Aotearoa. A small number of individual interviews were conducted with Tongan and Samoan women community workers. Housing advocacy workers from another housing advocacy project were also interviewed. These formed the second and third components of the New Zealand part of the research inquiry. Following the completion of the first three components of the investigation, the New Zealand data in its entirety was analysed. This analysis produced six

theoretical questions (outlined later in the chapter) relating to issues of agency for communities at the margins that informed the final component of the inquiry conducted in Canada. This part of the investigation consisted of individual interviews with community development workers working with communities at the cultural and economic margins. The New Zealand and Canadian findings were then re-analysed in their entirety.

Establishing the fieldwork

The fieldwork task began by locating possible research participants. I employed a “purposive” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) sampling method which meant that I approached community organisations most likely to have well established relationships with people living on low incomes (predominantly in the same geographical area as the organisation). The following criteria guided the selection: (1) research participants needed to be living on low incomes, (2) participants needed to have a desire to take some sort of action to change and improve conditions and circumstances in their own lives and those of other community members that they identified as being problematic and associated with living on a low income, (3) participants needed to be supported to engage in advocacy and community action activities by an organisation based within their geographical community, (4) the aims of the supporting community organisation would need to be compatible with community empowerment and community development methodology, and (5) at least one community worker within that organisation had good local networks and was prepared to be involved (at least initially) in the community action research project. This person would play a ‘bridging’ role in introducing me to community members and establishing a relationship of trust. This would be particularly important in situations with participants whose cultural identities and subject positions were quite different from myself.

Finding a community group of people living on low-incomes who would be organisationally supported to engage in policy advocacy around issues of low-income was not easy for several reasons. Community development is not well developed or funded in Aotearoa and so few organisations attempt it. Most organisations working with low-income communities in Aotearoa provide social services rather than ‘doing’ advocacy. Of those who do advocacy, the advocacy is largely done by the organisation on behalf of those communities. However, after several months of ‘sweaty’ networking I was eventually introduced by a friend to an Auckland based community development project.

Women's Advocacy Group

This community development project had been developed by the social service and community development arm of a Roman Catholic order of nuns, here after known as project 'Y'. Its central aim was community empowerment and its focus was a particular low-income community (here after known as 'A') within a defined geographical area in Auckland. At that stage they had gone through a three-year consultation process with community members and organisations to develop the concept, philosophy and aims. The project had been conceptually developed but not yet implemented. Proposed strategies included adult education and skills development of people living in the area, and policy advocacy around community identified issues. Its central methods were those of community development.

As the interests and aims of 'Y' were compatible to those of the research, it was agreed to introduce me to community organisations within the area that would have direct contact with local residents who might be interested in the project. Eventually a member of that order (hereafter known as 'B') who lived in 'A' and was in the dual roles of 'Y working party' member and local community worker agreed to introduce me to a group of women living in the area. She thought it possible that these women could be interested in forming an advocacy group. 'B' also later agreed to co-facilitate the group with me.

'A' is an ethnically diverse area relative to other parts of Auckland and has large Pacific, Maori and European communities living within it, many of whom are migrants with English as their second language. It has a large concentration of state owned houses, high unemployment rates and some serious social problems (unreferenced report)⁴³. Among residents' concerns are limited employment opportunities in the area, high crime rates and poor quality, unaffordable housing (unreferenced report). Kinship networks, churches and community organisations provide a sense of community and belonging for many 'A' residents. At the same time ethnic and religious factions exist within the community and some residents are isolated by issues of poverty and associated feelings of shame. The area has high proportions of children and young people. Perceptions by economically and culturally dominant communities are often stigmatising, labelling the area as "crime-ridden" and "notorious" (unreferenced report). Despite these barriers to self-determination, 'A' has several churches and other community organisations that provide focal points for 'sense of community'. Many residents do large amounts of voluntary work (unreferenced report) and there are some significant initiatives within the area whose main resources are enthusiasm and community spirit.

At the commencement of the research project, 'B' had lived and worked within community 'A' for several years. She had strong community networks and well established relationships with many local residents. 'B' had run a women's refuge, small-scale food and clothing bank and had facilitated group programmes of various sorts for a number of years. Her home had always served as a place that local residents could drop into for a chat and some support if it was needed. As a member of the local church clergy, she filled a role of spiritual guide for many local residents. As a community worker she was often in a development role within the community and was regarded by many residents as someone they trusted and relied upon. 'B' had worked to build strong local networks, particularly among residents in the area who were socially isolated.

WAG contained several different identity groupings in ethnicity (Tongan, Samoan, Palangi), sexuality, spiritual or religious beliefs and whether or not members were mothers. Relationships between group members at the commencement of the group reflected those already described within the wider 'A' community, in that both alliances and factions existed. Two of the women came from the same village in Tonga, others shared kinship networks and some had done personal development courses together. At the same time underlying tensions and estrangements existed across ethnicity and religion within the group, and two of the women were particularly isolated by poverty and lack of social support.

Formation of the Women's Advocacy Group

'B' and I began meeting with some of women living in the area on a weekly basis. All of these women lived on low incomes and the majority were migrants from Samoa and Tonga. I explained that I was doing research at Massey University around poverty, human rights and how people living on low incomes could work together to speak out on and help to improve their living situations. As a part of the research I was interested in being a member of a women's advocacy group who spoke out about problems of low income and that took some action to improve the living situations of their communities. I added that I wanted the research to have some good and practical results for people facing issues of poverty. Some of the women in the group were immediately very responsive. We spent several weeks discussing the sorts of issues they faced in relation to low-income, talking about the idea of a women's advocacy research group and getting to know one another. It took some time to arrive at a mutual understanding of what the advocacy research project could be about and there were tensions within this process. Both the advocacy and research aspects of the group's activities were discussed. The research

aspects of the project centred around the activities that we as a group might engage in, rather than the theoretical questions of my PhD research. When it became evident that there was interest in forming an advocacy group, we set ground rules and began discussing how we might go about the advocacy research project. During this time, I also took any opportunity I could to go to community meetings and have contact with the women outside of the group.

Group numbers fluctuated throughout the entire advocacy research process. The length of this fieldwork component (sixteen months) and the demands it made of the participants were difficult to reconcile with the everyday demands and changing circumstances of their lives. Particularly within the first few weeks of the project, membership (research participants) and numbers changed as people self selected themselves in or out of the group. While participants were initially easy to recruit through the community worker from project 'B', they were harder to maintain. Research participants themselves did most of the participant recruitment. They also maintained group numbers at times when other participants questioned the value of the project and what it was that we were doing – which they did especially when progress was slow.

Levels of inquiry

The research conducted with WAG consisted of two levels of inquiry that drew on participatory and action-reflection methodologies. The first level was initiated and largely carried out by myself in consultation with group members. It related to the research questions posited in chapter one and contributed towards the theoretical story of agency argued throughout the thesis. In addition to recording stories of agency as they occurred within the lives of the research participants, it employed a staged approach to evaluating the community development or methods of agency developed by WAG and myself. These evaluations occurred at the conclusion of each action phase.

The second level of inquiry consisted of the community issue (or problem) that group members identified they wanted to change or improve. The group identified child health and safety in relation to the conditions of the state-owned houses in which they were tenants. Research on this issue conducted by the women, formed the basis of the group's advocacy activities. The focus of this second line of inquiry strengthened as the life of the group progressed and members thought about what they would like to change. This level of investigation emphasised participatory methods. Co-participants became researchers themselves, identifying the issue to be investigated, types of research questions and data collection methods. They participated in

the analysis and interpretation of the research and presented the results to their communities. Due to time constraints on group members' participation that had to be balanced with the need to act strategically and decisively within the policy debate environment, rigorous action research principles were less adhered to at this level of the inquiry. Group evaluations of our actions and planning took place on an ad hoc basis as people were able to participate. This is consistent with literature (Pederson, Edwards, Marshall, Allison, & Kelner, 1988) regarding public participation in policy development that highlights the tensions between participation of economically marginalised communities, and the strategic approach required to influence policy in an environment of competing interest groups. It is also consistent with PAR literature (Maguire, 1993; Martin, 1996) that highlights the difficulties encountered by communities at the economic and cultural margins (particularly women), in participating in evaluation and planning activities due to lack of resources and role expectations. At this level of inquiry, my role with the group was more as resource person in supporting members to identify and research the issues they wished to take action on. This also meant teaching the other research participants to conduct their own research on housing.

Supporting structures and their role in the evolution of the overall investigation

Over this formative period of the research, a number of structures were established for the purpose of supporting and guiding the research. A community advisory group was formed made up of representatives from WAG, community workers in community 'A' and members of 'Y''s working party. The purpose of this group was to assist in guiding the overall development of the research, to advise on local cultural and development issues and to ensure accountability to the relevant groups and organisations in community 'A'. A small planning group made up of two WAG members, 'B' and myself was also formed for the purpose of planning WAG's activities. I also established a supervisory relationship with a Tongan/Fijian woman for the purpose of giving me cultural advice. My experiences with WAG, my meetings with the community advisory and planning groups and my cultural supervisor were influential in shaping the direction of the overall investigation.

Discussions with the community advisory group led me to attempt a planned comparative piece of research⁴⁴ with another group of immigrant women from the Pacific Islands living in a housing shelter in another Auckland suburb. This housing shelter was also affiliated with project 'Y' and its employees were already engaged in advocacy and policy debate on the

related issues of poverty and housing. 'Y's working party members expressed some enthusiasm regarding the potential of a second group of people directly affected by issues of poverty becoming involved in advocacy and policy debate. However despite several attempts, this second advocacy research project never got underway. The possibility of starting up another women's advocacy group in community 'A' was also discussed with the members of the planning group for WAG. However, they felt that if a second group began, it would end up competing with WAG, particularly if members were also from Pacific Island countries.

The dual roles of community researcher and developer, which I now filled with WAG, were proving very demanding. It began to look likely that WAG would be engaging in policy debate and community action around housing issues in the future. These two factors led to my decision to look for another advocacy group (research participants), but one engaged in housing, already established and with which I could work alongside in a more traditional researcher's role, just collecting data.

Housing Advocacy Group

After yet another false start with a community based advocacy organisation, I coincidentally met a member of a housing advocacy group in another part of Auckland. After talking with him, I established that this would be a suitable group to work with for several reasons: (1) it was a housing advocacy group that had been established to address housing issues in another low-income area of Auckland, (2) its participants were predominantly people living on low incomes many of whom were immigrants from Pacific Island nations and (3) a key goal of this project was community empowerment through improved housing conditions and participation of local community workers and residents in policy advocacy.

This housing advocacy group (hereafter known as HAG) also had some significant differences to WAG. Its approach to community empowerment was more 'top down'; having been initiated by a government funded health service that then obtained some sponsorship from central government. Its membership was more ethnically diverse and was made up of both women and men. It also included representatives of a variety of governmentally funded institutions and local community organisations (the majority of whom were local residents).

I arranged a meeting with the group, introduced the research and my prospective role, which I envisaged to be tracking their progress and conducting a small number of individual interviews.

I made it clear that I was prepared to negotiate my role with them, with respect to how they as a community might benefit from the research I was doing. At the closure of the formal part of the meeting, the representative from the government funded public health service introduced me to two members of the local community who, through their position and status, had informal gate keeping roles in the community. After some negotiation it was agreed that I would conduct a small number of individual interviews and provide them with a copy of the final research report.

Samoan and Tongan women community workers

The second area of investigation that emerged from the work in community 'A' was in response to cultural issues of hierarchy and authority that emerged within WAG. Conversations with WAG and the community advisory groups, my cultural supervisor and others during the research process, led me to regard the chosen expression of these cultural values within the New Zealand context as being key development issues for Samoan and Tongan communities in attempting to navigate a course of self-determination. This area of inquiry subsequently investigated the impact of these traditional cultural values on community organising processes for Samoan and Tongan women. A small number of interviews (N = 5) were conducted with Tongan and Samoan community workers using community development processes in their work with Pacific Communities. The purpose of these interviews was to further explore and clarify the main themes and challenges (as they related to issues of hierarchy, authority and power) for Samoan and Tongan women community development workers.

Three of the five women knew most of the members of WAG. The other two had contact with WAG group members through activities within the local community such as those related to church or community work. Their direct knowledge of WAG members and the group's activities meant that my perceptions of emergent issues of culture within the advocacy research project could be checked with other data sources, who were knowledgeable of Tongan and Samoan cultural systems generally, and of the subject positions that WAG members occupied within these.

The cultural identities of the five Pacific women community developers were quite different from one another in some respects. This is important because they occupied a range of subject positions in relation to the cultural systems they were talking about. Their varying subject positions had implications for the ways in which they viewed these cultural systems, partly based on their own experiences. Four of the women were born in Tonga or Samoa and had

immigrated to Aotearoa as adults. Their social statuses within their own cultural systems varied with respect to class and education. Two were members of high status families in Pacific societies, one because her father was a minister and the other because of relative wealth and chiefly titles held within the immediate family. The other two Island-born participants came from families of 'ordinary social standing'. The fifth interviewee was New Zealand born of Samoan and Maori ethnicity. Two of these interviewees had been or were members of clergy and had good knowledge of the influence of Christianity on the lives of Tongan and Samoan communities. All five interviewees had good knowledge of Tongan and Samoan cultural systems, although from a range of subject positions, contingent upon their own experiences, identities and social positions within their cultural systems.

Canadian component

The final component of the investigation evolved from the New Zealand findings and was intended to build on and test these through a series of individual interviews with community developers and researchers working with ethnically and economically marginalised communities in Canada. Five thematic areas for investigation in Canada were developed from the New Zealand findings: (1) how dominant social structures, institutions and related discourses structure individuals and communities' choices for agency, (2) how individuals and groups might become more active protagonists in constituting their own subjectivities, identities and subject positions, (3) the impact of community workers own identities on organising processes, (4) partnerships between institutions and communities and (5) the impact of globalisation on activism.

A brief 'research request' was sent to community developers and researchers via the e-mail through a researcher's private e-mail list of contacts and via a list serve for people working in the health promotion field. This request briefly outlined my areas of research, cities I would be visiting in Canada and the approximate dates I would be there. It invited interested people to contact me for further information. Those who expressed interest were then sent a more detailed invitation to participate in the research, which included background material about the study and guideline criteria for self-selection. The following criteria for participant recruitment/self selection were used: (1) community developers needed to have been working with a community of economically or ethnically marginalised women (or at least mainly women) for a minimum of nine months in a process of engaging in policy debate or some related action to influence policy, (2) that community developers had been working with community members to build

capacity for agency through participants learning new skills and roles for action and advocacy, and (3) to enable further comparisons with the New Zealand data, it was also considered desirable, but not essential, that the advocacy/community action group were of mixed cultural composition, had used story telling⁴⁵ in their community development activities and that the project goal/s were related to the determinants of health.

Few people responded initially. Participants were recruited through a handful of enthusiastic (or just helpful) prospective participants who had replied, locating and persuading others in their locality or project to participate in the interviews. In recruiting research participants 'long distance', one significant difficulty that I encountered was accuracy in matching recruitment criteria and research participants. I identify two reasons for this. Firstly, it was difficult to get the detailed information I needed from people about their community development and research activities to ascertain if they were suitable participants. Secondly, using a "snowballing" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) method of participant recruitment meant that some accuracy was lost in matching participants with selection criteria, as these criteria filtered through a further intermediate layer of people. These problems recruiting Canadian research participants meant that I was not able to use all of the interview material. There were two interviews that I was completely unable to use and not all of the interviewees were able to contribute to all of the theoretical questions.

Development of the research questions

At the commencement of the inquiry, I developed a series of sub questions related to the overarching research question "*how can economically and culturally marginalised communities act to shape and determine their futures?*" posed earlier in chapter one⁴⁶. The development of these questions was largely guided by the agency-structure dialectic posited by social policy and health promotion theorists such as Giddens (Giddens & Pierson, 1998), Williams (Williams, 1998) and Robertson (Robertson & Minkler, 1994). They relate to both the capacity building aspects of agency and those relating to structural and policy related changes. Just prior to the commencement of the fieldwork, the research questions were piloted with members of the community advisory group. Some slight alterations were made to the questions. These questions appear in their altered form in tables two and three on the following page.

Table two: research questions relating to capacity building**Capacity building questions (power within and power with)*****Personal and group efficacy (effectiveness)***

- How can people with experience of poverty, make their voices heard within the dominant policy discourse in a way that is safe, empowering and effective?
- What ideas do people have about themselves, and the 'proper' relationship between themselves and government (or corporations) that will support or inhibit collective action for change?
- In working with the collective stories of a community, how do one promote the growth of a collective culture, as well as honour diversity?

Key differences between dominant and marginalised communities in the ways they see the issues and the solutions

- How do people with experience of poverty define their world view in contrast with dominant ideologies?
- In what ways do people with experience of poverty, perceive the causes of poverty-linked issues and related solutions that are different from those in positions of power or policy makers?

Advocacy and partnership

- What level of partnership is needed with other members from related communities of interest for effective advocacy?
- In collaborating with larger groups, how does the least powerful retain ownership of its identity and collective stories?
- How do different experiences and world views of poverty affect the abilities of promotional and representational groups to form partnerships for advocacy?

Table three: research questions relating to policy and structural changes**Questions relating to policy and structural changes*****Identifying effective methods and courses for action***

- What factors contribute towards building ongoing dialogue between different cultures and daily realities (ie people living on low incomes, policymakers, lobby groups)?
- Which factors are important for low-income communities to incorporate a wider picture of development that goes beyond immediate locality development/interests?

Effective strategic action within a global context

- How is it possible to have meaningful citizen participation in policy development within the present political context of economic globalisation?
- How can grassroots participation aimed at achieving greater control over resources be effective within a global context?
- Does globalisation mitigate against the above or in fact provide new kinds of opportunities?

Due to the evolving nature of the research, it was not possible to tell at its commencement those investigation questions that would remain relevant to the study and those that would not. Following the analysis of the research data at the conclusion of the New Zealand component, the original research questions were reformulated into the six theoretical ones outlined in chapter one. This process entailed questions that were no longer relevant to the study, (as determined by the data that had been generated), being omitted and a new question relating to impacts of the community developer's subject positions on community development processes being added.

Research methods and data collection

Data collection methods for the present investigation were qualitative in nature. (Quantitative data utilised was from secondary sources). Qualitative methodologies seek to answer the questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p.3).

Throughout the four components of the investigation, a variety of qualitative data collection methods were employed.

Women's Advocacy Group

One week prior to the formal commencement of the research, information sheets⁴⁷ (appendix one) that had been translated into Tongan and Samoan and consent forms⁴⁸ (appendix two) were given to WAG members. At the time of distribution, I verbally explained the content of these and invited members to telephone me before our next session if they had any questions. Group members then signed these at the next group session after again being provided the opportunity to ask any questions. The following data collection methods were used:

- Ethnographic (Tedlock, 2000) data collection involving "prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the

day to day lives of the people....in which the researcher studies the meanings of behaviour, language and interactions of the culture sharing group” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455).

- Eleven individual semi-structured interviews; with WAG members and one with a community worker outside of the group who was familiar with WAG’s activities. Six of these interviews took place near the beginning of the research with the group as part of the story-telling process. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in appendix three.
- The remaining five individual interviews with group members were for the purpose of evaluating the group’s activities. (See appendix four for a copy of the interview schedule). It was not possible to conduct final evaluation interviews with all members of WAG. Just prior to the completion of the group’s activities, one women’s partner forbade her to attend any activities outside the home. Two other members were not available for a final evaluation interview, due to conflict between WAG and organisation ‘Y’ that surfaced towards the end of the project. This was problematic with respect to face validity as the range of perspectives in the final evaluation of the group’s activities was reduced. To mitigate this, I conducted a final evaluation interview with a community worker who had followed the group’s capacity building and housing advocacy activities and knew most of the members.
- All WAG sessions and some community advisory group sessions (see appendix five for the information sheet) were audio-taped. These sessions mostly comprised weekly group activities (and meeting procedures in the case of the community advisory group) and did not use formal, structured inquiry methods. Occasionally a focus group (Madriz, 2000) approach to inquiry was used for the purpose of elucidating and refining existing data.
- Some group members gave workshops to community members, papers at conferences and talked to social work students regarding their experiences of WAG’s activities. Their notes as well as mine pertaining to these sessions have served as further data sources.
- I kept extensive fieldwork notes of all advocacy group meetings and related activities as well as of conversations that took place with group members informally. These were recorded after all formal group meetings and activities and most informal interactions with participants. Three overarching categories were used: my observations of what happened, how I felt about what happened and my own interpretations and conclusions regarding this.

These records have served as further sources of data. When this data is drawn up either in descriptions or indirect quotes, its source is referred to as 'field notes'.

- The final source of data collection that primarily relates directly to the housing advocacy were the media reports generated from WAG's housing activities. These reports were on National radio and in print and electronic media. Due to the need to keep the identities of the participants anonymous, this material has not been included in the thesis.

The Housing Advocacy Group

Indepth semi-structured interviews were conducted with five members of HAG. The purpose of these interviews was to compare and contrast processes of empowerment between HAG and WAG. The content of these interviews was determined by my ongoing analysis of the data arising with WAG and in consultation with my supervisor. Information sheets (appendix six) were sent to participants beforehand, with consent forms being signed at the time of the interview. (See appendix seven for a copy of the interview schedule).

Samoan and Tongan women community development workers

Indepth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Samoan and Tongan community workers regarding their experiences of cultural issues of hierarchy, authority, leadership and gender roles within their work with Pacific communities. The content for these interviews was planned in consultation with my cultural supervisor, using the data pertaining to these issues already collected from WAG. Interviewees were sent copies of the information sheets (appendix eight) beforehand with consent forms signed at the time of the interview. (See appendix nine for a copy of the interview schedule)

Community development workers in Canada

Twenty-two in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with community development workers in Canada. The content of these was determined from the analysis of the New Zealand data, relating to six theoretical questions of agency outlined in chapter one. Copies of the information sheet and interview schedule are located in appendices ten and eleven respectively.

Management of the data

With the exception of three WAG final evaluation interviews, all individual interviews and most group sessions were audio-taped. Hand written notes were taken at the time of the WAG evaluation interviews. All individual interviews and some group sessions were transcribed. Group sessions were selected for transcription based on the relevancy of their content to the investigation questions. I determined their relevancy through my immediate impressions of the sessions and subsequent referral to notes I had made about the session. Hired transcribers who had signed confidentiality agreements did all of the transcribing. They were hired because of my inability to hear what had been recorded owing to my partial deafness. I found this mildly problematic at times as I was unable to refer back to the tapes to fill in missing words within the transcriptions or to 'glean' a fuller meaning being conveyed within the interview often provided by voice rhythm and intonation. I felt somewhat distanced from some of my data and tried to compensate for this in two ways. Firstly, I referred back to my impressions of each interview that had generally been recorded immediately after the interview. When relevant, I also discussed the content of the interviews with the women transcribing them to gain their impressions. (This method of 'content checking' was engaged in by Janice Ristock (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) on her research into violence within lesbian relationships).

With the exception of the initial interviews with WAG members near the commencement of the study, all individual interview transcriptions were sent to participants for validation and comment. The six initial interviews with WAG members were not sent to them for validation for several reasons. The interview transcriptions were in English and were very lengthy, numbering an average of about 45 pages each. Being largely oral cultures and with English as their second language, and already having many time constraints, it was not feasible to expect participants to sit down and go through these page by page. Instead, I summarised the main themes from these and fed them back to the group for comment and discussion over two audio-taped group sessions. Transcriptions of these sessions and of the later story-telling sessions provided validation of these findings.

Due to the duration of the fieldwork (twenty-five months), there was a long gap at times between the original audio-taping of interviews and sending the transcripts of these to participants for validation and comment. Transcripts are time consuming to read through and willingness to read through them often depends on factors such as availability of time, interest

in the study, good will and concern with being properly represented. I was concerned that people would either have lost interest in the study or have shifted to new locations. In an effort to circumvent these problems, I phoned the New Zealand participants prior to sending the transcripts, checking addresses and explaining the long delay. The time delay was less problematic with the Canadian component. In all cases a letter was sent out with transcripts requesting people to return the transcripts with comment by a certain date if they wished to make any alterations to them. Of those participants who returned their transcripts with comments, the alterations were generally slight, often correcting grammar and occasionally inserting different words to clarify meaning.

Data analysis and presentation

At the conclusion of the fieldwork, all the research data was analysed in its entirety. At this stage of the investigation, I briefly considered using a software package such as Nudist or Ethnograph to analyse the data. While such software packages are useful in assisting with the analysis of large amounts of data, being the only researcher on the project and having previously analysed the data at varying intervals, I considered that there were also advantages in organising and analysing the data manually.

A general inductive approach (Thomas, 2000a) was used with the analysis of the data. The common purpose of this approach is to “allow key findings to emerge from the common, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed in structured methodologies” (p.3). All transcripts were read through for the purpose of generating key themes and sub-categories within these. The key themes were initially derived from the theoretical questions that informed the Canadian component of the investigation. For purposes of validity, the pre-identified themes (in the form of theoretical questions) were checked for accuracy. Key themes were checked through multiple readings of the transcripts by myself and were also checked by another researcher who read through a sample of the transcripts. Once the key themes had been verified, subcategories were then identified under each. Categories were refined through continuing revision of the transcripts.

The variety of data sources and respective range of locations (subject positions) of participants meant that the data sources could be usefully triangulated⁴⁹ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) against one another. It was possible to triangulate data from participants from low-income and ethnically marginalised communities with community developers who worked

with, but were not members of these communities. Data analysis was further strengthened by the range of subject positions represented within the research with respect to ethnicity, gender and class. Existing data sources provided useful comparisons and reference points for data generated from the fieldwork. Further triangulation was provided by the exploration agency relations by the use of different questions and methods with different participant groups.

Throughout the data presentation I make it clear when my own interpretations differ from those of the participants. Some of the direct quotes of participants have been altered for the purposes of inserting missing words, making grammatical sense or clarifying meaning. This has been done in cases where the meaning was clear from the context, but not necessarily from the quote. Missing words that have been inserted are encased in square brackets []. In cases where explanations are inserted into quotes the following brackets are used { }. Double and single apostrophes are used to identify direct and indirect quotes respectively. In cases where indirect quotes are used, these have been taken directly from my field notes, indicated by the bracketed references to these. Direct quotes are sourced as one of the following: WAG, HAG, PWCW and CCD. These refer to the categories of research participants which are Women's Advocacy Group and Housing Advocacy Group members, Pacific women community developers and Canadian community developers respectively. Each acronym has a number beside it – this refers to the particular individual within that participant category. Generally, when other people are referred to, either in the text or in quotes, code names 'X' or 'Z' are used. Where continuity is important, the same code letters are used throughout for various people. When this is the case, I write 'hereafter referred to as', identifying them with a particular letter of the alphabet.

The cross-cultural content of some of the research with the Tongan and Samoan New Zealand research participants, presented particular challenges to face validity. Being unfamiliar with these cultural systems added a further layer of complexity in so far that I could be confident that what I was presenting would "resonate with the experiences" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) of these research participants. To assist with this, two of the Pacific women research participants read through my 'draft' presentations of the data analysis of theoretical questions one and two. (These questions comprised the content I was concerned with). In the final presentations of these theoretical questions, the comments of reviewers can be identified by the letters PR1 and PR2 alongside the quotes. Some quotes were altered as a result of their comments. In cases where I have disagreed with the reviewers' interpretations, I have included their comments alongside mine.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations within research are essentially about power. The critical post-modern approach taken to theorising agency relations within the current investigation conceptualises power within the research process as a dynamic and fluid force (Martin, 1996). While the researcher's power is partial within researcher – participant relations, she or he nevertheless occupies a more powerful position by virtue of the centrality of their role in framing the research inquiry and constructing the accounts of findings.

Feminist, participatory and constructivist research theorists (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Martin, 1996; Olesen, 2000; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) have all contributed to the growing body of writings concerned with research ethics. Guba and Lincoln (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) write about the particular “ethical risks” imposed by constructivist approaches to inquiry. These include the relational risks of the sometimes intensive and intimate contact with participants, that can result in misunderstandings or violations of trust and the difficulties of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality within a methodological approach that relies heavily on language and direct quotes. Olesen (Olesen, 2000) notes that collaborative and power sharing tenets of participatory research heighten ethical concerns with “voice” and “account” as researchers and participants negotiate modes of data gathering and analysis as well as issues of representation. Such ethical tensions may be further heightened by the institutional requirements that run counter to the unfolding ethos of participatory research, such as those of funding organisations.

Empowerment and power relations were central to the inquiry. I was concerned with assessing and ensuring empowering processes and outcomes throughout the research process. I sought to deal with ethical issues arising within the research through juxtaposing these with Lather's (Lather, 1991) three categories of validity (construct, face and catalytic), whilst bringing my own reflexivity to bear in accessing the power relations inherent throughout the research. Some of these ethical issues are dealt with in this chapter already. Others are encompassed within the power-culture dynamics discussed in chapter seven. Two other ethical issues that I encountered within the research are worthy of mention here.

- The critical post-modern theorisation of agency relations and ensuing write up of the research material has at times pushed the boundaries of ‘ethical research’ with respect to anonymity. Critical post-modernism's emphasis on subjectivities, discourses and the constitution of these within particular sets of power relations, coupled with its tendency

towards deconstruction, serves to elucidate the nature of agency relations at the micro level of relating. This level of relating tends to be personal, involving real people in their everyday contexts. The information is necessarily context laden, the participants' identities, cultures and subject positions inevitably elucidating the rich text of agency relations. However, such an analysis is also bound to threaten the anonymity of participants. As a way of circumventing threats to the anonymity, some identifying information (over and above the usual precautions to ensure anonymity) has been left out of the thesis. This information falls into two categories. Firstly, the research reports, news-paper clippings pertaining to the housing advocacy undertaken by WAG and any identifying references (as noted earlier in the chapter) have been omitted. Secondly, although potentially rich in elucidatory capacity, some quotes of participants have also had to be omitted from the thesis. Making these assessments caused some difficulty for me, as the potential value of analysis (with respect to theory) conflicted with the anonymity of participants.

- The other area pertains to the write up of the Samoan and Tongan research material and my efforts to engage Pacific reviewers in commenting on this for purposes of face validity. Overall the process worked well. There will usually be tensions inherent in representing other people's cultures, or conversely, having one's culture represented by someone who does not share that same cultural identity. Such tensions are heightened by differences in structural power. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I observed that in reviewing the material as Palangi researcher and Tongan participants, we were engaged in the very same power-culture dynamics so central to the investigation analysis. (I did not have the opportunity to discuss my own observations about this process with either of the reviewers). The process, made me question more deeply and precisely the nature of my argument. The process was challenging to me with respect whether to relinquish data or alternatively to stand from the subject position from which I had analysed the data and to be clear overall about the subject positions I brought to the analysis. In doing so I found post-modernism's break with binary opposites useful, in so far as I could come to know and take responsibility for my different locations (Dibernard, 1996) whilst bringing a "self-reflexively critical relationship to the material" (Tedlock, 2000, p.467).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodological perspectives and research methods that have informed this inquiry. In addition to laying out the various components that formed the fieldwork and the research methods utilised within these, it has also surfaced some potentially interesting issues regarding power-culture dynamics and validity, which are the subject of further discussion in chapter seven. Following an account of WAG's activities, the evolution of main themes and research constructs, chapter seven provides an outline of the ways in which some key validity tensions were played out during the process of the research.

⁴¹ These research traditions include those of action research, participatory rural appraisal and feminist research.

⁴² First Nations refers to native Indians, the indigenous peoples of Canada. Métis refers to peoples who have First Nations and other ancestry.

⁴³ To protect the anonymity of research participants, research reports that identify the geographical location of community 'A' are marked as 'unreferenced'.

⁴⁴ My intentions in initiating this particular comparative piece of research was for the purpose of comparing and contrasting processes of empowerment across to advocacy groups employing similar community development methodologies.

⁴⁵ Story-telling was considered desirable as this had formed a significant part of the community development methodology used with WAG, outlined in chapter seven.

⁴⁶ These questions correspond to the first level of inquiry with WAG and the other New Zealand and Canadian components. They are distinct from level two WAG inquiry questions developed for the purpose of the housing research and advocacy undertaken.

⁴⁷ Any necessary alterations to information sheets, consent forms and interview schedules contained in the appendices have been made to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

⁴⁸ To avoid repetition of the material in the consent forms used for the different components of the investigation, only one of these has been included in the appendices. (The consent forms for all components of the research are virtually identical apart from their titles. For example, 'Consent form for Housing Advocacy Group members' or Consent form for 'Women's Advocacy Group members').

⁴⁹ Various definitions of 'triangulation exist'. In the main these fall into the four categories proposed by Denzin (cited in Janesick) (Janesick, 2000). These are (1) data triangulation, (2) investigator triangulation, (3) theory triangulation and (4) methodological triangulation. Forms of triangulation utilised in the investigation were data triangulation and methodological triangulation. The latter of these encompasses Ristock and Pennell's definition (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) offered earlier in the chapter.

Chapter Seven

Building community capacity

Introduction

The chapter begins by providing a summarised chronology of the community development methodology developed and implemented by WAG. This methodology had a strong emphasis on working with members to strengthen their capacities for agency, through the adoption and inclusion of new subject positions within their identities. Where it is relevant, data regarding participants' experiences of the methodology has also been included. Accompanying the account of the community development methodology is also a summarised chronology of the emergent research themes that arose from the work with the group. These themes were important in informing other aspects of research that comprise the thesis and are more fully developed under their respective theoretical categories. The chapter concludes with an account of 'validity tensions' encompassed within the research as these were influenced by power-culture relations.

Community development methodology: WAG

The advocacy research project with WAG consisted of four phases that comprised three to six months each. All of these phases comprised both research and community development methodology. Developed by WAG members and myself, the purpose of the community development methodology was community capacity building. This refers to increasing the agency capacities of WAG members to enable them to engage in community development work in order for their own communities to exercise increased levels of agency. Phase one consisted of group members getting to know each other, developing trust and a mutual understanding of the project and deciding on planning and review processes for the project. Phase two consisted of story-telling (and preparation for this) during which each member told her life story to the group using whatever medium she was comfortable with.

During phase three, group members selected the broad advocacy issue of housing, did structural analysis around this issue and explored aspects of power, related to acting on the issue and learnt media advocacy skills. In phase four, the group narrowed the advocacy topic further and undertook a child health and safety survey of 42 Housing New Zealand (state-owned) houses in community 'A'. As child health and safety also touches on the affordability of housing, the group decided to publicly support the (then opposition) Labour party's housing policy of income-related rents. The release of the survey findings at a public meeting resulted in widespread media coverage of the issues and some action by Housing New Zealand to remedy the problems.

Phase one: establishment of the advocacy research project

Due to the need to establish trust between participants, and to negotiate the parameters and form of the project, several activities were undertaken within the group's activities. These were:

- Group members brainstorming and deciding on the ground rules for the group.
- A planning session undertaken by three other members of the group and myself to develop a framework for group activities and action.
- Establishment of the group warm up. Members were invited to use this time to catch the group up on how their week had been and communicate anything else they wanted to the group. This took a very significant place within WAG's activities as most group members lacked other forums to talk about their lives and feelings.
- Negotiation of the various practicalities surrounding the advocacy research project such as transport, a regular venue and childcare systems.

During these initial weeks of meeting, women often mentioned how good it was to be able to get out of the house, socialise with others, talk about their lives and share the various difficulties they were facing.

Phase one: emergent themes

Experiencing a new cultural context and notions of agency

At this time, I was able to learn about the sorts of everyday issues advocacy group participants faced as Tongan and Samoan women living in Aotearoa on low-incomes. Much of this was new information for me. While I had previously worked with people living on low incomes, usually they were Palangi (of European descent) and had come into my work environment. Usually the relationship had been lay person to professional, as I was either in the role of counsellor or social worker. Working with these women on ‘their turf’ and being immersed in their cultural and social environments meant that I went through an intensive learning process. This gave me the opportunity to review many of my previously held assumptions and ultimately increased my appreciation of the multiple subject positions within power-culture relations that give rise to experience. As well as learning about the sometimes overwhelming difficulties they faced, I also came to know their sources of strengths, learn about ways in which they exercised power and hear about how they regarded their lives.

Role conflict

I also began to grapple with the dissonance between other WAG members and myself regarding our perceptions of my own role as researcher/ community developer with the group. This relates to the emergent themes of hierarchy and authority and the incompatibility of these with PAR and the community empowerment goals of the advocacy research project. These issues are further developed later in the chapter under the heading ‘Validity tensions and power-culture dynamics’ (thus connecting these tensions to methodological issues within the research), and again within theoretical question number two, chapter eight (in so far as the connection between culture and agency is concerned).

Phase two: story-telling, culture and identity

The preparation process for our story-telling

The original intention of the research had been to follow Freire’s (Shor & Freire, 1987) model of social change and critical pedagogy in which group members would all tell stories around a particular issue to do with low income. This method tends to emphasise the linking of personal

experiences to dominant social structures around the axiom of class. However at our first community advisory group meeting the place of culture and identity within the research was raised. A member of the group asked: *'what place would the cultures and identities as migrant women who had come to New Zealand from Samoa and Tonga have in shaping the stories of the women?'* (field notes B2). It was decided to work with the research participants in a way that built upon their rich plural identities rather than being limited to the singular identity of 'women on low incomes'. The advocacy issue would arise through this broader approach to sharing personal stories.

Advocacy group members corroborated the need for a focus on culture and identity within the story-telling. Members expressed this need in a variety of ways, such as a sense of emptiness and missing of their families, cultures and ways of life that they had left behind in Tonga and Samoa. Other group members experienced a sense of disconnection and lack of cultural pride within their families and ethnic communities (field notes B2). These statements affirmed the growing emphasis on culture and identity within the development of the story-telling methodology (the purpose of which is outlined in table four below) as important aspects of empowerment. Group consensus and understanding of this focus grew as members heard each other recounting these experiences of being Samoan and Tongan within the European, male dominated society of Aotearoa. It was with this growing understanding that we set off as a group to undertake our journey of empowerment together.

Table four: purpose of the story-telling

Purpose of the story-telling

It was intended that the process of the story-telling would incorporate elements of both personal and group empowerment. Its purpose was to:

- Strengthen our connection to our identities, cultures and values
- Build self-esteem and confidence through sharing our stories
- Build some common narratives from our experiences
- Build a sense of group and belonging
- Draw out issues for advocacy and speaking out.

As a result of the community advisory group meeting, an employee of 'Y' (hereafter named 'E') who was Maori and had knowledge of Maori culture conducted three preparatory sessions with

WAG members on story-telling in relation to culture and identity. An important assumption underlying this work (held by myself and increasingly shared by other group members) was that poverty was viewed as encompassing loss of tradition, identity, families, friends, relationship to land, values and beliefs in addition to economic resources. I also engaged in this work as a co-participant and continued to develop the work initiated by 'E' after she left the group. 'E' spent time listening and talking with the women around their experiences of leaving their homelands and coming to Aotearoa. Parallels were drawn between the loss of land, identity, language and culture for Maori as a result of colonisation and some of the group members being cut off from their cultural roots as migrants to Aotearoa. 'E' suggested to the group that the loss of land, family and identity in coming to another country often results in migrants disconnecting from important parts of themselves. Story-telling work would be about reconnecting to identities and getting wholeness back. Four specific activities that were engaged in by group members (the first three of these within group sessions) during this time are outlined (field notes B2).

- The first activity asked group members to consider the transitions they had made in leaving their homelands and coming to live in Aotearoa. 'E' specifically focused on issues of culture and identity, emphasising the importance of one's own mother tongue in being able to convey the deeper messages of one's being. As a lead in to this 'E' emphasised that we were all *'te tangata (human beings) and that was important to be able to look past the differences in people to the heart of the matter – where our common humanity was'*. She then asked all group members to name important aspects of their cultures that were *'closest to their hearts'* and to consider what they had lost and gained in leaving their homeland and coming to Aotearoa. Group members were asked to make a list of each in pictures or words and to think about their experience of this transition. Group members were then asked to name the feeling within themselves to the group as they considered their experiences of their transitions. To the immigrant women within the group, 'E' suggested that they may feel a sense of loss in thinking about these things. 'E' concluded by emphasising the sacredness of people's stories and where they had come from (field notes B2).
- The second activity led by 'E' was a group ritual in the form of a powhiri (official welcome) by 'E' as tangata whenua (people of the land). 'E' told group members that the powhiri was intended to *'acknowledge, address and enhance the very dignity and worth of being'*. It was *'intended to acknowledge group members as 'tapu' (sacred)'*. 'E' emphasised that members brought with them values, beliefs, gifts, talents, wise experiences and memories of loved

ones who have passed on. In replying to the welcome, 'E' encouraged group members to speak in their own language. She said: *'you are coming as you, valuing yourself in this state, in the state of who you are, in the sacredness of where you brought all these stories from, so that you can be part of where you are now'*. She described the powhiri as a ritual of *'spiritual access'* In addition to signing citizenship papers, group members could bring their whole spiritual selves into Aotearoa and be whole, starting from that place (of wholeness) again (field notes B2).

- The third activity emphasised the importance of group members continuing to plant themselves firmly in/on the ground and nurture their strengthening process. The analogy of a tree was used. It was iterated that in 'order to speak out' we all need to be firmly planted in the ground spreading our roots deeply into the earth and making sure our trees were nourished. Group members were invited to draw themselves (and their families, cultural identities, past/present/future – all that they were) as a tree. They were asked to take notice of what sort of a tree it was, where it was planted, its condition and what it needed to be nourished and continue to be strengthened here in Aotearoa. This was shared with another person in the group. Group members were encouraged to keep returning to their 'tree drawings' periodically to see what they continued to need to nourish them (field notes B2).
- The fourth activity consisted of individual interviews with group members. The interviews assisted preparation in two ways. Firstly they helped members continue to draw out the threads of their stories as they were preparing them, thus assisting participants in crafting their stories. Secondly, they helped build trust levels and confidence amongst group members. Group members were encouraged to help each other prepare and it was even suggested they might interview each other. However at this time trust levels were still low in the group and most members were grappling with the issue of confidentiality. The decision was made that I interview each member of the group as I was the Palangi, had no 'village connections' and the trusted leader/auntie of the group (field notes B2). An interview schedule (appendix three) was developed in consultation with the WAG planning group and handed out to group members in preparation for the story-telling.

WAG members found the powhiri very significant. For most of them, this was the first time they had felt fully welcomed to Aotearoa. One member said that a particularly memorable experience within the story-telling had been:

When 'E' came here and welcomed us Pacific Islanders here in Aotearoa and allow us to bring the gift with us (WAG#5).

Similarly 'B' talked of this in her final evaluation of the group's work prior to her departure:

The um impact that 'E' had with the group with her input and the powhiri that we had that day was very significant for them. The women felt that for the first time perhaps they were um welcomed onto our land or their land it belongs to all of us (WAG#7).

Telling our stories

By the time we started sharing our stories, we had been meeting at least weekly for three months. Group members were encouraged to write their own stories prior to telling them and invited to use different media to express these. Participants were also given guidelines for what to include in their stories such as: their growing up years, cultural values, what it was like to come to and live in NZ, their personal strengths and hopes and dreams for the future. Considerable preparation was involved as each woman carefully thought about how she would tell her story, and what part of her story she felt able to share with the group.

The story-telling took place over four weekly sessions. We decided to take roughly an hour each, although often the group's process around each story took much longer than this. To assist in building trust (James, 1996) and maintaining a sense of safety within the group, the process of story-telling was quite structured. (I took the role of facilitator within this process). It was emphasised that the privilege of hearing another person's story was a gift and that the listener's part was just as important as the teller's. The different places (subject positions) (Razack, 1993) from which we all listen was stressed within the group and WAG members were asked to listen from respectful, non-judgmental and supportive places within themselves. After each woman told her story, each other member of the group would give a "gift" back by saying what the story had touched inside for them. (The concept of 'gift' had been introduced by 'E' in the preparation phase of the story-telling and refers to the gift of oneself – meaning that being oneself with others is enough). This kind of giving back to the story-teller was very important.

The process of story-telling was ritualised in that it involved a series of actions designed to create and maintain a sacred space for each story-teller to tell her story. At times this included a healing waiata (song) from the group back to the story-teller. Each story-teller was invited to take the initiative in preparing her own sacred space in which to tell her story. The majority of participants did this through bringing items of cultural significance. One group member laid out

a tapa cloth in the story-telling space. At the conclusion of her story she then talked about the significance of the tapa cloth within her Tongan culture.

A group warm up preceded the story-telling, during which I would re-iterate the process and the ground rules. For example, on the first week I used the example of the monarch butterfly hatching out of its chrysalis and preparing to fly:

I was thinking about our story-telling as I was driving here this morning and I got a picture of a monarch butterfly....I thought while we've all been preparing our story {pause} it's like we're inside this chrysalis and we're getting ready to come out. When the butterfly comes out it starts to open its wings. It has creases in its wings, its wings are bent and it has to let them dry and unfold. Well that's a bit like us with our stories - things happen to us and sometimes they might cause a crease in my wing you know...Sometimes the story causes a crease in the wing or something that happens it could be a hurt or something that affects us and like us the butterfly needs its wings to be strong for flying..... As 'X' tells her story this morning, it's like you {'X'} come out of your chrysalis and we listen....And as we listen, your wings unbend and unfold and our listening helps to dry them and get them strong ready to fly ready for future things that you'll do in your life... (WAG#10).

As the process continued other group members also began to engage more in establishing the story-telling space:

I just want us all to place our hearts in the light {pause} so that we can all listen to each other and show our true feelings for that person by {pause} placing our hearts in the centreby showing the love for that person in whatever she's going to share with us today... Whatever she shared is something very sacred and that person true feelings {pause} so I want us to all place our heart in the middle and consider us all in the one family (WAG#4).

Methodologically, it was very important that 'B' and myself, as the community worker and researcher respectively, tell our own life stories to the group. This was an important step towards more equal power relations within the group, building trust and minimising distance (George, 1996) between ourselves in our roles as professionals and other members of the group:

And um I think you did very well building that trust because you and 'B' had to do your story-telling telling. Other wise {pause} I don't know maybe half of us will say half wont if you still didn't get to tell {your story}. Or we say 'ah I got two kids I'm married and that's It'. No deeper {pause}. You know, no deeper how you first born and brought you back come into Aotearoa and what's life is like things like that (WAG#1).

Phase two concluded with a group evaluation of the story-telling process. At 'Y''s invitation, group members made a presentation to local community workers on the story-telling and our experience of it. This was well received. A celebration of the successful completion of the story-telling was also held. Group members invited others in the community to join in the celebration.

Certificates were presented and the local media attended. Group members were interviewed and WAG's activities publicised.

Phase two: emergent themes

The impact of dominant social structures on agency

Group members told stories of their contact with government departments, health and social service organisations and within the employment and commercial sectors. This began to reveal the multi-layered nature of the barriers to self-determination they faced within the New Zealand context. These barriers were multi-layered due to their status as Pacific peoples, women, immigrants and as low-income people. Through hearing these stories it became obvious that, in addition to facing the practical kinds of barriers to self-determination such as language, education, money or adequate housing, group members were also confronted by other obstacles. These obstacles were primarily about the ways in which they were viewed and treated as 'other' by many of the organisations and people they came into contact with. Group members talked about the racist behaviours of people within the private rental accommodation sector and their experiences of the institutionalised discriminatory practices of government based organisations. Women in the group also talked about how they felt 'blamed' and 'singled out' as low-income people by the media and within day to day situations. They also talked about how such everyday encounters affected the way they felt about themselves (field notes C1-C2 and theoretical question one).

Agency, culture and identity

The decision to focus on culture and identity within the story-telling marked an important conceptual shift within the research. The concepts of poverty/disempowerment (and so the flip side wealth/empowerment) began to take on a new meaning to me theoretically and empirically (field notes B1-B3). While previously empowerment had been seen as having subjective elements (confidence, self-esteem, sense of belonging, social support, networks and social cohesiveness) as well as objective elements (control over resources), culture came much more into play. What did cultural dominance, or Western hegemony, mean at the subjective level of power (the lived and felt experiences of people) and at the more objective level of power (structures and institutions both within NZ and world wide), and what was the interplay between these different levels?

The influence of colonising, capitalist and Christian discourses on the subjectivities of the research communities

As I talked with other group members, I also became increasingly aware of the historical and present impacts of European colonisation on our lives. The colonisation process was a complex interweaving of capitalism, industrialisation, Christianity and Eurocentrism that impacted both on their material and subjective experiences. This tended to manifest itself in their expressed reverence for industrialisation and modern technologies, western based knowledge systems and church clergy that was expressed many times within the group. (See theoretical question number one, chapter eight).

Tongan and Samoan cultural values and the social action and research process

I also became aware of the importance of particular cultural values such as respect for elders, service to the group, Christianity and adherence to established orders in relation to role, hierarchy, authority and place. These cultural values, reflected over and over in conversation and action were to become more significant as the advocacy research project progressed. The centrality of these cultural values within the investigation is elaborated on shortly.

Issues of cultural transition

Another emergent theme was cultural transition and the tensions WAG members experienced in attempting to continue their cultural traditions in Aotearoa. Culture can be an important sense of strength for all of us and its successful adaptation to new contexts is critical for health, well-being and agency of those who are part of it. It became evident that, the research participants and their communities faced some important choices with regard to expressions of their culture and their implications for agency within New Zealand society:

I'm thinking of the fa'a Samoa...there's a real tension...if there's a funeral that comes up, well automatically the families [are] expected to give in money.....sometimes they just cannot afford it, so they have to be brave enough to really say 'No, I've got to feed my children first'. And that can be a really big struggle, because there's a whole {expectation} (WAG#4).

Continuing dissonance between theory and practice

I continued to grapple with the dissonance between my own values, what the community development and PAR literature said about my role and my actual experience 'in the field'. The literature referred to extensive participation, collaboration and reciprocal education processes between researcher and community within a climate of equitable power relations. As the research progressed, dissonance was expressing itself in relation to the themes of participation, authority and leadership (field notes B1-C2).

Processes of empowerment and their relationship to culture

The story-telling activities emphasised agency processes in two ways. Firstly telling one's life story with its emphasis on culture and identity was a very powerful means of building individual and group agency through shared experiences as Tongan and Samoan immigrant women and as human beings. Group narratives and connections were built around shared cultural experiences as Pacific peoples and as women. Secondly, it became evident that exposure to cultural differences and associated life experiences was an important means of opening up new possibilities for roles and ways of being in the world. Given the right attention to existing structural power relations and group dynamics, exposure to different cultures (particularly at the micro levels of human relating) could increase agency. (See theoretical question three).

A post-modern analysis of power

My experiences of power relations within the research served as one of the first levels of my data collection that seemed to speak to a post-modern/structuralist experience of power relations at the local level. Within this framework, interpersonal and group relationships of agency tended to be configured by the relational dynamics of the more micro aspects of power such as personal power, networks, personal connections and those cultural systems represented within that context. I was experiencing power as being much more multi-faceted and as changing between people and groups from situation to situation and context to context. I noticed that the power-culture relations that were active within a particular context shaped the 'agency capacity' of others and myself. Agency would be configured in different ways that was largely dependent on the cultural systems and social structures that were operational within that particular context. This post-modern experience of power was still tempered by dominant social structures that

made themselves apparent in the way they constituted people's subjectivities or impacted via very real material inequities that constrained the capacity to act (field notes B1-C2).

Phase three: skills development

Phase three of WAG's capacity building activities were aimed at the development of skills in preparation for the group's future advocacy activities. These capacity-building activities focused on preliminary research and information gathering, analyses of power relationships, media advocacy and group process. (The latter of these activities was not so much a practical advocacy skill, but an important capacity building activity with respect to 'power with' or maintaining the cohesiveness of the group). Each area of activity is discussed below.

State-owned housing: preliminary research

WAG members elected to advocate on issues of state-owned housing. Most members of the group were state tenants and had been adversely effected by the country's housing and welfare policy reforms introduced in the 1990s. Other women living in 'A' were invited to attend the group on two occasions for the purpose of gathering some preliminary information regarding the kinds of issues experienced by other state housing tenants. WAG members also spent some time discussing more specifically what was problematic about the housing and identifying what they would like to change (field notes D1-D2).

Media advocacy skills

A woman who trained community groups in media advocacy came to work with the group. Practical examples in housing advocacy were worked through by group members. These included identification of the issue and target audiences, possible story angles, key messages and media sources. This provided group members with some valuable experience in actively thinking and planning how to use the media to achieve change. Discussion took place over the need to ensure the right story angle was taken up (one that was not damaging) and that participants' vulnerabilities as State housing tenants were protected (field notes D3).

Explorations and analyses of power relations

These sessions were developed in consultation with my cultural supervisor for two reasons. Firstly, I noticed that power issues were surfacing in a more overt way within the group. Secondly, I thought it important to have a framework for analyses of the planned housing advocacy and relationships within the advocacy project. We co-facilitated these group sessions. It was considered important to have a co-facilitator who had good knowledge of Pacific peoples' cultures when focusing on issues of power and our analyses, given that issues of hierarchy and authority are differently perceived within Samoan, Tongan and Palangi cultures.

Specific activities engaged in by group members regarding analyses of power dynamics related to the experience of power at three levels. The first and second, focused sessions on experiences of power within (personal power) and power with (power shared between people) respectively. Explorations of these first two levels of power involved group members sharing their experiences of power at these levels and identifying attitudes and behaviours that had contributed to these. Emphasis was placed on the achievement of shared power as an important aim within the activities of the advocacy group (field notes D2).

The third session focused on explorations of structural power relations. It was emphasised that in some of the situations people had talked about, there was an imbalance of power at first, not because of things inside people (like differences in inner strength), but to do with things such as authority, status and numbers of people. Explorations of structural power relations focused on planning for action on housing issues (i.e., home ownership, lower rents and culturally appropriate houses). Following identification of structural power relations in these areas, group members considered strategies for working with these to bring about the most agentic outcomes for WAG and community 'A'.

Group process

Discussions on group process centred on membership and the continuance of the project, staff changes and restructuring within 'Y' that affected WAG, and power issues within the group.

At the commencement of phase three, numbers in the group were dwindling. Two women had withdrawn (for reasons that weren't entirely clear) and another appeared to be contemplating it. WAG had been meeting for over six months, and group members began to question why we

were meeting. Progress had been slower than expected, few tangible results had come from the project and group members were finding it difficult to envisage what the group could achieve. I sensed there was another underlying reason for the dwindling membership that group members seemed reluctant to discuss, and intuitively felt it had to do with issues of gender. I believed that members who were no longer coming to the group had been discouraged from doing so by relatives or friends and that this was also affecting other women's attendance who were still coming to the group. I thought this might be due to traditional Samoan and Tongan role expectations of women, and that the women had been told not to come by male and older relatives who had more authority.

I felt unable to act on this issue for two reasons. My lack of knowledge around Samoan and Tongan culture meant that I didn't know for certain if this was the case. As a 'woman' and a 'lesbian' I was also afraid of being labelled as 'man hating' if I identified the issue as gender. Following a presentation made by some WAG members to social work students about the activities of WAG, one of the students raised the question: '*why weren't there men in the group?*' An animated conversation occurred between the other three presenters (who were all Tongan women) and some of the Pacific peoples in the class, confirming my intuition that the issue of non-attendance in the group was related to traditional gender role expectations (field notes D1).

This allowed the issue to be raised for group discussion, along with ways that group members could be supported to resist claims designed to keep them 'in traditional role'. This discussion was fruitful and resulted in the stabilisation of our membership. Two group members also stressed that it was '*important to keep checking to see if any members were being pressured to stay home*' (field notes D1). This situation and my own responses to it also gave me scope to reflect on the impact of my own identity and life experiences on my role as community developer/researcher. This particular experience was key, in that it amplified already emergent research themes and produced new ones that started to shape the research in different directions.

Three new members were also introduced during this period and leaving members farewelled. Significantly, one person who was leaving the group to go overseas was 'B', the community worker from 'Y' who had known and fulfilled a significant social and spiritual role in the lives of some group members for a number of years. Two recently arrived women in the community and another community worker from 'Y' (hereafter referred to as 'N') replaced the departing

members. The group's process around the departure and integration of new members required considerable time and attention.

At this time 'Y' was also restructuring and introducing new members into its organisation. The original working party was replaced by a Board responsible for the governance of 'Y'. The number of employees in 'Y' was increased from one to two, with the community worker now reporting to a manager who attended Board meetings. The new structure of 'Y' was hierarchical, and the majority of its members appeared to have little understanding of community development processes and the centrality of power relations within these. These changes had profound implications for the investigation, discussed more fully in chapter nine.

The final issue that required attention during this period was power relations within the project. Power issues within the group were becoming more overt, paralleling people's growing awareness of these and the increasing time and energy invested in the project. Two of the newcomers (although immigrant Tongan women and living on low incomes) had university degrees. Some of the participants considered these two women to be highly educated and were worried that: *'they might be laughing behind our back, because we didn't know as much as them'* (field notes D1). Additionally, some members had an evolving awareness of my structural power as an educated Palangi. One member had been questioned by another member of her Tongan community *'why was she working with a Palangi?'* This WAG member said that this same person had also commented about *'rich people making money from researching poor people'* and that she'd been thinking about what he could have meant (field notes D1). These comments raised questions for her about the power relations within our project, which she subsequently voiced within the group.

In the same group session, a Samoan member of the group said that she: *'wanted some action and that it wasn't enough to keep coming and sitting around talking. And that some people did make their money from researching poor people'*. Raising these issues caused conflict and discomfort between some group members, as some felt ashamed that the issue of money had been raised (field notes D1).

Phase three: emergent themes

Issues of culture and development for Samoan and Tongan communities

Issues of agency and development appeared to be closely linked to the articulation of authority, hierarchy and gender roles within Samoan and Tongan cultures. From this realisation a new facet of the research emerged that sought to establish the connections between culture and agency, establishing the basis for the part of the inquiry that formed theoretical question number two.

How communities might resist new roles and increased agency

My observations of resistance WAG members had met within their families and the wider community to their participating in the group's activities led me to engage with another series of questions. While I could see that there were issues of agency directly relevant to Tongan and Samoan cultures, my own life experiences also told me that resistance to people changing and taking power tended to be a widespread human phenomenon. I began to ask myself 'in what ways did communities resist new roles and increased agency of some of their members?' Related questions were 'under what circumstances did families and communities have responses that were enabling of people claiming new subject positions?', and 'how could this issue of resistance to increased agency of members, be worked with effectively within community development processes?' I regarded this as an important issue. I observed that sometimes within empowerment processes, some of the biggest barriers to increased agency, lay in the resistance of family and friends to these changes.

The impact of community organisers' cultures and identities on organising processes

My own inability to act around the gender/power issues within our predominantly Samoan and Tongan group as a Palangi lesbian took me by surprise. I had already been aware of how cultural differences impacted on the project in both agentic and unagentic ways. At times I was oblivious to issues pertaining to Tongan and Samoan culture, or alternatively, I would find myself positioning research participants as 'other', overlaying the stories with assumptions about them as members of another ethnic group. I became aware of my tendency to see the other

participants as oppressed because they were poor, but they did not necessarily see themselves likewise.

However, this latest occurrence propelled my awareness of these issues into a growth spurt. As I recorded the process of the research and my own impressions, my exploration of the impact of my own cultural identity on the community development and research process deepened. I began to formulate further questions relating to the impact of community developers' subject positions on development work with communities.

Phase four: housing advocacy

This phase of WAG's activities focused around the practical aspects of housing advocacy. The intensive part of the planning and preparation for the housing advocacy took place over several months. During this time a number of activities ran in tandem.

Establishing housing advocacy goals and supporting actions

In the months leading up to the advocacy phase, the group identified four areas of housing that they were interested in: market rents and affordability, child health and safety, house ownership and cultural appropriateness of housing. The final group decision regarding the advocacy topic was determined by their sense of: being able to make a difference, group resources, and the immediate relevance of issues to the lives of group members. A central point of discussion was the importance of balancing the smaller achievable advocacy activities with actions that would also contribute to change at the wider level.

Discussion centred around the possibility of campaigning on state housing related child health and safety issues, supporting the Labour party's newly unveiled Housing Policy in the lead up to the national elections. A number of housing advocacy goals and supporting actions were chosen. These are outlined in table five, shown on the following page.

Table five: WAGs housing advocacy goals

Housing advocacy goals and supporting action (WAG)	
<i>Health and Safety</i>	
1.	To raise public awareness of home-related child health and safety issues currently facing tenants of Housing New Zealand houses in 'A'.
2.	To contribute towards improved health and safety conditions for people living in Housing New Zealand owned houses in 'A'.
<i>To support the Labour party's Housing Policy</i>	
3.	To raise the awareness of people living in 'A' of the Labour party's housing policy
<i>Supporting actions</i>	
1.	To carry out a child health and safety survey of Housing New Zealand Houses in the 'A' area, releasing these to target audiences.
2.	To invite Labour party members to a meeting in 'A' to raise voter awareness regarding their housing and related policies

Child health and safety survey of state-owned houses

The second activity consisted of carrying out a child health and safety survey of Housing New Zealand houses.

Coordinated action with the New Zealand Labour party

The third area of activity by the group consisted of coordinated action with the New Zealand Labour party over several months. Like many other low-income areas, community 'A' traditionally had a low voter turn out at national elections. (Many of the people in these areas were considered by Labour party politicians to be potential Labour supporters). Therefore Labour party members had an interest in working with WAG as a means of making linkages with the people in this area and increasing voter turn out and potential Labour votes. WAG accepted an invitation by the Labour party to release the survey results at a public meeting on housing jointly planned by Labour party and WAG members. It was agreed that the Labour party would host this meeting and they would also take the opportunity to outline their housing policies.

It also became clear to WAG and Labour party members that there could be mutual benefit in co-ordinating other actions. As a forerunner to the public meeting, WAG did some joint publicity with the Labour party candidate around the housing survey, encouraging people to vote⁵⁰ in the upcoming national elections. Planning action with the Labour party, meant the group had to be vigilant to maintain a separate identity and to ensure there were no negative spin-off effects for members.

Preparation of a media strategy

The fourth area of WAG's activities was the preparation of a media strategy with the assistance of a media consultant. Target audiences and key messages drawn from preliminary survey findings, were decided on by the group. Earlier in the year WAG representatives had attended media advocacy training courses in Wellington and Auckland. Three members were selected as media spokespeople to represent WAG. Invitations to the public meeting and a background information sheet on the research were sent to key media people and organisations. Two days before the public meeting, the group spokespeople underwent further media training which focused directly on the key points arising from the survey that WAG wished to make to the media.

Public meeting

The fifth area of work undertaken by WAG during this phase was the release of their recently completed child health and safety survey of state-owned houses in community 'A'. The results of the survey were released at a public meeting in community 'A', jointly organised by the Labour party and WAG. The meeting was 'officially' hosted by the Labour party, with WAG invited as guest speakers for the purpose of releasing the survey. The public meeting had a very high turn out of local residents, many of whom were state-housing tenants. Some local residents also spoke, airing their grievances and feelings of anger at the housing conditions they were forced to live in. The atmosphere of the meeting was highly charged. This was hardly surprising given the declining provision of publicly owned housing in Aotearoa over the past fifteen years.

Other ongoing housing advocacy activities and outcomes

During the three months following the public meeting, WAG continued with a number of advocacy activities. These included meetings with representatives of Housing New Zealand,

politicians, government bureaucrats working to develop housing and social policy and ongoing media advocacy.

Conclusion of the housing advocacy

For several months WAG members continued to engage in housing advocacy activities. What was now required was sustained pressure on Housing New Zealand and engagement with housing policy people to ensure that the survey's recommendations were followed up on. The research was at an end and I was no longer in a position to continue the co-ordinating and supporting role of the group's advocacy work. Some group members wished to continue, but lacked some of the essential resources (such as sufficient knowledge of bureaucratic structures, childcare and a physical base from which to work). Organisation 'Y' had previously provided the physical base. The research funding had covered costs of childcare and my membership of the group had complemented other group members' knowledge. Soon after the commencement of the research there had been a verbal understanding with 'Y' that they would assist the women in continuing the advocacy work. This was consistent with one of the organisational aims of working with local residents to have input into social policy.

However, organisation 'Y' did not continue to work with WAG at the conclusion of the advocacy research project. During this last phase of the project, conflict occurred between organisation 'Y' and some WAG members. Despite a facilitated meeting between some members of 'Y' and WAG, the conflict was never resolved. My assessment, explained in chapter nine, was that it was no longer 'safe' for me to have any further contact with 'Y'. This was unfortunate, as I was no longer in a position to advise 'Y' on how they might support WAG to continue with the housing advocacy. The outcome for the women in WAG was that they were left without organisational support to continue the housing advocacy activities for their community. A month later, on behalf of WAG, I sent organisation 'Y' and local community workers a report on the activities and outcomes of the housing advocacy project. This report included media clippings, written correspondence and recommendations of ways in which WAG members might be supported to continue the work by organisation 'Y'. Outcomes of the housing advocacy detailed in the report were:

- Widespread distribution of the housing survey to key politicians, policy makers and members of the public.

- Widespread media coverage regarding the child health and safety issues facing tenants of HNZ owned houses in community 'A'.
- An offer from HNZ to review the conditions of the HNZ houses surveyed.
- Anecdotal reports of HNZ's increased responsiveness to tenants for a short duration following the release of the survey (field notes E2).

At the conclusion of WAG's activities, it was clear that sustained advocacy was required to achieve policy solutions. The comments of one WAG member at the conclusion of the project aptly summed up the situation:

We do a big thing – it's started to work. Now we sitting back and we see if it's starting to work. We need to keep shaking them {Housing New Zealand} up with the paper. They keep going back when they see an article in the paper with our name on. It makes them want to fix things. Our helping has started to help, but there are heaps more houses out there.

Talking about her vision for the community she said:

I want to help, but I realise I can't do it myself. We need others to help for example like you {community developers/people with particular skills}. We need more skills and experience to do it (WAG#1).

A few months following the formal conclusion of WAG's activities, I received a letter from 'Y's Board stating their commitment to the continuation of the housing advocacy and of their plans to explore this with housing advocacy workers in the area. Many months after this (and over a year after sending the Housing Advocacy Outcomes report to 'Y'), I was telephoned by a social work student doing a placement with the organisation. She told me she was doing a survey on behalf of 'Y' to ascertain the need for housing advocacy to continue in the community. I have heard nothing since. To my knowledge, 'Y' has not taken any further action in this area.

Phase four: emergent themes

How social structures impact on minority groups' choices for activism

Although the impact of dominant social structures on the agency of individual members of minority groups was evident within the early stages of the research, their impact on minority group choices for activism emerged quite clearly with WAG's choice of advocacy topic. This story (outlined in the data presented within theoretical question number one) was significant in

demonstrating how institutional power-culture relations structure groups' choices for activism at the more macro levels of policy debate.

WAG also began to engage in a series of partnerships as a means of realising its advocacy goals. These partnerships or working relationships were with organisations and people who had greater structural power either via their identity or institutional relations. The success of these partnerships in terms of increasing WAG's capacities for agency and self-determination were variable. However, the results of this aspect of the research confirmed for me the importance of partnership for communities at the economic and cultural peripheries with groups in more structurally powerful positions in order to realise goals of self-determination. At this point I became interested in the relational dynamics of culture, structure and institutional power in configuring relationships of agency as an outcome of community – organisational partnerships.

My interest in this area deepened even further with the advent of the previously mentioned conflict between members of WAG and organisation 'Y'. The absence of the partnership with 'Y' significantly weakened the 'capacity for agency' of WAG members and community 'A' to build substantially on the housing advocacy work already undertaken and to address their housing issues.

Community-organisational partnerships

The unresolved conflict caused me to begin thinking quite critically around the area of minority group–institutional partnerships. It became evident there was a mismatch between the dominant discourses and associated institutionalised practices of the Christian church, and those discourses and less institutionalised practices of community development. I realised from my experience and from the literature, that it is not unusual for the predominating institutional discourses that shape thinking and behaviours within organisations attempting to undertake community work, to be at variance with those of community development.

The importance of access to structural power for marginalised communities and the disempowering aspects of community-organisational partnerships made the paradoxical nature of community-organisational partnerships apparent. I became interested to investigate further the problematic area of these relationships and how they might be overcome. This led to the development of research questions that inquired into the agentic and unagentic aspects of community–organisational relations and the associated dynamics of culture, structural and

institutional power in configuring relationships of agency. These questions formed part of the Canadian research component.

Agency as religion – agency as spirituality

A second area of interest and resulting clarity that arose for me is the distinction between ‘agency and religion’ and ‘agency and spirituality’. Activism within the practice of religion institutions and activism as part of a spiritual practice that is not bound by Eurocentric and patriarchal discourses can have divergent results regarding its ability to re-constitute power relations. I came to regard ‘agency and spirituality’ as distinct from ‘agency and religion’ in that the former brings an intent to transform status quo power relations as part of increasing the agency of marginalised individuals and communities. The conscious re-constitution of one’s subjectivities (agency and consciousness) and the appreciation of our inter-connectedness as human beings as ‘a guide to action’, may be regarded as part of spiritual practice.

The transformative use of power and the impact of ‘power with’ on dominant social structures

In some respects the themes produced here are not new, but exaggerate earlier ones. The continuing challenges of stepping into counter cultural roles of leadership, speaking out and exercising authority increased at this stage, as the public nature of the advocacy activities was stepped up. This required group members to *‘face their own people’* as they put it. While this was tough for advocacy group members, this phase also made it increasingly evident that the experience of these new leadership roles and of speaking their truths publicly was a powerful experience for these women and their communities. As a result of their advocacy activities this small group of women exerted a strong impact on the media, government housing organisations, politicians and policy makers. While some of this was due to effective advocacy strategies and fortuitous timing, the transformative use of institutional power by some people in key positions was also an important factor. These themes were influential in determining the direction of the research inquiry in Canada (Field notes E2-E3).

Validity tensions and power-culture dynamics

The methodological issues that arose in the work with WAG reflected and constituted a range of power-culture experiences that had varying implications for the validity of the research. These

power-culture relations concern the dynamics between myself (positioned as traditional researcher by other participants) and the other women's advocacy group members (traditionally 'the researched'), between other advocacy group members and in relation to the wider community. They were also perpetuated and reflected through the application of PAR methods (predominantly based on white, middle-class, male norms) by a researcher (myself) working within the institutional constraints of academic/university culture.

Feminist researcher Marion Martin (Martin, 1996) points out that power within the research process is not simply concentrated within the researcher or the research community. Drawing on elements of Michel Foucault's theses on power, Martin (Martin, 1996) proposes power as a dynamic and fluid force within the research process. Power is exercised rather than possessed. While power is exercised in vertical directions (for example, 'researcher' over 'researched'), it is also exercised from the bottom up. Power relations within the research community (including both traditional researcher and participants) reveal:

...not a simple hierarchical loading based on socially ascribed characteristics, but.....complex multifaceted power relations which have both structural dominance and structural subordination in play on both sides (Humphries cited in Martin) (Martin, 1996, p.89).

Ristock and Pennell (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) acknowledge that both researcher and participants bring with them social histories of race, class, gender, sexuality, age and other power-associated differences in social position. "These reverberate throughout their interaction, whether the researcher pays attention to them or not" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.65). Examining the microphysics of power within the research is necessary if we are to understand the interpersonal and structural relations that affect the research process. Lack of attention to the micro-physics of power (or culture) could misdirect the analysis of process and results, thus compromising the validity of the research. I would also add that lack of attention to the micro-physics of power could also compromise the catalytic validity of the research.

As noted in chapter six ('Validity and generalisability'), I frequently encountered tensions between Lather's three categories of validity (construct, face and catalytic), particularly as these pertained to relations of agency as these were constituted through power-culture dynamics. Below, I have selected five key issues to demonstrate these tensions.

Participation

Central to the issue of individual and community agency and ‘research as empowerment’ is participation. Questions such as who decides on the direction of the research, its methods, or what are the next activities of the group, for examples, are essentially about the locus of power (Martin, 1996; Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Throughout the research, I often asked myself the question ‘what is an appropriate balance between myself as the research co-ordinator and the other members of the group?’ Striking an ‘appropriate balance of power’ meant balancing the participatory and empowering aims of the research process with investigation outcomes of rigorous, evidence based knowledge claims. In other words, the demands of construct and face validity must be balanced with those of catalytic validity.

At the onset of the investigation, I had intended to involve members of WAG in each and every level of the research project. It did not work that way, and I swung between feeling that too much was being asked of the women in terms of time and energy, and yet that their full participation was important in power sharing and producing trustworthy research. The inherent tensions between participation, empowerment and the production of credible research rarely sat comfortably for me throughout my investigative work with WAG.

At one time in the later stages of the research project, group attendance and energy’ seemed particularly low. I seriously questioned the balance of participation between other members and myself and so asked the other members “how they were feeling about the project and if they wanted to keep going?” Their replies affirmed their commitment, but also a level of stress and fatigue in their own lives that made participation difficult:

I feel committed to the group and what we are planning...sometimes I might look stressed or far away, it is because of the situation at home (WAG#6).

It seems a hard job. We need more energy and people to energise us. Sometimes I feel like giving up. I know we can do it if we stick together. We can get to the end, we can do it. And then we can be proud of ourselves (WAG#5).

There was also a feeling among other group members that I had the skills and time to carry out various aspects of the research and related decisions. Being Palangi and having English as my first language, meant that sometimes I was the group member best placed to deal with institutions in the course of our research and advocacy activities. For example, one day when we were allocating tasks a group member said to me: “I am thinking that you should phone the electorate office in case I make a mistake” (WAG#6). Also other members had little time to

carry out additional responsibilities apart from family care, paid employment, voluntary work within the church and schools. Particularly during the advocacy phase of the project there was a tension between getting ‘things done’ and the group value of participatory democracy and power sharing.

Authority/leadership

I approached my role with a belief that we all have our own ‘sense of knowing, inner truth and life experience’ to draw on and contribute in our activities with others. Different kinds of specialist knowledge, such as research skills on my part, and the local and cultural expertise of the participants, could work in a complementary manner to promote shared leadership and more equal power relations among participants. This is consistent with feminist and PAR approaches to inquiry (De Koning & Martin, 1996; Green et al., 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) outlined earlier. My expectation was a more or less linear process of group members gradually gaining confidence and skills and eventually taking up stronger leadership roles. This did not happen according to plan!

During my initial meetings with the group, there was a strong expectation for me to take a directive role. I emphasised continually the ideas of partnership, sharing knowledge and skills and co-participating in planning and research activities. However, I quite quickly became aware that most of the group members wanted me to take up more of a role of imparting knowledge. One woman said: *‘We expect you, the lady from the university, what we would be expecting from you, is that you are going to teach us’*. Some of the group members felt unsettled by what they saw as a lack of structure, concrete information and a directive role on my part. It was often expressed to me that I was from a *‘very high place’* (the university) and that they wanted me to teach them concrete skills and impart knowledge (field notes B1). I noticed over the first few months of our meeting that group members showed some confusion and frustration at my insistence that they also had knowledge to share. Reflecting on her experiences of this many months later during a presentation at the Public Health Association of New Zealand’s annual conference, one participant said:

So myself and the other mothers in the group thought that Lewis would be teaching us skills and things. But Lewis said ‘No. You got knowledge, I got knowledge – we will teach each other’. I thought to myself ‘but what knowledge have I got?’ So I was confused and the other mothers in the group were confused too. And we said to each other ‘Why doesn’t Lewis teach us some skills?’ So we wondered if it was worth coming at all (WAG#1).

These experiences were contrary to the ideal of the “co-creation of knowledge”, a central premise of PAR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). I did have some knowledge that would be useful to share with them, and in that way (as they said) I was a kind of a ‘bridge to their futures’. However, I also became aware that their leadership expectation of me was also bound up in the issue of authority. In their eyes, because I came from a university, I had an authority in relation to knowledge that they didn’t have. These experiences are also consistent with PAR literature that notes the depreciation of popular knowledge, even by “the people themselves” (Gaventa, 1993). The ways in which authority and leadership played out within the research process are also consistent with the literature outlined in Chapter Four regarding Pacific peoples’ cultures and issues of authority, hierarchy and leadership.

The differential authority accorded to me was problematic to the other group members taking up leadership roles as well as challenging my construction of issues according to dominant Palangi norms, thus potentially impacting on construct validity. It also had potential implications for face and catalytic validity. I sensed that the reluctance of research participants to question my ‘expert researcher authority’ could also mean that when we were engaging as a group in processes of validating research findings, my initial interpretations (if incorrect) could go unchallenged (face validity). I was also aware that if the authority and leadership (power) stayed with me throughout the research process, other research participants were less likely to feel energised and increase their capacities as researchers (catalytic validity).

From my perspective as the research coordinator, issues around authority and ‘inner knowing’ repeated themselves in numerous ways throughout the research process. The way that I dealt with this was to challenge these assumptions, continually create leadership opportunities for others and use research and development methods that drew on members’ knowledge bases. The issues of authority and leadership impacted less on the research process as it evolved. This was because the research itself came to rely more on their localised knowledges as the investigation progressed and other group members began to challenge my assumptions as the trust between us built and we got to know each other better.

The tangibility and immediacy of results

From the onset of the research process, WAG members wanted to see practical and tangible benefits for themselves and other community members. Some also made it clear that they definitely wanted to do research themselves and wanted this process to begin more or less

immediately. For example, on the third week of the group meeting one woman wanted to know ‘*why the group hadn’t done any research or taken any actions to date?*’ I explained that I was waiting on permission from the ethics committee of the university and that ‘good research’ that people considered credible was planned and systematically carried out (field notes B1).

It was initially hard for members to understand the ‘research culture’ of ethics and systematic inquiry. This resulted in some initial tensions as we struggled to gain a mutual understanding of what this ‘advocacy research group’ could be about. In other words, what were and could be our areas of commonality? From my perspective how could a research process that had to meet the ‘scientific’ requirements of the academic community and was controlled by the institutional needs of the university fit with the needs of this community? From their perspective, the question was more of how could their desire to improve and take action on the conditions of their lives fit with the ‘set of rules from the university’ that this researcher had to obey to get this qualification called a PhD? From the perspective of communities (particularly those whose cultures are not represented within dominant social structures), knowledge is both accessed and legitimated through the scientific community, many of whom reside in academic institutions (Gaventa, 1993). The everyday knowledges within communities at ‘the margins’ have a much better chance of advancing their causes if legitimated through scientific rigor – thus their reliance on the ‘academic expert’ to transform these into legitimate knowledge claims (field notes B1-B2).

A further example of such tensions occurred in the later stages of the advocacy research project, when the group was carrying out its own housing research. The group’s target number of houses to be surveyed had been agreed upon as 40. However, one member went well over her quota and when asked to stop surveying houses expressed her frustration: ‘*Why shouldn’t I carry on if there are so many people that want their houses surveyed!*’ (field notes E2). However, a balance had to be struck between the group’s resources (skills and time) to analyse all the findings in a scientifically rigorous manner and the scheduled timing of the release of research. Such challenges are not uncommon within PAR aimed at social change. At times PAR “sacrifices methodological sophistication in order to generate timely evidence that can be used and further developed in a real life process of transformation” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p.591).

The tangibility and immediacy of outcomes from the research desired by community members meant that a delicate balance needed to be struck between the trustworthiness (face and construct validity) of the research and the need of people to see immediate and tangible benefits

(catalytic validity). Initially, from one week to the next (as we discovered and negotiated our common ground), I did not know if I would still have a research group. Throughout the entire research process, I continued to hold the tension point between the requirements of the research culture and the needs and requirements of the community I was working with. As our trust grew and common ground became more established my experience of the tensions between catalytic, face and construct validity lessened, although always remained. I was in a bridging role between two quite different cultural communities and their sometimes divergent needs. Throughout the research with WAG, I continued to balance the needs of the other advocacy group members with the requirements of the academic community.

Research participants and the wider community

It was clear from the onset that various dynamics of power were being played out within WAG. Some of these were along lines of ethnic and extended family networks, others through personalities and personal power and occasionally through more structural relations of power such as relative wealth or levels of education. The group had a strong Tongan membership, particularly through one extended family. I suspect this made it more difficult for one or two other members to feel they had an equal stake in the group. The following story is an example of how these dynamics impacted on the rigour/validity of the research.

Towards the beginning of the research, (after group members had signed consent forms), I double-checked with group members they were okay with the group session being taped. One of the Tongan members of the group replied that she *'was not happy with this'*. Immediately discussion (in Tongan) broke out among the Tongan members of the group as they tried to discern why she did not want the session taped. They turned around and apologised to me for holding things up. I said: *'It's okay - sort it how you need to'*. After failing to reach an agreement with this person, they then suggested that the group vote on the issue – as they did not see why one person should stop the taping of the group. One member said that she: *'Wanted everything to be perfect for this week as 'E' {who was considered to be of high social status} was coming to facilitate and this was the week we had planned to officially start our research'*. She did not see why things *'should be spoilt by one person'* (field notes B1).

At this point, I strongly emphasised that we needed to take the time as a group to reach a consensus in a way that valued the needs of each member and that we could not be taping if one person felt unsafe. Group members then said that this one person needed to talk with me. We

decided to take a break while I talked with this person, as there was clearly something else going on that was not surfacing within the group forum.

It eventuated that this person was feeling unwelcome in the group and did not want to attend any more. She started to cry and said that she: *'felt hurt inside and untrusting'*. She said: *'Other people think I'm 'slow', but I'm not slow. I feel the other Tongans {meaning those in the group and the local community} talk about me'* (field notes B1). We did not tape that group session and there was considerable anger and shame within the group that things had not gone according to plan as some had wanted things to be 'perfect'. The group member who had not wanted the session taped did not return to the group. I learned afterwards that these particular dynamics (which reflected other relations of inclusion/exclusion and factions within the community) had existed for some time.

Other more structurally orientated issues of power surfaced in relation to the wider community. The dominance of particular social structures (cultural systems) along lines of gender, spiritual authority and economic power, and the associated exercises of power (sometimes unwittingly) had the effect of loss of group membership at different times. This was particularly so when group members strengthened their own capacities for agency and became more confident and challenging of structural authority within the wider community. Some splintering of the advocacy group occurred due to these conflicts, making it more difficult to check results and obtain face validity. Thus catalytic validity was again pitted against face validity.

Building a (cross-cultural) relationship with the research participants

Living outside of community 'A', and having an identity that differed from the other co-participants in some significant ways (ethnicity, sexuality, class, education, not being a mother, spiritual/religious beliefs) had three significant implications for the investigation that I have been able to ascertain. I was positioned (both by myself and other participants) as an "outsider" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Having a cultural identity that differed in many respects from the other participants meant that I needed to gain a much greater understanding of their cultures and everyday realities. This meant opening to my own lack of knowledge, being prepared not to know and spending more time with other participants coming to know their worlds. This was critical to the research in two ways. Firstly, I needed to find ways to build relationships with the other participants across our differences so that we would have a research project. This also called for reflexivity (Lather, 1991; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) on my part regarding how my

own social locations and identities influenced my assumptions and our interactions. It also called for trust on their part and willingness to form a relationship with some one outside of their everyday experiences.

I spent as much time as I could with other group members outside of our group meetings. I accepted most invitations to visit their homes, go to celebrations, church services and often spent hours on the telephone with other group members, using the opportunities to employ ethnographic (Sarantakos, 1998) data collection methods. There were times when my lack of knowledge of Tongan and Samoan cultures was sharply pulled into focus for me. I remember one group member rather exasperatedly making the following comment to me as we were trying to plan a meeting and she was in the midst of funeral preparations for someone whom I considered a 'distant relative: *'You do not know what I have been through this week!'* (field notes D2). Working across cultural boundaries also meant that I had to be prepared to review my constructions, and change the research design if necessary.

The other cross-cultural relationship problematic for me was the research participants coming to know my world. As a lesbian, I am familiar with homophobic responses from some people when they learn of my sexual identity and realised that this was a possibility with the other co-participants - particularly as they had strong religious affiliations. Being unfamiliar with Tongan and Samoan cultures and Roman Catholicism, I found it hard to guess what their response might be and whether it would be safe to 'come out'. On one hand, the method and integrity of the research design demanded that as a co-participant, I also be as authentic in revealing who I was. I intuitively felt that my ability to build and maintain a relationship relied upon my authenticity and that disclosing information about myself would shift the balance of power in a more equal direction. On the other hand, I felt concerned that by 'coming out' I could lose my participants and 'blow the research'. The paradoxical situation in which I felt caught caused me some paralysis as a researcher and group member. The field notes recorded by myself during our story-telling provide a synopsis of my experience.

Being a lesbian amongst this group is a challenge – and a part of me that I have not been open [to the group] about. I haven't felt safe to in case I blow the research. Or rather that because of homophobia, the group decided they wouldn't work with me. Rather an irony, as the nub of the research is about identity, visibility and speaking out.....When I tell them is actually crucial. Better to let them see more of me [first] so that my lesbianism is easier for them to integrate, rather than coming out sooner. But timing is crucial. If I don't come out to them, I know I'll lose them in a subtle sense anyway (field notes B2).

Lather (Lather, 1991) discusses the need for reciprocity within the research process as implying a “give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power” (p.57). The concept goes beyond negotiation of research design and methods, to include the more personal aspects of relationship between the researcher and those who are traditionally researched.

As the weeks went by within WAG, other group members grew more curious about my life. I began to feel increasingly alienated from the group, as I felt unable to ‘put my whole self in’ as they seemed to do in our group discussions. I grew increasingly anxious about losing the research - either through not being authentic or through homophobia (field notes B3, C1).

I finally sought assistance within cross-cultural supervision with a Tongan/Fijian woman who was able to give me the information I needed to find my way through this issue with the other group members. Eventually I came out to the group within the context of telling my life story, as we were all taking turns to do. Having worked together for three months already, locating my sexual identity within the context of my life-story, in a structured process, was for me a safer way of coming out to the group. We had had time to get to know each other and build relationships. Therefore, I reasoned that they were more likely to see ‘more’ of me as a person and associated perceptions of myself were less likely to be framed by dominant and discriminatory social constructions of ‘lesbians’.

All three categories of validity (construct, face and catalytic) may have been compromised had I not been open about this central part of my identity with participants. Expecting them to talk about their culture, identities and life herstories whilst holding a major part of mine back would probably have engendered distrust and feelings of disempowerment. Had these conditions prevailed, I doubt very much whether I would have been able to develop the open and trusting relations subsequently required to deal with issues of construct and face validity within the research.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with an account of the unfolding community development and research methodologies as these pertained to WAG and informed the remainder of the research. The subsequent formation of theoretical questions from the New Zealand component of the research was key in testing this theoretical framework and the New Zealand findings further.

Chapter eight and nine provide accounts of the research findings as they relate to these theoretical questions.

⁵⁰ WAG's position on this exercise was to emphasise the importance of voting, rather than encouraging people to vote for a particular party.

Chapter Eight

Identities, cultures and agency

Introduction

This chapter addresses the interconnections between identities, cultures and agency as these were demonstrated by the empirical evidence provided from the investigation. The critical post-modern approach taken to the analysis of these dynamics emphasises both the deeply subjective nature as well as the more structured, material aspects of these power-culture dynamics. Theoretical questions numbers one and two focus more on the undermining and exclusionary tendencies of dominant social structures and cultural systems as they relate to the agency capacities of communities at the margins. Theoretical question number one focuses on these as they relate to culturally dominant Western institutions and social structures. Theoretical question number two picks up these issues as they relate to a number of cultural systems that intersect and exist within the research communities. The marginalising tendencies of the agency terrains outlined, theoretical question number three begins to articulate processes whereby members of communities at the margins might begin to build more agentic identities that take into account their cultural systems.

Theoretical question one: dominant (Western) social structures and agency

How do dominant social structures and institutional behaviours structure minority communities' choices for agency (in relation to dominant Western male cultures) within their everyday lives and in processes of social action/ public policy debate?

Theoretical question number one inquires into the marginalising and constraining influences of dominant social structures on the agency of communities at the margins within the core industrialised nations of Aotearoa and Canada. The orientation of this question is not intended to preclude the fact that the research communities exercise agency within their everyday lives - they can, and do. This question is intended to illuminate some of the specific challenges these

communities face within their everyday lives in order to understand power-culture dynamics in relation to dominant social structures and to begin to identify some potential sites for increased agency. The larger context of this question relates to the processes of economic and cultural globalisation (outlined in chapter two) as they influence the lives and agency capacities of the research communities. The impacts of these processes are both contemporary and historic in origin.

The fieldwork produced a lot of data pertaining to this particular theoretical question. Much research already exists surrounding the exclusionary effects of dominant social structures on low-income communities in both Aotearoa and Canada (Duncan et al., 1996b; Health Canada, 1999; Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000,). Some data is presented for the purpose of confirming this research, but presentation of data focuses more on those power-culture dynamics structuring agency relations less written about. These pertain to the construction of Pacific peoples' subjectivities by Eurocentric, patriarchal discourses throughout processes of colonisation as well as contemporary processes of exclusion impacting on communities at 'the margins' in both Canada and Aotearoa. I then provide some data that illuminates the influence of dominant social structures on the agency of marginalised communities within community action processes.

Migration from the economic and cultural peripheries

Research results show that processes of economic and cultural globalisation play significant roles in structuring the agency terrains of the research communities. Within the study many of the participants and members of communities with whom participants worked were migrants. As outlined in chapter three, Western, capitalist expansion during colonial and contemporary times has created a specific set of social and economic conditions whereby people from peripheral, less industrialised nations are drawn (or 'imported' as cheap labour) to wealthier, core, industrialised nations (Amin, 1997; Robbins, 1999). Within the context of the research, these shifts primarily occurred from nations located in the economic peripheries (Tonga, Samoa, Somalia, Nigeria & Latin American countries) to the wealthier, industrialised countries of Aotearoa and Canada. Apart from a minority forced to flee their countries, migrants wanted access to new subject positions through the social mobility offered by increased standards of living and education in their prospective host countries. This itself is an act of agency. As my fieldwork with the New Zealand participants was more extended, most of the data relates to the migratory experiences of Samoan and Tongan women within the context of globalisation.

The context for migration

The stories of participants (particularly those told in individual interviews and story-telling sessions) confirm the existing literature (Lockwood, 1993; Ongley, 1991; Shankman, 1993). Cash jobs had been difficult for family members to obtain and WAG members spoke of the struggles their parents had experienced in financing their education and sometimes providing the family with enough food. Speaking from within the New Zealand context, participants frequently described their families in Tonga or Samoa as having been poor during their growing up years: *“To be honest, I am from a poor family....I would say life was very hard. We hardly have any clothes, any shoes you know”* (WAG#4).

Participants’ stories reflected the changing economic conditions within their countries brought about through colonisation and economic globalisation that had become difficult to balance with the traditional demands of providing for the extended family. The importation of goods, scarcity of paid employment (as contrasted to living productively off the land) and increasing reliance on a cash economy, meant that participants had begun to search abroad for paid employment. One participant described her decision to migrate to Aotearoa:

I came here in 1978. I wasn't married [at] that time.....And the main reason I came here because the way of living in the Island {Tonga} was really not much of an income to look after {my family}. Lucky I had a little good education back in the Island. But you know how much I had to earn in a fortnight? Is only \$25 a fortnight. And then I said to myself, 'I think I better look out'..... I saw the great difference {between Aotearoa and Tonga} and it's better for me to come and work over here and help {my family}.....And I think the reason why everybody come from the Island is because of the low income - there is no income there {Tonga} for people unless you got the job over there or get ah some the crops from the plantation. Is no factories there for you to go and work at except the ones who have a good education they have job in the Social Services over there and so there is not that many jobs and that is the main reason I came over here to get help the family back home....It is a big step (PWCW#1).

Stories also reflected changing values and priorities (more need for cash) within the context of economic and cultural globalisation. The data suggests that some participants began to adopt a more individualist approach to agency as they started to consider the economic needs of their immediate, rather than extended family: *“When I compare to Tonga, it's hard to get money in Tonga and plus the culture in Tonga – it can put our family down....We can't save up some money in Tonga because of the culture in Tonga. We have to help each other”* (WAG#3). Another woman who had earned a good income when she had lived in Samoa spoke of feeling harassed by relatives for money:

.....they expecting us for things.....like they demand every day. You know, and that's because his mum is alive and my parents are all alive. We are still giving things for the family but not in a life here. Life here, you have things but after things for your family then you decide to give if you can afford.....But it's different from the life there, for every way you go, they still follow you and say, 'come on?' (WAG#6).

All of these participants spoke of immigrating to Aotearoa for reasons of wanting to improve their economic conditions (a very significant agency capacity). Access to better quality education as a means to accessing paid employment and higher income levels was frequently cited as a reason for immigrating. These benefits are aptly captured in the following description of one woman's migratory experience:

In 1978 when they {mum and dad} came here, they see it's a better life here and they got a job and work to pay for my older sister and two brothers older than me and myself to come into New Zealand and get a good life here.....Life {in Tong} was good but, um, it's different. We come here, we eat good food. We stay in nice, clean house. We get good clothes. Going to school, good education...It helps, This is what our father helps for. We will have good education. Give us a better life and to be able to look after ourselves in New Zealand life, um, to become [more] wealthy than what we were back home...Yeah, I put it that way, we become more wealthy that what we are back home and I say we are.....We more healthy here, wealthy and healthy (WAG#1).

The proliferation of Western, capitalist values of consumerism (Korten, 1995; O'Meara, 1993; Robbins, 1999) via globalising processes of print and electronic media and migration was evident in the lives of research participants. One Samoan community worker talked about Tongan and Samoan peoples and the "image consciousness" (PWCW#2) of these communities. According to her 'image' or social status was now often linked to access to Western commodities. Some research participants described how their ability to make lives for themselves in Aotearoa and access income and commodities was a source of pride for their families still living in Tonga or Samoa. The elevated position of Aotearoa as a wealthier industrialised nation in the minds of most WAG members is reflected in the following comments by one woman:

....I can always look at Tonga, Tonga will be down here. Tonga will be at the third floor and New Zealand will be on the first floor, Tonga will be on the third step and New Zealand will be on the first step.....In New Zealand even though it is money, money, money, you got everything, better things. Nice things. Good things. But in Tonga it's the second hand way of life of what we got in New Zealand.....So the good things we got in New Zealand, and the bad things I thought, oh this is rubbish. It would be a good thing in Tonga. Even though I would send something bad to Tonga thinking oh that dress is not good here in New Zealand. I wouldn't wear that to a wedding. But if I sent that dress back to Tonga, my sister would wear it to a wedding or to church maybe (WAG#4).

Accessing economy and negotiating culture: conflict and consent

The investigation data showed that life was frequently difficult for the low-income and migratory research communities. Members of these communities often encountered various forms of “*blatant discrimination*” (CCD#3) in employment and commercial sectors. They also talked of being treated as “*outsiders*” (WAG#4, WAG#3) post migration and being made “*made to work long hours*” (WAG#4, WAG#3) for little or no pay by some extended family members. Members of these communities were often ‘isolated’ due to language, cultural barriers and lack of social networks (CCD#10, CCD#3, WAG#5). Their future hopes and dreams for a better life (increased agency) were important in sustaining them:

I think all my strength it comes from looking at my family starting up as a poor family and in the state we are in now, even though we should really be in the better way. We still making a move into it {a better life} and hoping for the future. Into a better way (WAG#4).

Their future hopes and dreams also carried important cultural values. When talking of their hopes for the future, people mentioned love, unity and respect among family members. For the Samoan and Tongan research participants, the presence of these values in their lives were important agency capacities. While it could be argued that the importance of family unity is important in most cultures, it is particularly evident in Pacific peoples’ cultures (Pilato et al., 1998). One participant captured the importance of these values in talking of her hopes and dreams for her children’s lives in Aotearoa:

My dreams [are] that they would stay together and love together. Love, share together, you know? [That] they support each other. That’s the main thing I want them to stay to help each other....They must all have that love and my other hopes that they will have good education....I want them to share, support each other...Never forget the unity, you know. The hopes and dreams that they would love. Love is the main thing. If you love, you won’t do anything to harm other people....But if you {they} have no love and I don’t know how these children could cope on their own, you know? That’s my highest hope (WAG#6).

The centrality of values such as unity, love and respect became more evident as the research with WAG progressed. These cultural values were important elements that constituted the internal agency terrains of Pacific peoples within the study. However, dominant social structures within the Eurocentrically orientated context of Aotearoa, often did not support these. While migration to Aotearoa did provide some access to important agency capacities that structure the external agency terrain, such as paid employment and access to better health care and education, nurturance of internal agency terrain elements, such as culture, was more problematic. The provision of publicly funded housing was one example. One Samoan research

participant explained the role of culturally appropriate housing in maintaining fa'a Samoa in Aotearoa:

My hope will be for our culture to be maintained in terms of togetherness of family and extended family {pause}. That our people have more space to be able to see what's happening rather than all closed in with all these problems within the households ... that they're not losing sight of their children. That they're still together and develop, ah re-strengthening of [culture] through better housing....It's very important thing over here for us to keep our culture together. It's a lot more than just a roof over our heads. It's a lot more to do with bringing back the sharing that we do back home um bringing back the um the extended [family] and strengthening tiesBecause here now at the moment now we all into our selves and you know you have just work all day you don't see your kids you never see you're your brother and sister for so long until something happens.....So you know we help people because it's a way we always been bought up that way.... our culture is always with people (HAG#2).

However, a Tongan community worker in the same housing advocacy group expressed her disinterest in culturally appropriate housing for Pacific peoples in New Zealand:

I'm not interested {in culturally appropriate housing} with coming back to that, because I hear some Pacific Island said 'we have a big house, big room, more space, and because in our culture we have to do this and that and let the Council to take the responsibility'. Why don't you have a standard, standard style of cheap flat? (Hag#3).

This woman had some practical reasons for her views, for example, that 'capped' government funding for state-owned housing would be better utilised within a 'one design fits all' approach. However, I sensed within her manner, words and tone of speech a deference to the dominant Palangi orientated social structures and norms, reinforced in her own words: "*That is what I have to teach our people, learn from the Palangi in how to spend your money, and how to wash....Adjust, for budgeting, for cleanliness, for sleeping*"(HAG#3). However, as one of the Pacific reviewers noted: "*The Palangi dominant culture has some very helpful norms for people from the Pacific Islands. For example the area of 'boundaries' and limit setting*" (PR#1). This reviewer addressed how integrating some aspects of another culture may increase levels of agency, particularly internal agency capacities.

Loss of culture and identity for ethnic minority communities was frequently raised by research participants both within Aotearoa and Canada. (Some of these issues have been written about already and are further discussed in chapter two). Participants in the New Zealand component of the inquiry sometimes spoke of feeling that some members of their cultural community appeared to 'disown' their culture. This was commonly experienced as being insistently spoken

to in English (despite both sharing the same mother tongue) by other Island born Samoans or Tongans:

Most of the Samoans, even if I try to approach them to talking in the language {Samoan} because I know they are Samoans, but they try to talk in the Palagi language – in the English. So that's why I always said you fia Palagi. You know....You here Palagi in a way that you want to be a Palagi the way they talk (WAG#6).

Others spoke of feeling culturally disowned by case-workers within government agencies who were also members of the same ethnic community:

That's the thing, the Tongan people you go with {a case-worker}, you look at that person you know they are Tongan, I'm not trying to put them down, but they're the people who are supposed to help you but they're the ones who turn around and say 'nah, nah....{no benefit assistance}'. Some blooming Tongans, all you know is that they are Tongans because you saw them in the funeral or a wedding walking there like a Tongan. Then when you went to the office they ignore you and don't want to know you or don't want to be known as a Tongan (WAG#4).

In this example, the officer (although Tongan) had accessed some economic power (via employment) within the dominant Palangi cultural system and social structures and in doing so had ascended to a different social and cultural order than his/her own. The officer is the agent of a particular set of hegemonic (Grossberg, 1996) discourses (capitalist, Western, male) and signifying practices that position a member of the same cultural community as “other” (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Speaking the language of the dominant cultural group with members of one's own culturally marginalised community (when one knows this is hard for them), or ignoring them, are behaviours of separation which effectively maintain dominant power-culture relations. Therefore, the dominant cultural and economic “order is consistently preferred, despite its articulation within structures of domination and oppression” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 161). Sometimes, these kinds of experiences were the source of conflict within families:

[My] mother, she always tell me to speak English to them {my children} and I say 'Look here, I not a Palagi, I'm a Samoan'... I always speak Samoan to my son and my mum, she gets mad she say, I should not speak Samoan to my son I should speak English. I say, 'well the way I brought up I am a Samoan and now my kids grow up I want them to be a Samoan too. No matter what country we live.' I feel like my mum wants to deny our son Samoan. But there's no need (WAG#5).

The Samoan community worker who had earlier explained her perspective on the importance of culturally appropriate housing in the maintenance of Pacific identities, made an astute observation about the maintenance of existing power-culture relations:

.....a lot of other people they like to let things go. Some of them they think that we're stirrers. Well some of them, they say well we're in New Zealand let's do what the New Zealanders do... but they forget because they thought they going to be someone else. They forget that at the end of the day they'll still be their little self - you can't be automatically become a Palangi (HAG #2).

As communities at the economic and cultural margins attempt to strengthen external agency terrain capacities (such as economic resources) via processes of migration, their internal agency capacities (cultural systems, identities) are often unsupported (and sometimes diminished) by dominant social structures within their new context. For these communities, attaining greater agency often involves conflict within their communities in relation to dominant cultural and economic systems, as they negotiate the tensions between internal and external agency capacities.

Colonising discourses and subjectivities: the Samoan and Tongan research participants

I did not anticipate at the commencement of the fieldwork that the impact of colonisation would necessarily be a significant factor in the inquiry into agency with the research communities. However, hints of this came quite early on in the fieldwork during a planning session with two WAG members (subject positions of low income, immigrant Tongan and Samoan), 'B' (subject position of Palangi, member of clergy), and myself (subject position of Palangi, university educated). When anticipating our future advocacy activities, both the Tongan and Samoan members said that: *'it was lucky they had 'B' so that when it came time to do the speaking up {advocacy work}, other people and especially Pacific Islanders would listen to them'*. When I asked what they meant, they replied: *'people will listen to you {rather than us}'*. When I asked why people would listen to 'B' and myself (two non Pacific peoples, not living on low incomes, speaking about issues that did not directly affect us), rather than them, they replied that: *'people would prefer to listen to the Palangi'*. They intimated that this was just the way things were and that it was something that could not be changed (field notes B2).

My own interpretation of this, is that in the participants' eyes, our statuses as 'Palangi, educated' and 'Palangi, clergy and respected member of community' were higher than theirs. However, one of the Pacific reviewers also pointed out that *"it would be common sense to ask representatives from the dominant culture to represent a minority group's issues"* (PR#1), inferring that this itself was an act of agency. I have no argument with this, (and agree that I might do the same as a Palangi immigrant to Tonga – as put to me by PR#1), although my own

analysis of Western hegemony remains. I believe the emphatic statements of these participants that other Tongans and Samoans would rather listen to 'B' and myself stating their case, to be due to the internalisation of Western hegemonic discourses pertaining to the superiority of these knowledge systems. Such discourses position those who have been educated within these institutions as having higher social status. This inference is supported by an interview with an immigrant Tongan community worker who also knew the group members. When I asked her about group members' continual positioning (perceptions) of me (as an educated Palangi) as having higher social status and authority than themselves, she replied:

The first thing is because they look at you, [you] are Palangi. They love the Palangi and the 'Palangi will do things better than us' is the thought....Because when the Palangi first came over to the Island, everybody there they think that the Palangi brought the good things to Tonga and everything good is the Palangi....like the modern things, or food and the clothes....It's also colonisation of the Islands when the first um, first um explorers came over there and that's how we think and whenever we go its a matter of us respect the Palangi more - higher than us. It carry on...that's how it started....Yeah and its to do with material things and what they bring. Everything is good, you know - education yeah that person is better than you (PWCW#1).

Western systems of knowledge

Conversations with group members and semi-structured interviews with Tongan and Samoan community workers began to reveal the ongoing significance of previous colonising processes (such as modernity, Christianity and consumerism) (Lockwood, 1993; Robbins, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) in constituting their internal agency terrains. During the course of one story-telling session, group members talked about why Samoans and Tongans had changed their clothing after the arrival of the Europeans to their countries. In ensuing conversation, processes of colonisation were positively viewed as a "natural progression of modernity" (Sarup, 1996) by group members:

Because of the church, that's what we heard. [The] mission coming from England - that's why the people decided to change the clothes (WAG#3).

I think we were so thankful that Captain Cook came to Tonga and actually give us a modern [life] you know - to become Tonga as it is now....We were just so lucky that we have that Captain Cook came to Tonga and bring the light. You know that we have actually become better people.....otherwise we would have still be in that stage....in the dark...He bring all these different things that make Tonga the more you know more in a development way....he tried to make the people in a better living, to cover themselves (WAG#4).

Laughter (Group)

In Samoa before {the arrival of the Europeans} we heard those stories that they went eating people -eating people in Samoa (WAG#6).

But when the church arrive you know that's when the [civilisation] starting (WAG#4).

During other group sessions it became evident that systems of Western knowledge were often viewed by WAG members as being superior to some of those within their own cultural systems. These kinds of conversations occurred numerous times. In one discussion concerning child-rearing practices in Samoa and Tonga, group members agreed that these were changing because of the influence of Western practices. One member said:

....in Tonga, like, I done something wrong and so my father gonna give me a hiding, [but] because the model {Western knowledge} comes, the civilisation is starting to come to Tonga, and people are opening their eyes now (WAG#4).

Christianity

Another discourse of tremendous influence in constituting the subjectivities of WAG members was Christianity. The patriarchal and Eurocentric discourses predominant in Christianity had taken root in the cultural systems of Tongan and Samoan societies during the European colonisation of these Islands. The influence of these discourses within the everyday lives of the participants showed in the group warm ups and informal conversations, in their reverence for 'B' as a member of clergy and within their formal story-telling sessions. One Samoan member of the group recounted her life with her family while growing up in Samoa:

The bible was the first Samoan book he {my father} was teaching us...We sat together and read verses from the bible or we memorise the Psalm 23. That is 'the lord is my shepherd'. Then we finish with a prayer (pause). No work is done before the morning devotions that was so special to us it was like a rule in our family (pause). We were told to worship God and encourage[d] to have faith and put all our trust in God (WAG#6).

On another occasion, another member of WAG alluded to the spiritual benefits of assisting the local clergy:

We have to help for those people, like the nuns and the priest. One day a week, you know, I'm going to help at the priest's house, just cleaning up and because of my belief, I can trust God and I believe I working there for nothing {no pay} and I will get some praise from God (WAG#3).

Like modernity, the powerful influence of Western hegemonic discourses that construct Christianity as a "civilising influence" on the former "barbarism of the natives" (Sarup, 1996) even in contemporary times, was evident in the comments of one Tongan community developer:

.....I think if we go back to civilisation...the other thing that they {Europeans} brought over there...they [convert] the people into Christianity....Because the Palangi brought the Christianity....the people and then the king and all the Tongans they developed into Christianity and then they gave up their country to God...Christian[ity] is really strong in us because the people we weren't civilised then - some are cannibals. They eat each other yeah.....The Palangi brought the Christian religion to them and then they changed their lives.. All the Islands they really very strong in their Christianity. Because once they came and introduced that civilisation and people knew that this is God not what they were living in like cannibal/terrible ways [that's] how we got to respect the Palangi. Because they brought the Christianity....they brought the light.....and brought the civilisation to the Island and to the people (PWCW#1).

Some of the Tongan and Samoan participants were more critical in their analysis of the influence of Christianity on their respective societies and cultural systems. Rather than positioning Christianity as a 'civilising and progressive influence', Christianity was viewed as a patriarchal, colonising discourse that had subjugated pre European Tongan and Samoan cultural systems to 'Western superior knowledge':

I think it started with the Christians Before that women had a lot to do with the development of Samoa....They {Christian missionaries} brought with them with the whip, and they brought with them the statement 'spare the rod and spoil the child' ...The whole thing {Christianity} doesn't really have a placing for women in it...We adapted our whole beings into this new thing and of course we start to say 'oh they are whipping those people, so we whip our people'....And the Palangi women were very silent and submissive and not seen...and so that's how we treat out women...I think when they brought this new message with them, it is a good thing, but it is part of social control (Hag#1).

However, the subject positions of these community workers were distinct from those of WAG members as they had higher levels of education and demonstrated more sophisticated structural analyses. The different subject positions of Samoan and Tongan community developers and WAG members, and their contrasting constructions, appear to point to the importance of higher levels of education and critical analysis for communities at the margins to reposition themselves more agentially in relation to dominant Eurocentric, patriarchal discourses.

The influence of religious discourses in the lives of WAG members was apparent in their treatment of clergy and the higher social status and authority accorded them. This was rarely talked about directly, but was implicit in their deference to clergy. Community workers conferred around the high social status and authority that the Tongan and Samoan communities generally accorded their ministers and other clergy. One interviewee said:

Even the religious have a status. Status - I still haven't got to the end, you know. I just see it within my own family and I always say to them 'they {clergy} are just like you and me, you know, they are not so unapproachable that you can't

talk'....They will do anything they ask them to do, you know - because they have respect and that status. 'You are a nun. I will do everything that you ask me' (PWCW#5).

This was confirmed by 'B' one day when we were talking about issues of authority and leadership within the group:

As much as I don't like it I am seen as an authority figure because of my role as a sister. Most of or all of the women I'd say who are part of this advocacy group um are affiliated to a church and church people like ministers and sisters are seen as somebody that they look up to or have authority.... (pause) While I do my best to be one of them and to talk about equality, it's something that I have to sit with that I don't find very comfortable. But it's definitely there (WAG#7).

Contemporary dominant social structures and the agency of communities at 'the margins' in Aotearoa and Canada

This section explores the structuring and exclusionary effects of the dominant discourses and social structures pertaining to ethnicity, class and gender, on the agency of communities at the margins in Aotearoa and Canada. The impact of these social structures on the lives of the research communities was revealed when participants spoke of everyday encounters with people, institutional representatives and their experiences of institutional practices. Some encounters demonstrated the influence of one particular discourse, such as race, in structuring the agency of individuals. Other stories showed a more layered process of marginalisation as several discourses could be operative within a given context of power-culture dynamics between actors. Rather than being organised around dominant discourses pertaining to ethnicity, class and gender, the material is organised to demonstrate the transmission and structuring effects of three distinct but interrelated processes of marginalisation. These are: (1) the construction and promulgation of marginalising discourses, (2) the maintenance and reproduction of these through institutional practices and (3) the everyday actions of individuals.

The construction and promulgation of marginalising discourses

The research data provides much evidence of communities at the economic and cultural margins being positioned unagentially by neo-liberal discourses in Canada and Aotearoa. These discourses were invariably promulgated through right wing governments and business interests, within the context of carrying out restructuring programmes in the 'national interest' of remaining competitive within the global economy. In some respects the 'felt' impact of these reforms on the lives of participants was fresher amongst research participants in Canada than in

Aotearoa. This could be because neo-liberally driven social and economic policy reforms have happened more recently in Canada, whereas the first wave of these were introduced in Aotearoa in the 1980s. The media was viewed by research participants as a powerful institution within the discursive field of policy debate:

What I see is the predominant media message and it's often a political message, and I'm thinking specifically about the provincial government convincing people on welfare or new immigrants that they're...they're lazy, that they need to work, that they're draining the resources of this country (CCD#8).

In one Canadian city these messages were viewed as effectively creating conflict between members of the public:

I think somehow or other many people in this community who are not from South East Asia or from another country ...um...blame the fact that they're in pain {don't have enough money} on the fact that the newcomers have taken that money....We had it in the focus group this morning. Ah... 'you know it's the Goddamn immigrants who came into this country and that's the reason {we have no money}'. I believe that that's being supported by many media messages by our provincial government right now (CCD#8).

One community developer talked about 'neighbourhoodism' as a term that had been coined by some low-income communities to highlight the classist and racist constructions of their neighbourhood by powerful institutions such as the media. According to her, the prevalence of these exclusionary and stigmatising discourses invariably limited employment opportunities for members of these communities:

If somebody who lived in one of these communities went for a job interview - they wouldn't likely get the job because their address gave them away as someone who lived in one of those communities. The media has done such a good job of making the general public believe that those communities are bad, therefore the people are bad and they can't be trusted and you shouldn't hire them (CCD#9).

Members of low income and ethnic minority communities, who saw other members of their communities as being similarly affected talked about the impact of these discourse on themselves:

They think I'm a deadbeat....This new government really treats people like they're criminals, stupid, deadbeats, whatever. [The premier] is acting like we're all ripping the government off for millions and millions of dollars every year. And he's talking mandatory drug testing, he's talking about fingerprinting. When you get stuff like that you can't help but feel, obviously to him you're worthless... We obviously are all completely uneducated and too stupid to know how to handle ourselves like...It's really demoralising for starters and it really makes me angry (CCD#9).

"I think the worst part of it for me right now being back on the system {social assistance}.....The judgement from the society that you're no good. If you're not working it's because you're lazy ... (sighs) You know you're a weight for the

society. Like.....you're garbage And even if you believe in yourself, after a while when it's repeated and repeated you start believing it, even if deep inside you know it's not true (CCD#6).

Racism and sexism often predominate within belief systems about members of low-income communities:

The other beauty one {stereotype} is the general attitude that 'oh you're poor you must have done something to deserve that' you know....If you're a single mother you must be a slut, slept around and you brought this on yourself. You're a single mother - you're automatically in the slut category (CCD#9).

The maintenance and reproduction of discourses through institutional practices

The research data also provided evidence regarding the reproduction of dominant discourses and social structures prevalent through institutional practices. Such institutions include government-funded health and social assistance programmes. Investigation participants were often subject to the monitoring and surveillance practices of these institutions in order to access a minimum level of resources necessary for a basic standard of living.

'Routine' institutional practices (such as those of categorisation, communicating in the languages spoken by the dominant cultures and requiring applicants to disclose personal information about themselves in public places) frequently undermined the agency capacities of participants. The difficulty of trying to communicate in English for migrants was often talked about: *"You go to the government and ask for money. It was embarrassing, so embarrassing and things. You had to do your communication by English. The language and sometimes it is hard to explain"* (WAG#4). One community development worker emphasised the feelings of shame brought about by recipients of social assistance through the practices of one government organisation:

You go to a government agency to ask for some financial support. It is so embarrassing. You need to be able to communicate well in English for a start. There appears to be a total lack of consideration for the privacy of the discussions taking place, some of it involves very personal details. You can hear what's going on. I would never want to share personal information in those situations. It makes one feel small. It can be demeaning and it slowly erodes women's sense of self confidence and self-worth (PWCW#4).

Other institutional practices by government departments were less innocuous:

Welfare can walk into my house anytime they want without advance notice and search my house. And they're looking for things like men's razors, extra

toothbrushes, cause they want to prove their might be somebody else living there who should be supporting me (CCD#7).

Participants talked about the power of institutions to re-define, re-categorise and reposition communities at the margins according to dominant social structures and norms. One community developer told a story about a Guatemalan migrant in Canada, who filling out a job application form, had ticked a box saying she was indigenous:

I said, 'No, in Canada you are not indigenous'. The next question was 'are you a member of a visible minority?' And she said 'no'. And I said, 'Yes in Canada, you are a member of a visible minority' And she just looked at me and said 'ah my brain hurts!' (CCD#3).

Similarly a Samoan community developer in New Zealand expressed his indignance at being labelled a 'Pacific Islander' (and thus being positioned as an 'outsider') by airport officials in Auckland:

We the non white happen to be the Pacific Islanders. It wasn't until I landed in Auckland {having come from Samoa} at the airport here and then I heard someone say 'Oh the Pacific Islanders have been cleared'. That's a label from the European, the Pakeha, Palangi, well whoever the decision-makers are. And I just like to hear how the white New Zealanders feel if they were to go to Canada or America and someone say oh 'she's a Pacific Islander!' (HAG#1).

Within both countries, systems of classification are connected to a particular set of "power-knowledge" relations (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Those whose identities are represented within dominant social structures also have the institutional power to construct 'official' categories (knowledge) and so position those who have different identities from themselves as "other" (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999). Such categorisations have far reaching implications for the ways in which they shape agency terrains. The construction of official categories and the development of institutional policies and practices invariably privilege some discourses over others. The boundaries of any particular paradigm within which policies have been developed often remain invisible, except to those communities at the margins whose agentic capacities remain un nourished as they fail to fit the policy templates that exclude and position them as 'other' (Lister, 1998; Williams, 1992).

The implication of this was far reaching for communities as they were often excluded from accessing important agentic capacities such as housing, employment or appropriate health. A Canadian community developer recounted the experiences of many immigrants arriving in Canada:

When they get here their qualifications mean absolutely nothing. So they become sort of trapped in a cycle of poverty that is aggravated by language - lack of

language of skills, and a lack of recognition of the skills that they bring with them. Um... and to some extent [there's] systemic racism ... so these are all factors that are contributing to, ah, marginalising people.. I think also people become so disillusioned that their poverty kind of rolls in on itself that ... Maybe even the way I experienced it myself - sort of like although you get a little bit of poverty and you've got a bunch of bunch of barriers and problems around you and it becomes a bit more difficult to climb out. You become more trapped it's ...ah... like a bit of a cycle. You just feel like there's no way you're ever going to get out of this. You lose hope (CC#4).

One government housing official in New Zealand described the misfit between the government's policy for the provision of publicly funded housing and the needs of Pacific communities. While anecdotal and statistical evidence (Howden-Chapman & Tobias, 2000; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999; New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 1999; The Otago Housing and Health Local Solutions Project, 1999) shows the need for larger houses, particularly for Maori and Pacific peoples (who have greater numbers of children than Pakeha New Zealanders), Housing New Zealand statistics do not show such a need. This has been a source of contention within housing policy debate in Aotearoa for some time. The housing official explains the discrepancy:

With the Island community {Pacific peoples}, they won't go in {to Housing New Zealand} and say there's twenty five of us, we want a five bedroom home because they know {that Housing New Zealand would say they were 'over-crowded' {and some of them would have to leave}. So that if they are housed, it might show up on the application maybe three or four family members, whereas in fact if they {Housing New Zealand} did a visit, it's probably closer to ten or twelve on average. No {they won't put that on their application} because, you know, it's too risky and that's why they view us suspiciously. I mean the last thing we want to do is go and visit a family, as I said we don't make judgements. If they say that's their family, that's their family...Housing New Zealand can do that {specify who is family}, and in fact they do that. They say, 'well hey, you are overcrowded but if your uncle and aunt and your second cousin moved over here you'd be fine'So there's the cultural issue as well (HAG#3).

The everyday actions of individuals

Institutional practices that structure agency are often reproduced uncritically by employees or members of institutions. The recursive ordering of social practices, through the 'practical consciousness' or 'everyday knowledgability of agents' (Giddens, 1984) and the predominance of liberal-human discourses such as 'common sense', (Weedon, 1987) whereby knowledge is not problematised, are important precursors for the maintenance of dominant social structures within institutional practices.

Fieldwork in both Aotearoa and Canada produced many narratives of situations in which members of communities at the economic and cultural margins experienced stereo-typing and discrimination by individuals in a range of institutional roles. These discriminatory behaviours occurred across a variety of sectors including employment, housing and commerce, having significant impacts on the subjective and material worlds of the research participants and members of their communities. One Tongan woman spoke of her experiences:

Being an Islander and then a Tongan, you find there people you get on with and, um, there's are some people looking at you as Pacific Islanders, you don't get along with even if you haven't done anything bad to them. They just look at your colour and you're Pacific Islanders, that's it, without getting to know you (WAG#1).

When trying to negotiate with the bank because her family were behind with the mortgage payments, she found that bank staff would not talk with her but insisted she get a lawyer:

To put it this way about my mortgage. When I rang them and ask them about paying it off, they wouldn't help me. They wanted me to see a solicitor, somebody higher, and to me I felt that I was mad at them. Why? Why can't they talk to a normal person, like me? ...I look at it they look at me, looking down because I haven't got much qualification...So to me they won't deal with me because I am down here, but they will deal with the lawyer or my solicitor cause they up here the same level as them (WAG#1).

The impact of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours of individuals was particularly significant in situations where these people were in positions of structural or institutional power:

It's hard for us Samoan to hop and get things straight away. Like approaching people in the Income Support. They are what you call, racist. You can see that....Most of the places where I been to.....I said to myself, oh, it is because I am brown and my hair is black or the language that I am using.....Because no respect in the way they act (WAG#6).

Foucault's (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) second thesis on power theorises power as being continuous and dispersed throughout a very large number of officially sanctioned social authorities. Within these institutions, the exercise of power is rational. For example, in the case of publicly funded social assistance, the applicant must meet certain minimum criteria. The ways in which criteria are applied however, are often contingent upon the identities and subject positionings of those individuals involved, and those discourses brought into play, influenced by context. This was highlighted by one woman's experience at the New Zealand income support service:

Sometimes I have problems with Social Welfare. I went to this lady, a Palagi old lady and she goes to me, 'look here, look at how young you are, you supposed to be out there looking for a job'....She knows {I have children}. I had my son there with me. And she goes to me, 'look at me, I am old and I am still working'. Oh,

man, I feel so bad and I turn around and say 'Sorry I can't tell you my problems. I want to go now'....Cause I went for my son's uniform for school {to try and get some extra money}...And she goes 'you should of planned and put away money'. And I told her, 'I can't put away the small amount of money that you giving us'.....She was telling me to go out there and look for a job and I ask her, 'are you going to come and look after my son for free? (WAG#5).

Within this situation, the employee's discretionary power appears to be closely linked to her positioning of the 'customer' unagentially in relation to a number of dominant discourses. Given the content of the text and the interviewee's subjective experience of the situation, quite probable constructions of the customer on the part of the government representative would be the 'Pacific Island benefit bludger', the 'promiscuous, lazy single parent', or the 'undeserving case'.

Investigation data also demonstrated the mobilisation and recreation of systematic bias (Lukes, 1974) within institutions by individuals. In one example, a community developer told a story about the attempts of a Samoan woman, living on a low income to get medical attention for her child. Not having access to a telephone to make an appointment first, this woman took her sick child straight to the surgery. Recounting the story, the community developer said:

Some patients never get beyond the receptionist to see the doctor. I can recall a situation where an articulate Samoan mother, pregnant and with two children under five years. She visits the doctor {without an appointment} as her younger child is unwell....The receptionist says that they can't see the doctor {without an appointment being made first} and to return the following day when an appointment can be made. As the woman recalls – 'I gave her the easy answer and said okay we will be back'. The truth is they never went back...It's those little things that are so important. When you chip away and chip away at people's self-esteem, they end up believing that they are not worth anything (PWAC#4).

The practices of this health care centre were based on the premise of people having access to a telephone and on (dominant) Palangi cultural protocol of phoning to make an appointment before visiting the doctor. It is likely that the nurse did not stop to consider why the woman had not rung to make an appointment first. She may have made some stereotypical assumption (from her cultural perspective) about 'Samoans being disorganised, just rolling up and expecting to see the doctors there and then', thus demonstrating Luke's proposition that:

The bias of a system is not sustained by a series of individually chosen acts, but more importantly by the socially structured and culturally patterned behaviours of groups and practices of institutions which may indeed be manifested by an individual's inaction (Lukes, 1974, p. 22).

Community development processes, dominant discourses and institutional practices

The investigation produced a number of examples of situations within community action and development processes whereby culturally dominant discourses and institutionalised practices structured the choices and actions of communities at the margins. One Canadian community developer notes the powerful influence of dominant discourses on belief systems of communities she worked with:

I found it's harder to get a political analysis across to people. I find that you're always bumping up against attitudes. I don't know how [you can] get out of this - political attitudes. People without much money are lower class [and] usually will accept the viewpoint of the government in power". There's a word for that process. I mean you're buying into - 'hegemony'. Yeah. So they're buying into that process and then you're trying to say 'no, no you can take some power! So you're bumping into attitudes and I don't know how to change attitudes (CCD#8).

Throughout marginalised communities' engagement in social action processes, dominant power-culture relations continue to impact negatively on agency capacities. Institutional practices that constitute the external funding and policy environments can also have significant impacts on the subjectivities (internal agency terrains) of members of communities at the margins:

Another barrier {to community capacity} had to do with how communities have in the past had to characterise themselves to funders as being very needy, as having high crime rates, as having a lot of poverty-related disadvantages... In fact in the competition to get money they had to be the most horrible place to live in order to get the funding.So that's a demoralising experience, emotionally it's a barrier, and it's a community-wide felt barrier. Individuals feel it but there's also this collective sense of 'poor us' if they internalise it or a collective sense of being demoralised because those proposals get used for other things. The media picks them up you know, all of that, right. And it becomes part of the community's psyche (CCD#9).

The ways in which culturally dominant institutions proscribe the choices of marginalised communities engaged in community action was also evident in the activities of WAG. By the time WAG had completed phase two of their capacity building activities, a debate had already begun within the group around which housing issues would become their focus. There was some dissension over whether WAG should advocate around issues of child health and safety (high rents and the physical conditions of the houses), rather than the cultural appropriateness of state-owned housing. While one woman and myself were keen for the group to tackle the latter issue, other members were of the opinion that 'seeing this is New Zealand, maybe we should go

along with how the housing is here' (field notes C2). There was also a more general discussion within the group over whether Pacific peoples should be advocating for public policy that supported the expression of their cultures within the New Zealand context. One woman said:

I am a Pacific Islander but the difficulty of carry[ing] on our traditions here are because of money....I mean, the government won't encourage us to do this...the wedding and the funeral and that's up to us Islanders to cut it down. You can't afford it, don't have it.....I mean, we can never change it in our traditions....[But] the government will not look at that.....That's a structural analysis. You look at it in a different way than the government is looking at it, you know?....I respect our traditions and our culture's way of doing things but I reckon this is not an important issue that will never change a thing (WAG#4).

Generally, WAG members felt that the group would have a much better chance of success if it attended to the basics of affordability and child health and safety. These issues sat neatly inside the more narrowly defined mono-cultural constructions of health and well-being supported by the majority of the New Zealand population. Had WAG advocated for culturally appropriate housing and attempted to position itself outside of dominant policy-related discourses regarding what constitutes 'healthy' publicly funded housing, it would have needed a considerably stronger infra-structure (resources, networks, partnerships) than it had access to at the time. The chosen advocacy topic (which met with considerable success), also coincided with an aspect of the majority of the group's identity (as mothers) that is shared and valued by the dominant culture in Aotearoa. While the group's choice was in part strategic (realistic and attainable given our resources), the influence of culturally 'hegemonic' (Grossberg, 1996) constructions regarding what constituted a publicly acceptable advocacy topic was also present. In these New Zealand and Canadian examples, the "field of common sense or popular consciousness" played a significant part in defining the "limits of the struggle" (Grossberg, 1996, p.162).

However, the other New Zealand-based housing advocacy-group (HAG) decided to advocate for culturally appropriate state-owned housing. In some respects this achievement is quite remarkable given the dominant power-culture relations⁵¹ that characterise the policy environment. This decision was made after considerable debate with members from other Pacific Island nations where once again discourses of the 'superiority of Western cultural systems' were apparent. One HAG member in favour of advocating for culturally appropriate housing had this to say about the "consent" (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996) of many Samoans to culturally dominant discourses and practices within their new environment:

My own people that have talked, they seem to be talking from a very Palagi orientated ah perception of things. Whereby they say um well this is New Zealand so things should be that we try to adapt ourselves to what is here and the way of

life that we are now living. Meaning that ah what we were used to or how we were brought up is now a second citizen to new environment. Whereby in my case I say oh yeah I am now in New Zealand but that doesn't mean that I should think as a [Palagi]. Well when we talk ah ah New Zealand we talking fa'a Palagi ah the European way (HAG#1).

One result of this group's housing advocacy was the establishment of a research project with Community Housing Ltd (a government housing department) involving consultation with local residents. The purpose of this research was to inform future housing design that is more compatible with "different cultural beliefs and practice" (The Otago Housing and Health Local Solutions Project, 1999). To date, this research has culminated in the design of several culturally appropriate houses that are being assessed by the local communities for 'suitability'. While, culturally dominant institutions and the policy environment did structure the activities (and the choices of some group members) of this group in a number of ways, they also achieved some success in positioning themselves outside of dominant policy discourse. (The reason this may have been so is explored further under theoretical question number five, chapter nine). However, the 'upstream' swim within policy debate for communities at the economic and cultural margins remains, as expressed by one Samoan community developer:

It still doesn't fit the for Pacific people - those houses were actually built for Europeans only. So they can't really keep saying to us that it's for the whole people. They are still building it {palagi style state-owned houses} and its biased....No one really wants to look at the basic needs of the whole people that have actually migrated and make New Zealand. They sing about diversity the enrichness and all that bull shit. You know [it] doesn't happen because we still have one biased system with never being made for us....People need to start changing the mentality of the way they think. Think multicultural (HAG#2).

Conclusions: theoretical question one

The investigation results demonstrate that the agency of communities at 'the margins' in the core, Western democracies of Aotearoa and Canada, are structured in part by power-culture dynamics. For migrants from the economic and cultural peripheries, processes of Western hegemony (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996) already in motion within their homelands intensify. For people whose countries were recipients of Western capitalist expansion during colonial times, discourses of modernity, Western knowledge and Christianity that position them as "other" (Hall & Neitz, 1993) are embedded within their cultural systems. While the research data has demonstrated these processes specifically in relation to Tongan and Samoan peoples, other literature (Sarup, 1996; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) exists that supports the historical location of these power-culture relations in other colonised countries.

In contemporary times, members of the research communities continue to negotiate Western cultural systems through contact with dominant social structures, institutional practices and the everyday actions of citizens within their new host country who are members of culturally dominant communities. While there may be new opportunities to access external agency capacities such as employment and improved healthcare services, migrants must also struggle with intensified forms of cultural hegemony inherent in these systems. Often the self-perception of economically disadvantaged migrants is negatively impacted on through the internalisation of racist, sexist and classist positionings. These threaten to diminish important internal agency terrain elements such as one's identity (self-esteem, sense of self and belonging) and cultural systems.

The parameters of 'popular consciousness' (Grossberg, 1996) and discourses framing policy debate are established within a particular set of material-power relations. The research results have shown that within the domain of community development and action, the power of hegemonic discourses to contain and undermine capacities for recognising and challenging those culturally dominant constructions that frame the discursive field of policy debate, are very significant indeed. WAG's choice of advocacy topic, demonstrated these relationships. Furthermore, some of these Eurocentric and patriarchal discourses (Christianity for example) are deeply rooted within the cultural systems of these communities.

The demonstrated power of hegemonic discourses to structure the subjectivities of research communities points to the need for development methods that work with members of these communities to create more agentic identities and subject positions for themselves, especially in pushing the discursive boundaries of policy debate. Structural power relations inherent within globalising processes point to the need for communities at 'the margins' to form agentic partnerships with institutions positioned within dominant social structures, which have access to economic and cultural/discursive power. It is likely that only through accessing these material power bases can communities at the margins increase their capacity to advance their interests.

Theoretical question two: culture and agency

How do issues of culture (gender, ethnicity and religion) impact on the agency of communities at the economic and cultural margins?

Within the context of this theoretical question, 'culture' is specific to the cultural systems of women and ethnic minorities. The emphasis is on those subjective elements of culture such as values, attitudes, beliefs and world views that have significant implications for the development and agency of communities. These subjective elements of culture are important because they have a strong bearing on the social and economic power that some members of these communities are able to exercise relative to others. An important premise of the thesis is that all communities have issues of culture that both constrain and enhance their development. The investigation data presented here explores the constraining factors within the gender, ethnic and religious cultural systems of the research communities.

Ethnicity and agency

Trust

'Trust' is a significant development issue for Samoan and Tongan communities living within Aotearoa. While 'trust' between people is integral to 'social cohesion' (Wilkinson, 1996), and therefore an important agency capacity within all societies, Samoan and Tongan people who have immigrated to core, Westernised democracies face issues of trust particular to their cultural communities. Various aspects of traditional Tongan and Samoan societies such as strong kinship and social networks, the ways in which dwellings are constructed and their close proximity to one another, mean that 'confidentiality' is an unfamiliar concept to many:

...I think that's one of the issues for the Tongan people - trust.....Because the thing is there's no such confidentiality back in the Island - because living in small villages of about 80 houses in the village and whatever you do over there the neighbours know about it (PWCW#1).

Trust issues between group members arose early on in WAG. These first emerged within WAG when one member said she did not trust some of the other Tongans and felt they were 'talking about her' (field notes B1). Concern that other group members would keep group information confidential was particularly significant in the initial period of its activities. 'B', the community worker and group member commented: "*I know it's {confidentiality} more of a Palangi*

concept, and I did hear in the beginning more rumblings about trust. You know, two or three of the women saying they didn't really know if they trusted" (WAG#7). Low trust levels within the group were a defining factor in deciding to do the semi-structured individual interviews prior to the story-telling. Community development workers within community 'A' also saw the absence of trust between people within Pacific people's communities as limiting the development and agency in these communities. One community developer said:

....that's why people find themselves more quiet {keep to themselves}, because the thing is you don't want people to know your business things.. If I say something to my own people I know that they will repeat it (PWCW#1).

The same community worker also talked about the hesitancy of WAG members to experiment with new roles they had not tried before as being connected to lack of trust within their own community:

Sometimes they (WAG group members) think that they are scared of making mistakes.....they don't know that there are always ways where you can make mistakes..... But then there's one other thing they don't like it probably because we come from a small Island and everybody knows each other and if you do in the wrong way {make a mistake}, they will talk behind your back (PWCW#1).

She also talked about the importance of education in orientating Pacific peoples to their new cultural context:

But that's what we are trying to educate our people here to stand for themselves...This is different, this is New Zealand. This is Tonga where we can [be] like Samoa....If somebody told {you that} you do something wrong, there will be all this talk around {behind} the back. That's the thing that they worry about. But the thing is rubbish you know. They're here {Aotearoa}, they have to educate and look for the look for the future (PWCW#1).

Another event that highlighted this issue was the Child Health and Safety Survey of state-owned houses, undertaken by members within community 'A'. Many of the families surveyed were Tongan, Samoan or from some other Pacific Island nation. WAG members commented that it was hard for them to go and knock on the doors and that often other Samoans and Tongans would not want to let them into their houses. At the time I did not fully appreciate the issues of trust involved and tended to assume that this was mainly due to a lack of confidence within group members – which was partly true. (This is also an example of how my own subject position – non-resident, Palangi, researcher- impacted on the community development activities). However, a local Samoan community worker known to the group shed further light on the issue:

Well let's say that these Samoan women {WAG members} going to ah go and visit the Samoan people who live in the ah the Housing New Zealand house. Here

in New Zealand, well as soon as the Samoan person opens the door and sees another Samoan person immediately they do not see them as helpers. They see them first as Samoans and anything that does not go well in their family they want to keep it to themselves. Of course they will show hospitality they will show oh you're welcome and all that. But to tell them exactly where you know whether they are in hard situation and all that they will find it very hard to share that...Mainly because first of all they see these women as Samoans. Now if the other Samoans know about other Samoans immediately they think this will go back to the islands....If word go back to the islands in Samoa that this certain family is living in devastating situation um word will go around very quickly. If it happens that this family will go back to Samoa for a visit or and then they start showing what they bought to Samoa from New Zealand, you know people will start saying things like 'well ah look at them. You know flaunting what they bought from New Zealand, but what we heard tells a different story you see' (PWCW#2).

The same community worker also referred to Samoan and Tongan people as being 'image conscious', meaning that these communities cared a great deal about what people thought of how things 'appeared' and their material circumstances. While these same things may be true of many ethnic cultures, the inquiry also revealed that migrant Samoan and Tongans faced some issues surrounding image and status that are particular to their migratory status. Both WAG group members and Samoan and Tongan community developers spoke about the extra pressures on migrant families within their communities. (Many of these cultural expectations such as the pressures to send money back home or to host family members in New Zealand have already been documented) (Milne & Kearns, 1999; Tukuitonga & Finau, 1997). Participants commented on the pressures they faced to be successful within New Zealand as the economic and educational successes attained in this country would be a source of pride to family members back in their homeland. Successes in these areas increased the family's social status. Migrants unsuccessful in these areas was considered to have 'failed':

When we go back to Tonga we need a good house for the families ...And that's why sometimes I stay here I feel crying...Like if we go back to Tonga, you can't feel comfortable when we go back from here. We stay in good houses in here (New Zealand) and when we go back to Tonga we feel, down, you know....The Tonga people look at us and 'say they all went up to overseas and stay and live back here in the old house'... And that makes us feel sad (WAG#3).

The Samoan people still have {the idea that} 'we are going to New Zealand and New Zealand is the land of opportunities'. If they come over here and find that it is not as they thought, they still keep that notion (pause). They do not want to admit that they have made a mistake {pause}...The thing is they are caught in between...If they go back to Samoa they will be considered as 'failures', that they failed to make it over here. If they go back 'poor' people. over there people will mock them. They will say 'oh they came from New Zealand and they have no money'. That's why when {Samoan} people go for holiday ah down to the Islands

they come back as soon as they find that their pockets are empty! (laughter)
(PWCW#2).

One community developer revealed that fear of 'the word' getting back to other members of kinship networks both in New Zealand and in Tonga often prevented Tongan members of community 'A' from making formal complaints about the poor conditions of their houses. While lack of trust and confidentiality undermined the ability of WAG group members to act for change, it is important to note that the investigation results also indicate that these same cultural issues undermined the agency of Samoan and Tongan families within community 'A' more generally. It appears that within the New Zealand context, traditional conventions surrounding confidentiality (or lack of) and the status attached to succeeding economically post migration, threaten the social cohesiveness (Wilkinson, 1996) of these communities at times.

Authority, hierarchy and leadership

Cultural issues of authority, hierarchy and leadership were prominent throughout the entire investigation period with the Women's Advocacy Group. Under theoretical question one I discussed the positioning of Pacific peoples as inferior by Western social structures. This discussion centres around their relative positionings due to the dominant social structures of hierarchy and authority within Tongan and Samoan cultural systems. Hierarchy as a ranking system of people according to status and authority (Meleisea, 1987; Morton, 1996) is still a very influential element of Tongan and Samoan cultures.

The perceptions of WAG members of my role as an 'authority' on many issues (due to my affiliation with the university), the higher status accorded to me because of that, and my own expectations of my role (previously described) were sources of tension throughout WAG's activities. I also noticed during this time that some group members described some people they knew, such as educated professionals and clergy, as 'very high people', regardless of their ethnic identity. I correctly interpreted this to mean that these people were 'looked up to' as having more authority and social status than group members. During the course of the group's work together, it quite quickly became apparent, that for them to assert their point of view without deference to any people present considered to be of higher social status was counter cultural. These cultural values of respect and deference for authority were instilled from a young age:

In our culture we always respect our mum and dad and we always respect people older than us....You know how we been brought up back home, we always respect

our parents whether they are wrong or right, or if us kids are right and they are wrong, but we still have to respect it because it is our parents. You have to agree with what they agree of and, um, not to answer back (WAG #1).

Other signifying practices (Jordan & Weedon, 1995; Weedon, 1987), including those of eating and greeting people, conferred these relations of hierarchy and authority:

The culture says parents, older people eat first, then children....When it comes to a wedding or something, high people {eat first}....They eat, the older people, like only those people who have titles to have the best things, you know (WAG#6).

Deference to the authority of one's parents and elders continued throughout adulthood:

....we never fight with our mum and dad. ...If I feel angry, I don't say anything.....When I got to do anything wrong, even at now, I am this age, when I do something wrong and mum and dad say it is wrong, they tell me off... Whether I laugh about it or my tears start going. You know, but I never answer back....It depends what I did wrong and I know I did it wrong. They tell me off and then I cry or have a laugh about (WAG#1).

One WAG member spoke about the ways in which these cultural values and beliefs continued to influence the way she was within the group:

In our culture is really strict – you must do this, you must do that. You never say what you think. They never let you say anything. If you knew that your parents are wrong, you must shut your mouth, you never say it out.... That's why it is so hard for me now we are in the group. I hardly say anything, you know, cause I still got that feeling (WAG#5).

Community developers talked about the continuing influence of discourses and signifying practices pertaining to authority and hierarchy within traditional Pacific cultural systems on the subjectivities and actions of Pacific peoples who had immigrated to Aotearoa. Relating an incident concerning a professionally trained Samoan woman who was in a position of authority within her own workplace, one community developer said:

....one woman is the director of her place. But when a chief or Matai comes through the door, she is on her knees, talking to them and she said 'It is the conditioning I had. Even though I am educated, even though I am a law unto my own hands. But what do I do when someone come in through the door? I am on my knees talking to them'. She said 'I cannot change that' (PWCW#5).

Pacific community developers generally viewed the adherence to traditional cultural values of hierarchy and authority within Pacific peoples' communities in this country as constraining influences on their ability to exercise agency. They thought that adherence to these cultural values constrained the development of immigrant Pacific peoples' abilities to voice their thoughts and experiences within their new cultural context. Talking about how the traditional

values of hierarchy and authority might impact on the work of WAG, one community developer said:

We Pacific Islanders, because we were used to be told at home... because there is a hierarchy there of authority there and that in the home, mum and the children don't have any say on anything and that's why you know the father is {head of the house}....we go by hierarchy. Hierarchy, great authority, like that. And if you want something you said to be demanding you know....I'll tell you we'll do this and that's it, there's no say from us even though it's right or wrong...I think that's how we come and when we move over and when we came over to New Zealand it still the thing we don't really stand up ourselves. We don't really have the confidence to stand up in ourselves, even though we know we can do it (PWCW#1).

Research participants did sometimes talk about times they had voiced disagreement with someone whom they considered to have had higher social status than themselves. These incidents were less usual and tended to occur in family situations and with WAG members who appeared 'able' in exercising their personal power (Starhawk, 1987). Overall, however, research findings from this part of the investigation support earlier studies that cite contemporary Tongan and Samoan cultural systems as remaining quite hierarchical (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Marcus, 1993; O'Meara, 1993), even post immigration to Aotearoa/New Zealand (Finau, 1982; Meleisea, 1995; Tupuola, 2000).

The ongoing predominance of hierarchy and authority had implications for the development of leadership capacities within the membership of WAG. Members were often reluctant to take on leadership roles within the group. This was the case both in relation to other members within the group, particularly 'B' and myself, and in relation to the wider community. For example, group members all felt that either 'B' or myself should take the role of welcoming new people. One group member said:

It's not that we're putting ourselves down but, you know, in a way, you are the, you know, you are a researcher or whatever...and it's good that you welcome people - like an auntie (WAG#5).

Incidents such as this made it difficult to shift power relations within the group related to more structural and institutional forms of power, such as the authority and status conferred on 'B' and myself due to our vocational and professional identities. Transformative power relations involve both giving and taking power. The following story, which relates to phase four (housing advocacy) of WAG's activities, demonstrates the continuing impact of culture as a constraining influence on the agency of WAG members.

It was decided that group members would announce the upcoming housing survey at their weekly church service. (Most of the women in WAG were members of the same local church). It was agreed that one Samoan and one Tongan member of the group would speak in their own languages to the Samoan and Tongan members of the congregation. The new community worker and member of clergy 'N' who had replaced 'B' would announce the survey to the English-speaking members of the congregation. However, on the day before, both Samoan members of the group said that they were unable to attend church the following day and announce the survey. At the time, I sensed that it may have been too difficult for these women to come and speak to the congregation on behalf of the group. A Samoan community developer who knew the women had this to say:

Can they do it? {Speak out}. Or do they have to overcome that the idea of inferiority (pause) being inferior and inferiority here is attached to being a low income earning family.....some families you know, if you're well known in the parish or in a village or ah you know the more powerful - you know to be able to speak out um...Yeah they are sort of attached to that {class} and the other thing is that um (pause) well I'll say (pause) in a situation where um oh you know like you know going back to that Sunday {pause} you know when at the last minute 'N' said that 'X' couldn't do it and 'Z' couldn't do it too, I thought well...I wasn't surprised because I kinda thought 'are these women ready you know to speak out? (pause) To a group of people?' The idea is there that for them they are very happy to do the work you know ah the background work because that's what they had been doing all the time (PWCW#2).

Around this time, I also had a spontaneous conversation on the issue of leadership with one of the two Samoan women in WAG who had been going to announce the housing survey at the church service. (This person was also the oldest Pacific member of WAG and so according to cultural expectations would be in a position to take a leadership role with the Tongan and Samoan members). When I asked her to explain to me why she did not consider herself to be a leader within WAG, or in other settings such as church, she replied: "*People will listen to father {the priest}. The majority of us in the church are Pacific Islanders – he has the authority*". When I asked her why he had so much authority in her eyes she said: "*It's different for us, our roots are firmly planted in Samoa – just the branches are here*". I interpreted this to mean that the heart of her cultural identity had been formed when she had lived in Samoa and that exposure to different cultural systems in Aotearoa had and would continue to have relatively minor influences on her values and beliefs. I then asked her what would happen, if 'father' wasn't there to take the lead? She replied: "*That would be the time for us, then we would get up, if we have all the information*" (WAG#6). This confirms the literature cited earlier in chapter four that within Samoan and Tongan cultural systems, the status and authority of a person

within any given context is relative to that of whomever is present (Meleisea, 1987; Morton, 1996).

When I asked her why she gave others (such as the member of clergy, or university-educated people such as myself so much authority) she said:

Because we are not qualified....they {particularly other Pacific peoples} would say to us what is your qualification? to the message we would be trying to say....We lean on you like a baby that needs the milk....we have knowledge, but it is still not well developed, that's why we need you.....We can look up to you, you are from the university....To step out in the church, I feel a barrier, I'm not qualified. So I start with what I learn and learn my family (WAG#6).

In their final evaluations of WAG's activities, a comment frequently made by group members was that one of the hardest things about the project had been to go and knock on the doors of other Samoans and Tongans during the housing survey. One reason for this was the implicit questioning of their authority to be carrying the survey, by members of their own ethnic communities. In other words "how were they qualified to be taking such a role? When normally they were just mothers at home who didn't work" (WAG#9). In carrying out the survey they were taking up roles of greater authority than they had previously been associated with, either by themselves or others within their ethnic communities. This was also the case when some WAG members stood up and presented the housing survey results at a public meeting. Once again, they were in authoritative roles within a meeting where many members of higher social status within their communities were present. While at particular times, they managed to sustain these roles of authority, this was challenging to them, as dominant discourses and associated social structures within their own cultural systems were contrary to these subject positions.

One of the Samoan community developers who knew the group had this to say about leadership and social status within Pacific peoples' cultural systems:

Regarding leadership (pause)- if you grow up in a situation where your leadership skills are not called up to the fore, where you're not really encouraged to show your leadership skills then you're not seen as a leader. You're just seen as a person (pause) who leads an everyday common life. You're born into a place and who you are (pause) is um it's really what you are....That is quite effective or dominating peoples lives. If you grow up in a family that is ah seen as a 'well to do family' and sort of like ah a leading family in the village and all that then you will um all be looked upon by others you know with some respect..... The [leader] is expected to well educated expected to have something behind them which is money, influence, power and all of the influence of power comes because of your good education and money, If you're a low income family person, where would you get your influence? (PWCW#2).

Investigation results demonstrated that discourses and dominant social structures pertaining to hierarchy, authority and place (the idea of being born into a place with specific roles) within Tongan and Samoan cultural systems, exerted considerable impact on the agency of WAG members. Consistent with the literature cited in chapter four, these discourses positioned WAG members (subject positions of less educated, low income, younger women) as having lower social status than many other members of their own ethnic communities, as well as to 'B' and myself.

Hierarchy or relative status confers the authority to speak and therefore construct discourses (Weedon, 1987), simultaneously privileging and marginalising particular voices within a discursive field in which cultural systems adhering to these values are represented. Within their own cultures, relations of power-knowledge (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) conferred the power to name, represent and create official versions of knowledge on members with greater social status such as elders, men, the well educated and those with titles. WAG's housing advocacy activities required its members to take up subject positions that were antithetical to those offered to them within their ethnic cultural systems. Despite a predominantly Western cultural, political and social context, these cultural discourses were still very influential in constituting the subjectivities and constraining the agency of WAG members as they sought to improve the health and safety conditions of state-owned houses in community 'A'.

Gender and agency

For women, I suppose in any culture, it's usually double-edged {accessing resources for capacity}. Because one, they have to work through the cultural ladder and then they have to work through the Pakeha economic ladder. It's like a double chore.....The same old story, I think in most cultures. Partnership is way down the line...Between a man and women (PWCW#3).

Investigation results from both Aotearoa and Canada suggest that cultural systems of gender exert considerable impact on the agency of women within their communities and on the development of these communities generally. Traditional gender roles and the associated statuses of women often acted as constraints on the ability of these communities, and particularly the women within them, to live more agentic lives.

Processes of economic and cultural globalisation had increased the range of (potential) subject positions for women within the investigation who had migrated from countries with very patriarchal cultural systems. While Western cultures are still patriarchal, they nevertheless offer

new and often more agentic subject positions for many participants. However, many of the more extreme (and constraining) patriarchal social structures and conventions still remained operative within participants' ethnic communities. While power-culture relations of male dominance were more pronounced within the cultural systems of those participants who had migrated from less industrialised nations at the economic peripheries to Aotearoa and Canada, they nevertheless demonstrated themselves to be present within the cultural systems of all the research communities.

Gender: intersections with wealth, ethnicity and education

Gender inequalities varied throughout ethnic cultures and were also contingent upon participants' access to other forms of structural power, such as class (wealth) and education. Speaking of the differences with respect to issues of marginalisation between herself and refugee women from another African country, a community developer said:

I come from a British colony and I was educated at home up to C Level, you know....But most of them were just brought in as a result of war, and doesn't even started to study in their lives. They will experience it {oppression and marginalisation} at a different level than myself...because I can at least challenge some of those things {because I have had an education}, whereas they can't challenge those things. So because they know that I can challenge some of the barriers it {marginalisation} will be systemic for me... whereas theirs will be physical {agency capacities such as housing, employment} and systemic (CCD#10).

A Samoan community developer who worked at a housing shelter talked about lack of English as a compounding element in Pacific women's marginalisation:

Even when they {women} are being interviewed, I mean, we have families coming in here. Nine times out of ten it is the man that speaks, the woman and the child sit very silent...They have a very poor understanding of English. So the man again, um, takes that dominant role and in speaking her views, that is what exactly happens (PWCW#5).

Dominant social structures and conventions around child rearing and nurturing and norms around masculinity and femininity within cultures often prevent women from accessing structural forms of power such as wealth and education. Pacific women community developers talked about the multi-layered nature of the social structures that restrained women's agency:

Women in Pacific Islands, they are usually there for child rearing, family setting, um, things around the home, um, although I have noticed when the women come here, out of love for their children and wanting to get ahead they do get jobs. The other is their own education, to be able to empower themselves and that's very hard because they have to raise the children, look after their husbands

who's like another child usually. (pause) and then look after themselves last..... [It's] very much hierarchical... Well hopefully they do get a job here or some pocket money then they can have some kind of outlet or some little doorway where they can get a slightly independent but very seldom. And even in the Church setting we {Pacific women} are still secondary. The ministers and the men are first.....So you lose all round.....And then if we don't have money then we stay put. Cause I think money and education are one, are two of the levers that can get you through or up and out.....If you don't have any education in this system then you don't have a ticket out really (PWCW#3).

Gender, hierarchy and agency

Patriarchal cultures typically ascribe greater social and economic status to their male members. Within these societies gender relations are hierarchical (however subtle) and dominant social structures and the structured effects (Giddens, 1984; Giddens & Pierson, 1998) of these often place men in positions of power and authority over women (Briar, 1997; Fairburn-Dunlop, 1996; Jordan & Weedon, 1995; Tupuola, 2000). Throughout the research, hierarchical relations of gender and authority had significant implications for the ways in which they conditioned and constituted the material and subjective experiences of the women participants. Due to the research design (which meant I spent the majority of the fieldwork time working with Tongan and Samoan communities), most of the data regarding the impact of dominant patriarchal social structures on the subjectivities of participants was from this part of the study.

Overall, investigation results confirm research that within contemporary Samoan and Tongan communities resident in Aotearoa, women have subordinate authority relative to men (Finau, 1982; Mulitalo-Lauta, 1998; Tupuola, 2000; Tupuola, 1998). There were some exceptions to this perspective, such as when participants cited that women could hold chiefly titles, or did have avenues for expression within their traditional cultural systems. However, these avenues were often less direct and relied on the good will or the transformative (Wartenberg, 1990) use of power by men in positions of authority. Interestingly, these perspectives came from middle class or professional women who had accordingly higher social status than most other women within their cultural systems, therefore affording them other avenues of expression. These subject positions meant that their experiences of their cultures were most likely different from those of low-income, less educated Samoan and Tongan women.

The absence of traditional extended kinship structures in Aotearoa brought the 'nuclear family' more to the fore. Some Pacific community developers were of the opinion that this absence, and its traditional decision-making structures, meant there were not the same checks on male abuses

of power within Pacific peoples' communities within Aotearoa. Pacific women community developers also believed that gender relations were slowly changing: "*Changes are taking place in Samoa as well as here, and its going to take a while, but it certainly is changing. Where the women are beginning to speak out more you know*" (PWCW#4).

Power-culture dynamics regarding gender relations significantly impacted on the activities of WAG and on many of the community development projects throughout Canada. Throughout the project I was aware of the ways in which dominant discourses and conventions pertaining to gender structured their lives and choices in a practical material sense such as childcare, or whether they were able to decide for themselves to come to the group. Interviews with Tongan and Samoan community developers indicated that cultural protocol around gender roles and hierarchy were antithetical to WAG members speaking out and acting for change (the exercise of agency).

Normally you know in another situation they {WAG members} wouldn't be given the opportunity because men would be the ones who always speak up for them (PWCW#2).

I think they {cultural protocol for Tongan and Samoan women around hierarchy} inhibit more rather than assist {these communities in acting for change}. That just stands to reason...It's an uphill struggle for women to do that because they have to struggle against the protocol....They have to do that first, let alone, beginning to take some initiative...[It's] very big. Double upstream swim really (PWCW#3).

Results indicate that traditional social structures of gender and hierarchy operative within the New Zealand context did not encourage women (particularly younger women in families) to exercise agency independently of male and more senior family members. The exercise of 'power over' often involved hegemonic relations (Carroll, 1992; Jordan & Weedon, 1995) in which other women 'consented' to be the agents of patriarchal dominance. Speaking about circumstances she had observed of many low-income Pacific women one community developer said:

If they are a woman on their own, they face one thing in particular, because they are always in tow of someone else. There is always another dominant woman involved that gets them from A to B....They are not able to express their views or have their say. So that dominating woman is either being an aunt, matured and always under the instructions of a man, unfortunately...It is all assumed. What you need. 'We know what you want and we will do it for you'. And it is not always what they want. Not always what they need. In most cases the choices that they have are very limited because of the controlling factor (PWCW#5).

The same community developer recounted situations in which women receiving social assistance were denied their own economic independence by other family members, who used the income to support other members of the extended family. Coercion by other family members was often the basis for choices made by young women to relinquish their economic independence and remain with other family members. Talking about the decision of a young Tongan woman (who was financially independent and had been going to move into temporary housing) to remain with her family, the community developer said:

When she made moves to move out, we got a quivering voice on the phone saying 'I can't come and move out now'....She was fearful of what the reprisals were for herself...Her contribution to the household was to pay for the food and that was all her income. There were over 10 women and children, living in that residence. So again her forced decision meant that she now remains back there, still under fear....Many of these women that are forced to be living in these conditions...I always believe that it's a cultural choice that they are forced to take. Unfortunately for this young woman, she is left there to continually pay money that has been given for herself and her child, and its providing for another family (PWCW#5).

The impact of dominant patriarchal social structures on women's subjectivities was evident throughout the study. Some Pacific women community developers talked about Pacific women's internalisation of hegemonic beliefs (Weedon, 1987) within their cultural systems that positioned them as having lower social status relative to men and wealthier, more educated people:

Traditionally, many Pacific Island women, um, have been conditioned to be in a serving role.....So again it is like the conditioning – you are a woman, you are this. You are expected to do that (PWCW#5).

One community developer talked about the feelings of inferiority of one WAG member because of the position she occupied within Samoan social structures:

'X' is a strong person very out-going, but inferiority personally would still be there because there is nothing behind her {pause}. If she is a person who does not have ah you know good qualifications and all that you know (PWCW#2).

Hierarchical relations between women were also evident:

Our women's committee in Samoa and that - even amongst the women they have different status...Like for example if my mother goes into a meeting of women, because she is a wife of the church minister in the village, she will be given high status. Whereas a wife of her brother who is not even a Matai or a chief wouldn't have the same status (PWCW#2).

Religious cultures and agency

Religion.....Anyone interested in the politics of contemporary culture has to recognise the continuing force in modern life of cultural forms which have a prehistory long predating that of our rational systems, and which sometimes constitute the only cultural resources which human beings have to make sense of their world (Stuart Hall cited in Grossberg) (Grossberg, 1996, p.142).

Religious institutions have traditionally played a significant role in the lives of low-income communities. 'Faith in God' or in a 'greater plan' are beliefs that often sustain people through difficult times and give their life meaning. The social support, aid and development work engaged in by religious institutions have played a significant role in assisting members of economically marginalised communities in their daily lives. Religious institutions have also offered 'ordinary people' opportunities for advancement in social status whether through leadership positions within churches or training and educational opportunities that they otherwise might not have access to. This is particularly the case with communities at the economic and ethnic cultural margins.

The influence of religious cultural systems and social structures was prominent within the lives of many of the research communities in Aotearoa and Canada. This was particularly the case with Pacific peoples' communities. Christianity played a very significant role in their lives and had been embedded within their cultural systems since the colonisation of the Pacific Islands three hundred years ago. Investigation results show that the influence of religious cultures and organisations within the lives of these communities both served to enhance and constrain agency.

Religious beliefs are often an important source of personal strength (power within) (Starhawk, 1987) as they sustained a sense of faith and hope:

First thing is the other part of the culture, it says to worship God,... To have faith in the Lord... So that's why my culture is special sometimes to me because that encourage me to worship God and have that strong faith.. Like I said, everything I want to do I always say God, like someone to ask for.... Ya, have faith in Him and you can do everything because of him (WAG#6).

Religious institutions also provide an important source of collective power ("power with") (Starhawk, 1987) for Pacific peoples communities in that they provided a common gathering place and focus for activities that built a sense of "community" (Labonte, 1996b):

What I see from my own church, it strengthens us by bringing us together. Bringing us together as a one group, bringing us together to worship and..... Not only for worshipping but also for strengthening the families. The more we

worship together the stronger your family are because we help each other.....We believe that when you come together in church and work together the strengths will be able to disperse to other families and they will learn from each other (PWCW#1).

Some Pacific peoples' Christian churches (Christian churches run and owned by Pacific peoples) however, were also thought to undermine the agency of Pacific peoples through their hierarchical organisation and the large investments of people's time and money they demanded:

The church (pause) over rules the people (pause)...They raise funds to build a church in here and build a church in Tonga and all those money they raise is to build a church and build it back home (pause)...They leave their family last all the money they've got (pause) all the things that they first give to the church (PWCW#1).

Churches are very powerful institutions. [They] seem to command the investment of peoples' time, of their energy. Unfortunately sometimes, more than is necessary of their resources. Of their financial resources in particular (PWCW#4).

Within the hierarchical relations of these church communities, hegemonic relations (Carroll, 1992) are sustained through the 'consent' of those that are dominated. Speaking of the over generous church donations given by families who could ill afford it the same community developer said: "It's all for show...the image outside is what they're looking at....but inside there is hardly anything". Access to a community and increased social status within the church community was often granted at the cost of undermining important agency capacities for many of these low-income families such food, income and shelter.

Gender, patriarchal religious cultures and agency

Patriarchal religious institutions have different implications for the lives of women than for men. Their discourses, social structures and conventions privilege male cultural systems over those of women. Patriarchal religions and society are "built on the notion of hierarchical control" (Spretnak, 1982, p. xiv). God the father has authority over Jesus, who has authority over man, who has authority over woman (and where applicable over other 'not full beings' such as people of color, homosexuals or children). The discourses predominant within patriarchal religions position women as 'other' (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999), less than and inferior to men. Spretnak (Spretnak, 1982) writes that "women were told by church, law and society to maintain their 'natural station' as the childlike, obedient helpmate to their husbands – to be the 'lesser vessel' within a patriarchal marriage" (p.xiv). Patriarchal religious systems have traditionally reserved communion with God as the providence of men. This is reflected

within church hierarchies in which the clergy are overwhelmingly male and those in the upper echelons (those with the most spiritual authority – i.e., closest to God) are exclusively male.

The research results show that while religious institutions such as Christianity and Islam exercise much spiritual, economic, social and cultural authority over the lives of many women, research participants viewed the costs and benefits differently depending on their positionings within class-gender-ethnicity relations in their own communities. A Nigerian community developer commented:

The problems of Africa is they have been patriarchal...But then the difference between me and these women is that in my country for instance, in Nigeria, there are two main distinguished religions. There is the Christian religion, there is the Moslem – Islamic religion is very, very oppressive, whereas the Christian religion gives the women a lot of independence. So a lot of the Christian women are highly educated and made lots of changes during colonization, whereas the women – the Moslem women were still in the backwaters. A lot of Christians will send their girls to school, whereas most of the Moslem cultures didn't want to educate the women....I'm a Christian. Moslems believe that the woman's job is at home, she should stay at home and make babies. Whereas we have that independence to grow up there and study. And the more you study the more exposed you are {to other ideas} (CCD#10).

Many of the community developers interviewed (who themselves had access to some form of status within their own cultural systems via either professional, educational or economic status) viewed churches as having strong controlling functions on the lives of their members, particularly women. Talking about the influence of some of the more fundamentalist 'Pacific Island'-led churches in the lives of many Pacific peoples, one community developer said:

It's not only their money that they are having to give...the expectations of their time, of their resources like food when they are having some shared meal or there is a visitor coming in...Most of the time you know, it's the women behind the scenes organising the whole thing. So they are expected to perform and if the family falls below that line.....It is very controlling whereby a lot of families are instructed, about the way they manage their family....It's very controlled and more than often the men are promoted into positions of power (PWCW#5).

This coheres with Foucault's (O'Brien & Penna, 1998) third thesis of power whereby institutions such as churches are characterised by 'regimes' of disciplinary power which subject their charges to surveillance, training, normalisation and subordination. Women and other family members conform to these regimes as they are also about: "saving grace for their family" (PWCW#5). The disciplinary power of these churches and their respective hierarchies of members is in their power to publicly shame those who cannot or will not give according to the institution's expectations.

Other patriarchal religions were also viewed as exerting powerful influences in constituting the subjectivities of women:

But religion, especially the Moslem religion tends to keep women in their place. Some of them cover their face, you know. It covers a lot of things, too, you know... exposure to the real world. Which is accepted by them because they are raised that way, and they're made to believe (CCD#10).

Religious cultures often have very significant implications for women's lives with respect to reproductive health rights: "*Moslems believe that the woman's job is at home. She should stay at home and have babies*" (CCD#10). Development writer Deborah Eade (Eade, 1997) has written that until women can regulate their own fertility and sexuality they may have frequent or unwanted pregnancies. Reproductive health rights are a critical aspect of women's ability to exercise agency within their own spheres of relating.

Control over fertility appeared to be an issue for some WAG members and their friends within the wider community. Several unplanned pregnancies that I knew of occurred during my sixteen months of working with the group. Pacific women in Aotearoa have much higher rates of fertility than most other sectors of the population (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999). So, it is difficult to disentangle cultural reasons pertaining to ethnicity from the fact that many of these women were Catholic. (The Catholic church proscribes against the use of contraception by women and therefore constrains women's ability to regulate their own fertility). However, some people of the Catholic faith do use contraception, particularly in Westernised countries. One Pacific reviewer also pointed out that "*lack of education and previous exposure to contraception within Pacific peoples' communities may also account for unwanted pregnancies independently of religion*" (PR#2).

More to the point, are the subject positions offered women by Catholicism through discourses such as those pertaining to contraception. Like other belief systems, Catholicism constitutes particular forms of subjectivity, "validating and even celebrating particular modes of femininity", (including) "an approach to traditional family life" (Weedon, 1987, p.96). Like other patriarchal religions, Catholicism offers women a limited range of subject positions that support male, hegemonic relations. These subject positions imply particular types of individual satisfaction and self-fulfilment and deny the validity of others.

Women in the advocacy group clearly saw the church as being positive factor within their lives that enhanced their economic, social and spiritual capacities:

This {organisation 'Y'} is where I found a great support and help. I started to learn sewing and cooking with the courses, with my self-esteem. I thank God for the help from sister 'B' (pause)....One day of every week sister 'B' always support us in food, in clothes, in money. Especially in prayers I thank God for the gifts of sister 'B'. This is how I become a strong mother to helping my family as well as in my community" (WAG#6).

The photos of the group reminds me of the group that the sisters were running when I first come here to this place. It sort of up-lift my life from a lower life that I now had to a better life where I am not going to let anyone run my life. So another thing that the sisters and all the groups encourage us mothers to be strong you know (pause) and how to run our own families and things like that (WAG#1).

WAG members and other women at the economic and cultural margins were able to access educational and training opportunities, some economic assistance and social and spiritual support through organisation 'Y' and other church affiliations that otherwise might not have been available to them. At the same time, being part of the Catholic church community and/or accessing 'Y's assistance in these areas often meant compliance with a particular range of subject positions, that did not include challenging the authority of the Church directly. Given the nature of community development work that often involves members of marginalised communities challenging status quo power relations (even as they relate to institutions that exert power and influence within their everyday lives), these points take on greater significance with respect to organisational-community partnerships, discussed later in the thesis.

The impact of gender cultures on the development of communities

Gender relations had a significant impact on the ability of WAG members to exercise agency throughout the advocacy research project. As discussed in chapter seven, expectations held by family and community members that WAG members fulfill traditional gender roles challenged the continued attendance of some women within the group. These family members argued that the place or proper role as women should be centred around family and child-rearing activities. At this time, two of the women who were pregnant left the group, despite having enjoyed the activities and the group's willingness to offer them a great deal of flexibility whether and how often they attended. Both told me their husbands wanted them to leave. The younger of these two women had just moved with her husband and children to the home of another family, as they did not have a house of their own. Within her new household, this woman's role was to be responsible for the domestic tasks of child rearing and house keeping for both families. Attending a women's advocacy group was not considered by the others (and particularly male

members of her family) as part of her role as a woman. The traditional authority of male and senior members of the household over her as a young Tongan woman (James, 1995; Morton, 1996) was reinforced by their access to a labour market structured by norms and conventions according to traditional, patriarchal divisions of labour and child-rearing (Briar, 1997).

The women who remained with the group had to withstand challenges from family and other members of their ethnic communities. They talked about their respective positionings in relation to ongoing education and related activities outside the home as women within their cultural systems:

Even with school here {Aotearoa}, she {the next door neighbour} asks me 'what I am doing?' and I say 'I'm trying to take a course'. And she goes, 'why you go back to school? You're old'. That's how our people think.. If you are old, you stay home and look after the kids. No more schooling.....I came here, and I got a shock. I see older people and they go to school and I was thinking, 'how come they go to school? They suppose to stay home. They don't need to learn more'. [Now] I wanna learn cause I came here and see people, older people learn and I was thinking, oh, ya I might as well enjoy then. Go for it (WAG#5).

And look at me, I'm like that too, you know. I'm lucky I guess to know this and it really builds up my knowledge. We believed in Tonga, once we are married, we don't go to school. But you people you go to school, and you, in a wheelchair or something.....See because me, I always wanted to go back to school....to be a teacher. But my husband says 'look at you, you old, you, you can't go to school, you know'?That's the Tongan people looking at me that way. But you people, you encourage to go for our goals and what we aim for and I will die with this, you know with this dream in my life (WAG#4).

Social relations of power and powerlessness between different subject positions, however, will determine the forms of subjectivity immediately open to any individual (Weedon, 1987). This is on the basis of gender, race, class, age and cultural background: “*But I mean my kids is holding me back and I haven't got the money*” (WAG#4).

Throughout the entire WAG process, power-culture relations of gender were significant with respect to when, where and how much women were able to participate in community development activities. This was evidenced both by women's hegemonic co-option within patriarchal discourses and signifying practices and the ability of men to enforce particular choices and behaviours (power over) through superior social and economic power. Within all the research communities, constraints placed upon women's participation in community development activities through their positioning as subjects within traditionally female roles, were clearly evident. One participant's comments encapsulated these expectations:

I think they would like to be involved, but they don't feel they have the family support.....Yeah, I mean lots of men go off to organisational meetings and everybody's just fine, eh? But, but for women, I think they are still trying to balance that home front, before they leave. So that demands a lot of work, you know making sure somebody gets to here, don't forget the hockey at this time, and the meals are left – the casseroles are left in the fridge. So I think women have that role as well. Whereas if a man goes off to be a part of an organisation they are not cleaning up the home front before they leave. So you know, there's a little more expectation on women...This becomes on top of what they are already doing on the farm or at home or whatever, rather than having, you know, total support in that area (CCD#16).

The research results showed that within many communities hegemonic (Sarup, 1996; Weedon, 1987) gender relations were often sustained by women. This was the case with WAG when female members of households and communities also challenged members' attendance in this group. For some women, participation in policy debate and community development activities meant they had to confront their own hegemonic beliefs (Jordan & Weedon, 1995; Weedon, 1987) about what constituted the 'ideal woman':

I think it's the same in lots of organisations; the women are doing this level and this level, but they are not the people that are going up to the final level. And maybe that's still got a lot to do with, with work in the home, expectations in the home, their own expectations of what they should be (CCD#16).

Within community development activities women also had to contend with more subtle levels of patriarchal constructions of women. Patriarchal constructions of female identities tended to offer women a limited range of subject positions that structured the ways in which they could go about community development and advocacy work:

I think most of the women are fairly cautious about, you know, making sure that everything is seen on the up and up. So you're maybe going to the meetings or whatever, but if you're going to meet with these guys you meet with them in public places, and it's not an 'after hours'. You don't go to some hotel room and share stuff like that. I think a lot of women are that way because they don't want to destroy these opportunities that we are building and create problems that way... Yeah, whether it's true or not. Perception is everything, eh? So I think we have to be a little cautious about that (CCD#16).

These gendered (Weedon, 1987) subject positions were constituted by images of how women should look and behave. Women found they had to be careful to avoid being positioned unagentically by others within development activities due to subscription to dominant patriarchal cultural norms that constructed them as 'other' (Sardar & Van Loon, 1999), thus labelling their behaviours as in some way deviant. One participant spoke about her own way of conducting herself at Board meetings:

I know on this coalition a couple of times when I have really wanted to chew somebody out, I've written it out. Rather than being seen as this hysterical, angry woman type of thing, I've thought it through well, and I think presented in the best way that you can (CCD#16).

While some men were supportive, investigation participants frequently talked about the resistance of men to women within their communities moving out of traditional female roles into more agentic subject positions:

The {Hispanic} men often resist the women becoming empowered....They don't like me giving driving licence lessons. The men want the wife to continue to be subservient at home, domestic, clean house (CCD#2).

Other community developers talked about the struggle that occurred over culture between men and women when women moved into new and more agentic subject positions:

The transition is the one that breaks the family, you know. They {men} resist the changes, because it's not our way of doing things. It's not our way for the woman to manage the money, it's the man that is the head – the manager of the money. But the woman has been here for so long, and has learned, [so] it's kind of hard to just go back...But some of the men don't go for the changes. Some of them just say, 'no, we are keeping our culture' and 'this is how it is'...So coming to the power part of it, {the men say} 'I have to be running the show,' '...whereas all that women are asking for is, 'We run the show' (CCD#10).

Sometimes resistance to the adoption of new subject positions by women on the part of men was of a more coercive nature and involved use of power over such as violence towards women:

Yeah, because I know of two who were here before their husbands, and during the unification it took a while and during that three years they were here, they've learned to manage their money, and manage the family. And suddenly the husband came back and needed that power to be transferred to him and it wasn't possible. And it resulted in a lot of abuses (CCD#10).

For a lot of young mothers, particularly we find difficulties when they are traditionally expected to be carrying out their tasks in a way that is appropriate. If they don't, they are beaten and that's not just husband and wife relationships. This is sister in laws; this is extended families. If you don't perform in a manner that they expect, like I say traditionally, you will expected to be physically abused (PWCW#5).

Several women community developers re-counted experiences of times when they had had to deal with the anger of male relatives because of their empowering work with women in the community. These stories confirm community development writer Deborah Eade's observations (Eade, 1997) of the potency of gender equity issues. She writes: "women must tread very carefully in questioning any aspect of a strongly conservative and patriarchal culture" (p.65).

We provided a computer course for 15 women. Now the men who were out working, were really threatened. I was challenged many times because they said

'I am the one going to work. I earn the money. I have a car. I go out. She just stays at home and looks after the kids. Why should she know how to operate a computer'? And we actually went offsite {for the course}...I said the requirement is that the women are going to be given a chance to be up-skilled..... Two weeks before that course started it was like a volcanic eruption....Lot of anger. I don't know how many times I had the husband come in to my office} and say 'It should be me not her'....So I demonstrated my own leadership skills and said the priority was women (PWCW#5).

Culture and agency: negotiating cultural change

In various ways all cultural systems both enhance and constrain the agency of peoples (depending in part on the identities and subject positionings available within those cultural systems). Some of those involved in development work with communities are now presenting strong arguments for confronting aspects of culture that constrain the agency of these communities (Harrison, 2000). This is not to argue that some peoples or cultures are superior to others, but rather to challenge those cultural values that are fundamental obstacles to agency.

Processes of cultural globalisation via migration, trade and telecommunications bring real opportunities for cultural exchange and the integration of elements of other cultures deemed agentic by peoples. However, globalising processes are imbued with particular kinds of power relations that ascribe more power to some nations and cultural communities than others. Communities at the economic and cultural margins face decisions about which aspects of their own cultures they may wish to transform and which aspects of their own cultures they wish to see reproduced more fully within the dominant social structures of the society in which they live. At times this can cause considerable stress in family and community relations. For example, in the case of the practice of fa'a Samoa in Aotearoa, people's choices not to contribute large amounts for ceremonies are counter to traditional expectations. Sometimes this causes stress within family and community relations as *"you never know who is cursing you for not giving"* (WAG#6).

Pacific community developers talked about the resistance within their communities to cultural change:

Pacific people are really mostly in groups. But you can't change the thing {cultural issue} by yourself. You have to change everything in groups.....Like if I want to make a change {with our community development programmes} then I call all the leaders of the churches around here (pause). The only thing is bring them together and see what they think. But there's lots of conflicts about that. Because those people who are the leaders they are really old people and they are

very really very traditional. They stick to their tradition they decide 'no, no we stick to that way' (PWCW#1).

My commitment is to working with Pacific Islanders who wish to make some changes for our people so they can make a better quality of life here in New Zealand. And for that they need different types of skills and knowledge from the ones we have at home. So the original Pacific Island skills would be like a base, but we would need to develop or modify them or extend them so we can fit them into context here. My belief is that we don't do that well enough yet. Because we are a minority group and sociologically like any minority group we cling on to our culture too tenaciously (PWCW#3).

The tendency to 'cling to culture' was expressed by community developers differently. One person spoke about the reluctance she had observed within Pacific peoples forums to discuss issues of culture and change. She cited an example of a working party on the education curriculum for young Pacific women:

It's all {customs and traditions} very unspoken. That's where tradition comes in to it, values and what it is going on in your own home. It's not up for public debate and even in that working party the unspoken values or the unspoken rules and guidelines {were there}... If anything, they {some leaders} try to keep a hold on the traditional, because a lot of the people who come out to New Zealand want to adopt the European way of life (PWCW#5).

The same community developer also talked about the pressure that was sometimes applied within extended families on members to conform to the beliefs and conventions within Pacific people's cultures:

When you step out and marry someone that is not of your culture, it is a mixed blessing...A mixed blessing and one that is not supported....Which is why a lot of them break away.....There is no half measures when it comes to culture...It is really hard to break away (PWCW#5).

The investigation results showed that within New Zealand, aspects of Tongan and Samoan cultural systems tend to become resistant to change, even when they may no longer be enhancing the agency of these communities. At this point, culture began to constrain the agency of many of these members. This has been evident throughout the results presented in this section. In his writings on culture and development in Africa, Thomas Weisner (Weisner, 2000) argues against the conception of culture and values as inflexible traits. Rather, "cultural beliefs and practices are tools for adaptation rather than fixed patterns that simply determine institutions" (p.142). Weisner's observations are significant because they reposition cultural systems as important capacities that ideally support and enhance the agency of communities. This idea was expressed by one Pacific woman community developer:

We need to make changes to the expressions of those {cultural} values so that we can move forward in a new land. I have always said to the youth that I worked with 'we have to start singing a new song. We can keep the same notes so to speak but we have to give a new arrangement to them'....To me the culture is simply a medium of expressing....I mediate my culture, not my culture mediates me (PWCW#3).

The same community developer spoke of the need for Pacific peoples' cultural systems to begin nurturing values that would enhance the agency of these communities within Aotearoa:

I think it's {authority} always there because P.I. {Pacific Island} culture is so hierarchical and we don't develop or nurture self autonomy in terms of authority. We nurture and develop a lot externally and, um, hierarchical authority....I think as human beings we're called to that. We've called to have our own internal terms of reference as well as, called to use the external form of reference when we need to. I think both are of equal value...But we {Pacific people's} have no ritual in nurturing and developing internal authority...That's another component that doesn't help us when we come here...So we go with a group....We find it very hard to stand out on our own (PWCW#3).

These comments reflect Weisner's (Weisner, 2000) ideas and those posited within chapter two of the thesis, that cultural systems are tools for adaptation and will be at their most agentic when they are fluid and open to change. Rather than being fixed patterns that determine beliefs and attitudes and therefore control and contain the potential of people to respond creatively to their circumstances, cultural systems can be used to nurture ways of being more agentic to all their members. In critical post-modern terms this means that just as discourses and signifying practices within cultural systems can constrain the agency of their members (Weedon, 1987), they can also be used to nurture more agentic aspects of culture. For culture to enhance rather than constrain agency, individuals and communities need to make conscious choices about those elements of culture they wish to retain, transform, discard and create. This necessarily entails individuals and communities undertaking processes of critical inquiry into the life circumstances of themselves and others. When cultural systems 'tap' and nurture the depth of individual creativities within their membership then the collective strength (Starhawk, 1987) of communities will be at its most agentic.

How choices are made about elements of culture within communities is important. Sen (Sen, 2000) points out in his discussion on culture and human rights, that all sections of any society (not just those in positions of structural power and the socially privileged) should have the opportunity to participate in public discussions on the subject of cultural change and development. This requires that people have basic agency capacities such as literacy, and that they are well informed and well briefed. This perspective concurs with comments frequently

made by the community developers interviewed, that cultural change and the development of communities requires education. My investigation findings (including those still to be presented) further suggest that good starting values for such education are openness to cultural change and critical debate, and a commitment to equity and the transformative use of power relations within communities, to allow genuine exchange and debate to take place.

Conclusions: theoretical question two

Within the investigation, ethnic, gender and religious cultures clearly exerted significant impacts on the internal and external agency terrain capacities of the communities. While central in influencing the subjectivities of the research communities, cultural systems are also central in terms of their impacts on their physical worlds. For example, while gender cultures offer women particular modes of subjectivity, they also have more tangible and materially experienced impacts associated with these subject positions, such as the everyday negotiations of childcare and the domestic sphere. Similarly ethnic and religious cultures exerted influences on both the subjective and material worlds of participants.

Investigation results pertaining to the impact of culture on agency cohere with a critical post-modern (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Weedon, 1987) view of agency relations. A post-modern view of power-culture dynamics demonstrates the contingency of people's ability to exercise agency within class, ethnicity and gender dynamics that change from situation to situation. As was demonstrated, gender inequalities and the ways in which these were viewed, were influenced by participants' subject positions and the mix of power-culture dynamics present. At the same time more structural forms of power were operative within gender, ethnicity, and class relations. These impacted on the ability of the women to be part of development activities. In some cases these demanded that women become advocates for themselves within their own ethnic communities.

While the data from the current inquiry pertains mainly to Tongan and Samoan women and women from ethno-racially marginalised communities in Canada, literature exists (Eade, 1997; Harrison, Huntington, & Samuel, 2000) that confirms the importance of culture in configuring relations of agency within communities more generally. As such culture is an important aspect of social cohesion and a community's ability to act collectively. Just as social inequality is legitimated through culture, resistance to domination must be rooted in culture (Jordan & Weedon, 1995).

Theoretical question three: identity and agency

How does work on more agentic identities influence the capacity of members of marginalised communities to influence public policy debate?

Introduction

With the exception of a small amount of material, this section relies upon data generated as a result of the community development methodology developed with WAG. It is concerned with increases in personal (power within) and group (power with) power through these capacity-building processes.

Most community development practice aims to increase individual and group agency capacities such as self-esteem or social cohesion for examples. The community development methodology developed for the purposes of the research includes and goes beyond these traditional forms of community development. The capacity-building work with WAG also focused on changes in personal and group levels of power through community development practice that emphasised those aspects of the internal agency terrain more aligned with identities (sense of self and sense of belonging) and cultures (shared systems of meanings, symbols and world views). While all of the community development initiatives within the inquiry were aimed at the transformation of dominant power-culture relations, only WAG focused capacity building work on cultures and identities to realise increased levels of agency.

Capacity-building activities with WAG also emphasised changes in individual and group levels of power through community development practice that placed an explicit focus on the analysis of power relations inherent in the group's activities and actions. While changes in personal and group power were important aspects in the majority of projects, they were more the by-product of community development activities aimed at structural changes. Data generated from more general community development activities engaged in by WAG, similar to those within other community development projects in the study (such as media advocacy), is included in the next chapter under theoretical question number four.

Focusing on cultures and identities within story-telling: drawing out threads of agency

One thing that needs to be addressed in much more detail is the spiritual consequences of poverty. And what happens to people who have lived in poverty all their lives....What it does to somebody's head and their heart and their self-esteem and their soul... I notice people who have a strong base - even if they're poor there's a strength of spirit. I mean it's the only reason they're still alive after 500 years of abuse, right. I mean the only thing that's kept them strong is that...amongst themselves they've been able to do it (CCD#2).

The story-telling with WAG was originally intended to examine such consequences of marginalisation. The stories that were shared were very personal. There was greater focus on listening and being with the emotional content rather than critiquing and analysing the underlying structural determinants that had shaped people's experiences. Telling her story was an emotional and first time experience for almost all the group members. Group relations deepened significantly with the story-telling. Much of what happened between group members was beyond what words or any transcript of a group session could convey. For example, at the conclusion of her story, one woman in the group performed a siva (Samoan word for dance). As this group member began to perform the siva (dancing and singing in Samoan) she began to move forward out of the corner of the room. The longer she danced, the more her 'essence' (beyond what she had just conveyed about her life to the group in words) seemed to emerge and spread throughout the room. It was very moving and beautiful.

Common narratives within the group were around two main themes. The first of these were the struggles experienced by the group's Tongan and Samoan members as immigrant women coming to Aotearoa. Among these were stories of arrival to and life in Aotearoa and issues of cultural change and conflict. The abuse and exploitation by the families they were staying with and initially reliant upon, were common sub-themes. Though they touched some quite deep pain, WAG members also considered talking about these past experiences to be healing. The second common narrative was our shared experiences as women and human beings. Sub themes related to universal human experiences such as death, or some sort of loss or change. From our stories arose a sense of shared humanness. Sharing stories in a space in which one's identities were held sacred and nurtured, not only strengthened group members' sense of who they were, but provided them an increased sense of belonging. After the story-telling, group members commonly described the group as a 'family they could share with and rely on'.

It was very interesting to hear towards the conclusion of one story-telling session most group members agreeing that they had not and would not consider telling their husbands/partners and friends much of their personal stories. Most seemed to feel that their stories would not be taken seriously. At the time of the story-telling sessions, word spread amongst some members of community 'A' how 'good' the story-telling was. As a result a couple of women in the community who were not members of the group requested to join in. Unfortunately we had to decline as WAG members considered that this would be too disruptive to the group's process.

As we told our stories we often touched upon themes that were shared by others in the group – often bringing up deep sadness or hurts. During the time of the story-telling it was important to check in with members each week about how they were coping with all the feelings that were 'surfacing' as a result of the story-telling. We gave some time to processing this as a group. Given the diversity of the group, it appeared our humanness was sufficient to cross the cultural boundaries and bridge differences (in practices of spirituality, sexual identity, world views and various life-choices for example) that had not been encountered before by some members. For example, the story-telling methodology enabled my own identity as a Palangi lesbian (which is integral to who I am) to be introduced into the group within the broad context of my life journey and cultural identity. (This is quite remarkable given that Pacific peoples often hold strong religious beliefs that proscribe against homosexuality) (Tupuola, 1998). The increased visibility of my own cultural identity within the group as a result of the story-telling enabled me to be 'more fully present' at meetings and to form more authentic relationships with other group members than previously. (Both presence and authenticity are important aspects of personal and group power). The following comments made by one Tongan member of the group to a Samoan member provide evidence of the group's ability to bridge diversity through the story-telling:

What you said about your story is so interesting how you cared for your grandmother and I almost burst into tears when you said you weren't there to look after her...but I didn't really know you that well to be honest um but now with what you shared you know I can really see ah how you really hurt um.....looking at you as you are different person you are different religion from all of us.....we are not here because we are Catholic and non-Catholics. We are here as family and you are a Samoan and I'm a Tongan. We all Pacific Islands and we helping each other that's all I'm grateful for that gift that you consider ah yourself (pause) a human being and then you know the person you are. Thank you for that and for the story very touching (WAG#4).

The story-telling activities appear to have increased capacities at both the personal (power within) and group (power with) levels of power (Starhawk, 1987). From the data six agency capacity categories were identified. The first four of these tend to cohere more with increases in

personal power while the latter two are more aligned with changes in group levels of power. These categories are outlined below.

Healing and transformation

The transformative power of the story-telling process with respect to individual healing (Epston & White, 1990; Pitt, 1998) was perhaps most evident. One group member likened the experience to being “*let out of a dark prison*” and “*being able to make a new start*” (WAG#4). For the first time one group member spoke about her grief at the still recent loss of her son in a fire, while others shared their feelings of loss at the separation they experienced from their families and traditions. Reflecting on her experience of the story-telling, one group member said:

When I tell my story there were heaps of tears. Tears of happiness, sadness, loneliness, heart broken, but most of all missing my families and friends and some of the Tongan values and traditions which I will never forget (WAG#4).

During one story-telling session, in thanking another member for her story, one woman said:

Thank you for your story. It was nice to hear it. I think we all got the same life but we bury it inside and we don't want to tell other people. But its good that we get on here to today and we trust each other and share our story. I think its good to let, you know let it out (WAG#1).

Other comments regarding the transformative power of the story-telling included:

I notice that every one feel happy and much better inside after telling their story (WAG#5).

The group has meant a lot to me and my family. It has helped me to change some of the life. Have lived the past to a better life (WAG#1).

As a result of group members sharing new perspectives on the story they had just heard and reflecting back the strengths within the story-teller they observed, the dominance of ‘problem saturated’ narratives (Epston & White, 1990) receded somewhat for some group members. “*After telling my story, I feel confident, strong and like I am belonging here*” (WAG#5). As a result they were able to consider more agentic subject positions for themselves and others: “*After hearing everyone's story day today I feel so sad and upset. I cry and smile when that person cry and smile. But above all I realise how strong and courageous women are in this group*” (WAG#4).

Alternative self-images and subject positions offered story-tellers by other group members included qualities of courage, strength and beauty. In replying to one woman's story, a group member said:

You've learnt so much from those hard times, those times that you thought were going to be different. And it's your inner strength and your love and the big heart that you have that have helped you through those hard times and made you the beautiful person you are today (WAG#7).

WAG members' adherence to the story-telling values of respectful, non judgemental listening were significant in themselves for their transformative potential:

One of the good things when we had this time to share and tell our story is that I feel like a new start and the group listen and respect me for who I am. That is something I am so proud of (WAG#4).

Drawing strength from the stories of others

Participants drew inspiration for their own lives from the stories of others:

I feel happy, lonely, loss and love. I learn that we all have difficulties in our lives. We never reach the best without a sweat (WAG#6).

I can learn something from the different stories that I hear in our group and I get more things that are very important to me to look forward to my future and to remember my family in my country. Hearing the stories of other people make me want to try hard (WAG#2).

Hearing stories of others that had similar themes running through them to their own also assisted women in discarding negative internalised identities and adopting more agentic subject positions as 'citizens with rights' for example. At the conclusion of one participant's story that included her hardships in Aotearoa, the following comments were made:

I just want to affirm what others have said, about the strength and courage in you (WAG#7).

The story teller replied:

I thank you too for what you share from your heart about the story that I was telling....Thank you so much and I wish that we all continue this and um the strength that we all have – this courage (WAG#6).

In reply, another group member said:

Mmm, we the mothers that we become strong and we have the confidence as citizens – no one treat us like a door mat like that (WAG#1).

Increasing awareness of different cultures and world views

The number of potential subject positions for group members was also increased through sharing of stories from different cultural perspectives within the group. This was particularly true for stories that were shared across boundaries of class and ethnicity. Knowledge of different ways of acting and being in the world was gained by group members. In particular, group members saw the possibility of new roles as women outside of traditionally defined ones. While the possibilities for exercising new-found knowledge was tempered by structural power (Ife, 1995) relations, some new options for action and exercising agency in the world were created. The following comments were made by group members to other members of different cultures after they'd told their stories.

It has been a while you know since we finish school, you know and we, then we meet husband and make babies and that, and then you know it sort of keep us off from being like you know learning, stop us from learning. But then ever since we have the programme {story-telling}, our mind and focus start to take on learning...I realised that we will never stop learning, you know?....You know most of the Islanders were like that when we married, we stayed home for the baby and no more learning. But now I realise that we will never stop (WAG#4).

Your story make me open my eyes- the world is so big. You travel, you go to university. It makes me want to go to university, makes me realise it is not too late for me, even though I'm a mother, I'm not too old (WAG#6).

Listening to your story, I realise how different it is with your parents in your culture. Palangis often think that their parents owe them, but to you, you can never repay your parent for bringing you up (WAG#10).

These comments from group members were made with respect to differences in class and ethnic cultural systems. Similar learnings about the possibilities of new ways of being and associated subject positions through exposure to people culturally different is also demonstrated later in the analysis of theoretical question number four.

Questioning aspects of culture

A related and unexpected outcome of the story-telling was that participants began questioning aspects of their own cultures. As the story-telling did not have a strong emphasis on critical and structural analysis, this tended to occur inadvertently. For example, a common theme within stories was sexual relationships between people who were not married. In Westernised countries, this has become more permissible in recent years. Discourses pertaining to sexual relationships outside of marriage within Tongan and Samoan societies however, still tend to

position women as 'tainted' or 'spoiled goods'. Within one story-telling session, one storyteller told the group of her emotionally fraught experience of becoming pregnant to a man to whom she was not married to and having to leave Tonga to escape the shame this would bring on her family. Throughout the story, she kept insinuating that having a sexual relationship and becoming pregnant without being married to the person was very wrong, referring to it as a 'mistake'. At the conclusion of the story, some group members attempted to reframe the 'mistake' in more positive terms. For example, one group member said:

Another thing that you were saying is your mistake. Um, to me it is not a mistake, it's a kid from God. (sniff) (Pause) I reckon us mothers that have kids (sniff) we're so lucky that we got kids and I always think that they have come from God given to us (WAG#1).

Following this, another group member (who was aware that her own life story contained some similar themes) said:

Um, what you were saying about your accident like you're pregnant before um married.... We know that in Tonga, in the island it's very rude and very bad to um go out to be having a baby before marriage and so all the families don't like us if we are having um pregnant before marriage. But for me I understand that's the life and we can't stop if we want to do something.... I feel sorry for you to be having that feeling because I think it's the same with me, but you can wait to hear my story (WAG#3).

In response to this, another group member began to question dominant Tongan beliefs around women and sexuality:

We are all in the same boat, the way of our lives that we were brought up in the island. We were under our parents as well as our brother's guidance (pause). That's another part of the culture that I feel unhappy about and I feel unhappy about it too because its best to say it's a gift if you have a baby. But because of the culture if you have a baby outside of the marriage, you must be dead. Or something like [that] they do to you. That's how I brought up too. Dad always say 'I shoot with a gun if you are pregnant without a ring' (WAG#4).

It appears that in telling her story, the story-teller gave voice to behaviours and subjects (sexual relations for woman outside of marriage and pregnancy as a single woman) that are sanctioned against in more traditional forms of Tongan society. (Often discussion on issues pertaining to sex is inhibited between Pacific peoples, particularly parents and children, as sex is regarded as being tapu or sacred) (Anae & Fuamatu, 2000). Through the story of one woman, space for dialogue and questioning on a sensitive topic was created. While discourses transmit, produce and reinforce power, they also expose and undermine it (Weedon, 1987). The process of discussion between participants coheres with the critical post-modern tenet that subjectivities are open to change (Benhabib, 1999; Hooks, 1990; Weedon, 1987) and that such changes are an

integral aspect of people adopting more agentic subject positions through challenging dominant and unhelpful discourses.

However, within this discussion, the internalisation of unagentic patriarchal constructions was also evident in some responses to the story. One listener still framed the pregnancy as a mistake:

So, my only advice to you, that's our only helper, God the man from above. Of course we are all human, and we all make mistakes, ignore those pasts (WAG#6).

Another talked about the benefits of the story teller now being married in that she now had a man to look up to and teach her. “*Now that you have got the husband in your family, you got a better teacher to look up to*” (WAG#4).

The first of these two latter responses caused particular discomfort and dissonance within the group. My impression is that there was a covert struggle within the group as to which constructions of the issue were the ‘better’ ones. Razack (Razack, 1993) points out that the internalisation of sexist or racist constructions by listeners of culturally dominant communities can undermine the potential of stories to challenge dominant power relations. However, by calling into question dominant discourses, discussions such as those in the story-telling sessions, appear to have loosened ‘the hold’ of some dominant and unagentic constructions on the subjectivities of some group members.

Reconnection and pride in Tongan and Samoan identities

The strong emphasis on (ethnic) cultures and identities within the story-telling proved to be valuable in assisting group members to reposition themselves more agentially in relation to dominant Eurocentric social structures that had marginalised them as Tongan and Samoan women. The process of re-remembering their cultural roots and talking about their pasts reconnected group members to previously buried “thoughts and emotions of who they were” (Woodward, 1997), thus connecting them to a stronger sense of self.

Telling my story, it reminds me to look back my place that I was grow up in so I can tell the difference in my own country and here in New Zealand.....I feel more comfortable to talk in front of people and let others know who I am and who we are (WAG#2).

Telling my story was the most important thing in my life....So that I know who I am (WAG#1)

Hearing other group members talk about their cultural identities re-affirmed for others the importance of their own connections to their Tongan and Samoan cultures. After hearing the story of another Tongan member of the group, one woman said:

I'm glad that you still think about Tonga as your home country, the place where you're born and I'm so glad that you're still proud of it and I'm glad that you stand for being a Tongan....You know because like most of us we come here and we lost it.....from what 'X' has shared with us today....really shows that um you don't want to lose being a Tongan ... You know you still strong being a Tongan lady and you proud of it and um I'm glad (WAG#4).

A Samoan member of the group similarly thanked another Samoan for her story:

And I am the same way...my family all struggle too. But I glad now that we can make – that we can get a better life where we are now (sniff). Thank you for being a strong woman and proud to be a Samoan. I'm proud too, to be a Samoan. I will never forget my birth [place]. Thank you again (WAG#5).

It was evident from the evaluations of the story-telling and the sentiments expressed in the group that the focus on culture and identity within the story-telling had given participants a renewed sense of pride in being Tongan and Samoan. However, this renewed sense of connection to their cultural identities did not necessarily lead to the construction of “new and resistant identities” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) that might motivate group members to challenge culturally dominant social structures and institutions, as already demonstrated in WAG’s choice of housing advocacy topic.

Story-telling work also appeared useful in assisting WAG members to develop visions that were more about the worthwhileness of assisting their own ethnic communities in the future. (This is a significant issue for members of communities at ‘the margins’ who run the risk of internalising hegemonic (Weedon, 1987) constructions of their own communities and turning away from them in their effort to become part of culturally dominant communities). One woman whose comments are representative of others said:

The project has given me a vision for a better life....Their {people's} housing needs to be in a better way – not just the government making money and dumping people into a house they're not happy with. Also a vision for our own people and our culture to be treated the same as everyone elses, even though this is our second home. We want to be considered that this is our first home, because New Zealand is our home now and for a better life. I think it has to do with the project why I now think like this (WAG#4)

Although causal links cannot be established from the investigation, it is probable that the focus on cultures and identities within the story-telling increased WAG members’ capacities to

construct more resistant and agentic identities with respect to dominant cultural systems and social structures in Aotearoa. Their re-found pride in their Tongan and Samoan identities could be viewed as an act of “choosing the margin” (Hooks, 1990) in the sense of re-claiming and re-identifying with their identities and cultures more positively. As one woman at the conclusion of the story-telling said: “*I won't forget how we always consider and being proud of ourselves for who we are, not matter what we are. Tongan and Samoan women living in Aotearoa as a second home*” (WAG#4).

Increasing sense of trust, belonging and collective power

As previously described, lack of trust between members of Tongan and Samoan communities in Aotearoa is considered significant in undermining the agency capacities of these communities. While some group members knew and trusted each other at the commencement of WAG activities, feelings of suspicion and alienation existed between others. The story-telling however, proved effective in building relationships between members:

As you were telling your story I feel like I was floating on a wave. You know like sleeping and listening that was very interesting....What a courageous woman you are. The first time I saw you, to be honest (pause) you were giggling you know and I said to myself 'oh she's giggling behind my back'. But I don't know until I have to face you. [Now] I understand the kind of woman you are and the more we come to the group....then the more I join 'X' and thinks that's a true kind of 'X'....Like the problems that she was telling of her journey {pause}She never give up...it's a gift yeah that's true and the gift of the group as well - we united you know (WAG#6).

In discussing and reviewing their story-telling experience, group members talked about the depth of relationship they had developed with one another. WAG members spoke of feeling an increased sense of belonging, trust and ease with other women in the group:

I see a change in the group after our story-telling. That we are more happy to each other, you know? Towards each other especially after a week we don't see each other. Well when we see each other, we hug each other and you know? Yeah, we share our daily life with each other. Its easy for us to share our daily life, what's going on with our family, things like that and the trust that we build up with each other after the story-telling (WAG #6).

I notice a great deal of change in the group – that we are more close and open to each other and more socialising and more belonging and that all members of the group feel like they belong to a family they can rely on (WAG#4).

Some weeks after the conclusion of the story-telling, WAG members were invited to give a workshop on their experience of this to local community workers. At the workshop one Tongan

community worker talked about the importance of activities such as story-telling with respect to their ability to bring members of Pacific communities together and to build trusting relationships. She said *“We need story-telling to bring the members of our communities together – to stop all the back-stabbing. We need to see our strengths and improve on these. The story-telling is very good for this”* (PWCW#1). A Tokelauan community worker who had also been present at the workshop later confirmed the need for trust building within Pacific communities, saying that she’d like to see the story-telling done more with these communities. Similarly community worker ‘B’ who had worked with WAG saw value in the story-telling in itself:

The story-telling really touched into them..... What that did for them as people. If we had done nothing else, you know the story-telling it’s been a tremendous freeing experience, up lifting {pause} and perhaps maybe the first time of really spending {pause} time reflecting on what it was like to leave their own country and what’s happened to them (WAG#7).

My own observations of the story-telling told me that at this point in the life of WAG, the energy and momentum of the group increased considerably. At the conclusion of WAG’s activities many months later one group member confirmed this:

Even we meet, weeks and weeks we still don’t feel comfortable with each other....until our story-telling that’s when we start to get our trust...and that’s when the power start coming into the group...Once we had all our trust (WAG#1).

The ability of story-telling to increase the capacity of group members to be in relationship with each other (power with) was an important source of collective strength that proved invaluable throughout the group’s advocacy activities. Throughout its advocacy activities, WAG members faced many difficulties that impeded their ability to participate in policy debate, such as lack of resourcing, knowledge of dominant Palangi social structures, institutions and policy processes, and language barriers. However, this small under-resourced group of women managed to carry out a housing survey, meet with policy people and engage in housing policy debate, despite all the obstacles in the group’s path. The collective strength of a few key members to continue with WAG’s activities was quite remarkable. One group member summed this up in her final evaluation of the group’s activities:

The power of the group to keep going, all these things happened, but we still kept going. All those people leaving, we were down on numbers but we still kept going. Usually a group would have lost power. And then the other thing with the sisters {the conflict}. But we did not loose power. We still kept going in this project. The power of three or four people made a very big power (WAG#4).

Learning to work with power

People who gain confidence, take power. They're not given power, they take it....If the people below the poverty line banded together, they'd be a huge political force. No politician would deny them anything. But they don't know how to...If they were given a little bit of power and felt confident about taking power they could do all kinds of things (CCD#17).

Throughout the investigation it became apparent that learning how to 'work with power' played a key role for individuals in increasing their agency capacities. The phrase 'learning how to work with power' refers to the process of critical learning and the ability to apply this in one's relationships with others. For members of communities at the margins, applying critical thinking to processes of community development meant both taking and giving power. As a process of increasing individual and community agency capacity, this process is distinct from 'more agentic experiences of power-culture relations' discussed in the next chapter. It refers to processes whereby members from communities at the margins (as distinct from community developers) take an active role and responsibility in managing and working power relations so as to produce the most agentic outcomes for their communities as possible. This refers both to more horizontal forms of power relations within the community development initiative, as well as to more vertical forms of power relations with respect to dominant social structure. It does not just rely on the transformative (Wartenberg, 1990) use of power by community developers or others in positions of greater structural power. Rather, power is exercised by members of communities through analysis and action. This requires thinking, emotional and acting capacities. Sometimes within the investigation, actively working with power relations was also associated with being able to work with conflict.

Data from this part of the investigation draws from relatively few community development initiatives. It draws on the work with WAG and two Canadian community development initiatives (CCD#1, CCD#2). Within the investigation, relatively few of the initiatives sought to work with individuals from 'the margins' to develop the capacities to work with power in the more active sense discussed here. (Some of those interviewed retrospectively saw the need for this). The reasons for this are likely to do with institutional approaches to community development which often do not place emphasis on capacity building activities (GermAnn, 2000). This is further discussed under theoretical question number six in the next chapter.

Research results from the investigation so far indicate that the agency capacities (and associated power experiences) of many members of the investigation communities were undermined by

contemporary dominant social structures in both Canada and Aotearoa. While members of these communities exercised varying amounts of personal power, investigation participants thought that lack of access to structural power often undermined their experience of this. One member of WAG talked about the lack of power that people in her community experienced within their everyday lives: *“The people on low-incomes – they don’t feel they have much power. If they don’t have money, they think they don’t have power”* (WAG#8). A Canadian community developer talked about her observations of many of the individuals from communities at ‘the margins’ she’d worked with, regarding their levels of comfort with exercising power: *“If you haven’t had power, have been raised in a family where you didn’t have access to power, you don’t know what it is and you don’t know how to do it* (CCD#1).

Results of the work with WAG, showed that learning about the functions of power and learning how to use power was a significant part of increasing the ability of individuals to exercise agency. For example, in the later stages of the research, group members were planning a meeting with the representative of a major government funded organisation who was in a position of considerable structural power in relation to the group. The women from the group, along with myself, had been asked to travel across the city to meet with the person on the organisation’s premises. The conversation that ensued between group members over whether and where the group should meet with this person reflected members increased awareness of power relations and how to work with these. One member said: *‘the way I look at it, we have to be very careful what we say. Nobody is going to use us for anything, no matter how high or important they are’*. Another member said *‘we have other ‘high’ people coming in and they don’t expect us to go to them. It’s (transport) really difficult for us...we have our self respect....even if this person does have things to offer us we are not going to go running to her’*. The group then discussed the pros and cons of where we should meet. Most members felt that the group would be more able to exercise power on its ‘own turf’. However one member disagreed: *‘We should go in there, because we need practice at going to other people’s places...We should go in and see whether we can take power’* (field notes E1). Other situations occurred, particularly in the later stages of the research that demonstrated group members’ increased ability to analyse and actively work with power relations.

Those members who took part in the final evaluation (WAG#’s 1, 4, 8) maintained that the emphasis on learning about power within the group’s activities had been a significant part of increasing individual and collective agency. *“My knowledge increased through learning and sharing. And through meeting all those different people. It was a learning how to cope with*

different sorts of people and the power” (WAG#1). At the conclusion of the advocacy group’s activities, this same person gave her perspective on the changes within the power relations between the advocacy group and various organisations the group had encountered in its advocacy activities:

The group started from the bottom and worked our way up. It took us a long time. Look where it got us now – to the top. To me Housing New Zealand feel scared of our group and they know that we can always find more houses to get to the media.....It also seemed like the Labour Party were after us. Because we can make their housing policy go up- we were also getting their name out to the media. And then other groups like Community Housing. They also came to us looking for help. And if these groups want something off us, they always know that they have to return us something (WAG#1).

Another member also talked about what she’d learned around the exercise of power:

I really learn a lot about power. What we’ve learned is that the people on low incomes aren’t heard by the people who have power....Also the power that (organisation) ‘Y’ had over us.....you feel useless if you don’t have much power....it applies not only to the project, but everywhere you look, those power dynamics go on. With all the fights that go on, it has to do with power, whether its individuals, communities, the whole world (WAG#8).

The research results show that it is important for people to become familiar with working with power. One Canadian community developer working with a children’s rights initiative told a story about how, when it came time to select and prioritise issues for policy advocacy, many group members were reluctant to be forthcoming about their chosen advocacy issue. Many individuals within this initiative were members of communities at ‘the margins’. For this community developer, the reasons were bound up in the issues of conflict and power: *“People who have not had access to power have a very hard time prioritising because in many cases they don’t want to break the solidarity. If you haven’t had power you don’t want the conflict” (CCD#1).* Community developers worked with project members to ‘play power games’ (to learn how to use their power and to practice having differences over things they felt were worth fighting about). Using a structural analysis of power, it was pointed out that if members didn’t take control of power, the local politicians would. The same community developer talked about the need for people to learn about power to be able to effectively strategise: *“Power just doesn’t come. You have to grab it, control it. You have to make it work for you. A lot of poor people have not had that discipline. You know the media calls them and they go ‘blah, blah, blah’. Instead of ‘What do we want out of this interview?’” (CCD#1).*

As people’s critical learning and analysis of power relations increased, there were some differences within projects regarding about how power was given and taken. In one Canadian

based anti-poverty initiative, a partnership between local government and low-income communities, some conflict arose between the low-income members. Some of these people were uncomfortable with one member's 'demands' that the community developers and local government members of the initiative meet certain requirements, that she regarded to be fair conditions under which members of low income communities could be expected to participate. With respect to this, the community developer said:

People {other members of low-income communities} were quite uncomfortable with that, but for two reasons. It might just be that she's taking too much power, but another might be that she's just taking power. And the other people might not be ready to do that (CCD#5).

By the conclusion of the story-telling, WAG members were talking about the collective power they experienced through being part of the group. Not only was this experienced as 'sense of community' (Goodman, 1998), but also as the collective power to exercise agency. As group members increasingly experienced this, their awareness of it grew. One member told the group of her reply to a newspaper reporter who had asked why she found it necessary to be part of a women's advocacy group to fight poverty:

This group of eight people, you know we could be doing a lot of things for hundred and hundreds of families there who needed it. In a group you bind your knowledge together and you feel stronger. But if you do it individually, you don't have the courage... But if you do it as a group you feel the strength of everybody binding what they have and it makes it stronger (WAG#4).

Conclusions: theoretical question three

The results of theoretical question number three suggest that work on more agentic identities is valuable as a means of increasing the agency capacities of members of marginalised communities to influence public policy. The data pertaining to this theoretical question does draw on the experiences of a relatively small number of research participants. With respect to the section "learning to work with power", this is not so problematic, as critical learning (Freire, 1968; Goodman, 1998) or structural analysis (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) has an accepted place within community development theory as a method of agency.

The data generated with regard to the story-telling as a method of agency indicates that this was an effective process for increasing the agency capacities of individuals and the collective capacity of the group to exercise agency. The healing and transformative (Epston & White, 1990; Pitt, 1998) power of story-telling was apparent, as was its ability to strengthen members connections with their cultures, identities and "thoughts and emotions of who they were"

(Woodward, 1997). One unexpected outcome of the story-telling within a group of culturally mixed membership was that members were exposed to new discourses, subject positions and ways of being in the world. While some participants may not have had the structural power to adopt new subject positions (particularly across class) such as ‘university student’, they nevertheless indicated that they nevertheless found this expanded their thinking about what was possible.

Story-telling activities proved to be a powerful means of building relationships between members and so increasing the group’s collective power to act. Telling one’s life story (after considerable preparation) proved to be an effective means of building relationships across cultural systems of ethnicity, class, sexuality and spirituality/religion. This has important implications for community development work with culturally diverse communities. A focus on culture and identity within story-telling appears to offer potential as a method of forming “critical alliances” (Ledwith & Asgill, 2000) across diverse communities to enable them to exercise agency. The results from this part of the investigation suggest that further testing and refinement of these story-telling methods as a means of building agency within communities at the economic and cultural margins would prove fruitful.

The research also affirms that activities associated with increasing ability to analyse power relations and actively work with power are important agency capacities. In addition to people increasing their analytical capabilities, it is vital that they become used to working with power and comfortable exercising it. This is particularly important for communities at ‘the margins’ such as women, ethnic minorities, and people living on low incomes, who might not have had much experience of this.

Conclusion: identities, cultures and agency

The arguments previously iterated in this chapter demonstrate some of the interconnections between identities, cultures and agency. Earlier literature cited within chapters three and four of the thesis (and supported by the discussion under theoretical question number one) suggests that the agency capacities of members of communities at ‘the margins’ are likely to be undermined in a variety of ways as they come into contact with Western cultural systems and institutions. Theoretical question number two demonstrates marginalising processes within the cultural communities of the research participants, discussing their respective impacts on agency.

The story-telling work with WAG was developed to work with the more subjective effects of these marginalising practices that constitute the internal agency terrain. These agency terrain elements or capacities include confidence, self-esteem, sense of self, cultural identity, sense of belonging and community. As outlined in chapter five (and demonstrated within the research with WAG), these are one set of capacities among others such as resources and interorganisational networks for examples. While the results indicate that the story-telling activities were valuable in themselves, these other agency capacities are also required to enable individuals and groups at 'the margins' to influence public policy. In the end, however, the breakdown of the partnership with 'Y' and the absence of other interorganisational linkages (through which institutional power could be accessed), significantly undermined the agency capacities of WAG. It is to these inter-organisational and external agency capacities that the next chapter attends.

⁵¹ The non re-cording of Pacific families by Housing New Zealand, as discussed by HAG#3 in the previous section is a tangible example of such institutional practices. Such practices often preclude policy debate (in this case culturally appropriate housing) that falls outside of dominant discourse and associated policy parameters.

Chapter Nine

Agency and community development

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the influence of identities and cultures on the agency of economically and culturally marginalised communities. Chapter nine shifts the focus of the discussion to community development as a method of agency with ‘communities at the margins’. While the relationships between identities, cultures and agency remain present, community development as a method of agency is now the primary focus.

The material is organised under three theoretical questions. These theoretical questions centre around the three ‘hinge’ relationships outlined in chapter one: community–community development methodology, community-organisational and community-community developer relations. The first of these concerns the efficacy of community development principles and strategies as a means of working with individuals and communities to increase their personal and collective power. The second hinge relationship explores various aspects of partnership (and the agentic potential of these) between communities and institutions within community development processes. The third hinge draws attention to the impact of the community developer’s own subject positions on agency-enhancing processes.

Theoretical question four: community – community development methodology relations

How might individuals become more active in constituting their own subjectivities, identities and subject positions within processes of community development?

This theoretical question pursues two lines of inquiry. Firstly, what are the significant processes whereby individuals participating in public policy debate and community development activities increase their agency? The critical post-modern theory of agency relations discussed in chapter five is used to explore and illuminate these findings. Secondly, which elements of community

development practice are important in contributing to individuals becoming more active in constituting their own subjectivities, identities and subject positions?

Theoretical question four places emphasis on the agency relations of individuals as members of community. The data presentation is comprised of three parts. It begins with a discussion on the processes whereby individuals engaging in community development increased their agency capacities, or range of agentic subject positions. Those aspects of community development practice that participants attributed to this outcome are also discussed. It then discusses processes of change within individuals (engaged in community development practice) in relationship with other members of their communities; in other words, how other community members responded in ways that were enabling of or resistant to change. This surfaces some significant tensions in community development practice between the development of agency capacities associated with the experience of power within and those agency capacities associated with collective experiences of power. The final part of the data presentation discusses agency, conflict and transcendence of conflict, as viewed through the lens of power-culture relations. The mixed cultural membership of community development initiatives within the investigation, with their varying abilities to access and exercise power, brought power-culture relations to the fore. Much of the conflict within the initiatives corresponded with the different subject positions of participants as constituted by their identities, cultural systems and relationships to dominant social structures.

Developing capacities for individual and community agency

.....so I feel like for every person involved there was like a extension of self ...to meet from where they hadn't been before.... I think that all of us had to extend our ways of being (CCD#5).

A common notion expressed by both members of communities at 'the margins' and community development practitioners interviewed, was that of 'extension'. According to interviewees, increases in the agency of participants occurred as individuals were 'extended' beyond their previous capabilities as a result of participating in initiatives. Exposure to new discourses and the opportunity to experiment with new roles and ways of being in the world resulted in many participants adopting new and more agentic subject positions. In particular, the research results highlighted four main processes within community development initiatives that were significant with respect to individuals and communities increasing their range of agentic subject positions.

Participation

The investigation results demonstrated that meaningful participation (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) was an important process whereby individuals and communities increased agency capacities. For the investigation communities, meaningful participation was also underpinned by other important practice ethics written about by the Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team such as respectful process, trust building and hope. One WAG members spoke about the meaningfulness for her of participating as a member of community to improve housing conditions in her neighbourhood: *“When we were carrying out the {housing} research, it gave me hope that we were getting somewhere...that we were going to make the results public. It was meaningful and we were finally getting to where we were aiming at”* (WAG#8).

The opportunity to participate in an atmosphere of trust was an important factor in people feeling safe to share their experiences. In many instances this broke down barriers between people as individual’s fears of being publicly shamed because of their impoverished conditions diminished: *“There are a lot of barriers that have been broken. People are now more open to speak about the problems at home like rats and insects....without concern that it would be a black mark”* (Hag#1). Those interviewed also talked about individuals developing a *“sense of belonging”* (CD#6) through participation. This was evident in the majority of community development projects. *“I now feel more belonging here and welcome”* (WAG #5). These experiences of participants cohere with the development of agency capacities outlined in chapter five such as *“experience of community”* (Thompson et al., 1998) and *“increased social networks”* (Goodman, 1998). One woman talked about the changes within herself as a result of participation: *“I now talk about things – and with other people. It heals my life, getting busy and meeting with others”* (WAG#1). Another low-income interviewee spoke of the significance of forming relationships with others and the associated feelings of connection: *“They {other low-income residents} were really glad to finally have something to do, some way to contribute and...and you know again feeling connected”* (CCD#7). Previously *“very isolated”*, she also talked about her own increase in social networks since becoming part of the initiative: *“Somehow the connections...you’re actually stunned how far they reach...how much other stuff you can get involved in once you become connected...But getting connected is really hard”* (CCD#7).

New roles

The second process conducive to increases in agency was the opportunity to take up new roles. This process is closely aligned with the development of new skills by community members, an important agency capacity commonly identified within community development literature (Eade, 1997; Goodman, 1998; Thompson et al., 1998). For example, WAG members frequently talked about having learnt new skills by taking up the roles of researchers in relation to child health and safety conditions in state owned houses: *"I learned a lot by doing the survey. Especially going through the results and collating them one by one. Actually doing a real survey that is going to be published"* (WAG#8). Within several community development initiatives, media training enabled participants to take up new roles as media spokespeople, increasing personal confidence:

A lot of the people who would never have spoken up before, just as a result of that (media) training volunteered to go and present parts of the report. And you know, they felt very good about themselves,.....Now they don't feel frightened anymore (CCD#4).

Community developers and members of low income communities spoke often of the adoption of more agentic subject positions through generally *"participating in the activities of the organisation"* (CCD#13) and the associated development of public speaking skills and increased knowledge of inter-personal relations, group dynamics and organisational processes. Participants also commonly talked about the development of agency capacities such as leadership (Goodman, 1998; Thompson et al., 1998): *"I discovered that I was a leader too (laughing). I didn't know that before the project – that I can be a leader and that I'm good at speaking in front of people"* (CCD#6). Within one Canadian anti poverty initiative, a community developer *"noticed shy people becoming community leaders"* (CCD#8). Increased self-esteem and confidence in community members was commonly observed to be a result of stepping into new roles and experiencing increased competence. Speaking of her own process of engaging in new roles one woman said: *"There's a noticeable result happening here and it really helps with my self-esteem, and my confidence"* (CCD#7). One participants' comments (as quoted by the community developer) are quite poignant: *"I'm just beginning to register that I'm a reasonably bright women and that I've been bright all my life"* (CCD#2).

The response of others to individuals extending themselves was key in enabling people to develop capacities for agency and to reposition themselves more agentially as subjects: *"They strengthen because there's a lot of encouragement {from the community developers} for them to*

come up and work for the people and work for themselves” (PWCW#1). One low-income woman who had clearly repositioned herself as a ‘capable actor’ said that an important part of this process had been peoples’ encouragement and affirmation of her: *“people constantly (came) up to me saying ‘we need somebody to talk about this. We know you’re brave.....that you’re comfortable enough” (CCD#7).* A community developer similarly talked about the significance of others responses within these processes:

So there was a woman who had never done anything like that....she learned all these skills....two or three months later she ran for Council, cause her neighbours were saying ‘Hey you’re great at speaking out. You’ve done all this, you can raise other issues’ (CCD#1).

Experiences of more agentic power-culture relations

The third process conducive to individuals adopting more agentic subject positions was the repeated experience of new and more agentic power-culture relations within community development activities. This occurred in two main ways. The first of these was the adoption of more agentic subject positions by members of communities through the opportunity to express their own experiences in ways that were authentic to them. The development of various agency capacities was apparent as people took charge of constructing their own stories about aspects of their lives. The second way in which individuals experienced more agentic power-culture relations was through occupying new roles that were imbued with new sets of power relations. Often this occurred in relation to people from more culturally dominant communities as determined by relations of class, gender and ethnicity.

While WAG was the only initiative where story-telling specifically focused on identities and cultures, other investigation results confirmed the significance of people having the opportunity to give voice to their own experiences as a means of increasing agency capacities. One Canadian anti-poverty initiative organised ‘People’s Hearings’ on poverty. The ‘People’s Hearings’ refers to a number of community forums held for the purpose of enabling members of low-income communities to speak about their experiences to other people in poverty and to people in positions of authority and influence, such as politicians or church leaders. Interviewees from this project spoke about the power of this process:

[People] felt empowered by articulating themselves (CCD#4).

Finally we were given a chance to tell our stories....having a chance to say something for once (CCD#7).

The creation of voice and empowerment through the external articulation of stories was very, very critical (CCD#5).

The ‘People’s Hearings’ on Poverty opened up new subject positions to individuals from communities at ‘the margins’, outside of those dominant discourses pertaining to people living on low-incomes. The construction of poverty as a consequence of structural inequities (Task Force on Poverty, 2000) effectively removed the blame from people living on low incomes for their circumstances and legitimised poverty as a ‘public’ issue: *“For once people living in poverty were allowed to speak out without being judged” (CCD#6)*. Exposure to poverty-related discourses as a result of the ‘People’s Hearings’ that positioned them more agentially as subjects, enabled previously disempowered individuals to organise and participate in other anti-poverty initiatives such as a ‘poverty gala’, a ‘Task Force on Poverty’ and ongoing media advocacy (CCD#s 5, 6, & 7).

Similar processes whereby people were exposed to discourses that enable them to take up more agentic subject positions occurred within other investigation communities in response to community development initiatives. For example, within the New Zealand investigation, both housing advocacy projects did a significant amount of media advocacy. As a result of this, a number of newspaper reports were published that positioned members of both these communities as ‘tenants with rights’ and ‘concerned parents’ whose poor housing conditions played a major role in contributing to the poor health of their children. Both of these projects also held public meetings for the purpose of discussing the poor housing conditions in their communities and appropriate policy responses from the government. These meetings similarly positioned the residents within these communities as ‘citizens with rights’. One result of both these community development initiatives was that people were much more likely to come forward about their housing problems following the public meetings and media advocacy: *“The housing agency are now very alerted {responsive to public complaints} and people have now got the courage to speak up about the problems with their housing” (PWCW#1)*.

At all these forums, the responses of listeners were a critical part of opening up the possibility of new subject positions: *“They could speak about their challenges without being told oh yeah, poor little you, you’re just in your self-pity” (CCD#6)*. The act of listening to stories and reflecting back agentic images assisted people in seeing themselves differently: *“When we were done speaking, a panel member acknowledged that we had spoken and commented like ‘its obvious you’ve been through a lot and I commend you for the strength you’ve shown’ – or something like that” (CCD#7)*. The existence of a “solidaristic community” (Benhabib, 1999)

that sustained people's narratives and sense of identities was also an important component of individuals increasing their capacities for agency:

...I remember people never having spoken out, speaking publicly...People that might have had stutters.....people who you know had their kids near by and were sort of holding on to them as they were speaking....and when people came back from speaking, everybody's congratulating them like high fives and stuff. I think that really built up confidence (CCD#5).

The other significant way in which members of community experienced new and more agentic power-culture relations was through occupying new roles that enabled them to experience and exercise increased levels of power. There were many examples of this throughout the community development initiatives within the investigation, including individuals at the margins taking up leadership roles in relation to people whose subject positions normally carried greater authority and social status. Or alternatively, community members carrying out research or some other activities that was normally the domain of 'experts'. One community developer described how a woman living on a low-income progressively increased her agentic capacities through the experience of new power relations: "*Then she moved into a position of real authority cause she's chairing this working group, calling meetings, getting people to type letters....and getting them to do this and that.....and then you are in a leadership role and you start feeling gee I can do this!*" (CCD#1).

Two Tongan WAG members talked about the positive impact on themselves of exercising leadership roles at a public meeting in relation to people who traditionally were considered to have much higher social status than themselves within their hierarchically based cultural systems. One woman whose comments are representative of both said: "*The public meeting gave me more power. When do we ever have the chance to have a meeting with Ministers of Parliament. We shared to them. It's different from us sitting on the ground and them giving a speech*" (WAG#1). All signifying practices (discourses, actions, roles and relationships between people) involve relations of power. They offer people particular modes of subjectivity and subject positions (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). In the above situation the individual was able to take up a subject position from which she was able to exercise power and experience a mode of subjectivity that assisted the development of her agency capacities.

The transformative (Wartenberg, 1990) use of power by community developers and others was an implicit part of processes whereby individuals from communities at 'the margins' are able to experience and exercise increased amounts of power. Some individuals spoke quite directly about the significance of experiencing more equitable power relations (Saskatoon District

Health Community Development Team, 1999) through community development practice whose value base was underpinned by the transformative use of power:

I learned that I could be the same as other people and that I don't have to be treated down all the time. Giving workshops and lectures, I realise that everyone is the same. Dealing with 'X' {the community developer} she treated us the same and made us feel like we're learning from each other. She put herself on the same level as us (WAG#4).

Another interviewee, who initially participated in an anti-poverty initiative as a member of a low-income community and later took up a role as a community developer within this initiative, similarly demonstrated the transformative use of power by community developers: *"The community was involved right from the start. We had some kind of control, We felt we had some power over the process. Everybody was equal"* (CCD#6).

Experiencing the possibility of change

People cannot get motivated, cannot start grasping for power, unless they think an alternative is possible (CCD#1).

The fourth process important to increases in the agency of individuals and communities was learning that change was possible and that they could play a part in it. Interviewees talked about members of communities at 'the margins' feeling like they were making a difference: *"They felt that they were valuable, that they were making a difference and could make some changes in people's lives"* (CCD#6). One member of an anti-poverty initiative talked of the City Council's positive response to her submission arguing against the Council's planned cuts to recreation programmes: *"They {the Council} did what I asked them to do, so you can't help but feeling like you're making a difference"* (CCD#7). One Canadian based community developer talked more generally about the experience of achieving change as being critical to increasing the agency capacities of individuals and communities. Speaking of one small group of low-income women who were lobbying for increased access to telephones for people living on low incomes she said:

And then they actually started to accomplish it....I mean people don't have that much experience of fighting for something and then actually achieving it...and of course as we know through other movements, that's the thing that builds people (CCD#1).

WAG members also spoke about the significance of realising they could make changes:

To see the strength and power that we can have (WAG#8).

We do a big thing and it's started to work. We need to keep shaking them (Housing New Zealand) up with the paper...it makes them want to fix things (WAG#1).

For the women in this group, knowing they could help others was an important part of being able to make changes: *"Later on in the project I feel strong and like we're able to go on and help people. The idea that we'd be able to help others gave me strength"* (WAG#4). These experiences cohere with Kieffer's (Kieffer, 1984) observations of "psychological empowerment" in citizens engaged in community development activities whereby individuals develop an "awareness of self as a visible and effective actor in community" (p.23). The same people who appeared to have developed an awareness of themselves as visible and effective actors in community (Kieffer, 1984), also spoke about their future hopes for their communities. Two Canadian interviewees living on low-incomes talked about this, as did several WAG members:

Part of the reason I keep coming back is because I keep getting these pictures in my head, fully formed of what the final thing is going to look like (CCD#7).

About the situation of many Pacific Island people- the low income, no work, hardly any food. I have this wish that somehow they could get educated in terms of being able to seek out things for themselves, overcoming some of the cultural barriers {weddings, funerals} that make things so hard- they can't pay that money back. I want to do something that will help them in some way- maybe in teaching, being a role model. Do things to help the kids (WAG#9).

Overall the investigation data does not enable me to draw any firm conclusions about the sustainment of new subject positions by individuals as 'capable actors'. However, within one Canadian initiative several individuals from communities at 'the margins' are still engaged in policy advocacy work four years later (personal communication). Within other community development projects within the investigation, evidence (WAG#'s 1, 8, CCD#'s 1, 4, 5, 6, 12) suggests that participants have transferred learned knowledge and skills and other agency capacities to new situations.

Processes of becoming: increasing agency capacities in relationship with community

It was hard {becoming more 'public' with the project}. I didn't want to expose myself to the public. I feel bad that people will look at me in funny way – 'Look at this woman, she was in the paper' ...And will people think you're a good person for what you say? People will always have different opinions about that (WAG#4).

Processes of personal change that are associated with increases in agency can often involve tensions in relationships with significant others. Identity, sense of belonging (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) and social support (Wilkinson & Quarter, 1996) are all in part contingent upon the quality of people's relationships with others. The comments of the woman above are representative of many of the participants in the community development projects within the investigation as they negotiated between increases in personal agency capacities and the effects of this on their relationship with others. Research results demonstrated that relationships with family members, friends and people in the wider community had a significant bearing on increases in individual and community agency and the processes whereby this occurred.

The use of structural power by members of family and community in relation to each other has been discussed earlier, specifically the constraining use of structural power by community members as demonstrated through gender relations and the enabling or transformative use of structural power by community developers. The present section focuses on the interrelationships between the development of individual agency capacities associated with increases in personal power and those agency capacities that relate more to relationships between people in communities at 'the margins' that are associated with increases in collective power. While the use of power within these relationships remains important, the focus of the discussion shifts more onto how the development of individual capacities may enhance community relations (increase experiences of power with) or create tensions within these, thus undermining collective power.

Many interviewees talked about the enabling responses of other community members to project participants demonstrating increased agency. Often the status of project participants increased in the eyes of community members: *"He emerged as someone who had good ideas....he got involved in a lot of things in the community. What I noticed with him is the way he took on a new status in his community. A new confidence within himself was apparent"* (CCD#1). Sometimes family and community members also felt their status had been enhanced through their association with emergent community leaders. Several interviewees commented on this. For example, one person living on a low income who also took a leading role within a community development initiative said: *"In most cases, like if people knew me for example they felt like 'oh well he is trying to help us solve some problems. And there was perhaps a sense that they knew a politician personally!"* (CCD#4).

Some enabling responses were more obviously imbued with structural power relations than others. *"In terms of identity, some people definitely spoke about how they'd become celebrities with their social workers....A status change happened. All of a sudden they were perceived as doing 'legitimate work'" (CCD#5).* In these cases such responses were very significant with respect to increasing individual and community capacity further. One community worker talked about her own response to seeing other members of her community in leadership roles for the first time: *"I would like to work with them in the future – I never knew that they had these hidden talents in them you know...They're awesome women....We need to work together. The future will be a lot brighter for the whole community"*. Speaking of the response of some senior members of her community that was in some ways similar, she said:

The community are surprised by what they achieve. Cause after that meeting one of the Palangi members came up to me and said 'I'm marvelling at what they achieve.....they perform awfully well....They are the woman that we want to fund (PWCW#1).

Of those interviewees who expressed opinions, many attributed such enabling responses to individuals exercising increased levels of agency on the part of community and family members, to the latter experiencing enough power within their own lives. This included family and community members perceiving increases in power for themselves as a result of the project (CCD#s 17, 10, 3, 1, 4).

Some community developers also spoke about increases in the agency capacities and the associated adoption of new subject positions by individuals as creating dynamics that divided some members of communities and families: *"I think for the most part when people gain power it's a positive thing for everybody around them. However that being said, there's also the potential for power to be a divisive force" (CCD#17).* Within the investigation communities, people's increasing analysis of power relations and their reflections on these, sometimes led to conflict in their relationships with others. One community developer told a story about a member of a women's poverty action group whose critical learning and ability to analyse structural power relations increased enormously: *"She started questioning poverty. 'How come she's still living in poverty? Why can't she get out of it {poverty}?' ...She started to question people's attitudes. 'How could she change them?' Her appearance changed over night. She changed her hair. She started to wear red."* These changes caused some disruptions in her relationships with others: *"These changes created problems at home with her husband. So the good with the bad. She was questioning some of what he was demanding of her, so it was causing some problems" (CCD#2).*

Another community development worker spoke about a working class woman who had become very active within a local community initiative and was now taking classes at university. While this woman was proud of what she had achieved the community developer inferred that some of her peers were not so supportive: *"It's interesting to see her peers...they seem to feel that they're not in the same league anymore...I don't know if it's really rivalry, but it's separated them somewhat"* (CCD#14). The comments of another community developer extended this notion of 'separation': *"The people who are generally impoverished and find a way to get to school, get employment and that kind of thing, all of a sudden in order for their survival they have to cut their ties"* (CCD#17). Whether or not people decided to disestablish certain relationships, changes in their own subject positions and associated world views brought feelings of alienation. One young woman who had made a number of changes whilst she had been part of a community development initiative was quoted by a community developer as since feeling 'disconnected' from her family: *"I'm not even like them, it's as if I'm not even part of that family anymore"* (CCD#19).

The story of one community developer describes how this conflict can arise between individuals and their communities:

There was an example of a young Indian man who got out and got educated and when he went back to the community, the people in the community felt he thought he was better than they were and virtually wouldn't associate with him. So you're ostracised from within and you're ostracised from without. And that person is really in limbo...they don't have support from anywhere.....He didn't belong to his community anymore, but he also had a hard time belonging to the outside world (CCD#15).

Data from this part of the investigation thus suggests a tension between changes in identity (power within) and relationships with other members of community (power with). One woman's anxieties about how members of her community would view her for changing her ways of 'being in the world' (an aspect of identity), cited at the beginning of this section, further suggest the significance of this issue for people. Changes in subject position for members of communities at 'the margins' may be all the more difficult, since such communities already often experience alienation from culturally dominant communities. Members may be more reliant on 'sense of community' (Goodman, 1998) and belonging in relation to their own immediate communities. Given that identity is central to agency, this area is worthy of further investigation.

Community development with diverse communities: conflict and agency

People fighting for better things for children... do not necessarily share any solidarities. In fact in some places we see middle-class people fighting for better services for special needs children which if they win, then the poor people that are fighting for lunches in the schools lose out....We're ghettoised in this city. People do not 'see' each other (CCD#1).

Community development with culturally diverse communities presents its own particular set of challenges in relation to these communities mobilising their collective energy (power with) (Starhawk, 1987; Wartenberg, 1990). Ethnic and other cultural diversities within many of the investigation communities meant that most of these communities were made up of distinct cultural factions who were unfamiliar with each other. The perceptions of these communities about each other were sometimes influenced by hegemonic discourses (Weedon, 1987) that positioned communities unagentically, creating classist and racist stereotypes (CCD#8, CCD#9, WAG#4, WAG#5). Thus members of culturally different communities often initially fail to 'see' each other independently of these discourses. While, in their day to day lives, these communities often co-existed quite separately, their mutual engagement in community action often brought to the fore differences and conflict that had previously been latent. This was the case within both Aotearoa and Canada.

Within these conflictual power-culture relations, two main themes were apparent. The first theme was that these power-culture dynamics occurred between members of communities whose members often occupied quite different subject positions related to their cultural identities. Conflicts were often the result of competing perspectives of these differently positioned community members. The second theme was that power imbalances between different cultural communities meant that members did not always feel they were able to participate meaningfully or equitably within initiatives. This heightened the need to ensure that people were able to participate in ways that were agentic to them.

Competing voices and agentic participation

There were people under financial stress all the time...so that's your class difference right. Different races...also people with mental illnesses, survivors. Some people with Masters degrees and some who hadn't finished grade ten. And the women too of course, gender. Makes you wonder how you we ever got anything decided! (CCD#8).

Research participants from culturally diverse community development initiatives frequently talked about the need to deal with the diversity of cultural identities, subject positions and competing needs around various issues. Some of those working with low-income ethnically diverse communities found racial tensions and biases to be quite explicit within these communities: *“When I actually went to the more alienated {marginalised} people, I found that people had more bias.... They were quite explicit...that they didn’t like people of other cultures or didn’t trust [them]”* (CCD#9). Community development theorists (Kennedy et al., 1990) have written that racial differences within low-income communities makes “mobilising” such communities more difficult as often racial tensions also have to be dealt with.

More generally, cultural differences within communities along lines of ethnicity, class or gender added to the complexity of community development processes aimed at collective action. The diversity of cultural identities often meant “culture became a contested space” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995) in that the competing perspectives of community members were strongly influenced by subject positions closely associated with their cultural identities. One low-income person described initial meetings aimed at building relationships between low-income people and local government bureaucrats. To his surprise he found that:

The people living in poverty needed as much to understand each other and we weren’t sort of like a block, a perfect homogenous group (laughs). And that became an issue all the way through....Everyone came at poverty from different angles. It could be that they were Francophone, or it could be because they were women, or lived downtown as opposed to more rural areas (CCD#4).

Other participants within the same project echoed these views. Such differences caused tension throughout the project and often contributed to feelings of lack of trust and alienation between participants.

Such cultural differences were also imbued with unequal amounts of power. One community developer working in a community economic development initiative in a Canadian city spoke of his concern that power-culture relations of class would marginalise the participation of low-income members:

I’m particularly worried about this young architect. He’s a really good fellow, well-intentioned...he talks too much....The thing particularly in diverse groups....class diversity is that middle class people are much more verbal and that can make things unequal (CCD#12).

In keeping with community development literature (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999), the research results demonstrate that it is important for people to be

able to participate meaningfully and equitably. In community development initiatives of mixed cultural representation, this became even more critical as power-culture relations came into play. In one New Zealand based project that involved different Pacific ethnic communities, a number of representatives of these communities withdrew. The data I have suggests they left because they felt unable to make themselves heard and therefore to participate meaningfully. One Tongan women said: *“I have put my point of view during the meeting and because those Pacific Islanders {Samoans} are much louder than some of us and they brought their own supporters....they {government sponsored employees} listen to the stronger group that represent us....but that’s not us all”* (HAG#3). A government housing worker involved in the same housing project similarly observed the process: *“Really early there were some Tongans and some Niueans...but they very quickly exited the scene....traditionally in these forums the Samoans have had the strongest voice and have been the most critical on policy and things, and everyone else has taken the back seat”* (HAG#4). This government housing worker and another publicly funded health worker in the project partly attributed the early departure of individuals from other ethnic communities to language difficulties, their inability to grasp some of the Palangi-orientated concepts and generally feeling marginalised in terms of their ability to participate meaningfully.

Another significant set of events within the investigation communities that demonstrated the impact of power-culture dynamics on people’s ability to participate meaningfully and agentially occurred within a Canadian based initiative to combat poverty. Conflict was present throughout the entire project between most of the Francophone participants and some members of the rest of the group. The conflict initially involved language as many of the Francophone members felt they would be able to express themselves more authentically (an important aspect of agency as theorised in chapter two) if they spoke in their own language: *“It’s always easier in your mother tongue, your own language to express stuff, especially if you have a lot of emotion about the subject”* (CCD#6). The Francophone members also asked that the written material from the project be translated into French for them. Getting French translations of documentation and speaking in their mother tongue, however, was an ‘up hill’ struggle for participants throughout the project: *“We weren’t respected.....If we were talking in French they started talking to each other...or would listen, or interrupting the conversation all the time – big, big lack of respect....We need the respect around the table about that issue at the start”* (CCD#6).

Within this community development initiative (as with most) social structures (rules, norms and conventions) were being reproduced according to the practical knowledge or consciousness (Giddens, 1984) of those members whose cultures represented dominant social structures in the wider society. While these tacitly known and agreed to rules and conventions were agentic for those from the dominant cultural systems, they were problematic to members from the ethnic margins (in this case Francophone members). So ‘unseen’ and taken for granted were these elements of practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984) in the day to day functioning of the initiative, that in reflecting on this conflict one low-income member of the culturally dominant Anglophone group said: *“So frankly stop all this bilingual crap. Stop making such a big deal about it and just get along. I just don’t get it. I don’t understand why they have to make such a big deal out of it”* (CCD#7).

Within culturally diverse communities, differences of gender, ethnicity, class or ability tend to reflect stratifications (Botes & Rensburg, 2000) of the wider society. This can lead to conflictual relations as people experience inequities in structural power. This was reflected in the day to day working of many of the initiatives. These findings point to the need for culturally diverse community development initiatives to find ways to work effectively across these differences, even celebrating and drawing on them as in the tradition of transformative populism (Kennedy et al., 1990).

Transcendence of difference

I think in a lot of cases it’s about exposure and to me that’s what bringing people together like that does...Exposure is what brings down the stereotypes (CCD#5).

The community development projects within the investigation met with varying levels of success with respect to working across the cultural diversity within them. However some participants also found that mixed cultural membership within initiatives could actually enhance the agency of members through exposure to new cultural narratives that increased their own understanding of the world (Ledwith & Asgill, 2000). For example, one community developer spoke of her experiences in an ethnically mixed community initiative: *“I was conscious that it was a very positive experience....people would share all sorts of stories about what it was like for them going back home and about what it was like for them growing up in their own culture”* (CCD#9). Similarly, another community developer said:

They got past their differences to the humanness of connection.....Where you’re from and having differences is something that can be really good...They {the

mixed cultural membership} provided different ways of viewing the world, and then you learn something (CCD#13).

The same community developer related a story about how one European man within his project had been able to get 'past' his own discriminatory beliefs about an Aboriginal man who had been in jail: *"I think by the end of the group, the white person found value in the Aboriginal person...it wasn't just identifying a person in jail. He identified him as a person who was trying to be a good parent"* (CCD#13). New subject positions were created as *"their worlds opened up"* (CCD#2) through exposure to people culturally different from themselves: *"I think the one woman thought that she was learning more than the other person – not realising that it was a reciprocal relationship. And the other person who was white and who had grown up with at least a little bit of money was learning about poverty"* (CCD#2). Exposure to these new cultural narratives was also effective in countering the power of previously held assumptions and hegemonic (Weedon, 1987) discourses. This occurred across ethnicity, class, ability and gender: *"Our men are now giving time to listen and hear the women and women likewise are giving the men time you know. Accepting and hearing each other...a lot of barriers have been broken"* (HAG#1).

For some members of communities at the margins, participating in community development initiatives with people culturally different from themselves gave them the opportunity to redefine and re-language their identities in relation to dominant constructions held by members of more culturally dominant communities: *"One of our members is a man with a disability...there were some learnings, like someone said 'Oh well what about handicaps?' And he raised his hand and said 'excuse me, I'm not a handicap, I'm a man with a disability'.....people accepted it right away"* (CCD#5). Creating new discourses or subject positions in relation to existing discourses is an important step in individuals and communities increasing their agency. Resistance to and challenging dominant social structures at the level of the individual subject is the first stage in the production of alternative forms of knowledge (Weedon, 1987). On an individual level, the research results suggest that within some projects, exposure to others culturally different from themselves can increase personal power (power within). This occurred because the ways in which individuals at 'the margins' had been previously positioned and the ways in which they had positioned others were challenged by new cultural narratives that undermined and exposed (Weedon, 1987) hegemonic discourses.

Aside from the New Zealand based WAG, none of the community development initiatives within the project actively included work with people's cultures and identities as a means of

increasing agency. However, a few of those initiatives that found themselves grappling with issues of identity and culture and then tried to negotiate some of these differences in subject positions, also found the mixed cultural memberships of their initiatives to be agency enhancing in a collective sense (CCD#'s 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13):

.....diversity is also a strength....There were a diversity of needs based on different cultures, but in the end I think that produced a better quality of understanding and a more accountable process to both the Anglophone and Francophone cultures in Ottawa (CCD#5).

This community developer cited an example of the Anglophone members of the initiative reviewing their initial position that a person filling a new job vacancy for the initiative needed only to be English speaking with a 'willingness to learn French' rather than bilingual. After being challenged about this, they apologised to the Francophone members, saying they hadn't been "*respectable*" or "*fair*" and agreed to hire a bilingual person. According to the community developer, this would "*never have happened before {at the commencement of the project} and it was the heightening of awareness of different cultures*" (CCD#5).

To various extents, the community development initiatives within the investigation were able to draw upon the strengths of their diverse memberships, transcending, but not suppressing the differences in cultural perspectives and subject positions within these. Their ability to transcend such differences for the common good of their communities enhanced their capacities for collective action. One community development initiative stands out in which project initiators decided to try and build some solidarity across the city around children's issues. Participants within this project were from a variety of cultural communities across differences of class, gender, ability and ethnicity. Although, they were all interested in seeing improvements in the lives of children and associated policies, they approached this from very different subject positions. Building solidarity around children proved to be quite difficult. Speaking of this the community developer said: "*We're all so anxious to get a kick at the can. We're taught to be territorial and proprietorial in our society*" (CCD#1).

After a year of meeting and establishing their working structure, members were asked to prioritise six issues for community action and advocacy. This process took several months and considerable care was taken over how it was done. During this process there were underlying tensions and more overt conflict between members of culturally different communities over whose issues should be prioritised. Some of these differences were between working class Métis and Aboriginal members and middle class members of European extraction. The former wanted

to attend to more immediate issues while the latter wanted to work with broader cultural change in relation to children's issues. When this issue was being 'hotly' debated between members of the initiative, some of the Aboriginal members agreed to put their more immediate interests aside. One person said: *"Well, I wouldn't work on this issue, it's not in my guts right now. But I would support you, I would support them to do it"* (CCD#1). The community developer described the process that she had seen occurring: *"So it was resolved. But there was tension around that and it's an understandable sort of tension. At the same time, this is what I see part of good politics is. It's a little bit of a transcendental process. We all need to get a little bit beyond ourselves"* (CCD#1). With regard to this she also commented more generally about what constitutes good community development:

I do see good community development as occurring when individuals are able to struggle towards a set of goals, only part of which is tied directly to their specific perceived interests. I do not think such goals can be in opposition to what one wants or believes in, but may be an issue that is not high on your list or of high concern in your specific identity group. It's as if the process of good politics creates enough trust and empathy on a broader level that individual leaders are able to transcend their own issues and their need to win on every issue (CCD#1).

Overall, the investigation results identify three factors that appear to be conducive to community development initiatives successfully transcending difference: commonality of purpose, the value base of the project and the organisational structure of the initiative. Commonality of purpose was frequently mentioned as a reason as to why people had been able to work together despite a diversity of subject positions: *"People are working towards the same goal, regardless of background. So it's not like the Chinese or sub Asian community, but its mental illness and racism that binds people together"* (CCD#11). When describing the value base of the initiatives that people had considered to be successful in the area, phrases and words commonly used were: *"respectful of each others views, listening to each others feelings, inclusiveness, flexibility and equity – connecting as human beings beyond people's roles"* (CCD#'s 12, 11, 5, 6, 1, 9, 4, HAG#1, WAG#7). From the stories told by interviewees, I would also add 'commitment to process'. This means that participants within these initiatives were committed to working through difference, conflict and the process of the group more generally. Ledwith and Asgill (Ledwith & Asgill, 2000) have written that successful critical alliances across communities may be characterised as "a state of knowing, having respect for, and commitment between persons who are different, but whose interest in social justice are similar" (p.295). The comments of one community developer's encapsulated this notion of "critical alliance":

I think that the commonality, the thing that's most important in terms of the diversity is getting past the differences, seeing each other....We all believe in what we're trying to do here. We all believe in it and we're all going to work together to try and achieve this....And we're all equal human beings sitting around the table (CCD#12).

The third factor that appears to be important in assisting initiatives to work well with cultural diversity is their working structures. There are two aspects to this, both key to people maintaining an agentic sense of identity (sense of self and belonging) (Jordan & Weedon, 1995). The first of these was that generally within those community development initiatives in which participants had been given some form of mandate from their communities to represent them, community support for these people was at its strongest. (CCD#s 1, 4, 11, 12, & HAG#1). Such community 'backing' was important for the success of initiatives.

The second were project working structures that enabled participants to maintain strong relationships with their cultural communities and, so, their cultural identities. Supporting these cultural identities is important as community development work, by its nature, brings communities into contact with dominant social structures and institutions. It does this both through participation within culturally diverse projects and throughout community action aimed at the transformation of dominant social structures. People's identities need to be strong enough to negotiate the intersection of different cultural systems within "critical alliances" (Ledwith & Asgill, 2000) and resistant (Hooks, 1990; Jordan & Weedon, 1995) enough to withstand the imposition of dominant cultural systems within and without these. One community developer commented on this: "*The process of keeping [critical] consciousness alive is tricky. You have to make sure that the dominant language doesn't take you over*". For this community developer, community development requires people to do many different identity dances at once, depending on the roles one was required to take up:

So I call it, sort of always doing two dances at one time. And then I say 'sometimes you have to do three or four' ...ah... you know you kind of have to have that kind of ...um...it would be like a, a kind of security people get to, okay? A security...You have to have the confidence that, that you have a right to do these different dances first of all. Secondly that people are not just going to attack you and write you off (CCD#1).

This interviewee then talked about the importance of people having a base that they could return to and be 'themselves':

What I believe is you have to have a base which is where you can be totally authentic....The identity is really important. What is your base? Where are you going to be that sort of integrated person? Because in many of those places out there you're not going to be that integrated person....So that group has to be a

base for you. Somewhere you're getting that support for who you really are and the total person. And getting affirmed in that role (CCD#1).

Within the investigation, the initiatives that met with the most success in transcending cultural diversity were those whose working structures enabled members to be supported within their own cultural communities. For example, within the Canadian anti-poverty initiative that experienced cultural conflict between Francophone and other members, the continued participation of the Francophone members through 'difficult' times was supported by them returning to their own cluster group (CCD#6). The support within the cluster groups sustained their identities as Francophone people and meant that they could return to a space of cultural authenticity.

Conclusions: theoretical question four

The investigation results demonstrate the significance of four processes conducive to the development of agency capacities primarily associated with experiences of power within. These processes are participation, experiences of new roles, experiences of more agentic power culture relations and coming to know the possibility of change. Each of these processes relate to the development of various agency capacities identified within community development literature (Goodman, 1998; Thompson et al., 1998). The critical post-modern analysis with its emphasis on the ways in which signifying practices constitute subjectivities and are embedded within particular sets of power-culture relations, has brought a process orientated approach to the exploration of how individual and community agency capacities are developed. While the development of particular agency capacities remain important in planing community development approaches to increased levels of agency such an analysis lends itself well to the identification of the micro processes that substantially influence whether or not the development of such agency capacities will be realised.

The exploration of such micro processes within the data analysis also raises some interesting issues regarding the influence of existing family and community relations on individual's abilities to adopt more agentic subject positions. It demonstrates that increases in individual agency capacities are conducive to increases in collective power within communities at 'the margins' when the responses of other members, particularly those with more structural power, are enabling. The results also indicate that increases in agency capacities are not necessarily always conducive to the development of collective community capacities more associated with the experience of power with. This is because increases in individual agency may lead to

tensions within community relationships, which are another important dimension of agency. Increases in some agency capacities such as self confidence or critical learning may seemingly undermine other agency capacities such as sense of belonging or community as these new subject positions cause conflict within or fragment existing relationships. The data from this part of the investigation also highlighted the use of structural power within some of these relationships to prevent family and community members moving into more agentic subject positions. It also suggests that people are more likely to allow others to move into more agentic subject positions either when they perceive some gains in power for themselves as a result or they appear to experience enough power within their own lives.

These results suggest that within community development practice it is important to consciously attempt to manage such tensions at the outset of any initiative. One way of making a start with this would be to identify with members of communities at 'the margins' those factors that could inhibit the change process (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) Support mechanisms such as 'checking in' with project members about how participation in community development initiatives and any associated changes were impacting on their lives. This would also support the change process.

Community development with diverse communities and associated power-culture dynamics has a place of particular significance within the contemporary context of increasing cultural and economic globalisation that has increased wealth and health inequities and brought different cultural communities into contact (and sometimes conflict) with each other. The results suggest that community development work with these communities at the margins brings both conflict through competing interests (decreased agency through loss of collective power) and potential cultural enrichment (increased personal and collective power) through coming into contact with each other. Once again the research data reveals that dominant power-culture relations often structure agency dynamics within community development work between culturally diverse communities across class, ethnicity and gender. Individuals and whole communities may feel dis-empowered as a result of participation.

The results from this part of the investigation point to the significance of nurturing identity and cultural differences within community development initiatives and ensuring that dominant power-culture relations do not mitigate authentic and meaningful participation. Practice ethics and structures that assist these processes should be implemented within these critical alliances. These potentially enable members to stay strong in their own cultural identity through returning

to their own cultural base while simultaneously being able to be with and learn from culturally different members of the same initiative, who may have access to quite different amounts of structural power. While capacity-building activities such as story-telling may enhance agency capacities such as self esteem or a positive cultural identity, project infrastructures provide mechanisms whereby these agency capacities may be sustained and enhanced in a systematic way.

Theoretical question five: community- (large) organisational relations

How might community-(large) organisational partnerships assist communities at the economic and cultural margins to increase self-determination, repositioning themselves outside of dominant policy discourses?

Initially, this question addresses three problematics of these partnerships. The first is the disjunctures often found between those discourses common to community development and those discourses predominant within institutions. These disjunctures were usually revealed within organisational behaviours. The second is the mobilisation of dominant discourses and institutional power (biases) by individual employees of large organisations, that often positioned individuals and communities at 'the margins' unagentically. The third problematic is the increasing expectations of individuals and communities at the margins for more equitable power sharing relations within these partnerships. This was often problematic as it challenges status quo power relations and requires the more powerful institutional partner to share power. The discussion concludes by outlining examples of agentic community-organisational partnerships and positing those qualities and practices thought by research participants to be conducive towards these. Theoretical question number five is addressed largely from the perspective of organisational rather than community capacity to undertake these partnerships.

'Large organisation' refers to larger forms of organisations such as health services, church organisations, and various levels of local and regional government. These organisations reproduce institutions that include those of medicine, law, social work, religion and social policy. Such institutions often display a tendency to reproduce dominant male and Eurocentric social structures. However, discourses and associated practices also exist within all of these institutions (in particular social work and social policy) that represent the interests and cultural systems of marginalised communities.

The results from this part of the investigation draw on the experiences of community developers from ten community development initiatives in which such partnerships existed. Partnership formations differed. Some initiatives were comprised of partnerships between one or more large organisations and members of communities at 'the margins'. A smaller number of initiatives existed as a distinct entity that was made up of people from economically and culturally marginalised communities. These initiatives (or small organisations) then entered into various forms of partnerships with large organisations. All of the large organisations within these partnerships had resourcing roles with community partners. A small number of these community-organisational partnerships were also working to develop public policies to be adopted and implemented by the same organisations.

In order to enable increases in the agency of communities at 'the margins' these partnerships were necessarily with organisations with greater structural power. While within these relationships the structural power of each partner was very different, the word 'partnership' is used as it implies an intent of sharing power. As posited earlier in the chapter, power sharing between organisations and their representatives and members of communities at the margins, or the "transformative use of power" (Labonte, 1996a) to enable increases in agency of the later, is a central tenet of community development (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999). An assumption is made that for organisations working in partnership with members of communities at the margins, there was some genuine intent to share power.

Data confirms the importance of vertical inter-organisational alliances or partnerships (Goodman, 1998; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) as being critical agency capacities for communities at the economic and cultural margins. One New Zealand based Tongan community developer explained the need for such partnerships: "*New Zealand [is] dominated by Palangis and probably they wont listen to us because we are migrants....We are small numbers.....we need a lot of supporters behind us....Even though my identity [is strong], I can't get things together by myself. I have to work together with other groups*" (PWCW#1). This often meant seeking partnerships with other communities who often occupied more culturally dominant locations:

People would be listening to you if you go in a group to work together and talking together for things - not only with the Pacific people - other wider people like... if you just stick to your own um cultural group by yourself you can't get there. If you want to tug against something you have to wait for the other people (PWCW#1).

However, the greater structural power of organisations more representative of culturally and economically dominant communities also created dilemmas for members of communities at ‘the margins’. One representative of a community organisation representing people of colour with mental illnesses explained some of these dilemmas: “*Do we partner with just anybody or do they have to have the same principles as we have to....That’s why the issue of partners now because we know that we cannot survive (without partnerships)*”. Her comments also revealed the cultural biases and inequitable ‘power-culture’ relations inherent in some of these partnerships: “*[But] if you partner with a hospital who has not clue what anti-racism is all about, are you compromising your principles? [Yet] we don’t want to be an isolated, you know an island. So you’re always caught in that bind, you know whether you’re true to your principles*” (CCD#11).

Schisms between discourses of community development and organisational behaviours

A number of community developers who worked with initiatives that were partially resourced by partner organisations talked about their frustrations regarding the lack of recognition within these arrangements of the resource intensiveness of capacity building activities. One community developer’s comments encapsulated the sentiments of others:

People talk about capacity building, but really I think that we in government have no idea what it really means. To put that (capacity building) into practice and into place – how very, very difficult it is. Having experienced it over the last few years {with this community development project}, if there’s one thing we need to do better on, its to quit spewing the words (capacity building) and to do something about it...There should be more dollars available for capacity building and capacity building needs to happen on a number of levels (CCD#2).

Community developers talked about the time needed to build individual and small group capacities such as those related to personal growth or conflict resolution as well as to those capacities that were related to building community capacity via inter-organisational partnerships. In particular, lack of recognition by sponsoring agencies of the time taken to build trust, reciprocity and group norms (important aspects of social cohesion) within vertical inter-organisational partnerships was raised by some interviewees. In some cases the establishment of these partnerships required considerable time and effort as they required the development of relationships between professionals of culturally dominant groups and non-professionals at the margins. This was the case within one community development initiative in which participants’ positionings of each other (often-based on stereotypical assumptions) as regional government

and low-income people initially caused some estrangement: *“From the beginning there was a tension between the regional government (members) and community...It literally took four or five months of meetings to actually get to a place where they were comfortable to work with each other” (CCD#5).*

However, this process was further complicated by the regional government’s bureaucratic procedures related to policy development and deadlines, and the influence of neo-liberal discourses that demanded accountability for regional government’s resourcing of the initiative with respect to outcome measures. Just as the initiative was developing its policy recommendations and associated budgets for the regional government’s annual policy and budget round, the ‘bureaucracy’ brought its policy/budget deadlines forward, imposing on the participatory ethos of community development the bureaucratic requirements of policy and planning processes. There were also fiscal imperatives imposed on the project in having to present quantifiable outcomes within a particular timeframe, determined by the policy schedule of regional government. This conflicted with the more process-orientated community development activities such as capacity building:

It was a very difficult time. We had to mobilise people to come, not to mention to get all our recommendations in order. If that stuff was not done it would not have gone over. And ‘X’ (a government official) had said that the initiative was very risky. And it’s risky because you could be spending a lot of money on supports and stuff, but if it doesn’t come out, they’re never going to do it again”. At the same time you want to do it at the pace of the community. You want to be having maximum participation. You want it to be their ideas...And so trying to make those two things fit was enormous (CCD#5).

As things happened, this particular community development initiative did succeed in translating its needs into the bureaucratic rhetoric of policy recommendations and budgets deadlines specified by the regional government. However, this created considerable anxiety within the membership of the anti-poverty initiative and the process of meeting government deadlines eroded some important participatory processes (CCD#s 4, 5, 8).

A similar schism between organisational rhetoric and behaviour occurred with the New Zealand based Women’s Advocacy Group. Initially WAG’s desires to align with the Labour Party candidate around their housing advocacy led to senior people in ‘Y’ asking myself to report to the Board to manage what they perceived to be a potentially difficult situation (field notes E3). My interactions with the majority of ‘Y’ members had given me the impression that they perceived me to be WAG’s leader (field notes D2-E3). I was uncomfortable with this as this was counter to community development and participatory research principles that emphasise

shared knowledge, expertise and leadership (Martin, 1996; Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999). Also, as already iterated within theoretical question number two and chapter seven, deferment to me by WAG group members as the 'group leader' partly due to cultural restraints of hierarchy and authority had been an ongoing issue throughout the life of the advocacy research project. To counter the contradiction between community development philosophy and 'Y's organisational practice, another member of WAG attended the Board meeting with me (field notes E3).

'Y' determined the agenda and place of the meeting. Formal meeting procedures were followed. When requested, we dually reported on the group's progress and answered the questions of Board members pertaining to the advocacy part of the project. My impressions of this process is that we were positioned by Board members as 'reporting to an authority', rather than participating in a mutual discussion (field notes E3). After we answered Board member's questions, we attempted to raise a question regarding 'Y's processes for resolving conflict. (This was because conflict between some WAG and 'Y' staff members had arisen and was proving difficult to resolve with 'Y' staff. It was my impression we would need an outside facilitator. When we raised the issue, we were told that it was not appropriate for discussion at Board level and to resolve it with 'Y' staff members (Field notes E3).

My own experience of the Board meeting was that the organisational practices of 'Y' had constituted relations of "power over" (Lukes, 1974; Starhawk, 1982) and that we had been silenced at the Board meeting through 'organisational procedure'. The comments of the other group member who accompanied me convey similar impressions: *"We felt that the power was over us. It's hard to go, knowing everyone has their eyes on you and you have to report".....I came out feeling powerless – we didn't get our message across....There was a lack of communication. Basically we were told to shut up" (WAG#9).* These experiences cohere with Lukes (Lukes, 1974) three-dimensional view of power. This view of institutional power highlights the ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics whether through the operation of social forces and organisational practices or through an individual's decisions.

A closer approximation to community development principles of shared control, power and empowerment (GermAnn, 2000) would have been for Board members of 'Y' to meet with WAG at a time and place convenient for WAG members (who had less structural power). This would also have been conducive to shared authority and decision making, although probably more difficult for 'Y' organisationally. The contradictions between 'Y's organisational

behaviours and its community development is not entirely unsurprising given that the Christian church is founded on patriarchal notions of “hierarchical control” (Spretnak, 1982) and such discourse is still dominant within this institution. With respect to this, one community developer made a more general comment about the contradictions inherent in patriarchal religious organisations undertaking community development:

In terms of social change...what is difficult around a lot of religious groups is the institutional aspect of religion as opposed to spirituality. And so that institution is upheld by things like patriarchy and upheld by real issues of oppression that are historic even though some {religious} institutions might be trying to overcome that history...But that has a bearing on what type of social change can happen because of course there's a vested interest in some of the historical power that the religious institution would have (CCD#5).

Community developers within other initiatives also talked about the problematics of the bureaucratic approaches of large organisations to their work with communities and the inequitable power relations these continued to reproduce. Some community developers (CCD#s1, 4, 5, 6 & 8) commented on the oversight of large organisations regarding the resources that communities at ‘the margins’ needed just to be able to participate in policy advocacy. According to one community developer, community members constantly get pushed back into dominant policy paradigms. This was because “*they get collapsed into what the state is willing to fund*” (CCD#2). Another reason for communities forgetting to “*fight the dominant culture that was reproducing many of their problems*” is that “*marginalised groups want so hard to succeed in terms of the dominant model, that they work hard at being good bureaucrats*” (CCD#1). Community members often wasted large amounts of energy writing up ‘perfect’ briefs and proposals that was in bureaucrat’s language rather than their own. Thus reinforcing dominant institutional and policy paradigms.

New Zealand based Samoan community developer similarly talked about his frustration with governmental bureaucratic procedures that ran counter to participatory community involvement in policy development. The housing advocacy initiative that he was involved in had been started by an employee of a large publicly funded health organisation in conjunction with the New Zealand government. Initially government representatives gave this community six weeks to decide on housing policy recommendations and present these to government:

When the talks started I got so angry. Because this has been the way with our community. Something is going wrong for sometime. Nobody knows about it and then somebody {a health organisation employee} turns up and says the government is saying there is a six week deadline. I told them that ‘it’s a very negative way of doing things. The issues to be discussed involve people and you don’t discuss that sort of thing and make decisions within six weeks’. In the end

the report went in later and I believe we were heard by the bureaucracy (HAG#1).

Interestingly, a central government bureaucrat who was participating in this same housing advocacy project remarked about the contradictions between government bureaucratic practices and working developmentally with this community:

We've made funds available. But you try to turn around and talk to the guys in this community and they'll say 'well these so and sos come from Wellington, tell us how they want it, how it's going to happen. They don't even live here you know'. We're {government} prepared to put our money where our mouth is, but they have to do something too....I have to say that in terms of information I need from them {to do something}, I'm a long way off. And doing these meetings we give them the hard facts and then say well what do you want to do? Then I'll get a one page hand written letter in the post 'we want to do childcare, youth justice etc....I mean I come from a very European perspective – I know what contracts are out there (HAG#3).

These last comments are particularly poignant as they articulate the layered nature of dominant power-culture relations. The organisational behaviours of large organisations are mostly premised on European bureaucratic norms. Despite organisational rhetoric about community partnership, because of their bureaucratic behaviours, such organisations operate in ways that exclude marginalised communities whose social structures are premised on quite different norms. Furthermore, the cultural identities of those performing the acts of bureaucracy are often aligned with dominant social structures. Thus the structural power of large organisations to mobilise the dominant institutions of bureaucracy and professionalism is coupled with the dominant cultural identities of employees (European descent, middle class, educated) whose tendency is to reproduce dominant discourses and cultural norms. This possibly contributes to failure on the part of some organisations to identify disjunctures between organisational behaviours and discourses of community development that seek the transformation of dominant power-culture relations. Further elucidation of this is potentially provided in exploring the behaviours of individuals within these organisations; the focus of the next part of the analysis.

The mobilisation of dominant discourses and (professional) institutions by organisational representatives

Analysis of the research findings revealed that the signifying practices (Weedon, 1987) (practices that have meaning including speech or actions) carried out by organisational representatives in relation to community members were key in influencing organisational capacity to assist communities at the margins. The actions of organisational representatives

within community-organisational partnerships appeared to undermine the agentic capacity of community members in two main ways. The first of these appeared to be the “mobilisation” (Lukes, 1974) of the institution of ‘professionalism’ in ways that privileged professional expertise over community knowledge within these partnerships. The second occurred when the thoughts and actions of organisational representatives were influenced by dominant discourses and social structures representative of white, male, capitalist interests in ways that were marginalising to community members.

Within some community-organisational partnerships, interviewees observed organisational representatives’ adherence to dominant discourses of professionalism that privileged professional expertise over lay knowledges: “*Sometimes government people get into thinking they know best and know more than community people...you know people get into being very paternalistic*” (CCD#12). Within another Canadian based anti-poverty initiative (also a partnership between low-income communities and regional government) community developers thought they had been positioned at times by organisational representatives as having greater ‘professional expertise’ than community members. They perceived this as “*limiting the interactions*” (CCD#5) between community members and organisational representatives.

Within some partnerships, the mobilisation of professionalism and dominant discourses that positioned community members unagentially appeared to occur simultaneously. One interviewee who occupied the dual subject positions of community developer and member of the marginalised community, that she was working with, talked about her experiences at Board meetings with a partner organisation:

If you are the sole person of colour in a room, and there are others, especially with long initials behind their name, you can get intimidated...You can say a thing ten times and not be valued for what you contribute. But when a person with an initial, like with a PhD says it once {other people say} ‘what a great idea’. And you’ve been trying to say that ten thousand times beforehand (CCD#11).

The participants of another community development initiative were similarly positioned by representatives of large partnering organisations as being less knowledgeable than other members whose cultural identities were more closely aligned with dominant social structures. One interviewee described the multiple barriers that existed for low-income women who had formed a women’s anti-poverty initiative. Following the implementation of a community research project and related advocacy activities, the participants had begun to implement a number of action plans in partnership with larger more resourced organisations within their

geographical area. But *“there were so many barriers put in their way. People are not very respectable of the opinions of people who are poor. Thinking that they’re not smart, that they’re not bright or that they don’t know”*. Describing the experiences of these women at meetings with representatives of large organisations, this community developer said: *“Every time they went to these meetings, there was a very definite feeling.....that their opinions were not valued. It’s not that they weren’t even listed to, they weren’t asked I think. And when they did express opinions, people sort of said ‘Yes, thank you very much’ and then went on their way”*. The impressions of this community developer were that organisational representatives were not conscious of their marginalising responses to these women: *“Now these people in the other organisations were wonderful, wonderful people. They didn’t even realise that they were doing it or know what they were doing” (CCD#2)*. This experience supports the theorisation of agency and consciousness articulated in chapter two, where it was posited that organisational representatives will be most able to assist members of economically and marginalised communities towards increasing their agency capacities, when they are fully conscious themselves.

The same community developer went on to talk about the impact of these experiences on the subjectivities of the members of the women’s anti-poverty initiative: *“They were disregarded by a group of people they didn’t expect to be disregarded by. You’ve stated an opinion about something and a legitimate opinion based in experience that the others (organisational representatives) didn’t have...So it affects you personally, but it also affected the work they were trying to do. So it was definitely a personal affront and a professional affront”*. This appeared to undermine important agency capacities such as confidence, self-esteem and ability to participate:

I could see them getting tighter, physically tighter – their arms were crossed, their legs were crossed....The looks on their faces – closed, blank. No anger.....They were afraid. Even if they knew they were correct about what was happening they were afraid to state it. So they moved back into their bodies and it sits in their gut. I think it was the beginning of the end of the project (CCD#2).

Some WAG members similarly experienced being positioned unagentially by members of organisation ‘Y’ on some occasions. Despite ‘Y’s stated and largely realised commitment to ‘power with’ forms of community development, there were some instances where the behaviours of some ‘Y’ members were experienced as “power over’ by some WAG members. One example was the attendance at a planning meeting with Labour Party candidates and representatives of ‘Y’. (Both these women occupied the subject positions of Palangi, educated,

middle class. These were in contrast to the subject positions of the majority of WAG members as low income, migrant Tongan and Samoan women. These contrasting subject positions reflected differences in social status and power).

One representative from 'Y' increasingly dominated the meeting. By the end of the meeting most of the interaction was between her and the Labour party candidate. The 'Y' representative took a directive role, making various assumptions about the ways in which the public meeting would be run. One of these included a Maori male saying the opening prayer at the public meeting. This was in keeping with 'Y's protocol, but not necessarily in accordance with WAG's protocol or members' wishes. WAG members later confirmed that they had felt unable to express their desire for a Samoan or Tongan person to say the opening prayer (field notes E3). By the conclusion of the meeting, the energy of the WAG members felt very diminished (field notes E3).

Later, WAG members discussed their experience: *"The meeting was all 'X' {'Y' Board member} and 'Z' {Labour party candidate}. It was like we couldn't {weren't capable} plan the meeting ourselves. It was like we weren't there or as if we had stayed home. They were just doing the meeting themselves"* (WAG#9). Similarly, another member said that she thought *"the meeting had just been between 'X' and 'Z'"* (WAG#1). One group member's comments iterated stereotypical views of Pacific peoples as being a reason for this: *"They think we're ju.i a dumb bunch of brownies who don't know anything"* (WAG#9).

Sometimes the power-culture relations of a particular situation mean that the mobilisation of institutional power and dominant discourses that potentially marginalise by organisational representatives can be averted. One such initiative was focused on research and advocacy activities regarding domestic violence. It was a partnership between women who had experienced being abused by their partners and agency representatives. At one of the meetings a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said that domestic violence was caused by alcohol abuse (a major cause among others). According to the community developer the women present (many of whom had been abused) *"saw it as a much broader kind of gender issue...so there was some tension"* (CCD#15). The same community developer said that eventually there was some resolutions of these tensions and a *"bringing together of ideas"* (CCD#15). My own analysis of this situation is that the more marginal discourse of 'domestic violence as the result of a patriarchal society' was able to maintain its space within this discursive field due to the power-culture dynamics of this context. There were enough women present (power with, power

within), some of whom had institutional power by virtue of their subject positions as professionals and organisational representatives (power over) to maintain the presence of what may have become a marginalised discourse within this community-organisational partnership. This enabled the women to retain a presence as more agentic subjects whose experiences were partly the result of wider societal forces.

Issues of conflict and power in community-organisational partnerships

Issues of power often centred on the control, direction and ownership of community development initiatives. To varying extents conflict was associated with people's changing expectations and experiences of power relations within the community development initiatives under investigation. Most initiatives did not specifically set out to build participant's capacities to critically analyse power relations or to apply these analyses within community development activities. However, these capacities increased anyway (probably as a by-product of the initiative's actions) changing participants' expectations of partnership (CCD#'s 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, &11). General increases in individual and community agency capacities also appeared to contribute to people's changed expectations of partnerships. As people developed an increased awareness of themselves as "capable and effective actors in community" (Kieffer, 1984), their confidence and desire to exercise greater agency within these partnerships increased. Some projects within the investigation experienced periods of conflict and strain as the (initially) less powerful partner attempted to establish its own "power and legitimacy" (Labonte, 1994).

The processes associated with such shifting power relations between communities and partner organisations were well demonstrated within one anti-poverty initiative. This particular anti-poverty project was initiated by agency representatives in conjunction with community developers (employed by publicly funded community health centres). These people formed a "Monitoring committee" for the purpose of overseeing and assisting with people's hearings on poverty throughout the city, ensuring that the outcomes of these were empowering for the participating low-income communities. (These 'People's Hearings' refer to the same forums already discussed on page 274 under this title). At the conclusion of the Hearings, a Task Force on Poverty between members of low-income communities and regional government representatives was formed for the purpose of developing policies to combat poverty. The Monitoring committee assisted with the formation of the Taskforce, continuing with its role as 'overseer'. Eventually when the Taskforce was formed, some of the agency representatives

(including community developers) from the monitoring committee were also part of the Taskforce.

However, as the project progressed, members of low-income communities on the Taskforce began to question the role of the Monitoring committee (CCD#s 8, & 5). Previous to this, community developers reported that the low-income members of this partnership had already begun to show increased confidence and readiness to request increased support and levels of resourcing from regional government in order to fulfil their role (CCD#'s 4, 6 & 8). As members of low-income communities began to “*change and grow bolder*” (CCD#8), they started to question the Monitoring committee’s membership and accountability. As a consequence of these discussions, community representatives joined the Monitoring committee, previously comprised of agency people (regional government and community developers).

Comments indicate that community developers had not been fully aware of the power relations inherent in the ‘overseeing’ body being solely comprised of agency representatives:

When we {community developers} evaluated the term ‘monitoring’, we realised it was actually monitoring the regional government. It wasn’t necessarily monitoring like the community members or whatever. But we realised [afterwards] how that could come across as a feeling of control over {to the community members} (CCD#5).

Once the Taskforce completed its initial brief (develop policy recommendations to combat poverty and present these to regional government), a decision was made to disband the Taskforce and create a new ‘advisory body’ comprised of regional government and community representatives. The purpose of the group was to oversee implementation of the recommendations and to advise regional government on an ongoing basis of anti-poverty policy. With respect to this, interviewees noticed two processes occurring; both centred on the locus of power within the community-organisational partnership. The first of these processes was that some community members were demonstrating a stronger sense of ownership of the initiative in that they made it clear that they expected to be involved in deciding the membership of the new ‘advisory body’:

There’s very much a strong feeling {from members of communities at ‘the margins’} that the community members living on low income will choose, will be on the hiring committee for the advisory body and will have ultimate say in how the advisory group is established.....And there can be a feeling {from those who have power}, well okay, now you want too much power. And I certainly think that we’re going to see a bit more in terms of tensions {within the initiative} (CCD#5).

The other process related to the decision made to disband the Taskforce and who and how power had been exercised in making that decision. Some low-income members of the initiative were disappointed with this decision: *"It was something where they felt they were valuable, and that they were making a difference. So it was harder for them to say 'yes, I agree that the Taskforce is dismantled' because they were losing something you know"* (CCD#6). One community developer, talked about her discomfort with this process:

I know we had to officially disband it - no problems at all. (But) you could have taken the same people, called them a different name and put them in place almost immediately, because they knew how to work together....And I was hearing phrases like 'we need new faces' and I'd think sure, but don't throw out the old faces. Like you've got people here who are really keen, are interested, who felt really let down I believe at the end of the task force (CCD#8).

This community developer's impression was that agency representatives were 'steering' the process in a more covert manner: *"I don't know who had the power and who was making the decisions. My assumption is that it was 'X' & 'Z' from the original Monitoring committee. It {the decision making} went right back to the agency people"* (CCD#8). This same community developer and one low-income initiative member attributed some of these directive behaviours of the agency representatives involved to their genuine wish to see a good outcome from the project (CCD#s 4 & 8). However these two people also questioned 'who really had ownership of the initiative':

They {some of the agency representatives who were the initiators} need ownership of the solution and then it becomes a showcase. You know that says 'okay we need to get a bunch of poor people and then we'll sit them down at a table with a bunch of government people and then we'll direct an outcome by subtle suggestions' (little laugh). So, there was a bit of that (CCD#4).

The other community developer said: *"I would never want to see it structured that way again. With the Monitoring committee feeling it's got the right to kind of help, but not necessarily talking to this group (The Taskforce). The Monitoring committee thought they owned the idea and that's a sceptical way of looking at it"*. She also qualified this by saying: *"I think the Monitoring committee has performed and are people who really care, who wanted this to work properly. But somehow they should have been talking more with the Taskforce"* (CCD#8). Throughout the life of this initiative (which was regarded by both the community and agency people interviewed as successful), it appeared that power shifted back and forth within and across sectors, between agency and community representatives. While organisational representatives clearly exercised professional and organisational power, which at times constituted "power over" (Lukes, 1974; Wartenberg, 1990) community members, these power

relations did not suggest the total dominance of one group over another. Rather, they suggested a post-structural conceptualisation of power as the “shifting and unstable political relations between actors, institution[s] and discourses” (O'Brien & Penna, 1998, p.118).

A ‘cautious inference’ I would also wish to draw from the data concerns processes where hegemonic (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996) relations are sustained within community-organisational relationships. To some extent, it appears that this partnership also included some degree of hegemony in that the dominance of organisational representatives was sustained by the consent of the low-income members of the community development initiative. I make this interpretation because the project represented a number of different interests. These included those of professionalism (the desire for ‘the model’ to succeed CCD#4), those of regional government (to be participating in such an initiative CCD#5), as well as a genuine desire on the part of those participating for communities at ‘the margins’ to determine their own futures through enabling policies (CCD#’s 4, 6 & 7). While power did and was beginning to shift from organisational representatives to community, my impression is that the balance still lay with regional government and health agency employees (whom represented all of the above interests). Despite one community developer questioning the process whereby the Taskforce was disbanded and asking “*who held the power to make these decisions*” (CCD#8), to my knowledge this process was not challenged by community representatives. Community representatives were not altogether happy with the decision (CCD#s 6 & 8), neither did it necessarily serve their interests. However, many had also gained considerably from the initiative and their communities stood to gain more in the evolution of the next phase. Less powerful individuals and communities in particular are sometimes in the position of sustaining such “power over” relations as (paradoxically) these enable them to access various agency capacities that otherwise might not be available to them (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996).

Within some initiatives, peoples’ increased ability to analyse power relations and increased expectations for equity caused more obvious tensions with organisational partners. One interviewee (whose organisation was comprised of and represented people of colour with mental illness) noted:

People on the Board are now much more sophisticated in their knowledge of racism. They cannot now just sit down and be naïve about racism...They can name it and can challenge the system. So in a way its positive, but it's also negative, because you get labelled a trouble-maker (CCD#11).

Similarly, in relation to the already mentioned women's anti-poverty group (previous section), when members challenged agency representatives for not listening and valuing their experiences as 'equals', they (the women) were positioned as 'the problem':

They {members of the women's anti-poverty initiative} introduced conflict into the group and the group did not want to deal with it. People didn't want them to change. It's easier to package them and say 'okay this is how 'X' reacts'. 'X' grew because she was so intelligent. But agency representatives did not want to see her as that. They just saw her as a 'troublemaker'....There was lots of organisational garbage going on (CCD#2).

Such unagentic positionings of individuals from marginalised communities by organisational representatives can effectively undermine the agency capacities of communities at 'the margins'. When issues are erroneously labelled as 'the personality problems of individuals', marginal discourses and perspectives continue to be excluded, institutions remain the same and status quo power relations are maintained. It is significant that being challenged is difficult for most people. As one community developer noted, community development is challenging to organisations and their representatives because: "by its very nature, community development points to the negative parts of the organisation.....and if you're within the system, its very difficult to hear day in and day out about the negative parts" (CCD#2). However, at the same time, the further marginalisation of community members because of the emotional responses their challenging evokes in organisational representatives, carries very real implications for these communities. Finding one's voice to speak and challenge from the margins is difficult and is also often an emotion-filled process. To speak from this position and be marginalised further because of it, weakens community members' own (still often fragile) positioning of themselves as "visible and effective actors in [the] community" (Kieffer, 1984, p.23) who are able to make a difference.

The agency capacities of communities at 'the margins' can be further undermined when these unagentic positionings of community members is coupled with the institutional power (Lukes, 1974; Wartenberg, 1990) of organisational representatives to exclude and marginalise:

We're seen by government as one of the bad guys because we always have to take a stand – advocating, constantly nagging. So when we got the money and we tried to start providing services and we'd tell them that we need more resources for this service, we found that we had been put in a box...What they did is to give us a bit of money to keep us quiet....And we can't holler a lot because we're scared of the funding being removed...Maybe it's better to say 'close shop?' (CCD#11).

In other community development initiatives in which the primary tool of institutional power was also its funding authority, similar hegemonic relations (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996) were demonstrated. Community members *“showed reluctance to exercise their empowerment”* because they did not want to *“jeopardise the relationship {with the partner organisation}”* (CCD#3).

Similar findings exist with WAG’s relationship to ‘Y’. Staff from ‘Y’ already provided low-income families in the community (including WAG members) with considerable social and spiritual support and economic assistance. Clergy also have particular authority in relation to (particularly less educated) Tongan and Samoan people. This is not so much the result of individual’s actions, but of colonising discourses that positioned Western knowledge as ‘superior’ and Christianity as a ‘civilising influence’. The historical and social location of WAG members within these discourses, coupled with the hierarchical nature of Tongan and Samoan societies, meant that they positioned members of clergy as having greater social status and authority than themselves.

Challenging these relations of authority was a new thing for WAG members and very difficult. When a meeting was held between ‘Y’ and WAG members to resolve the conflict, the majority of the Samoan and Tongan women present said very little, appeared nervous and only spoke towards the end of the time (field notes F1). When one of these women eventually came to speak her opening words were: *‘I feel nervous, because it is a new thing for me to be speaking like this to nuns who are so high’* (field notes F1). These difficulties were compounded by the tendency of ‘Y’ staff to oversee the structural power they possessed in the situation, demonstrated by their display of a number of silencing behaviours. These included speaking first, taking up most of the speaking time, using language that some members of WAG could not understand and venting their own anger and distress rather than asking questions. Speaking of her experience of the meeting one WAG member said: *“I felt so hurt and down after that meeting. I couldn’t speak, I held myself back. It was when ‘X’ & ‘Y’ spoke like that. I went there to be equal, but I wasn’t allowed to be equal. I started to feel below and like I was in the wrong meeting on the wrong side”* (WAG#1). For most of the women within this group, to disagree with people who potentially exercised such social, spiritual and economic power within their everyday lives was very difficult.

Results from this part of the research also suggest a more deliberate bid on the part of some organisations to maintain power. This occurred within several community-organisational

partnerships. A community developer working within a community economic development initiative provided one example representative of these. He talked about a bid by the local housing department to reduce the power of the initiative when undertaking work with it. During this process conflict occurred between the two parties as community members were dissatisfied with the conditions of a housing contract being drawn up by the Department. The community development initiative refused to sign the contract until certain conditions were met: *"It was not a co-operative relationship and I sensed they (the Housing Department) wanted to reduce the power (of the community development initiative). They needed the initiative as it had to be done at a community level"* (CCD#12). According to the community developer, the Housing Department went on to try to establish two other housing co-ops in different parts of the city; a plan that was not feasible and eventually failed. *"The only thing I can think of is that they wanted to reduce the bargaining power of the initiative. Which is a very poor way of dealing with a community group.....But they don't seem to be able to operate on a partnership basis"* (CCD#12).

Such experiences point to the apparent contradictions within community partnerships between the apparent desire to empower by those who have it, and the logical consequences of this. Bar (Bar, 1995) writes:

Professionals and politicians need honestly to appraise their attitudes and consider whether in their strategies for empowerment they only accede to notions of partnership because this approach secures their own power. Motivations on the part of power holders to engage with empowerment may therefore reflect self interest (p.128).

While the majority of the community-organisational partnerships in the investigation were challenged two partnerships broke down completely because the underlying issues of power inequities could not be addressed. Lack of established processes for dealing with conflict and the ensuing emotional responses of people (Hunt, 1990) were key reasons for this (CCD#2, field notes E1-F1). These results support the argument of Sen and Edwards (Sen & Edwards, 2000) that increased organisational capacity to undertake development work requires personal development and change within people and human relationships at institutional levels.

Agentic community-organisational partnerships

All of the ten community-organisational partnerships that contributed data to this part of the investigation increased individual and community agency capacities to some extent. Some were

more successful than others in so far as they resulted in communities at the economic and cultural margins being able to position themselves outside of dominant policy discourse or to take some related action to determine their futures. All of these partnerships met with issues that challenged community-organisational relations. In some respects community development orientated community-organisational partnerships are actually counter cultural to the wider institutional environment and the behaviours and beliefs of some individuals who may have some roles within these.

Those that were able to sustain partnerships that functioned well enough for communities to begin achieving some of their desired outcomes shared several characteristics. The first was organisational legitimacy. The organisation either had credibility in its own right with communities at the economic margins or there were individuals employed within the organisation or supporting its part in a community development initiative whom people considered credible. Credibility refers to integrity and trustworthiness. "A commitment to act in ways that enhance and do not detract from [articulated] values" (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999, p.16). "Legitimacy" or "credibility" was mentioned by several community developers as an important building block in agentic partnerships:

I was chairing this development process with 'X' who was an Indian chief and I must say we couldn't have gone on without her, because she really gave legitimacy for the Aboriginal people to hang in on this convoluted process. The trust really came from 'X', because she knew a lot of the people and had status as a tribal chief....you have to know where your legitimacy come from and it certainly didn't come from my position within regional government....in fact that probably works against you (laughs) (CCD#1).

Similarly, a New Zealand based Samoan community developer talked about why his community was willing to partner with a publicly funded health agency: "*We always like to come through agency 'X' as it's the only organisation with credibility in this area at the moment that is endorsed by the community and so has a mandate to look at people's health issues here. And it has credibility with all the other state (funded) agencies.* He also identified legitimacy with the participation of a particular agency representative: "*And we know that whenever 'Z' is involved, we know it can be trusted*" (HAG#2).

The second characteristic was the articulation within practice of prominent community development values and practice ethics (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999). Agency enhancing partnerships were seen as being "value-based". Commonly mentioned values were: mutual trust and respect and equity within these partnerships: "[Agency

enhancing] partnerships are value based I think, when you feel that you're equal players.....the relationship is like a mutual respect"(CCD#11). Similarly in reflecting on 'what had made the difference' within the initiative he'd been working with another community developer said: "The government and agency people that have been involved had a strong respect for low-income people and believed in their capabilities to do things for themselves" (CCD#12). A sense of 'commonality of purpose' and hope that 'meaningful results' could be produced as a result of partnerships also contributed to agency enhancing outcomes. "There was a sense of 'what we're doing here is remarkable and we're making progress" (CCD#4). Alternatively, a member of a low-income community in the same initiative said:

It didn't matter if it was a community member, a community developer or person from the regional government, there was not problem to sit at the same table and say whatever... [What helped] was really focusing that we were working for the same cause....that our goal was the same (CCD#6).

The third characteristic of agentic community–organisational partnerships was the transformative use of power by organisational representatives (CCD#s 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12 & HAG#2). This involved utilising institutional and structural power to which members of marginalised communities did not have access, to effectively increase the latter's power:

I think by the time we got to the fourth meeting, they {low-income members} were well aware they were running the process. They learned fairly quickly that they had the process. But they were only allowed to have the process by the agreement of the politicians and social services people. I mean it was with the blessings of those people that they had the power (CCD#8).

The transformative use of power by organisations, is the overarching goal of community-organisational partnerships. However, this goal requires, not only systems and processes within partnerships that enable this, but a high degree of consciousness and ability to critically reflect on power relations on the part of organisational representatives. It also requires the application of these attributes repetitively. Those initiatives that sustained agency-enhancing partnerships demonstrated an ability to apply this quality fairly consistently.

The fourth characteristic was the participation and support of people at senior management levels within large organisations within community development initiatives (HAG#2, CCD#s 1, 5, 8, & 12). Speaking about the reasons for the success to date of the community development initiative he was involved in, one Samoan New Zealand based community developer commented: *"It's easy to put the report into government and think nothing will be done. But we had some good keen people from government departments, who were pretty passionate and were managers" (HAG#2).* Given that community development practice itself is often counter

cultural to the practices of large organisations and it is essentially about changing status-quo power-culture relations, such partnerships require the support of people with access to institutional power. Interviewees also thought that the integrity of the practice of individuals within organisations was just as important as organisational behaviours: *“If ‘X’ from the agency leaves and ‘Z’ takes over whose not really linked with us, I don’t know whether it would work. It’s not supposed to be the individual, its supposed to be a systemic thing that everybody is treated equally, but its not” (CCD#11).*

The above four characteristics of agentic community-institutional partnerships existed simultaneously within several initiatives. Within these initiatives, these characteristics were sufficiently strong to mitigate the three earlier identified problematics of community-institutional partnerships as well as to engender a change in attitude between some organisational representatives and community members who previously had positioned each other unagentially. For example, one community developer said:

I’m not sure that all of the senior [government] people involved in the initiative had that view {believed in the capabilities of low-income community members}. But some of them have come around because of the track record. They’d say ‘ Oh gee we didn’t think these people could ever do anything – these people {low income community members} seem to know what they’re doing’. So there’s been a change in attitude (CCD#12).

In another initiative, there were initially a number of unhelpful assumptions made by community members and regional government representatives about each other (CCD#s 4, 5, 7 & 8). However:

.....by the end of the process a sincere affection had developed between people and there was a sense of respect and understanding across the boundaries. And again it was the breaking of stereotypes...Maybe the bureaucrats may have had some stereotypes as to what the clients that are being served are like and they learned a lot in that process. And likewise people from the community had stereotypes about people who sit in offices and controlled their lives. They realised that they {the government representatives} did have some compassion, did have a sense of humour and really wanted to try to find solutions to the problems (CCD#4).

This same community development initiative experienced all three problematics discussed earlier within this theoretical question. However, it also had legitimacy with both low-income communities and regional government politicians by virtue of who was involved. Core community development principles and ethics were applied consistently (CCD#s 6 & 7). Those involved were committed to the transformative use of their power to enable increases in agency of members from communities at the margins (CCD#s 6, 7 & 8). Despite the problematics of

organisational practices that were counter to community development, there were enough senior management people involved to mitigate some of these disempowering effects CCD#s 4, 5 & 8. One low-income member of this initiative discussed the regional government role in the following terms:

I mean the money's not there and you can't do some stuff. But still the idea that the government for the first time is acknowledging us. Saying not only are we going to try to help you, we're gonna let you guys in on the solution...And they were sharing their information and we were sharing our experiences and it was absolutely an amazing partnership. Oh if only the government worked that way more often (CCD#7).

Conclusions: theoretical question five

The investigation results confirm some of the challenging aspects of community-organisational partnerships in the existing community development literature (Clague, 1996; GermAnn, 2000; Hunt, 1990; Labonte, 1994; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999; Sen & Edwards, 2000). Schisms between community development discourse (often articulated within organisational rhetoric) and organisational behaviour appear to remain a significant problematic within community-organisational forms of partnership.

The research results also suggest that the mobilisation of 'professionalism' and social structures representative of dominant cultural systems by organisational representatives that position members of marginalised communities unagentially is a significant issue within community-organisational partnerships. The critical post-modern analysis has illuminated the significance of interactions between individuals within these partnerships and the subtle and complex nature of these processes. Discourses of 'professionalism' and culturally dominant belief systems (that position communities at the margins unagentially) exert powerful influences in constituting the subjectivities and actions of those engaged in some way or another in community development practice.

Shifting power relations within community-organisational partnerships are a necessary, if "healthful" aspect of these relationships as community desire to exercise greater agency within these increases. The power struggles and conflicts within community-organisational partnerships arose as a result of these processes as well as reflecting some of the dominant power-culture relations that communities were mobilising against. This second aspect of such conflicts is hardly surprising given that large organisations are often representative of dominant social structures and cultural systems. While the results demonstrate power to be shifting and

unstable within these partnerships, institutional power nevertheless remained with the organisations.

The results from this part of the research have interesting implications for those organisations that provide various health-related services and support to people and also wish to undertake community development work with these communities. In the struggle to establish their own power and legitimacy (Labonte, 1994), community members potentially risk alienating people who support them on a daily basis. Service-providing organisations such as churches, health or social services need to remain cognisant of the unique sets of power relations inherent in undertaking community development partnerships with the same community members that they support on a day to day basis. Organisations representative of institutions such as religion or medicine need to be further aware of the ways in which these discourses have traditionally constituted relations of “power over” and externally based authority and how these might continue to influence the subjectivities of the community members. The establishment of structures that clearly separate service provision from community development work within such organisations would demarcate clearer boundaries between these functions, creating a greater climate of safety for marginalised communities in establishing their own legitimacy within these partnerships. Different individuals should be performing service provision and community development roles.

The investigation results concerning ‘agentic community-organisational partnerships’ suggest that the partnership problematics previously iterated are not insurmountable and that community-organisational partnerships remain desirable to realise increased levels of agency for marginalised communities. Aspects of agentic community-organisational partnerships suggested by the results contribute to the ‘organisational conditions’ necessary to realise these outlined in chapter ten.

Theoretical question six: community - community developer relations

How do the subject positions (identities, cultures and professional status) of community development workers impact on the agency of marginalised communities within community development processes?

This question inquires into the influence of three categories of subject positions occupied by community developers in their work with communities. The first of these categories relates to

the impact of the community developers' identities and cultures on organising work. The second is the influence of community developers' professional statuses on these processes. The third category is the subject position occupied by community developers as the hinge between institution and community. The critical question posed here, is how do each of these subject positions constrain or enhance the ability of community developers to work with individuals and communities at 'the margins' towards the goal of increased agency or self-determination? A second question underlying this one (emergent during the research process) is how might the community developer use the power inherent in these different locations to transform status quo power relations, while maintaining a sense of integrity (power with, power within) in the process?

Apart from a few comments by members of WAG the data come from community developers themselves. Four Canadian interviewees were speaking from the dual subject positions of community developers and members of communities at the margins. This means that the majority of data presented within this theoretical question represents the views of community developers.

Identities, cultures and agency

Over the past two decades much controversy has surrounded 'cross cultural work' in Aotearoa. The debates have largely occurred with respect to ethnicity and to a lesser extent gender. They have taken place (within forums such as 'professional' journals and conferences) in a range of professions such as social work, nursing and research. (I have been less able to find references to these debates within community development). While standards of (ethnic) cultural safety have been instituted in nursing and social work, and there are increasingly research partnerships between members of different ethnic communities within Aotearoa, a sense of taboo still exists around cross-cultural engagement within these areas.

At the same time post-modern theories emphasising the multiplicity of voices, subject positions and locations (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Williams, 1996) have well and truly entered academia. While these theories have opened spaces for dialogue regarding the multiple and relative (rather than oppositional) positions of subjects amongst academics, my own observations have been that these arguments have been much slower to influence practitioners in 'the field' such as health promoters, social workers and community developers. In recent times, working with people of different ethnic identities and cultures has often been avoided. While professionals

often do work with people of different gender, ability and sexual identities and cultures, their different locations and the power-culture relations inherent in these are largely ignored. Consequently, little open discussion exists surrounding the problematics of working with individuals and communities from different identity and cultural locations. These issues have had consequences for the data collection for this part of the inquiry.

The impetus for the inquiry into the influence of community developer's identities (sense of self and thoughts and emotions of who we are) and cultures (shared systems of meaning, symbols and world views) on community development processes was provided by the research with WAG. My own field notes pertaining to my own perceptions and experience of this form the majority of this data.

Initially my awareness of the impact of my identities and cultures on the community development work with WAG impressed me as a 'lack of knowledge of Tongan and Samoan cultures'. I questioned my own ability to work with the members of WAG (as Tongan and Samoan Women) so that their agency capacities would increase. As I grappled with these issues and discussed them with others, I received a range of messages from different sources, including WAG members and other Tongan, Samoan and Palangi women regarding the impacts of working from different cultural locations. For example one Tongan WAG member's comments about the value of having had a Tongan woman (who was also educated) come in to work with the group for some time crystallised the potency of working with some one of the same (ethnic) culture in terms of agency:

And then 'X' coming in and the stuff we were learning about empowerment and also Paulo Freire's work. It made us realise that our own people can succeed. Working with another PI {person from the Pacific Islands}. We have a similar identity and they can understand us much more – they feel for us. They know what we feel...it encourages us to achieve our dreams – we realise that we can get there too (WAG#8).

Around this time, I was also talking with my Tongan supervisor about the idea of having an open forum with WAG members on issues of hierarchy and authority, as these issues seemed to be impeding the work of the group. We planned that the discussion would focus on the question: 'In what ways did it serve group members to maintain hierarchical relationships both in relation to members of their own communities and more generally?' However, when I asked her opinion on whether I should ask a Tongan or Samoan woman to come in and facilitate this session, she thought that this would only 'lock the women more into hierarchical types of relations during the process of the discussion' (field notes C1), making open discussion of the issues difficult

due to their deference to the facilitator. On balance she thought it better that I facilitate the discussion. Sometime prior to this, I had also been told by a Samoan researcher, that my own “locations” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) of lesbian and differently abled would have sensitised my awareness to the power issues inherent in working with Tongan and Samoan people as a Palangi within the New Zealand cultural context (field notes M1).

As time progressed, I came to see that the issues surrounding community development work with people whom I both shared and occupied significantly different identity and cultural locations were relatively complex. During the course of the work with WAG, I became more aware of how my subject positions (Palangi, woman, lesbian) influenced my perceptions and constructions of the other members of the group, and subsequently my actions. I had eighteen months of contact with the members of WAG over which to deepen my awareness of these issues and at times discuss my reflections with the Tongan and Samoan women in the group. The majority of the community developers whom I interviewed in Canada had not had these kinds of opportunities to reflect on the impacts of their identities and cultures on development work and relationships. This is significant as most interviewees found these questions challenging. Most had not thought about these issues in any depth and found it difficult to spontaneously reflect on these issues. This meant that some people were unable to answer these questions. For example after some deliberation one community developer said: *“It {my identities and cultures} has had an impact, but I’m just not aware of it...I mean someone else will probably have to answer that question”* (CCD#17).

The community developer and community: the problematics of working from different identity and cultural locations.

Some initial barriers exist in situations where the identities and cultures of the community developer are considerably different from those community members with whom she/he was working. One Tongan woman from WAG reflected on her initial experiences of relating to me as a Palangi community developer/researcher:

And [I thought] ‘why should we trust this Palangi coming into our life?’ You know it was quite hard for us to trust you and maybe for you to trust us. [With the story-telling], we thought who is she to tell our life to, how we been brought up back home...You know, telling youse Pakehas how we been brought up...But when we starting to get to know each other and build a relationship, that’s when the trust starts coming (WAG#1).

At the same time, I had my own set of internal constructions of the other group members as ‘Tongan and Samoan heterosexual women’ and wondered if or how we could relate from our different locations. After a group session one day, I wrote in my field notes:

Today I got a strong sense that they wanted to know more about my world.... They know that they don't know all of me – they sense I'm holding back – it {who I am} doesn't all fit together for them. It's harder for me to judge what's safe [to say] in a strange [ethnic] culture (field notes B2).

Similarly, other community developers experienced barriers as they attempted to build relationships with community members whose subject positions were quite different from their own. As the majority of interviewees were women, class and ethnic differences were often factors. One Canadian community developer talked about some of these barriers she experienced in her work with low income, mainly immigrant ethnic minority communities: “That I'm white, I'm fairly middle class, I'm fairly well educated – I think that there are barriers there that I've found difficult to cross. Like even in language...sometimes they'll say ‘okay, what does that mean?’” (CCD#5). For another community developer, work with identity and cultural difference proved too difficult to work across on an ongoing basis: “They never did get past the fact that I have privilege and they don't have...We didn't get to the same depth {as I did with the other communities}....But maybe they've learned that there are some people out there you can trust” (CCD#9). The interviewee also attributed the lack of relationship relative to other communities to the feelings of powerlessness experienced by community members: “They were the most vulnerable {relative to the other ethnic minority and low-income communities I was working with} and they were the hardest to build the bridges too” (CCD#9).

Another community developer talked about her impressions relating to the ways in which community members positioned her:

I was saying how ‘now that we're having a family, I'd get a larger house’. And she said ‘Well how big is your house?’ And I said ‘It's 1080 square feet’. And she said ‘you just live in a big house!’ So they'd already pigeon holed me that I live in a big house! A big fancy house!....but I don't live in a big house (chuckles) (CCD#14).

This community developer saw such positionings as potentially creating barriers between herself and individuals from communities at the margins: “I don't want to interfere with how people see me.....I just don't want people to put up a big screen” (CCD#14). For some community developers, coming from culturally dominant locations caused continual tension, sometimes due to the ways in which they positioned themselves: “Occasionally I would go for a meeting with a community member and I would be stood up...My fears would be that somehow I

was to blame myself. Somehow I was too intimidating or my language was too complex. Whatever it was, it was something I did wrong. I could really put myself on a trip that way" (CCD#9).

Sometimes the differences in cultures and identities between community developers and members of communities at 'the margins' provoked misunderstandings and conflict. One community developer told a story regarding his work with a group of women. He said: "*I haven't been cognisant of some of their concerns from a gender perspective. I brought a different perception to the table and negated or ah wasn't sympathetic to their needs or concerns....I called them 'gals' or 'ladies' where they should have been 'women'....it caused some discomfort" (CCD#18).* The same community developer then talked about how he'd been oblivious to the women's discomfort until a woman community developer told him how the women were feeling. Within this situation, the different identity and cultural locations between the community developer and community members, and the associated discrepancies in power had "reverberated through their interactions" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) without the community developer being aware of these. This situation caused some separation between the community developer and the group members. At the time of our interview, weeks after the initial incident, these issues remained unaddressed. The fact that these issues still remained unresolved, despite this community developer and the women often being in the same building, alludes to the sensitivity of these issues and the potencies of feelings that are produced as a result of inequitable power-culture relations.

The results from this part of the investigation suggest that identity and cultural differences between community developers and community members have real effects on the subjectivities of both. This has implications for internal and external agency terrain capacities of individuals and communities at the margins. For example, identity and cultural differences may mean that community developers miss vital information, make unhelpful assumptions or be oblivious to power-culture dynamics that are played out in the relationships with community members. This is likely to be counter to the development of internal agency capacities such as skills and knowledge, self-esteem and a strong sense of identities.

Drawing on value bases and the experience of marginal identities in working across identities and culture with communities at the margins

Of those who were able to engage in some level of reflexivity regarding the influence of their identities and cultures on organising processes, a small number talked in broad terms about their beliefs and values. From their perspective, these had assisted them with community development work with people of different identity and cultural locations. These comments tended to reflect an awareness of power relations. One interviewee said: *“I have to be very aware that I don’t have a lot of barriers that these people have...If I wasn’t aware of it, it would cause problems with me understanding what it would be like to have less power in society”* (CCD#8).

One community developer told me about an experience that had proved to be formative with respect to shaping his identity and the way he went about his work. As a result of a written ultimatum to a politician demanding more resources for community development work in the province, he and several community developers were sacked. *“That was very important to me in terms of actually taking a stand and something I always go back to in terms of who I am...that’s a key part of my identity, working towards greater equality”* (CCD#12).

The same community developer (who spoke from the subject positions of white, middle class, educated, male) did not experience many of the barriers to self-determination that the individuals and communities he worked with did. However, my own impressions are that he was quite “conscious of his own locations” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) in relation to these people. When I asked him if he experienced any sorts of barriers to self-determination as the communities he worked with, he replied: *“Nobody is free as long as we have great disparity in our social and economic system...we’re all penalised...I don’t experience those kinds of barriers {such as employment, housing, racism, sexism}, but I experience the unhappiness of living in a society where the inequality is so great”* From his perspective, he “needed to take responsibility” (Dibernard, 1996) for his own particular locations in exercising his agency to transform dominant power-culture relations: *“I wouldn’t mind taking it a little easier, but I have to keep doing what I can... ..When we have disparities like we have, when the children don’t get their opportunities and the life chances that they need – we all loose”* (CCD#12).

On the whole, these community developers also tended to be those who had experienced marginalisation through their identities and cultures themselves. Some of these interviewees

referred to and drew on their own experiences of marginalisation during our conversation on this topic. One community developer who came from the subject positions of community developer, male, ethnic minority and living on a low-income, talked about several incidents in which he felt these identities had assisted him. One of these experiences had been his role in going through the documented stories of people living on low incomes. These stories had been documented for the purpose of compiling a report to regional government with a series of recommendations. For this developer his marginal identities had increased his consciousness of his locations (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999) and had assisted him in recognising the cultural gaps in their own process:

...I don't think that we got everything out of that testimony. There was always so much more depending on what direction you came from it....There were gaps in the sense that new Canadians and invisible minorities were under-represented in that process. I found myself trying to speak for them, in many cases because of my connection with them...I tried to remind people that you just can't look through your own set of glasses and think you have the full picture (CCD#4).

Another community developer who occupied the locations of woman, middle class and lesbian spoke about her experiences of marginalisation as a result of her identities and her perception that she was able to use these to relate to the experiences of marginalised communities:

Many of my identities are not mainstream....Certainly I don't have a lot of experience of living in other [ethnic] cultures than my own and I think that's a lack in terms of relating to new-comers in Canada. At the same time, because I identify with marginalised communities in Canada, I think I can transfer that understanding beyond (CCD#5).

Linking these experiences to her values and practice she said:

The biggest thing I could say around my own life and my belief around diversity is I think a value that I bring to the work and that can be felt is respecting and honoring other people's experiences. And I do think that's had an impact in terms of building the relationships (CCD#5).

When asked about the impacts of their identities and cultures on their relationships with community members, two community developers talked about the experience of 'not fitting in'. One of these women who was of Argentinean, Dutch and Indonesian descent said:

"I grew up in the sixties, so I do have that whole background of bias and gender inequality. And I also experienced racial barriers {to self-determination}. I was always the 'little dark girl' growing up. I never identified with being white, but I never identified with anything else either, cause there was nothing to identify with...I spent a lot of time trying to find a place in the world....So I suppose I have to say that I think it {identity} did impact. I suspect that the real bias I went in {to the community development initiative} with is that finding out who you are and your place is really critical (CCD#2).

The comments of this community developer concur with my own views on the importance of community developers and community members coming to know their own identities and cultural locations from which they interact. For community developers, knowledge of these will mean that they are better positioned to assist marginalised communities towards exercising increased levels of agency.

Due to the difficulty that some participants encountered in reflecting upon the impacts of their own identities and cultures on organising processes and therefore the limited amount of data available, the results from this part of the investigation need to be interpreted with some caution. That being said, the results from this part of the investigation suggest that the identities and cultures of community developers may have a substantial impact on organising work and the abilities of communities to increase their capacities for agency. Those community developers whose own identities and cultures are located outside of dominant social structures are more likely to be sensitised to equity issues within power-culture relations. However, the results also indicate that sensitivity to these issues is not contingent upon this. The value base of the community developer is also important in their ability to critically reflect on the impact of their identities and cultures on development processes and to take responsibility for this.

Issues of professionalism and agency

While it is arguable whether community development can or should be regarded as a profession, a number of professionally trained people undertake community development work. The community developers within the investigation were either university educated or qualified professionals such as nurses or social workers. The majority of these were paid employees of institutions such as social and health services, local and regional levels of government and universities. This component of the investigation focuses on the institutions of the professions as they are promulgated through individuals who are regarded as professionals. This is distinct (although not entirely separate) from the organisational behaviours that also promulgate institutions of profession such as religion and medicine, discussed under theoretical question five.

Professionalism, power and agency

To be 'empowered' - I have a lot of grievances against that word.....It means that somebody else is coming to make a better person of me...You are a social worker by profession. So, if you don't give whoever you are dealing with the right or the time to do something, they are not empowered. All the people will be just waiting

for the social worker to come and give it {power} to them. I dislike it {the word empowerment} being used.....Most of the time it's being used to emphasise the status of the weak, the less advantaged, the less privileged, the less important (HAG#1).

The words of this Samoan, New Zealand based community developer articulate some of the confusion that currently surrounds professionalism and the use of power within development work with communities. The relatively new status of community development as an 'empowering practice' (Labonte, 1996a), that is still not well understood by both communities and community development practitioners often leads to confusion surrounding its practice. One of the inherent challenges within the community development work being carried out with communities by developers is the influence of professionalism. Issues of 'professionalism' influenced community developer – community relations as either community developer or community member/s positioned each other in particular ways. Issues of Professionalism first came to my attention in the work with WAG, although there were undoubtedly cultural reasons for this. While I did not name the issue as 'professionalism' at that time, the extra authority attributed to me by group members was also partly due to my perceived 'expertise' as a university researcher (Gaventa, 1993) and 'professional'.

Prior to working in community development, a significant number of community developers within the investigation had previously trained in professions such as social work or nursing. One interviewee, a nurse working as a community developer within a community health organisation alluded to the philosophical divisions within these roles with respect to power relations: *"What I like is that I'm more human for working here {as a community developer}. In the hospital everything is so technical. Quite frankly, you do your tasks and you do your treatments and then you ship people off and you think 'Oh look at me! I can do all these things! But I don't have any people skills!'" (CCD#14).* In particular, the act of 'doing treatments' speaks to the professional's imposition of solutions (Illich, 1977), thus cohering with the act of "power over". This is antithetical to the power experiences inherent in community developer-community relations of 'power within' and 'power with'.

The data from this part of the investigation suggests that sometimes community developers carried aspects of their previous professional training into their roles as community development practitioners. In particular this impacted on the power relations between community developers and members of communities as sometimes the latter, were still

positioned (however subtly) as ‘clients’. One community developer, whose profession was social work alluded to this:

I come from a social work background, so I guess I carry that with me. I think that's a bit of a challenge sometimes...There's the separation between the professional and the client and we know from community development that that approach doesn't work. But there is still some greyness with that. Like where do you draw the line? (CCD#13).

The intrusion of professional practices into community development work that constituted relations of “power over” were often supported organisationally. The same professionally trained social worker (previously mentioned) who was currently working as a community developer in a ‘health action’ centre talked about this: “*Health is a field that does seem to be kind of skill related or task related.....We have to be vigilant that we're not part of the problem with people too – that we're not 'doing it to people'. That we start thinking of people as 'clients'” (CCD#13).* The results revealed that service provision organisations often have ways of positioning people (as patients or clients) that conflict with community development as an ‘empowering practice’. This subtly reinforces training most service professionals receive before they shift into community development work: “*My theory on community development, is that people make all the difference and the relationships you form with people. A lot of people get really comfortable with certain other staff and certain other clients that come to programmes and they bond with that person and feel a real sense of connection” (CCD#19).* This community developer worked in a community health centre that administered treatment to people as well as undertaking community development work. My impressions are that the inconsistencies within her comments were also in part constituted through discourses of medicalisation and her participation in related organisational behaviours such as ‘running programmes for clients’.

At this organisational level, two community developers (CCD#1, CCD#2) also spoke about the lack of training in community development work. Talking about social work training, one community developer said: “*There's not enough work done during their educational processes for them to think differently. There's not enough community development. The School of Social Work used to have that as a focus and now its kinda gone by the wayside” (CCD#2).* This same community developer went on to talk about the difficulties with attempting to get trained social workers in her office to think within community development frameworks, rather than within the traditional social work case work approach.

The investigation results showed that the issue of authority was often closely associated with the community developer's role. Authority was both attributed to the community developer by members of communities at 'the margins' as well as community developers themselves. Neither inherently good or bad, the basis for this authority was attributed to a number of reasons associated with professionalism:

I think authority and power come in many different ways. We {community developers} have the authority of our title. I have a title of community developer. I have authority of the organisational support behind me. I think I also have authority in terms of knowledge. That's a different kind of authority. That's given to us {by people} (CCD#5).

The issue of authority was sometimes difficult to manage within community development practice, tending to get bound up with issues of professionalism. One community developer reflected on how professionals had taken over within a women's anti-poverty initiative:

Thinking back to the transport co-op situation, I think that other people in social work or what ever, assume they know best. I mean they are wonderful people – have a good heart and a good soul, but take over (CCD#2).

Similarly issues of professionalism and authority came to the fore within another Canadian anti poverty initiative. Some of those interviewed had quite different perspectives on the issue associated with their subject positions of community developer and member of community at 'the margins'. One situation that highlighted these differences was in planning how people living on low incomes might speak publicly about their lives and related issues of poverty. There was considerable disagreement over whether the media should be present. One person living on a low-income who thought that media should be present, gave his perspective on the situation: "They {some of the community developers} wanted it {the poverty hearings} to be designed to provide a safe, secure place for anyone who wanted to speak out about their situation" (CCD#4). However this same person also had misgivings about this process: "I agree with it, but to the point where I would say that some of the social work types that were trying to help us in this process, on the one hand trying to protect us, would tend to overdo it. And emphasise our fragility. And my feeling was, that I wanted people to start feeling strong and that they could actually change things" (CCD#4). This view was affirmed by another community developer (CCD#8) who felt that some of the community developers had been too directive in the process.

Although neither of these two interviewees overtly stated it as such, my impression was that power struggles had surfaced at various intervals regarding the direction and control of the

initiative, and people's claims to 'expert' knowledge. Continuing on, the low-income member of the initiative said:

The social work or the agency types can be a little paternalistic. In the sense that 'we have to protect these people. You know they're going to crumble like a dry leaf'I've spoken at community developers and social workers conferences. 'You have to be careful that you don't keep people down. It's social control inadvertently, completely inadvertently (CCD#4).

However, a community developer who thought the media should not be present, regarded the authority of community developers as 'knowledgeable actors' as being quite as legitimate: "*We {community developers} had definite ideas about how to access the community, how to mobilise the community, how having media present at a place where you're going to talk about your experience of poverty did not work...we {community developers} have a unique experience in knowing about mobilising*" (CCD#5). However, this same community developer also found balancing her role and associated authority to be challenging: "*I guess I find that frustrating as a community developer, because I know that my role is to resource other people to do that work....And yet when you see something, it's hard not to try and influence that agenda.....And I did have to check in with myself. Am I being supportive? Or am I being controlling*"? (CCD#5). This demonstrates some "reflexivity" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) in being able to assess and analyse the power relations between herself and other members of the initiative, an important "benchmark" of community development practice (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team, 1999).

The experience of the majority of community developers interviewed was that members of communities at 'the margins' often attributed greater authority to them because of their 'professional' status:

I think because I was a nurse, they gave me a bit more authority because of that background (CCD#19).

I think they think I have a lot of social status. I teach university, so I'm awarded social status. Wouldn't matter if I was the world's worst university lecturer (CCD#3).

I'm sure they did {view me as having more authority}. They know I work for social services, so therefore I have a wage. They know I have an education. They looked to me to assist them with development work and I had knowledge about community development they didn't have (CCD#2).

Sometimes community developers regarded their positionings by community members as 'professionals with more authority' as antithetical to the goals of community development

work. Two community developers (CCD#12, CCD#9) initially found it hard to form relationships due to their positionings as a 'government worker' and 'social worker' respectively. Other community developers, including myself, at times found the status attributed to them as a 'knowledgeable authority' by community members to be counter to people's recognition of themselves as capable and "effective actors" (Kieffer, 1984), an important agency capacity. While Community developers thought their knowledge to be important in resourcing people, they also thought their semi-professional status to be a barrier to empowering relations. One community developer said: *"It {more knowledge} can also be a barrier. If people are constantly looking towards you {as the community developer} for knowledge, then they might not be looking towards each other"* (CCD#5). This coheres with Foucault's second thesis of power (O'Brien & Penna, 1998) in which power-knowledge is dispersed through "a very large number of officially sanctioned authorities" (p.119) including the modern disciplines or professions of social work, medicine and nursing. (This includes community developers who may either be trained in one of these professions or accorded 'professional' status as an employee of a large institution such as local government).

A community developer's efforts to share power and authority with community members, does not necessarily change their status and authority as 'professional' in the eyes of community members. 'B', the member of clergy who worked with myself and the other members of WAG said: *"I've had that struggle all along. They sort of look to me to take the lead or give the answer or say 'B' will do that. I think part of that too you know is being a sister and they like to sort of put you on a pedestal...it's a constant struggle, that's not where I want to be up there"* (WAG#7). The act of 'looking toward' the (professional) community developer, for authority (despite whatever attempts they may be making to share authority) support Ivan Illich's (Illich, 1977) assertion that "the disabling of the citizen through professional dominance is completed through the power of illusions" (p.27). Just as professionals appropriate special knowledge to define public issues, problems and solutions, so the public positions him or her in that role. Illich (Illich, 1977) writes that the acceptance of professional claims "legitimises the docile recognition of imputed lacks on the part of the layman: his world turns into an echo-chamber of needs" (p.57).

However, community developers also viewed positively their authority and different subject positions as professionals. One person pointed out that his authority as community developer had ensured he'd been able to guide an initiative to prevent it going in "unhealthy" directions. Another spoke of the agentic aspects of her professional role that gave her a different

perspective on issues than members of communities at ‘the margins’: *“For self protection, I’m not always feeling what they’re feeling I’ve got a barrier there on purpose as a way of being objective so that I can deal with the material that’s coming out and try to move the process. I couldn’t do this work if I didn’t have a professional role that I could slip on”* (CCD#8). This same person described herself as *“having a different lens”* through which to view the issues. Other community developers (CCD#s 2, 3, 4, 12 & 16) talked about their different subject positions from members of communities at ‘the margins’ meant that they viewed these people as having many more skills and capabilities than they viewed themselves as having. For example one community developer said: *“I don’t see them as the powerless, helpless, weak individual suffering the vagaries of the Canadian government that they see themselves”* (CCD#3). Whether this was in part due to the ‘ethos’ of the helping professions, or the separate experiences and identities of the community developers, is hard to gauge. These differences in subject positions were non the less viewed as agentic with respect to working with members of communities to increase their capacities for agency.

In the main, most community developers found that issues of authority decreased as the community development initiatives they were involved in progressed: *“They did perceive me as having more social status. But I think that changes as they get to know you as an individual”* (CCD#8). Interviewees expressed aspects of Donald Schon’s (Schon, 1983) conceptual model of the “reflective contract” between practitioners and citizens. One community developer talked about *“letting people be equal”* (CCD#12) as the relationship became more established. Another commented on his changing role in relationship to participants. While this was not explicitly ‘negotiated’ with the group members, his comments indicate his cognisance of members’ increased abilities to exercise leadership as he ‘gifted’ some of his authority and power to other group members as the project progressed:

I had a hard time thinking about myself as the facilitator. I debated about that. Because I was the facilitator, but should I just be another participant? As the project went on leaders emerged, they did come out more and I supported them in that. But you know, initially, I still maintained some power...Power is an interesting issue. I couldn’t relinquish all of it...for whatever reason, I still needed to maintain my power position in the group...I think I needed to with that project. It could have gone in directions that wouldn’t have been healthy for everyone (CCD#13).

Professionalism, identity and agency

A small number of participants within the investigation talked about the interfaces between their own cultural identities, professional identities and roles as community developers. Some of the anomalies between professional models and the practice of community development have already been discussed in chapter five. What is important to iterate here is that some of these professional models of practice have relied more on universal bodies of knowledge, expertise or theory and have tended to deal with particular situations or people in isolation from their cultural contexts (Ife, 1995). Neither have they required that professionals disclose much about themselves. Even in professions such as social work or counselling, the 'professional' holds the power to direct, and facilitate the interaction. The space within which client and professional interact is quite clearly bounded by time and location.

Within more traditional models, the identities and life experiences of the professional are kept out of the interaction. Within community development, a transformative intent with respect to power relations on the part of the community developer is more clearly articulated and boundaries of time and space are more permeable and fluid than in traditional professional models. These arguably require a fuller integration of the community developer's identities and cultures into their roles. With respect to this, one community developer talked about the challenges she experienced when she 'bumped' into community members she worked with on the weekends:

Sometimes, I find myself running into people in the weekends and I'm on my own time and say I'm with my Mom or whoever. Obviously I want to continue developing the relationship. So I struggle, do I introduce them?....My own stereotypes come up. 'Oh yes, these are welfare, and these are single moms and yes these are Aboriginals'....I have no problems with the people {community members} I work with at work. And it's after hours where you can see the differences that really don't matter during work hours. And there are two different views you have. And you really shouldn't, because people don't change on Friday afternoon (CCD#14).

The same community developer who was also employed as a nurse within her employing organisation noticed that she found it much easier to interact with community members while in her defined professional role of 'nurse'. The reflections of this community developer suggested that when the boundaries of her traditional professional role no longer existed she was more confronted with her own subject positionings as they related to her identities and cultures – which were perhaps more authentic:

I don't think the issue is how I treat people, as much as how I view them. I think that it's important to realise that it's my issue, it's not with them. And it's not that I'm looking down on them, but perhaps it's my own insecurities....well, I went to university to get a good job and I'm caught up in wanting a home and a family and doing the right thing, that sometimes I need to be grounded in seeing how we're all human beings.....I feel that the most important thing is to be genuine. But how can I be genuine, if I don't know where I'm coming from? (CCD#14).

Munford and Walsh-Tapiata (Walsh & Brosnan, 1999) discuss the importance of participants within community development initiatives locating or situating themselves within their particular historical, social, economic and cultural positions. It is also important that the community worker develops a coherent sense of their own cultural locations, independently of a professional role. This is likely to be particularly challenging for community developers who come from more traditional professional roles and/or whose organisational practices are grounded in discourses of professionalism. One community developer coped with the traditional separation between the 'client' and professional (perpetuated by the organisation he worked for) by thinking of himself as a community member: *"I like to think of myself as part of the community, not as a professional whose working with the people in the community. I don't know if that's good, but that's the only way I can do it"* (CCD#13). Another community developer (who occupied several culturally dominant locations) spoke about the integration of community developers' cultural locations into their roles in more general terms: *"You have to love doing this work and it really has to be your own work. Of course it's a profession or whatever, but it really is political work and either it's your politics or it's not. You're either doing it or you're not. You're in there building a movement. You're in the struggle and you gotta see the struggle as yours"* (CCD#1).

Overall the research results from this part of the investigation indicate that the subject position of community developer as "professional" is counter productive to the increased agency capacities of marginalised communities under particular conditions. These were when participants positioned the community developer as possessing elite, expert or superior knowledge. Premised on traditional professional models (Ife, 1995; Illich, 1977), such positionings have a tendency to construct "power over" relationships (anticipated or otherwise) between community developer and community members, in which community members are the passive recipients of knowledge.

However, the investigation results also indicated that the recognition of the community developer as possessing particular forms of knowledge and skills (associated with professional

models) by community members can assist in increasing the agency capacities of members of communities at the margins. This appeared to accord the community developer the initial authority to provide knowledge and guidance to initiatives in accordance with the skills they had to offer, as well as to develop more reflectively based contracts with communities. These contracts potentially enabled community members to take power as they increased their agency capacities.

Between organisation and community: the community developer as translator from multiple and changing locations

We work within a system....we're part of a larger bureaucracy that we answer as well....we don't agree with the system and are trying to empower people to battle the system, but at some level we certainly are the system too (CCD#13).

The comments of this community developer reflect some of the inherent contradictions of representing a 'system' that one is also working to change through the mobilisation of communities whose economic interests and cultures are simultaneously marginalised by the same system. Such 'systems' may be organisations representative of the State or organisations in which dominant social structures and cultural systems have become institutionalised such as universities, churches or other organisations undertaking community development work. However, (as this section later goes on to show) the contradictions for community developers inherent in working towards changing dominant social structures and cultural systems one represents organisationally, are potentially further complicated by another factor. This is the likelihood of one's (at least partially) own identities and cultures being inscribed within the practices of the institution/s one represents.

Overall, the results from this part of the investigation suggest that community developers occupy multiple and changing locations. These locations are constituted by the interrelations between the community developer's subjectivities (professional and cultural identities and subject positions with regard to various discourses) and organisational practices (constituted by discourses that are dominant within the organisation), and the identities and cultural systems of communities. The implications of this are that the community developer is located at the nexus of a range of power-culture dynamics. This produces unique challenges for community developers in finding ways to use the power inherent in their locations to transform status quo power relations, while maintaining a sense of integrity; defined here as "the state of being whole" (Pearsall, 1999). This means that in bridging these power-culture tensions, the

community developer maintains a sense of wholeness or “power within and power with” (Starhawk, 1982).

Research results showed two levels of tension inherent in the developer’s (multiple and changing) locations. The first of these is the necessity of translating and mediating between dominant discourses that constitute organisational practices and interests and those of community development. As previously recounted, I encountered considerable methodological tensions in carrying out community development research with WAG members in ways that had immediacy and meaning within their lives, while still meeting the scientific requirements of the university and those of the funding institution. This required a considerable amount of energy in playing a ‘translatory’ role (particularly with community members) as I attempted to explain the bureaucratic requirements of these institutions and their view of what constituted ‘knowledge’ and ‘legitimate research’ (field notes B1). The comments of a Canadian community developer also indicate a ‘translatory’ role between bureaucracy and community: “*Part of my job was to keep getting money for this {community development} process and keep saying to my superiors ‘You know this is a community development process, and I know you think we haven’t done anything yet, but we really are building, building, building’*” (CCD#1).

Other community developers felt these tensions more keenly. Their reflections suggest some difficulty in maintaining a sense of integrity or “power within” and “power with” (Starhawk, 1982) throughout the process:

The tension that I felt as a community developer, was knowing those timelines, knowing what the situation {in regional government was}... We did a lot of behind the scenes negotiating with ‘X’ from regional government that the Taskforce (members of the community development initiative) didn’t know about. And I feel it’s that kind of support that is not well understood, even by some of the other community developers (CCD#5).

Again this community developer was in a ‘translatory’ role between regional government and community with respect to community needs and the participatory processes of community development and the culture (discourses and practices) of the bureaucracy. This role was not well understood by all within the initiative, causing some tensions within these relationships.

A participatory action researcher/community developer experienced similar tensions:

My role was an intermediary kind of role. And I would go back to the [university] research team and they’d say ‘well, now you need to do this’ and I’d say, well I can do this, but I cannot do that.....I had dual accountability...I needed to have a research team that would listen to what I had to say and allow the research to be

shaped in a way that made sense to the community and that made sense to the academics (CCD#9).

At times the dual accountability demands caused considerable discomfort:

I was the bridge between two worlds.....I was always at risk, because I would nurture and build in the community and there was always the risk that the academic agenda {which might not be good for the community} would put me in the position of losing the credibility {with community members} I had built...and that was always a very frightening thing (CCD#9).

The 'risks' and associated tensions inherent in this position for this community developer/researcher cohere with the experiences of some community developers in Labonte's (Labonte, 1996a) study, described as the "the pain of community development" (p.427). This refers to the struggle about accountability back to institutions versus accountability to community groups who sometimes saw community developers as being representatives of institutions they felt were disempowering. In these situations, the enabling qualities of institutional power attributed the community developer through organisational membership, potentially become disabling if the community developer is positioned by community members as engaging in the same "power over" behaviours that (marginalised) communities have traditionally experienced from institutions. For some community developers, within the present investigation, this 'potential risk' was carried as tension throughout their work.

To some extent these situated tensions (between institutional, organisational and community interest) could be managed by bringing clarity to one's role: "*We need to be critical about what restraints we have in the role (community developer) and what we can be offering within that professional role that we're paid for*"(CCD#5). Another community developer said: "*I've had a lot of experience with bureaucracy so I would be very clear with people on what I could do and what I couldn't do*". When she was asked by a senior member of regional government about possible political controversy with the community development project she was working with, she replied: "*Well the group is keeping this confidential right now.....I don't know what will happen with this in the future. Don't expect me as government to control that, cause I don't control that, this is a group decision*" (CCD#1). Another experienced community developer explained the way in which he conceptualised his accountabilities to communities and organisation in the following terms:

One always has to put one's loyalty somewhere. And I always consider that my first loyalty is to the group I'm working with...and that somehow I've got to try and help the agency I'm working with to try and understand {suggesting a translatory role} what these people are going to be requesting and need - so that

we can respond. And that seems to be a very difficult thing for government to do” (CCD#12).

The comments of the latter two community developers suggest that their primary alignment or identification was not so much just with ‘community’ (as their comments might initially suggest) but more with the concept of “facilitating a healthier relationship” (Labonte, 1996a) between community and organisation.

The successful use of community-organisational interface locations by community developers was greatly assisted by “trusting” relationships with communities and “allies” within organisations (CCD#s 1, 5, 9, & 12):

Our credibility didn’t come from our roles. It came from people knowing us and knowing that we would be honest with them and would not betray them. You have to have allies on your own [organisational] side. I worked with a good deputy. So I could phone him and say ta da ta da etc and I wouldn’t get chastised for it...you so have to know the politics in your own organisation and where your allies are. You have to know who to pick, whose buttons you can press and which you can’t (CCD#1).

This affirms existing research (GermAnn, 2000; Labonte, 1996a) that iterates the significance of supportive leadership within organisations. Effectively this translates into access to a supportive power base within the organisation.

The second level of tension inherent in community developers’ locations revealed processes more connected to participants’ (community members, community developers and organisational representatives) subject positions with respect to their professional roles, identities and cultures. The research results demonstrate that the community developer must negotiate shifting and changing agency terrains (discursive fields). These are constituted by the mobilisation of dominant discourses by various actors, discourses that are historically and socially located (O’Brien & Penna, 1998) and articulated within particular sets of social power (Weedon, 1987) relations. Such social power relations engage the subjectivities, identities and cultures of all who participate, influencing the ways in which they position others and position themselves. Subjectivities, identities and subject positions are ‘in process’, fluid and unstable, changing with the power relations of time and locale.

With respect to this, one community developer talked about how she was positioned by both regional government and community members as an ally:

As a community developer I think I was more trusted by both sides right, than they trusted each other. So I would get lots of discussion from the regional staff

because I was a worker in their area right...and they talked to me as an ally which means you talk differently right? And then the community members would be talking to me very bluntly.....and they (regional government representatives and community members) wouldn't be talking to each other ...And I would never over look the enormity of putting two cultures together like that to work together (CCD#5).

Community developers in this initiative were also challenged by community members for not going 'far enough' to represent their interests with respect to 'supporting' community's claims for increased financial assistance from regional government: *"There's the institutional versus radical tension and that was brought up by community members as well. In the sense 'well you're just buying into that because you're part of the system sort of thing' ...[Sometimes] it was felt that we weren't being radical enough"* (CCD#5). The comments of community members were interpreted by this community developer as inferring class interests: *"And that has to be questioned. Was it me being sort of middle class, saying 'Oh well, lets not rock the boat here"* (CCD#5). The community developer's own positioning of herself (in response to challenges from community members) also coincided with the fact that regional government was viewed by community members as representing status quo (white, middle class male interests) and that the community developer occupied some of these culturally dominant locations.

This last example also articulates an additional layer of complexity for community developers: the likelihood of one's own identities and cultures being at least partially inscribed within the practices of the institution/s one represents, or is seen to represent. At this second level of locational tensions (professional roles, identities and cultures) the "integrity" (Pearsall, 1999) and wholeness of the community development practitioner is potentially challenged at a deeper level. (This was alluded to in the theme "the pain of community development" cited earlier from Labonte's (Labonte, 1996a) study). However, this latest example also iterates an experience that is other than a split identification between community and organisation in terms of accountability or the pain of not belonging completely to either as articulated in Labonte's study. It expresses a situation whereby the identities of organisational representatives are potentially associated with the marginalising tendencies of the institutions they represent.

This was also the case for me at times throughout the present investigation whereby my suitability and motivations to work with marginalised communities was questioned by others due to my culturally dominant locations as Palangi, university "academic" and previous professional life as a social worker (field notes M1, B1). Given the histories of colonisation, capitalism, and patriarchy (whose interests Western institutions such as government, religious

and voluntary organisations have promulgated) it is not surprising that for the community developer, community development should give rise to these power-culture tensions. Even as they are associated with the community developer/researcher, aspiring to ‘make a difference’. Thus the community developer/researcher runs a certain risk of marginalisation within their role, particularly if their cultural identities are inscribed within the practices of the institution they represent. Within these circumstances, the challenges for the community developer to retain a sense of integrity and agency within one’s own practice are substantial.

Another example of the power-culture tensions experienced by community was provided by a community developer/researcher’s work with communities at the economic and cultural margins. As an ‘outsider’ (i.e., neither low-income or an ethnic minority) she had to work at building relationships and credibility with community members: *“I was very conscious that I had more comfort in my life – more money, more privilege, more education and they were also conscious of it...I had to earn their trust, I had to work hard for it and step through all these hoops that they threw up”* (CCD#9). Gaining access to these communities and employing community development and research methodologies from the location of university-affiliated researcher was also particularly challenging: *“One of the barriers that I faced was that these communities had been over researched in a disempowering way.....go in suck all the information out of the community”* (CCD#9). Significantly, her own legitimisation as a researcher and of the community research methods were also partly based in the institutional power of the university, within which her identities were also partially inscribed. In time this community developer/researcher was able to establish good working relationships with many community members: *“They began to believe that at least one person in the research world had a different way of relating to the community and the research process and they began to trust that I was real”* (CCD#9).

This community developer/researcher considered there were big cultural differences between the academics and communities she worked with: *“I was the person between the community and the university – the research team. Who, are stuck in their own world... wearing nice clothes, having middle class incomes and middle class lives.....compared to lot of academics they had sensitivity, but they still didn’t live it {the research} everyday like I did”*. For the purposes of methodological validity, it was agreed that some of the university-based members of the research team would attend community meetings. However:

..... the reality was that these academics could not adjust their language, could not shut up.....one person would use language that I can’t understand, another

would take the inquiry in directions that were interesting to him....These academics weren't acclimatised and they couldn't get out of their worlds for a focus group... and again what it did was to put my credibility {with community members} at stake (CCD#9).

Within this situation, the extent to which this researcher/community developer could choose her own identity and subject position was “circumscribed by (a specific set of) social power relations” (Weedon, 1987): *“They {the academic members of the research team} had more power than me. They had PhDs and I was dependent on them for a pay cheque” (CCD#9).* The data suggest that the academic team members brought their own set of internal constructions to the community meetings, whereby they positioned themselves as having higher social status than the community developer/researcher. Such positionings were demonstrated in behaviours such as ‘taking over’ the community developer’s role as facilitator and assuming the authority to take the inquiry in directions that had not been previously agreed to: *“They brought all their own stuff, like they’re more senior than me therefore they should take over, or they’d assume certain things about power relations with me and roles and things like that”.* Worried that continued ‘academic researcher’ involvement of this nature (‘power over’ behaviours) would jeopardise the project and her own credibility, the interviewee did some ‘damage control’, taking steps to subsequently minimise the role of ‘academic’ team’s involvement in the process: *“My credibility was being destroyed..... So I just stopped taking them, and that was a conscious decision on my part. I never told them it was a conscious decision, but I did it” (CCD#9).*

Although not explicitly stated by the interviewee, my own inferences are that her concerns about the risks to her credibility through association with academics ‘who’d displayed a number of “power over” (Starhawk, 1987; Wartenberg, 1990) behaviours, were heightened by the possibility of being positioned by community members as ‘one of them’. The partial location of her own identities within the dominant social structures of the university, coupled with its hegemonic (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Weedon, 1987) tendencies to re-appropriate marginal knowledges to serve the interests of culturally dominant communities, increased the risk to her own credibility, with community members via their positioning of her.

Thus it begins to become apparent that for community developers (located between shifting and changing power-culture dynamics as these are constituted by institutional-community relations), the challenges to integrity or agency within the role are substantial. The mobilisation of signifying practices (dominant discourses and associated behaviours) within historically located and contemporary structural power relations exert powerful influences on the subjectivities of

all concerned. The particular ways in which power-culture relations constitute the subjectivities, subsequent actions of those involved and their abilities to exercise structural power are sometimes beyond the influence of the community developer, thus substantiating my earlier challenges to Ife's (Ife, 1995) proposition that "good community developer[s]" do not allow themselves to be caught in the middle of organisation and community. I also posit that it is not so much organisation and community that the community developer must avoid being caught between, but the cleavages produced by institutionalised power representative of dominant cultural systems, the community developer's own identity and cultural locations and those of the communities they work with. Such cleavages represent the sharp divisions that occur in people's positioning of others and themselves as a result of inequitable power-culture dynamics in situations where a number of diverse cultural systems and associated discourses intersect. These may create dissonance, conflict and may lead to the dis-empowerment of the community developer within their role, and ultimately reduce the agentic potential of the community development initiative.

These points were demonstrated in the conflict between organisation 'Y' and some members of WAG, within which I was positioned by some members of 'Y' as having *'caused the trouble'* (field notes F1). The increasing expectations of WAG members to experience more equal power relations with members of 'Y' was seen to have occurred as a result of my irresponsible behaviours rather than as the result of a community development process. At the previously mentioned conflict resolution meeting between 'Y' and WAG members, one 'Y' representative said that: *'I'd been given entry into the community only to trample all over it, and how distressed she felt for the women (WAG members) that they'd been so mucked around by me'* (field notes F1).

Alternative explanations for the conflict that had occurred, such as 'community as action' discourses of community development remained outside the parameters of the discussion. This was partly due to their marginal status within the institution of the church, my own lack of institutional backing at that time and WAG members' lack of formal knowledge of community development processes and theories. It appears to be the case that members of 'Y' interpreted the silence of WAG members during the meeting to mean that I had indeed caused WAG members to claim they weren't being treated equally by 'Y'. At the conclusion of the meeting, one member of 'Y' said: *'that the issues were by no means resolved and that she would taking the matter up further in relation to myself, {inferring that she would be making a formal complaint about me}'* (field notes F1). It was at this point that I decided it was not longer

feasible for me to have contact with ‘Y’. However, the reflections of a WAG member after this meeting shed further light on the possible reasons for my own positing by ‘Y’ members as a ‘trouble-maker’: *“They {‘Y’ staff} weren’t willing to listen. They know that in our Pacific Island culture we usually don’t stand up to them. So they couldn’t believe that those were our ideas – they thought it was you and you had told us those things to say” (WAG#9)*. This illustrates the mobilisation of discourses (within the subjectivities of ‘Y’ members) pertaining to historically based power-culture relations in which clergy were unused to being challenged by the Pacific members of their congregations. Within my positioning between organisation ‘Y’ and WAG, a number of dominant discourses and structural power relations were mobilised in ways that were beyond my anticipation or control.

These points are made to iterate the complexities of the hinge locations occupied by the community developer, particularly as they occur within conflictual situations and at the nexuses of cultural politics (both emotionally charged spaces of relating). The complexities of these hinge locations express the “pain of community development” (Labonte, 1996a), perhaps with a tinge of some inevitability. For the community developer, the task of maintaining a sense of integrity, wholeness of being and thus agency within these roles is challenging; the risk of some fragmentation ever present.

Conclusions: theoretical question six

The research results indicate that the different identity and cultural locations of community developers and members of communities at ‘the margins’ can exert significant impacts on the ability of communities to realise increased levels of agency as a result of community development initiatives. The structural power relations between community developer and communities’ members (inherent in these different locations wherein the cultures and identities of community developers tended to be more reflected within dominant social structures) were further differentiated by the developer’s institutional power. Barriers to cross cultural community development relationships tended to exist initially between practitioner and communities at ‘the margins’. Reasons for this included communities unagentic positioning of community developers (often due to past histories of disempowering relationships with institutions representative of culturally dominant communities), the tendencies of community developers to oversee power-culture relations or to be overly sensitised to them, causing paralysis within their roles.

Overall, the research results suggest the dichotomising effects of critical approaches to conceptualising community developer–community identity and cultural locations are unhelpful. This is due to the polarising effects of such approaches wherein the community developer is either an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ to the community they are working with. Rather, the investigation results support a critical post-modern approach to analysing these power-culture dynamics on the part of the developer and communities whereby they take account of their different and similar cultural locations within their relationships. With respect to the community developer, increased community agency appears to be contingent upon their ongoing ability to analyse power-culture dynamics, their awareness of their own identity and cultural locations and their ability to take responsibility for these in an ongoing way. Furthermore developers’ own experiences of marginal identities may serve as valuable knowledge bases from which to draw, although equally important is a sound ethical base that includes the transformative use of power within community development practice.

The use of their professional role presents some dilemmas for community development practitioners in working with communities towards goals of increased community agency. Traditional models of professionalism that privilege professional claims to knowledge and expertise over and above those of communities are contradictory to critical post-modern approaches to community development that emphasise partial and localised knowledges and the complementary skills of community members and developers. However, traditional models of professionalism continue to impede community development practice in a number of ways. Firstly, such models are still pervasive within organisational contexts, their discourses continuing to influence organisational norms and practices and therefore the activities or practitioners. Secondly, many community development practitioners are not formally trained in community development and have had previous professional lives as social workers, nurses, psychologists or in some allied profession. As it is often assumed that one can just ‘do community development’ (ironically in part due to its lack of professional status), discourses of professionalism (with their power over tendencies) continue to (subtly) influence the subjectivities and behaviours of practitioners even within their community development lives. Thus discourses of professionalism continue to constitute organisational cultures and behaviours as well as the subjectivities (internal agency terrains) of these community developers. Their combined influence exerts powerful effects. Thirdly, the research results showed that traditional models of professionalism also exerted powerful influences on the subjectivities of some

members of marginalised communities, demonstrated by the ways in which they positioned community developers as having greater authority and expertise.

The fluid and spontaneous nature of community means that it is necessarily free of many of the boundaries placed upon community member-practitioner interactions associated with traditional models of professionalism (such as non-disclosure of self, time bound meetings in which the locale is usually the professional's 'turf'). The investigation results indicate that this places unique demands upon the community development practitioner. With the 'protective' boundaries of professional models of practice no longer relevant, a fuller integration of their own 'authentic' identities is called for within their practice, particularly as they negotiate the increasing intersections between cultural systems associated with globalising processes. It is posited that such integration is an integral aspect of integrity or wholeness of self within practice; a necessary prerequisite for assisting communities to exercise increased levels of agency.

The investigation results indicate that community developers must forge a new conceptualisation of professionalism. One that affords them 'professional credibility' and therefore institutional power within their own organisations and in relation to dominant social structures. At the same time, such a conceptualisation must be conducive to a negotiated contract with community that emphasises shared knowledges and is aimed at the transcendence of status quo power relations (including community developer-community relations).

The community developer as the hinge between communities (marginalised identities and cultural systems) and organisations (social structures and institutions representative of dominant cultural systems) brings together a number of tensions already iterated. In walking the cleavages of institutional-community power-culture relations iterated within the research results, the community developer faces unique challenges to utilising their locations to assist communities in exercising increased levels of agency and in maintaining and developing a sense of integrity themselves within these processes.

The critical post-modern lens brought to the analysis of these relations indicates the layered and complex nature of these power-culture dynamics. These dynamics take account of interrelations of institutional power (representative of dominant cultural systems), community developers' own identities, cultures and professional role and the identities and cultures of the communities they work with. Such an analysis brings to light the extent to which these hinge locations

require developers to be strong in their own cultural identities, community development practice, ethics and knowledge. Negotiation of these locations would be greatly assisted by organisational practices that recognise the numerous power-culture junctures through which the worker walks with the intention of supporting them throughout these. One possible tool aimed at integrity of practice and community agency would be to map the developer's own agency terrain/s in relation to self, organisations and communities they work with, anticipating and 'processing' their experiences of power-culture dynamics. This could potentially be used as a peer supervision and development tool in relation to the developer's own cultural and professional identities. This is followed up in the concluding chapter.

Conclusion: agency and community development

The critical post-modern analysis taken to the agency relations of communities at 'the margins' within processes of community development has iterated a complex array of dynamics. These have focused on both the micro processes of agency as well those more related to macro, structural levels of power, illuminating the significant nature of power-culture dynamics in constituting agency relations. All three 'community development hinges' play critical roles in enabling communities at 'the margins' to exercise increased levels of agency within Western democracies, the effectiveness of which will be maximised by these working in conjunction with one another. In drawing the thesis argument to a close, the following chapter includes an alignment of these 'three hinges', wherein they are brought into relationship with one another.

Chapter Ten

Self-determination for communities at the margins: some preliminary agency frameworks

Introduction

For the communities within the investigation, the impacts of globalisation have proven contradictory. They pose substantial challenges to agency, health and well-being, but also offer new opportunities to these ends. Most of these globalising processes remain as pertinent now as when the investigation commenced over four years ago. The effects of Western imperialist expansion during colonial times and more contemporary forms of economic globalisation are still being felt. Wealth, power and health inequities within and between nations (Kelsey, 1999; Wilkinson, 1999b) remain great. These continue to undermine access to important health determinants such as adequate food and housing, ability to participate in society and sense of control, all of which comprise significant agency capacities.

Processes of cultural globalisation continue to accompany capitalist expansion via trade, electronic media and migration. Exposure to new belief systems, world views and ways of being in the world offers both risks and opportunities. While migrants to Aotearoa and Canada must negotiate the marginalising tendencies of these Western, capitalist democracies, these countries also offer new opportunities that include the ideal of democratic participation, the more agentic aspects of Western and other cultural systems, educational and economic opportunities. In their new host countries, these communities are therefore located within various sets of power-culture dynamics, both constraining and enabling of agency and involving considerable tensions between potential risks and opportunities. Such tensions encompass Western individualism and the often more collective orientated nature of communities within the investigation, choices between cultural preservation and change and new opportunities for economic wealth versus the risk of increased disparity and marginalisation within one's new host country.

Both within Aotearoa and Canada, community development remains an important public health strategy to "improve the capacity of less powerful groups to address their social, economic and

political needs” (Health Funding Authority, 2000, p.15). Issues of agency remain fundamentally connected to those of equity and public health. The specific avenues or approaches of community development in public health practice, however, remain unclear.

This concluding chapter draws together the main theoretical arguments of the thesis that contribute to the overarching research question posed in chapter one: *‘how can economically and culturally marginalised communities act to shape and determine their own futures?’* The discussion surrounding this question largely takes place within the context of community development, wherein community development is ‘the method of agency’.

I begin by summarising the theories that informed the data analysis and how and why I chose to use these. This is followed by a theoretical account of agency relations as they occurred within the investigation both within community development initiatives and within participants’ everyday lives. I make no separation between these spheres of relating. While community development initiatives were specifically designed to enable the communities within the investigation to exercise increased levels of agency, theoretically, these processes cohered and overlapped with those within the everyday lives of research participants. The only substantial difference was that within the community development initiatives, power-culture relations tended to be experienced more at the macro, institutional levels, as communities engaged in public policy debate and partnerships with large organisations. Having given a theoretical account of agency relations as they occurred within the investigation, I go on to propose a number of ‘agency frameworks’ as these relate to community development with communities at the economic and cultural margins. These agency frameworks are based on and developed out of the investigation’s findings. They highlight the contributions made to the community development literature by the inquiry through its emphasis on identity and power-culture dynamics in theorising agency, also drawing on existing community development literature where relevant. Critical post-modernism forms the theoretical foundations of these frameworks, which centre upon the three ‘hinges’ of community development, introduced in chapter one. These are community-community development methodology, community-organisation and community-community developer relations. Given that these frameworks are constructed from the present (limited) investigation, I conclude with several proposals for future research.

Choice of theoretical framework and generalisability

As a researcher and a community development practitioner, I was positioned at the juncture of analysis and practice for much of the investigation. My choice of a theoretical framework for the inquiry was informed by this position. The necessarily reflexive nature of my role meant that I sought to understand agency relations as they were occurring within community and my own location within these. As I sought to understand these dynamics, no one theoretical perspective proved sufficient to explain what I observed and experienced to be occurring. Rather it was a series of intersections between feminist, post-modern, post-structuralist and critical theories that proved useful in analysing and theorising agency. Several factors within the research led me to apply particular elements of these theories as they seemed to ‘speak’ to the agency relations occurring in ‘the field’.

- Firstly, structuralist (Freire, 1968; Ife, 1995; Shirley, 1982) accounts of power relations premised on the sustained dominance of particular communities (ethnic, gender, class) over others (via the structured effects of dominant social structures and institutions) proved insufficient to explain agency dynamics. I observed that while the structural aspects of power were a significant factor in constituting relations of agency at the community level, this was by no means the defining factor, the nature of power seeming much more fluid, contingent and changing from context to context.
- At the same time, the centrality of identity and culture within the research participants’ lives in constituting the subjective and material aspects of agency dynamics was also becoming apparent as the inquiry progressed. The stories they shared conveyed the centrality of their identities and cultures with respect “to living lives they had reason to value” (Sen, 2000). The challenges they encountered in realising their potentialities as low income, migrant woman were both subjectively and materially based as they grappled with the structural effects of institutional practices that privileged Western, capitalist, patriarchal interests and cultural systems. Here, the social constructionist tenet of “human as instrument” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000) came to the fore as my own subject positions also informed the development of this part of the inquiry. The recognition of identities and cultures as significant agency terrain elements was also assisted by my own identities as a woman, lesbian and differently abled person, and my associated experiences of grappling with issues of agency related to dominant social structures.

- Issues of identity, culture and agency within the investigation were further complicated by the research participants' multiple identity and cultural locations along lines of gender, ethnicity and class. Coming to a place of understanding the inter-connections between identity, culture and agency was further compounded by my growing comprehension that present day agency relations were influenced by past and contemporary globalising forces of economy and culture, that located all of us within particular social and material power relations and associated discourses. These forces exerted strong influences on the subjectivities (internal agency terrains) and more material circumstances (external agency terrains) of the research participants. Thus the multi-dimensional and faceted nature of agency was becoming apparent.
- Given these developments, the fieldwork was also revealing agency to be located within a range of power experiences (power within, power with and power over) that existed in relation to a number of cultural systems (ethnicity, gender, class, ability). The dynamics of power and culture appeared to change from situation to situation contingent upon which cultural systems were operative and the nature of power (individual, group or institutional) within that given context. While structural power relations were clearly operative, power also seemed to be dispersed throughout the social systems I observed, its influence within these also unpredictable.
- I was also still grappling with the question of agency – or rather how might community development practice assist members of marginalised communities to position themselves outside of hegemonic constructions and dominant policy discourse? This involved the development of new and resistant subjectivities and discourses and the institutionalisation of these within public policies and organisational practices. Reading within any one body of theory proved inadequate. A theoretical account of agency relations began to be constructed from those aspects of theoretical frameworks that resonated with what I observed and experienced.

The ensuing theoretical perspective that informed my analysis (and to some extent practice) was provided by a critical post-modern framework that comprised the intersections between post-modern, feminist, post-structural and critical theories as these informed the various facets of the agency relations I sought to explain. The explanatory powers of post-modernism (O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Williams, 1996) and feminist theories (Jackson & Jones, 1998; Weedon, 1987; Williams, 1996) were significant. Post-modernism's emphasis on fragmentation, partiality,

contingency and the changing and multi-faceted nature of identity theoretically elucidated the changing nature of participants' subjectivities and identities, their apparent contingencies and the contradictions inherent in these. Feminism's traditional concerns with women's emancipation means that most feminist theory engages with the connections between dominant structural power relations (i.e., patriarchy) and their influence on women's subjectivities (i.e., gender roles), while at the same time holding the notion of an agentic subject who is both constructed by and actively constructs her world.

Post-structuralist theories of power (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) and the discursive constitution of subjectivity (Weedon, 1987) also formed important facets of the analytical lens. Foucault's theorisation of power as dispersed throughout contemporary social systems, exhibiting different qualities at different times and locations, iterated the dynamic, fluid and changing nature of power relations I observed. His theorisation of the production of knowledge as being located within particular historical and social contexts and as the results of particular sets of power relations illuminated the processes whereby marginal cultural systems and associated knowledges are subjugated to the interests of more powerful communities within the investigation. The post-structural (Weedon, 1987) emphasis on the discursive constitution of subjectivity was vital in theorising how members of communities at the margins might construct more agentic identities and subject positions for themselves. The traditional concerns of feminist and critical theory (Freire, 1968; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) with emancipation kept the nihilistic tendencies of some post-modern currents of thought 'in check', emphasising the structural and material aspects of agency dynamics.

With respect to generalisability, the research participants and their communities were by no means homogenous. The low-income members of the community development initiatives were predominantly ethnically marginalised women. However, in some cases low income members were of European descent and/or were men. While the investigation has been concerned with marginalisation as it pertains to income (class), gender and ethnicity, participants did not fit 'neatly' and simultaneously into all three categories. Some low-income members of community development initiatives were women of European descent, a smaller number were men who were members of ethnic minority communities and fewer still were men of European descent. Occasionally participants were differently abled (disabled), – not one of the major categories of marginalisation within the investigation, but never the less present throughout. The New Zealand research communities were comprised predominantly of migrants. While migrant people were well represented in the Canadian research communities, the proportion was less.

Therefore, the identities of the members of the research communities cohered and overlapped with the key categories of woman, low-income, ethnic minority and migrant rather than fitting simultaneously and discretely within each of these. Given this, and the participatory and evolving nature of the research design, the generalisability of the research results cannot be guaranteed in any absolute sense. But neither should they be given the post-modern tenets of localism, partiality and contingency. Rather, the results reveal a number of emergent, if tentative patterns of agency relations that coalesce around various themes. While the 'agency content' may vary from locality to locality, it is contended that there are a number of patterns of agency relations that are potentially transferable to other populations. With respect to the transferability of the research results, the diversity of the participants and research communities may also be perceived as a strength in that similar dynamics of agency were observed to exist from locale to locale.

Theorising agency: a critical post-modern perspective

It will be clear by now that the inquiry rejects liberal humanist (Jordan & Weedon, 1995; O'Brien & Penna, 1998) notions of the individual as rational, unified and self-knowing, equally free among others to direct their efforts to determine their own futures within the progressive and culturally neutral unfolding of human endeavour. Rather, contemporary agency relations both within Aotearoa and Canada represent the intersections of a number of interests and ensuing power relations, the strands interwoven in ways that are shaped by particular historical and social circumstances. Within these societies, assumed values and practices premised on discourses of 'common sense' both mask and perpetuate dominant power-culture relations.

The centrality of identity and culture to agency

In theorising agency relations, 'identity' and 'culture' have remained key theoretical constructs throughout the investigation, their significance partially associated with and increased by globalising processes. The centrality of these concepts within agency dynamics was demonstrated in subjective and material terms throughout the research in a variety of ways, of which some key areas are outlined below:

- Western capitalist expansion and the associated processes of economic and cultural globalisation were shown to have both undermining and potentially enhancing impacts with respect to identity, culture and agency (theoretical questions one and three). Neo-liberal

discourses were shown to undermine an agentic sense of identity (as ‘capable and effective actors’) for many members of the research communities as they encountered hegemonic constructions of people living on low incomes that also associated their economic position with their cultural identity. Examples of such marginal subject positions included: “*lazy immigrants*”(CCD#8) and “*single mothers who’d slept around*” (CCD#7) (theoretical question one). Institutions and social structures representative of dominant cultural systems were also shown to undermine agency capacities in that they tended to marginalise the cultural systems and identities of (particularly migrant) research participants (theoretical question number one). The research results, however, also show that particularly at the micro, community level of relating, globalisation has the potential to enhance agency capacity. This was achieved via exposure to new cultural systems and their associated discourses that offered more agentic subject positions (and identities) to members of communities at ‘the margins’ (theoretical questions one, two and three). This was particularly the case for women and people of low social status in traditionally hierarchical societies.

- The cultural systems of the investigation communities impacted significantly on their ability to exercise agency as demonstrated by the data pertaining to Tongan and Samoan participants and women more generally within the research. As relevant to the research contexts, cultural values of hierarchy, authority and some aspects of gender roles, as these related to women were shown to constrain agency (theoretical question two).
- At times tensions existed between attempts by individuals to adopt more agentic subjectivities and thus identities, and their need for belonging (also theorised as an important aspect of identity). The research results showed that participants’ potentially strengthened identities through the adoption of new subject positions, resulted in the fragmentation of relationships, undermining belonging and thus an agentic sense of identity. Such tensions produced a paradoxical relationship between agency and identity.
- Within culturally diverse community development initiatives, assumed adherence to rules, norms and conventions (Giddens, 1984) based on dominant cultural systems and structures was shown to undermine equitable and meaningful participation, negating the authentic expression of participants whose identities and cultural systems were marginalised by these practices (theoretical question four).

- An agentic sense of identity for community members was sometimes undermined within community-organisational partnerships (theoretical question five). This occurred when organisational practices and behaviours of individuals within them were structured according to culturally dominant discourses and norms and reproduced in ways that offered community members marginal subject positions. In this sense culture and identity remain key partnership issues. Given the critical post-modern view of agency dynamics that signifying practices offer particular subject positions and thus constitute/influence subjectivities, organisational practices that support and reproduce marginal cultural systems are potentially powerful with respect to members of these communities developing more agentic cultural identities.
- Within community developers' own practice, the centrality of culture and identity was demonstrated with respect to the influence of their various subject positions or cultural locations on relationships, both as they were positioned themselves and were positioned in various ways by community and organisational members (theoretical question six).

The theoretical story of agency relations as they occurred within the inquiry

Throughout the investigation, post-structural (O'Brien & Penna, 1998; Sardar & Van Loon, 1999) conceptualisations of agency have been used to emphasise the historic specificity of discourses. Rather than the representation of a singular truth, such discourses are constructed and are the result of competing interests within particular social and historical circumstances. Exerting powerful influences in constituting people's subjectivities, those discourses that prevail within any society do so as a result of particular sets of structural and material power relations.

Such historically specific processes (associated with the expansion of Western capital, in contemporary and colonial times) were shown to shape the subjectivities and material circumstances of the research communities (theoretical question one). In particular, the internal agency terrains of many of the Tongan and Samoan participants were shown to be influenced by such discourses pertaining to the superiority of Western knowledge systems and Christianity: *"We got to respect the Palangi because they brought the Christianity.....they brought the light and brought the civilisation to the Island and the people"* (PWCW#1). Thus discourses of 'modernity', Western knowledge and Christianity that positioned them as "other" (Hall & Neitz, 1993) were embedded within their subjectivities, identities and cultural systems, exerting

powerful influences on contemporary agency relations within their new host societies. Such hegemonic discourses were sustained by particular sets of power-culture relations. Economic (and then institutional) power secured the dominance of Western, capitalist, patriarchal interests and their associated cultural systems. While this part of the research demonstrated these processes specifically in relation to Tongan and Samoan peoples, other literature (Sarup, 1996; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) supports the existence of similar processes throughout other colonised countries.

Western colonising processes associated with capitalist expansion are important in theorising agency because of their evident impact in constituting the subjectivities and material circumstances of people in present day New Zealand and Canadian societies. These dynamics continue to shape contemporary agency relations as members of the research communities from (often previously colonised) countries at the economic and cultural peripheries migrated to Aotearoa and Canada, seeking to increase agency capacities such as wealth and access to Western education systems (theoretical question one). *[We migrated] to give us a better life...to become more wealthy than what we were back home" (WAG#1)*. The investigation showed that for the Tongan and Samoan research participants accessing more materially orientated agency capacities in their new host countries often conflicted with the maintenance of internal agency capacities associated with their identities and cultures. Culturally hegemonic relations (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996) were evident as members of these communities consigned aspects of culture to the past (both within their everyday lives and policy advocacy) in order to achieve increases in more material agency capacities. Members of marginalised communities were not so much the passive recipients of these processes (as the term 'hegemony' can imply), but were often actively negotiating these so as to produce the most agentic outcomes for themselves. The form and direction of choices, however, was strongly influenced by dominant power-culture relations.

Within Canada and Aotearoa, economically powerful communities exerted enormous influence over the types of discourses to which people were exposed (theoretical question number one). The institutional power of these communities gave them superior means to reproduce their cultural systems relative to those at 'the margins', positioning the latter in particular ways that secured their power. This was demonstrated to be the case both within neo-liberal discourses, clearly aimed at pushing the parameters of public opinion and institutional practices further to 'the right'. Within both countries official systems of classification were connected to particular sets of "power-knowledge" relations (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Those whose

identities were represented within dominant social structures largely had the institutional power to 'construct' official knowledge. This was demonstrated within a number of areas such as the construction and use of official categories, the framing of policy discourse and the application of models of professionalism. A poignant example of 'official knowledge' was the official use of constructs such as "*Pacific Islander*" (HAG#1) or "*visible minority*" (CCD#3) in Aotearoa and Canada respectively.

Throughout the entire investigation, discourses and other signifying practices were shown to shape and influence the parameters of people's thinking and experience. This was shown to be the case both in relation to those representative of Western, capitalist, patriarchal cultural systems as well as those that supported various interests and aspects of culture within participants' ethnic communities. Relations of domination and subordination existed between dominant and marginal communities (theoretical question one) as well as within them (theoretical questions two and four). Given the multi-marginal identities of the majority of the research participants (low income, women, ethnic minority), their locations within their own ethnic communities were often 'peripheral', with respect to their access to economic and social power. The degree to which the research participants and members of their communities could choose particular subject positions or modes of subjectivity within their everyday lives was circumscribed by social power relations (Weedon, 1987) (chapter seven and theoretical questions one, two and four).

The critical post-modern analysis of agency relations within community development initiatives demonstrated a number of processes whereby people came to more actively constitute their own subjectivities, thus beginning to adopt more agentic subject positions. These processes were named as: participation, story-telling (with a focus on culture and identity), taking up new roles, the experience of more agentic power-culture relations, learning to consciously work power relations and experiencing the possibility of change. Theoretically, these processes involved exposure to new discursive and other signifying practices that offered more agentic subject positionings, some identification or emotional investment with these and a reconstitution of one's subjectivities within these (theoretical questions three and four). The adoption of more agentic subjectivities and identities was assisted by participants developing an increased critical consciousness (ability to work power relations) and beginning to take a more active role in shaping the signifying practices that constituted their own subjectivities. Pivotal to the development of more agentic subjectivities and identities was the presence of a solidaristic community (Benhabib, 1999), whose listening and inquiry sustained their development. These

processes also required the presence of people (both within and outside initiatives) with access to structural power, willing to use this power transformatively in helping individuals and communities carve out a 'discursive space'. One obvious demonstration of this within the investigation was the use of the media to convey the views of community members, thus influencing the wider discursive sphere (theoretical question four).

Often, even when exposed to new and more empowering discourses, lack of access to structural, institutional and economic power made it difficult for community members to realise new and more agentic subject positions. This was the case both within the research communities (theoretical questions two and four), and in relation to economically and culturally dominant communities (theoretical question one). Throughout both the Canadian and New Zealand research communities, dominant social structures premised on hierarchical and patriarchal norms tended to undermine women's efforts to adopt new subject positions. At times this resistance came from men and more senior members of families and communities themselves, or else was located in the mobilisation of dominant discourses, rules, norms and conventions pertaining to women's natural role in the home by less powerful members of communities. Thus less powerful members of communities (often unwittingly) became agents of those same dominant discourses that also positioned themselves unagentially. A poignant example of the latter was a low-income Samoan woman who could not afford to pay for childcare being told by a neighbour (similarly disenfranchised), on whom she depended for assistance, that '*her place was home with the children, not in some community group*' (field notes D1). Participants' efforts to adopt more agentic subject positions were similarly undermined by those practices of culturally dominant institutions (previously iterated) more associated with neo-liberal interests or status quo power relations. The practices of these institutions often mitigated against the ongoing reconstitution of more agentic subjectivities by participants, as evidenced by the stories that continued to unfold throughout the research process (chapter seven, theoretical question one).

Therefore, while exposure to new and empowering discourses and other signifying practices that positioned them more agentially was important in participants beginning to consciously reconstitute more agentic subjectivities and identities, ways needed to be found for these processes to be sustained. Rather than being reliant on the benevolence of more powerful people to construct signifying practices in ways that were empowering, participants needed to have a central role in constituting these practices themselves. This entailed the inculcation of their subjectivities and identities into dominant social structures and institutional practices through

the development of healthier public policies. The development of these produced more equitable structured effects with respect to agency capacities such as income, housing conditions and health status. Such policies potentially enabled members of communities at the margins to exercise increased levels of agency within both the micro community and macro institutional spheres of relating. For the communities within the study, an important means of entering public policy debate and thus increasing agency capacities was forming relationships with organisations representative of culturally dominant communities. This provided the structural power necessary to exert influence within the field of public policy debate.

These community-organisational and community-community developer relations often mirrored agency dynamics between marginal and dominant communities in everyday life. Less helpful aspects of these relationships included organisational practices (such as policy development or other bureaucratic procedures) premised on dominant social structures and cultural systems that undermined the participatory capacity of marginalised communities. (This also included the common problematic of disjunctures between discourses of community development and those dominant within the organisation). The mobilisation of these institutional biases (Lukes, 1974), dominant discourses and cultural systems by organisational representatives also undermined the agency capacities of communities particularly with respect to the ways in which they constituted members' subjectivities. In particular, discourses of 'professionalism' that privileged 'professional expertise' over community knowledge were problematic. The often culturally dominant locations of organisational representatives and community development practitioners were also associated with these marginalising processes going unrecognised. The marginalising impacts of institutional power at the organisational level were thus compounded by the structural power of individuals within them and their failure to recognise this. In these situations the reproduction of dominant rules, norms and conventions through "practical consciousness" (Giddens, 1984) was problematic. These processes mirrored the marginalising tendencies of dominant power-culture relations in wider society. This signals the importance of organisational representatives being aware and remaining conscious of the tendencies towards such dynamics (agency and consciousness) within organisational-partnerships and taking steps to avert these.

Community-organisational partnerships that did enable communities to exercise increased levels of agency (i.e., supported the ongoing reconstitution of more agentic subjectivities, the expression of these within public policy debate and subsequent changes in externally located agency capacities such as housing conditions) encompassed the following processes. Considerable time was taken in planning the participatory processes and structures within

partnerships, with community and organisational members deciding on these and establishing joint protocol. Participatory processes within the partnership respected the identities and cultural systems of communities at the margins, actively seeking processes most conducive to the ongoing reconstitution of more agentic subjectivities. These partnerships sought to create more equitable power-culture relations (i.e., relations conducive to the expression rather than marginalisation of communities' identities and cultural systems) throughout their working structures. These partnerships also included the participation of organisational members with enough institutional power to mitigate organisational tendencies to mobilise discourses and associated organisational practices counter to those of community development and the increased agency of marginalised communities.

The cruciality of 'agency as consciousness' to development processes also applies to the community developer. (Agency as consciousness was conceptualised in chapter two as 'connectedness to the interiority of one's being from which one acts as an initiating, and directive subject of action'. While this applies to all participants, for community developers this necessarily includes a high level of awareness because of the structural and institutional power they potentially have access to and exercise within their roles). In particular community developers were shown to occupy a number of unique and demanding locations as the 'hinge' between organisation and community. Community developers' abilities to successfully negotiate these power-culture junctures (so as to enable marginalised communities to exercise increased levels of agency) were assisted by the developers' own knowledge and integration of their identities and cultural locations and their ability to take responsibility for these. This demonstrates the significance of consciousness in facilitating community developers' integrity or agency within their roles.

In theorising agency dynamics, the construct of 'hegemony' (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996; Weedon, 1987) proved helpful throughout the investigation. There appears to be two aspects to its significance. The first of these were processes whereby participants unwittingly became the agents of dominant discourses that positioned themselves and members of their communities unagentially (theoretical questions numbers one and two). The second of these processes were those that implied a more conscious process whereby relations of domination were sustained with the consent (Carroll, 1992; Grossberg, 1996) of the dominated, more through material concessions than ideological struggles. Both within the everyday lives of members of communities at 'the margins' (theoretical question one) and within organisational partnerships (theoretical question five), a "general interest" (Carroll, 1992) existed, often

constructed out of quite divergent needs. While this seemingly served to unite members of dominant and subordinate communities, the balance of power remained with dominant communities to construct and control the relationship according to their interests. Within the investigation results, power was shown to be dispersed across a number of institutional sites such as government agencies, churches, community organisations and families, increasing the complexity of negotiations in which members of communities needed to engage to enhance their capacities.

Throughout the investigation, Giddens' theory of "structuration" (Giddens 1984) proved valuable as an explanatory framework for an issue that sits at the heart of the thesis - the reproduction and transmutation of social systems (how change does or does not occur). The links made by Giddens between subjectivity and materiality within the reproduction and transmutation of social systems provided a basis for establishing the connections between internal and external agency terrain elements in constituting agency dynamics. This conceptualisation of agency was then extended 'sideways' to include the dynamic interplay that occurs between aspects of power and culture (as these are influenced by those internal agency terrain elements that are activated within a given situation) that influence agency relations. Giddens' (Giddens, 1998) premise that "the possibility of change is there in every moment of social life" (p.89) and associated emphasis on micro-social processes within the reproduction/transmutation of social systems also lent credibility to the investigation's emphasis on the social activities and practices between people (that eventually form institutions) as points of influence.

Power and agency: a critical post-modern conceptualisation

In theorising the relations of power that occurred throughout the research it is possible to distinguish between two spheres of relating: those within community and those within the institutional sphere. The first of these refers to agency dynamics that mainly occurred between members of marginalised communities, both in their everyday lives and within community development initiatives. These power relations were evident throughout the data assembled within questions two, three and four. The second sphere refers to agency dynamics that occurred as members of communities came into contact with institutions predominantly representative of capitalist, European, patriarchal cultural systems and interests. These power relations were demonstrated within theoretical questions one, five and six.

The critical post-modern theorisation of power relations posited throughout the inquiry views power as being dispersed and continuous throughout the social system (Foucault, 1980; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). Power is exercised under specific and local conditions. Its nature is fluid with power relations changing from context to context, thus having an element of unpredictability. Power is both concentrated within state apparatuses and diffused across other institutional sites such as non-government organisations, churches, schools and the family. It is also located within and diffused throughout social networks, its exercise apparent within interpersonal relations uncoupled from their institutional sites and contexts.

A distinction is made about the nature of power relations within the community and institutional spheres of relating. Theoretical questions one, five and six demonstrated that at institutional spheres of relating, agency dynamics were much more influenced by structural forms of power (Ife, 1995; Lukes, 1974; Starhawk, 1982) than at the community level. Organisational reproduction of dominant social structures and institutions occurs on a large scale. This structures the agency of individuals and communities in ways that individuals at 'the margins', uncoupled from institutional forms of power can not. At this level agency dynamics are of a more predictable and 'determined nature', shaped by institutional forms of power.

Within the community sphere, agency dynamics appeared less 'determined'. Rather these were influenced more by other aspects of power, i.e., 'power within' (personal power) and 'power with' (the energy and strength created by people when they act together). They were also more contingent upon particular combinations of actors. These dynamics, however, were also shaped by inequities in structural power within the research communities. By virtue of identity, social status or income, some members of these communities had greater access to structural power than others. The ways in which this power was exercised was more contingent upon personal factors such as a person's transformative intent. ('Transformative intent' refers to the intention to use one's greater access to power to increase the power of those who possess less, to enable such individuals and communities to exercise increased levels of agency). While power had a concentrated quality at times (through the exercise of structural power by individuals), it had an overall tendency to remain more dispersed and fragmented than within institutional spheres. This potentially enables more opportunities for members of marginalised communities to create processes/signifying practices that are conducive to the development of more agentic subjectivities – an important step towards exercising increased levels of agency.

Power-culture and agency

Throughout the inquiry power-culture dynamics (as theorised in chapter two) appeared central to the constitution of agency relations. In some respects this should come as no surprise given the close association between ‘culture’ (as this also includes people’s subjectivities and cultural identities) and agency demonstrated throughout the inquiry.

The original definition of agency iterated in chapter one included the ‘ability of individuals and communities to authentically express themselves through consciously constructed identities’. This definition of agency involves the outward expression of people’s evolving subjectivities, identities and cultural systems, so that these can take form in the material world (via public policy advocacy, for example). Within the investigation, power-culture dynamics were central to these processes, either inhibiting or enabling the expression of individuals’ and communities’ authenticities. (As defined in chapters one and two, ‘authentic expression’ refers to chosen forms of expression that are self-defined as being congruent with people’s sense of self and identity). For example, the power-culture dynamics that predominated at the institutional level of public policy development constrained the authentic expression of marginalised communities’ identities and cultural systems in housing policy advocacy (theoretical question one).

At the community level, power-culture dynamics were largely shown to be changing from context to context and more easily influenced by the actions of individuals (theoretical questions two, three and four). At this level, it was possible (although challenging) for participants within community development projects (including community developers) to structure the activities of these initiatives in ways which promoted more equitable power-culture relations within them. (‘More equitable’ refers to power-culture relations that enabled the mutual expression of the diversity of subjectivities, identities and cultural systems within community development initiatives). More equitable participation and opportunities for cultural exchange (exposure to new subject positions) were promoted by minimising the dominance of particular cultural systems within initiatives. Such conditions were more conducive to the authentic expression of marginalised individuals and communities’ subjectivities, identities and cultural systems.

The influence of power-culture dynamics to produce more agentic outcomes for individuals and communities at the margins within institutional spheres of relating (theoretical questions one, five and six) was harder to achieve. At this level, power-culture dynamics were of a more

predictable, ‘determined’ nature, as alluded to in the housing policy example above. This is not to say that power-culture relations were unable to be influenced at institutional levels; rather that this took considerable effort, goodwill on the part of everybody involved and the transformative use of (institutional) power by those who had it. Throughout the investigation, power-culture relations between marginalised communities and large organisations were never equitable, although some were more enabling of the authentic expression of marginal subjectivities and cultural systems than others. Those few community development initiatives that structured their activities so as to promote more equitable power-culture relations demonstrated the possibilities of achieving this end.

Towards the self determination of communities at the margins: agency frameworks

The present investigation aligns itself with “social action” approaches to community development (Kennedy et al., 1990; Labonte, 1996a; Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001) that have as their basis post-structural, post-modern and critical theories of social change. This is not to deny the virtues of social planning or locality approaches to agency, but rather to say that their implications for agency as it has been expressed within the current investigation are much more limited. However, the critical post-modern approach taken to theorising agency within the present investigation, and its illumination of the centrality of identity and culture to agency, lead me to propose a more particular methodology. This methodology maintains a focus on power-culture dynamics (as these constitute relations of agency) as they occur throughout processes of community development.

This conceptualisation of agency as, in part the authentic expression of communities’ evolving subjectivities, identities and cultural systems, implicates an approach to community development resemblant to ‘building from the inside out’. Such an approach requires a careful process of creating opportunities that surface people’s deepest identities and self-expressions allowing them to place these alongside the cultural systems of their communities. Consistent with community development approaches that emphasise developing the people who comprise the ‘community’ prior and alongside social action (Kennedy et al., 1990), this approach focuses on the internal as well as the external agency landscapes of communities. By drawing the connections between economic and cultural marginalisation, this model conceptualises the participation of ‘low-income communities’ in policy advocacy as going well beyond the

articulation of their experiences of poverty. Rather it conceptualises the transformation of policy frameworks and participatory structures so that these reproduce the evolving identities and cultural systems of these communities, thus creating more equitable cultural as well as economic relations.

Within these processes, individuals and communities articulate not only the impoverished nature of their economic conditions, but their growing sense of increasingly agentic subjectivities and identities. This includes their dreams, aspirations and visions for the future, no matter how marginal these might be within existing policy discourses and parameters. The proposed approach is one that is cognisant of the risks of economic and cultural globalisation for communities, but also accepts the opportunities inherent within these globalising processes.

In aiming to create equitable power-culture relations at micro community and macro institutional levels of relating, the approach potentially mitigates some of the disempowering effects of globalisation. In particular it takes advantage of the culturally diverse identities (offering potentially more agentic subject positions) to which people may be exposed at the local level.

A critical post-modern approach to agency: the necessary conditions

Based on a critical post-modern conceptualisation of agency relations, this approach to community development (table six, shown on the following page) theorises the discursive constitution of subjectivities within particular sets of power-culture relations. It proposes a number of necessary processes or conditions for communities to realise increased levels of self-determination or agency within three spheres of relating: the community development initiative, in the wider community and at institutional levels. These extend ideas introduced by Pease (Pease, 1999) in chapter five. A significant difference is that these conditions make firmer connections between the adoption of more agentic subject positions and access to structural and institutional forms of power.

Table six: a critical post-modern approach to increasing agency - the necessary conditions

Within the initiative

- People are exposed/have access to new discourses and other signifying practices that offer more agentic subject positions.
- People have some emotional investment or identification with these and are subjectively motivated to transform social practices and the power relations that underpin them.
- People's own evolving subjectivities, identities and cultural systems are reproduced within the social structures (rules, norms and conventions) or signifying practices of the initiative – thus providing a basis within the initiative for the active reconstitution of their subjectivities within its 'ordinary' or day to day practices.
- People begin to take a more active role in constituting these signifying practices themselves.
- There is a solidaristic listening community (Benhabib, 1999) which supports the development of new subjectivities and identities.

Community

- Members of marginalised communities have access to people with structural power (for example, publicly recognised leaders or people working with mass media) who are responsive to the evolving views of community members and who assist in carving out and maintaining a new discursive space (both in and outside the initiative). The 'discursive space' enables new and resistant discourses to be developed and increase their influence, mitigating the influences of dominant power-culture relations that might otherwise prevent this.
- Members of marginalised communities have access to community networks/organisations outside of the initiative that will assist in advocating for cultural change within the wider community, particularly insofar as cultural values are impacting negatively on the agency of some community members. This holds 'spaces' of agency for less powerful members of communities, ensuring that structural power is not used to keep them in familiar and less agentic subject positions.

Institutional

- Marginalised communities form partnerships with organisations willing to reproduce the social structures and cultural systems of these communities alongside their own. This assists in the reconstitution of more agentic subjectivities and identities not only within policy advocacy, but in the processes that lead up to this.

Communities, community developers and organisations as partners in change

It is proposed that the above conditions may be created and sustained by the trilogy of community, organisation and community developer, working together as 'partners in change'. This approach to community development draws on the methodological insights gained from the community development methodology developed within the work with the Women's Advocacy Group, and from the investigation's theorisation of agency dynamics. This approach

to self-determination holds power-culture dynamics to play a central role in constituting agentic relations.

Within the context of democratic parliamentary systems, community, community developer and large organisations are each viewed as making a unique contribution to processes aimed at increasing the agentic abilities of communities at the economic and cultural margins. Communities are obvious stakeholders and participants within these processes. As intermediaries between state and community, organisations have a critical role to play with respect to leveraging institutional power to ensure the reconstitution of dominant social structures and institutional practices in ways that promote the economic and cultural inclusion of marginalised communities. Located at the multiple and dynamic intersections of power and culture as these pertain to community-organisational relations, the community developer plays an important translatory role, assisting communities and large organisations in working with each other. The community developers' contribution relies on their ability to understand the social structures and cultural systems within both community and organisation, and the power dynamics inherent in these relations. These things being said, the following framework is proposed for community development and public policy advocacy work with economically and culturally marginalised communities within Westernised democracies.

Communities

The investigation results suggest two areas of action for members of communities at 'the margins'. These are work on more agentic identities and subject positions and cultural change. These areas of action cohere with the first two spheres of agency relations (within the community development initiative and the wider community) iterated in table six.

Work on more agentic identities and subject positions

The investigation results are suggestive of five core processes in assisting communities to realise increased levels of agency. These are as follows:

- **Participation** Community members identify issues they wish to address and new discursive practices offering more agentic subject positions in relation to these issues are introduced. This phase involves the joint establishment of project purpose, values and culture. This

includes the establishment of signifying practices within the day to day running of the project that re-constitute the subjectivities of members in more agentic ways.

- ***Use of story-telling strategies*** Members engage in various forms of story-telling in which the focus is their own identities and cultures. This includes their sense of self, herstories/histories, values and aspirations for the future. These activities are designed to build personal and collective agency capacities. Such story-telling strategies could potentially include psychodramas, sociodramas, photo-narratives, journalling or other forms of reflection and sharing. In articulating aspects of consciousness and subjectivity much broader than their experiences of economic marginalisation, community members are better positioned to advocate for far reaching policy changes that include the inculcation of their subjectivities and identities within policy frameworks, in addition to economic redistribution.

Use or adaptation of the particular story-telling methodology developed in the investigation should include forms of the pre-story-telling activities outlined in chapter seven. These activities (which included use of ritual, family trees and individual interviews) are key in assisting members of marginalised communities to develop a focus and awareness of their identities and cultural systems as potential sites of agency. Within this particular methodology, participants are also encouraged to value the cultural systems of others alongside their own. Narratives are co-constructed between group members so as to simultaneously offer a wider range of individual agentic subject positions and build group identity and belonging. This approach is aimed at supporting people to surface their deepest identities and self-expressions, allowing them to place these alongside expressions of cultural (their own and others) and evolving group identities. Thus a balance between individual and collective expressions of subjectivities is aimed for. Such story-telling methods also build a solidaristic listening community, potentially assisting in mitigating some of the tensions between the adoption of new subject positions, subsequent changes in relationships and feelings of disconnectedness or lack of belonging (also important for agency). Due to their personal nature these initial story-telling activities are best done in small groups. Subsequent story-telling that is more issue-based can be done in larger, more public settings.

- ***Taking up new roles that require an 'extension of self'*** This means that community members take up new roles that are achievable, but require them to extend themselves

beyond their usual perception of what they are capable. The participation of community members within these signifying practices is intended to contribute towards people's re-positioning of themselves as capable and effective actors.

- ***The experience of more agentic power-culture relations*** This means that members of culturally marginalised communities experience activities (signifying practices) that are imbued with new sets of power relations (particularly in relation to culturally dominant communities) that enable them to position themselves more agentially as subjects. This could involve activities such as the re-construction of marginal experiences (usually subjugated within hegemonic discourses) by members of marginalised communities in ways that reclaim those discursive spaces usually dominated by culturally dominant communities. Or this could involve members of culturally marginalised communities taking up new roles of authority and leadership in relation to their own affairs. (This often involves re-claiming authority from members of culturally dominant communities). Importantly the experience of more agentic power-culture relations also includes the ability of members of marginalised communities to be able to analyse and actively work with the structural power relations within these, so as to take a more active role in the re-positioning of themselves as subjects.
- ***Experiencing the possibility of change*** As a result of the activities of community development initiatives, members of marginalised communities begin to experience processes of change at the personal, group and institutional levels of relating. Such changes may include the adoption of more agentic subjectivities, increased cooperation between community members or policy changes, thus creating the experience of change as a result of actions taken. Experiencing the possibility of change is important as this creates memories on which to draw in effecting future changes. This assists in creating an agentic sense of self and identity that is particularly valuable in community development/social action activities that do not give immediate results but require sustained effort over long periods of time.

The investigation results also suggest that community development work with culturally diverse and larger memberships typically involves issues relating to the building of critical alliances and the ability to work effectively across these. These issues included lack of social cohesion due to community factions, fragmentation and the marginalising effects of participatory processes based on the rules, norms and conventions of cultural groups with greatest structural power within initiatives. The research results suggest two processes conducive to assisting with these problematics:

- Adaptation of the story-telling methodologies developed within the current investigation would assist in building alliances across culturally diverse communities, increasing community capacity to act collectively. One possibility is to start story-telling clusters in several different community factions or locales, eventually bringing these different groups together to share their experiences. The purpose of building community and getting to know people (through gaining a fuller understanding of people's different subject positions) would be made overt. Another, is to begin with story-telling in small, culturally diverse groups within marginalised communities, subsequently bringing these together within larger community forums. These possibilities are further discussed in the section 'future research'.
- The second process is intended to counter the tendency of dominant power-culture relations within community development initiatives and associated signifying practices to position some members more agentially than others, thus marginalising people within participatory processes intended to produce the opposite effect. Evidence from the present investigation suggests that this potential problematic will best be dealt with when such power-culture dynamics are made overt within initiatives and joint protocols for participation are established between community members (rather than assuming the conventions of more culturally dominant communities within initiatives). This creates participatory processes in which people's identities and cultures are more equitably supported, resulting in greater 'equity of expression' and ensuing power-culture relations. More equitable power-culture relations refers to the reduced likelihood of culturally dominant groups within initiatives determining forms of signifying practices (which constitute/influence people's subjectivities) and decisions regarding actions undertaken for social change. This latter point mitigates the problematic of community development initiatives deciding on social change actions predominantly shaped by those members with greatest structural power. The investigation results further suggest that large and culturally diverse initiatives should be structured in ways that enable community members to retain strong links with their own cultural communities that can support them in their own cultural identities. The benefits of marginalised communities forming critical alliances carry increasing salience in the face of globalisation. This is because contemporary processes of globalisation have increasingly pushed particular and quite different communities to the economic and cultural margins. Despite their diversity, these communities face some similar issues of marginalisation, the effective redress of which requires their cooperative efforts.

Cultural change

The investigation results demonstrated the influence of culture on marginalised communities' abilities to exercise increased levels of agency. These focused on the ways in which aspects of ethnic, gender and religious cultural systems constrained the agency of community members. Given the connection between culture and agency demonstrated within the inquiry, these results suggest 'cultural change' to be a critical aspect of community development methodology with marginalised communities. ('Cultural change' refers to the process of challenging and ultimately aiming to change aspects of culture which are considered oppressive or to constrain the agency of some or all members of a community). This is not to say that marginalised communities should be the only ones undertaking activities associated with cultural change (to the contrary), but that this is a significant area where such communities are better able to exercise agency. Not all aspects of culture are empowering. Also (as demonstrated within theoretical question number two) the fact that the cultural systems of communities at 'the margins' are often under threat means that these are often in danger of becoming 'static' (as a means of resistance) and unchanging, thus constraining the agency of members. In considering issues of culture and agency, it is proposed that communities should pursue the following three areas of inquiry:

- Firstly, are any aspects of their cultural systems dis-empowering for any of their members and how might they wish to change these? What beliefs and (signifying) practices might they introduce within their cultures to nurture those aspects of culture that they consider will give all members of their community increased ability to live lives they have reason to value?
- Secondly, which aspects of their cultural systems would they like to see more fully reproduced within/alongside dominant political, economic and cultural social structures in wider society? Are there aspects of these culturally dominant systems that they wish to integrate into their own?
- Thirdly, what forums and practices can they establish so that issues of culture and agency are discussed within the wider community in ways that enable the equitable participation of all concerned, thus ensuring that the voices (often silenced by cultural norms) of less powerful members of their communities are heard?

Large organisations

The research results suggest that agentic community-organisational partnerships would include a number of organisational conditions. Many aspects of these are found within community development literature (Clague, 1996; GermAnn, 2000; Ife, 1995; Labonte, 1996a). Other elements are reflective of the agency relations theorised in the present investigation, in particular emphasising power-culture dynamics and the potential contribution organisations may make in enabling the constitution of agentic subjectivities. This also includes their role in facilitating the articulation of marginal identities and cultural systems and their eventual reproduction in policy discourse

- The organisation is knowledgeable about different theoretical approaches to community development and is clear about which approach to community development it intends to practice within its partnerships with communities. (As iterated in chapter five, social planning, locality development and community in action approaches are vastly different both with respect to their conceptualisations of community and the implications for power relations within partnerships). The current investigation advocates “community as action” (Labonte, 1996a) or “critical post-modern” (Munford, 2001; Rosenau, 1994) approaches as these are potentially the most transformative of status quo power relations. Furthermore the critical post-modern approach to community development now being proposed may deepen this transformation through its active work with marginal identities and cultural systems as precursors for increased agency. The above approaches however, are potentially the most challenging for organisations, as they may require fundamental re-orientations of organisational philosophy, culture, discourses and individual behaviours.
- The organisation (and senior management) is clear about its own interests in entering into partnerships with communities and is open about these at the onset. A partnership agreement is drawn up between community and organisation that includes clear accountability mechanisms and processes for resolving conflict.
- The organisation strives to reproduce the cultural systems of marginalised communities (alongside those of more culturally dominant communities) within its practices. This does not mean that organisations have to ‘become’ the communities they partner with. Rather, they must disestablish those organisational practices that simultaneously privilege the interests of culturally dominant communities (i.e., white, male, wealthy, elite) and exclude

those communities at the economic and cultural margins. It cannot be assumed that organisational protocol will cohere with those of the community. If organisations are to assist marginalised communities in articulating their own identities and cultural systems within policy discourse, organisational behaviour must be conducive to the authentic expression of these within the partnership. Analysis of the data has shown that signifying practices within community-organisational relationships occur within particular sets of power-culture relations, offering particular subject positions and exerting powerful influences on the subjectivities of all concerned. The organisation must therefore assist communities in exercising increased levels of agency through continuously enabling the expression of evolving and marginal subjectivities, strengthening this process through signifying practices as they occur between organisation and community. For example, one practical step towards assisting this would be for community members and organisations to establish jointly agreed upon protocol within the partnership that reproduces the cultural systems of each. Importantly, such signifying practices should be consistently practiced to support marginal subjectivities and yet have sufficient flexibility to incorporate newly evolving forms of these, particularly as these relate to community members.

- Organisational representatives have the ability to critically reflect on their own tendencies to mobilise disempowering dominant discourses and organisational behaviours that are culturally marginalising within these partnerships. On an individual level, agentic community-organisational partnerships require that organisational members are cognisant of dominant power-culture dynamics and have the capabilities to take steps to establish processes conducive to increased levels of agency on the part of marginalised individuals and communities within these relationships. This requires organisational representatives to be conscious of the ways in which their own identities are inscribed within the philosophies and practices of the organisation and the ways in which they position themselves and community members in relation to those discourses operating within the organisational-community sphere of relating.
- The underlying philosophies and values of organisational discourses are consistent with those of community development. Organisational behaviours reflect these and where possible bureaucratic behaviours are kept to a minimum within partnerships with communities.

- Senior management are supportive of the community development initiative and have sufficient power within the organisation to mitigate the effects of any institutional discourses that undermine effective community development practice within these partnerships. It is also important that these people are sufficiently aware of the ways in which their own subject positions (identities, cultures, institutional power) will influence their actions in relation to the initiative.
- Organisational employees (regardless of whether they are community developers) are educated in community development practice and theory. The organisation establishes supportive organisational norms that support organisational employees in their own critical reflection upon marginalising power-culture dynamics as they occur within the organisation and in their own interactions within community partnerships.

It is suggested that organisations wishing to undertake community development work first initiate an assessment of the organisation's capacity to do so. Table seven, below, provides a number of key questions (based on the organisational conditions iterated above) that are suggested as a starting basis for such an organisational self-assessment.

Table seven: 'tool' for assessing organisational capacity to undertake community development work

Possible lines of inquiry for organisations wishing to undertake community development:

- What are the dominant discourses of the organisation respecting its philosophy, culture and expectations of members' behaviours?
- How does the organisation understand the goals of community development, and theorise how community development activities achieve these goals? What are the philosophical under-pinnings of these approaches and how might they differ from those of the organisation?
- What are the organisational implications of the chosen approach to community development?
- What procedures/processes does the organisation have in place to assist its members in their community development practice?
- What is the scope for reproducing the cultural systems and social structures of marginalised communities in organisational behaviours - particularly concerning the establishment of joint protocol?
- Why does the organisation wish to undertake community development work? Which organisational interests/goals may differ from those of the communities the organisation partners with? What processes could be established to deal with possible conflicts of interest between organisation and community?
- How are the identities of organisational representatives inscribed within the philosophies, values and practices of the organisation? How might this influence representatives' identification with the organisation and ways in which they respond to community challenge regarding organisational practices?

Community developers

From the vantage of the critical post-modern theorisation of agency relations posited by the investigation, there are four key areas of action that can assist with the development and maintenance of ‘integrity’ within the community developers’ work with communities at the economic and cultural margins. These areas of action are proposed in addition to the critical post-modern tenets (theory, strategies and practice ethics) of community development discussed in chapter five. These areas are as follows:

- Community developers must continue to forge a conceptualisation of professionalism that simultaneously legitimates their knowledge claims and ensures their access to institutional power, whilst also clearly giving local community knowledge status equal to their own. Given the tendencies of organisational practices, organisational representatives and community developers themselves, to sometimes mobilise dominant discourses of professionalism, a proactive stance needs to be taken to this issue. This means that community developers must take responsibility to create community development processes (and related organisational procedures) that nurture this conceptualisation rather than reacting to situations that undermine it.
- Community developers need to take account of the ways in which their own subjectivities (identities, cultures and professional roles) impact on their relationships with members of marginalised communities. They must exercise cognisance of the power-culture dynamics that potentially influence these relations. One way of achieving this consists of community developers mapping their own locations within social structures with respect to their identities, cultural systems and forms of institutional power (such as professional power) that they have access to. Community developers should then consider how these locations impact on the ways they position community members. They should also consider the ways in which these locations influence community members’ positionings of them. The overarching goal of this exercise is to ensure that positionings of each other do not constrain community agency, but effectively build agency capacity to the fullest extent possible. This exercise could be used as a peer supervision tool by the community developer, or with community members at some stage in the project’s development.
- For community developers, integrity of practice means their awareness must also extend in the direction of the impact of their locations on their relationships with organisations that

they are either employed by or otherwise relate to in the course of community development activities. This requires them to be conscious of their locations between community and organisation, and the often subtle power-culture dynamics inherent within these. (This is also inclusive of the ways in which community developers might position and be positioned by organisational representatives). In a sense, this requires community developers to know their own agency terrain, as it is constituted by power-culture dynamics. (This is also a terrain that will be continually changing and in process throughout the life of a community development project). One possible way of doing this is for the community developer to map his or her agency landscapes at particular points in the project. This could be done to assist in planning strategically (in anticipation of upcoming events) or as a learning exercise retrospectively. This builds on the previous area of action (the impact of the developer's own identities, cultures and professional roles upon their relationships with community members).

- Given the detraction from communities' agency capacities that occurred within some community-organisational partnerships in the investigation, a further possible area of action for community developers could be to work with communities to develop their abilities to assess organisations' capacities to undertake these. This is considered to be a developmental task for communities that could occur over time as part of their capacity-building activities. In some respects it may seem that communities are ill positioned to do this given their lack of institutional power relative to organisations. However, this becomes an important aspect of establishing legitimate and healthy relationships with organisations. Such an 'organisational capacity check' could be adapted by communities from the questions provided in table seven.

Future research and practice directions

The overarching question framing the research: *'how can economically and culturally marginalised communities act to shape and determine their futures?'* required me first to come to a theoretical understanding of the agency dynamics that were occurring throughout the investigation. The six theoretical questions posited made significant contributions to theorising agency. However, by no means does the inquiry constitute an exhaustive knowledge base, enabling me to reach definitive conclusions. The evolving and partly serendipitous nature of the inquiry has surfaced a variety of snapshots of agency dynamics. Conducted from relatively

unfamiliar angles of inquiry, the investigation provided a series of insights that are simultaneously unique and less substantiated within existing community development studies. These developments, coupled with the limitations of the research design, mean that the agency frameworks so far developed must be tentatively posited, in need of further refinement and testing. Numerous possibilities for further inquiry exist, of which the most salient are outlined below.

- Further research is needed in the area of building critical alliances across diverse communities. Given that marginalised communities are often culturally diverse and that increased levels of agency rely a good deal on the ability of these communities to work collectively for change, knowledge in this area for community developers has become imperative. Few community developers within the study conceptualised their work in this way. Thus, the evidence regarding ‘what works’ is still scant. Further testing and adaptation of story-telling methods and ways of developing project infrastructure for the purpose of building such alliances is needed.
- Having demonstrated the significance of cultural change in working with aspects of culture that constrain agency, the issue of how to develop processes involving cultural change with communities is by no means resolved. Potentially, this provides a rich and challenging area for further inquiry. This area of inquiry touches at the heart of power relations in communities, is potentially controversial and may be threatening to members of communities. However, it remains a potent area of inquiry, carrying much potential to increase levels of individual and community agency.
- Emergent from the inquiry into community-organisational relations has been the identification of organisational conditions believed to be facilitative of increased agency for communities. However, the implementation of such recommendations by large organisations raises questions about their own power within the spheres of national and global governance. What are the wider implications for organisations agreeing to reproduce marginal subjectivities and cultural systems within institutional behaviours? How might such organisational changes challenge capitalist forms of economy that predominantly secure and reinforce white, patriarchal dominance? How might organisations include the inculcation of marginal subjectivities into their own discourses and practices whilst maintaining the institutional power necessary to enable communities at the margins to

exercise increased levels of agency? Such questions beg whole new areas of inquiry, integral but beyond the scope of the present investigation.

- There is a paucity of research concerning how marginalised communities active within social movements have managed to exert influence on global structures (Alger, 1988; Tarrow, 1998). One of the initial intentions of this investigation had been to tackle the implications of globalisation for community development and to inquire about the efficacy of community development as a method of agency within a globalised economy. This proved to be outside of the scope of the research. Conversations with community developers during the course of the investigation regarding the impacts of globalisation on community development and its current feasibility as a method of agency indicated that few had had the opportunity to think about this. The ability to influence the development of healthier public policies is an important aspect of community development methodologies aimed at changing status quo power relations. Given that globalisation has fundamentally altered the dynamics of power and spheres of influence regarding processes whereby citizens have input into political and economic decision making, this area warrants further research.
- The ‘Critical post-modern approach to increasing agency’ articulated in table six would benefit from further development and refinement of the ethics that surround them. For example, there has been a tendency to assume that the expression of marginalised individuals’ subjectivities is inherently good because these voices are from ‘the margins’. In this sense the tendency has been to not problematise authenticity. However, those involved in community development are inevitably involved in choices about which forms of subjectivity are more desirable than others. Given the self-determination frameworks that are posited rest so heavily on concepts that concern the use of power such as ‘agentic participation’ and the achievement of ‘equitable power-culture relations’, refinement of the ethics surrounding these processes is desirable.
- Another area warranting further research concerns what ‘spirituality’ might mean in terms of community development practice aimed at increasing the agency of individuals and communities. Within Western democracies, and apart from work undertaken by religious organisations, community development aimed at social change is often of a secular nature, its methodologies often failing to nurture “immanence” (Starhawk, 1982), or consciousness of the unity in which we are all embedded. While Semitic religious organisations have elements of spirituality within them, contradictions exist between dominant discourses

within these and those of community development (as has been demonstrated in the thesis). Research aimed at articulating the points of synthesis between spiritual and community development practice so as to enhance agency (as defined within the thesis) would assist both religious and non-religious organisations to go about the ‘change process’ in ways that are mutually agentic for those concerned. Such research could also contribute towards debates about what constitutes ‘ethical’ community development practice.

- A related area is further research into collective notions of agency and their relationship to individual conceptualisations. Community development implicitly encompasses both individual and collective expressions of agency as it involves the development of communities and the individuals that comprise them. However, there is little written about the tension points between individual and collective notions and most agency literature assumes Westernised, individualistic conceptualisations. Such research could potentially be directed at a number of ends such as cultural constructs of agency, working with the tensions between individualistic and collective notions in community development practice and developing an ethical framework for practice.
- Finally the inquiry and subsequent theorisation of agency relations and frameworks have been developed mainly in relation to particular populations: low income, ethnically marginalised, migrant women. The associations drawn between economic and cultural marginalisation throughout the investigation, implicate the diversity of cultural communities and associated locales with whom the approach is potentially valuable. This begs further development of these fledgling agency frameworks (as these frameworks have been articulated from the three perspectives of communities, large organisations and community developers).

So what for public health?

What implications do the investigation results and evolving agency frameworks have for public health practice in Aotearoa and Canada? The associations now being drawn between agency, equity and health within public health discourses establish the relevance of the agency frameworks previously outlined. Goals of “equitable health outcomes” for populations are not just about outcomes but about process as well. Health status is not the same, nor achieved in the same ways for all communities (Saskatoon District Health Community Development Team,

1999). However, the ideal of “equitable health outcomes” is still relatively new within the New Zealand and Canadian public health sectors and barriers to its realisation exist. ‘Mainstream’ institutions involved in areas of public policy development are still finding their way around what this concept means in practice. The views of people at ‘the margins’ are also still under-represented within discourses regarding health and well-being, suggesting that for these communities, agency (as it has been conceptualised within the thesis) is still largely unrealised.

As a ‘ground up’ public health strategy, community development potentially plays an important part in ensuring the views of communities are reflected in public policy, a vital component in the realisation of equitable health outcomes across the diverse populations of New Zealand and Canadian societies. However, community development still remains relatively untested within this domain, particularly in Aotearoa. The research suggests that *power-culture* dynamics play a critical role in influencing agency relations at every level of community development: within community development initiatives, within community and within community-institutional spheres of relating. Processes that are intended to assist in the creation of equitable health outcomes across diverse populations should take account of these power-culture dynamics within all three spheres of relating. Public health strategies that enable the constitution of more agentic subjectivities and the creation of opportunities for ‘equitable expression’ across marginalised and (often diverse), communities must be developed. Without these, ‘expression’ remains blocked by dominant-power culture relations, with the probabilities of attaining equitable health outcomes most likely reduced. Similarly to avoid this problematic, public health organisations must also seek to create power-culture dynamics facilitative of communities’ evolving and marginal subjectivities, eventually achieving the reproduction of these within policy discourse.

Such a conceptualisation of self-determination within public health practice takes account of peoples’ internal and external agency landscapes, making the connection between subjectivity and materiality within the reproduction and transmutation of social systems. This conceptualisation allows for possibility of change (in the direction of creating more equitable health outcomes) to be present in every interaction between those engaged in public health activities.

Community development is often slow and is hardly an immediate panacea for reducing inequities in health and well-being. However, as a method of ‘building from the inside out’ that positions people at the centre of their own ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ community development

offers a way forward. As it has been articulated within the thesis, it is not only about the development of communities at 'the margins'. It is also about the development of institutions and the people within them.

Appendices

Appendix One

Information sheet for community research groups

Anti-Poverty Advocacy Research Project

Background

My name is Lewis Williams. This research project is part of my Ph.D. research that I am undertaking at Massey University Albany, Department of Social Policy and Social Work. My research is mainly with people who are struggling to meet the basic costs of living and are probably having other difficulties because of this. I am researching how people living on low incomes and coming together to share stories might gain the strength from each other to speak out about their experiences or take some form of positive action.

The aims

The study aims to empower people from disadvantaged communities, through giving voice to their local issues and concerns at the national level of government. The idea is, that in addition to influencing policy change that is relevant to your lives, you will also strengthen individually, as a group, and as part of a community through being part of the project.

An invitation to you

As part of the research, two women's support and action groups will be formed. The purpose of these will be for us to come together to tell our stories, to talk about the causes of our difficulties and to decide what action we wish to take. I would like to invite you to be a member of the community 'A' Women's Support and Action Group.

What will I be asked to do?

The research project will take place over about nine months. The methods of research used are called participatory action research. This means that you as a participant will be invited to talk with the group about the sorts of problems/issues you think we should work on, how we run our group and research the problems and what action we decide to take. You are asked to join in as much as you feel confident and able.

You will have the chance to tell your own particular story to the group in a way that you feel comfortable and safe. It could be a story, or a song, photos, poem, or you might have other members of the group help you. If you would like I will talk with you individually to help you prepare your story.

Being a member of the Women's Support and Action group also means that you will need to focus a certain amount of time and energy on it. The group will meet regularly over the next 6-9 months. The group will decide how often we meet. I would like you to come most times we

meet because this is important to the group. However, you do not have to come if you do not want to. An individual interview lasting about 1-1½ hours will also be part of the research.

If you decide to take part in this research project, then I will give you a consent form to sign. Signing this means that you understand what the research is about and would like to take part. I will be happy to go through the consent form with you if you would like.

Possible benefits for you as a result of the research project

I think it is important that the research project has some practical benefits for you. The possible results that I can see are increased confidence and sense of strength both personally and as a group. It may also be possible to bring about some practical results for yourself, your families and the wider community. It is very important that I hear from you what sorts of benefits you would like to see come out of the research project so that we can do our best together make sure this happens.

How will what I say be kept private?

Any information that you give will be confidential to the research and will only be used for any publications arising from it. You will remain anonymous, unless for some reason, you decide tell your story to the public.

You will be given a written copy of your individual interview and a final copy of the groups research report if you would like it. If you agree to be tape-recorded, then tapes will be transcribed by either myself or a person that I hire to transcribe them. That person will sign an agreement to keep the information confidential. All information will be kept in a locked secure place, until it is no longer required. At that time it will either be returned to you, or if you wish destroyed.

The group will decide together some rules that make sure that personal stories and discussion about these remain confidential to the group. Group sessions will only be tape-recorded with every member's written permission.

Your rights

As a participant you have the right to:

Decline to participate

Refuse to answer any particular question

Withdraw from the study at any time

Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation

Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give written permission to the researcher

Be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded.

Accountability

I am accountable to an advisory group that is made up of community members and people from organisation 'Y'. I will be meeting with this group once a month for guidance and advice.

My University Supervisors are:

Dr Mike O'Brien
Dept of Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University Albany
Private bag 102-904
Northshore.
Ph 443-9765

Dr Marilyn Waring
Dept of Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University Albany
Private Bag 102-904
Northshore.
Ph 443-9700

If you have any complaints about ethical matters relating to this project you may contact:

Professor Phillip Dewe
Chairperson
Human Subjects Ethics Committee
Massey University
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North.

If you have any questions or you want to know more about the study, please phone me on
Ph: (09) 818-1063
Ph (09) 443-9767 Ex 9794 (Massey University, Department of Social Policy and Social Work)

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Lewis Williams.

Appendix Two

Consent form for community research group participants

Poverty, Policy and Participation Equity Study

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I might ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researchers on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

(The information will be used only for this research and for publications arising from this research project).

I agree/do not agree to the group discussions being audiotaped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the meetings.

I agree to keep all information discussed in the group confidential to the group.

I agree to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Appendix Three

Individual interview schedule for Women's Advocacy Group members

Poverty, Policy, Participation Equity Study

Part one: important life events

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Can you tell me about your family (can include ancestors) that you grew up with?

What was your life like for you in Tonga/Samoa – the good things, the not so good things?

What have been the most important life experiences that have helped you become the person you are today?

What are the important changes that you have gone through in your life?

Part two: culture and values

What are your most important cultural and personal beliefs – things that you hold deeply, or are really important to you?

What are your personal and cultural beliefs that strengthen you?

Are there beliefs or ways of doing things in your culture that are difficult to continue in New Zealand?

Are their things in your culture that make things difficult for you some times?

What are your spiritual beliefs, how do these help you?

Part three: life in Aotearoa

Why did you come to Aotearoa/New Zealand? What is the story behind that?

How did you feel about coming and when you got here?

What hopes/dreams did you have/ your parents have for your future when you came here?

How is life different in this country?

What have been the main difficulties for you in coming to this country - how have you tried to solve these?

What are the main struggles in your life today? How have these changed or stayed the same since you first arrived here?

How does being Tongan/Samoan help or prevent you making your life here?

What are your hopes/dreams for yourself and your children in the future?

Appendix Four

Final evaluation interview schedule for Women's Advocacy Group members

Poverty, Policy, Participation Equity Study

What were the milestones/or the things that stood out for you in the project?
Can you tell me about your experiences of those?

What kept you coming to the group?

What were the things/obstacles that got in the way of participating in the project?

What were the things about the project/group that gave you power/strength?

Were there things about the project that took away your power and strength?

Can you tell me about any learnings you had around power?

Did you notice any changes in your relationships with others because of the project/group?

What were the main things that came out of the housing advocacy project for you?

Do you have a picture/vision of how you would like life to be for your family and community?
Can you describe it?

Any other comments?

Appendix Five

Information sheet for Community Advisory Group

Poverty, Policy and Participation Equity Study

Background

My name is Lewis Williams. This research project is part of my Ph.D. research that I am undertaking at Massey University Albany, Department of Social Policy and Social Work. My research is mainly with people who are struggling to meet the basic costs of living and are probably having other difficulties because of this. I am researching how people living on low incomes and coming together to share stories might gain the strength from each other to speak out about their experiences or take some form of positive action.

As I'm sure you'll be aware, health, housing and income level statistics suggest that for many people within New Zealand, the right to a standard of living that is adequate for physical, mental, spiritual and social development is not being upheld. I have observed that often people, who are struggling to meet basic living costs because of low income, keep their stories and struggles inside, blaming themselves for their situation and feeling hopeless. This often keeps people silenced and isolated from one another, blocking effective exploration of causes and effective collective action in terms of having input into policy solutions.

The aims

This research project aims to promote the effective participation of members of low-income communities in influencing policy development at the national level of government. The research seeks to answer the question of how can low-income communities become empowered within Aotearoa/New Zealand within the larger context of a global economy? The study seeks to promote the empowerment of people from disadvantaged communities, through giving voice to their local issues and concerns at the national level of government. The idea is that in addition to influencing policy change that is relevant to their lives, the participants will also strengthen individually, as a group, and as part of a community through being part of the project.

Research methods

The research project will take place over about nine months during which I will be working with two groups made up of people living on low incomes. During this time these groups will meet together to choose a key issue to work with, share stories in relation to this issue, identify underlying causes and decide whether and what sort of collective action to take. The methods used are Participatory Action Research which means that the participants become co-researchers involved in the problem definition, the selection of research and intervention methods, data collection and dissemination. In a sense, the research methods are not fixed, but a continual unfolding process.

The Community Advisory Group for the study

I would like to invite you to be a member of the community advisory group. The advisory group is being formed for the purpose of guiding the development of the research, giving advice on cultural and local development issues, the dissemination of research results and to ensure accountability to the relevant communities within community 'A'. The group will meet on a monthly basis for a maximum of an hour and a half. The participants from the two community research groups will be invited to select representatives for membership of the advisory group to ensure their voice in the overall development of the research.

It is likely that the community advisory group will act as a resource for the research in refining thinking and discussing issues arising from it. In this sense it is likely that there could be some discussion around research methodology and theoretical concepts. For this reason, I would like to include the discussions held by the community advisory group as part of the data collection in the research. Please note that in relation to the two research groups, only process will be discussed. The actual content or what was said in those groups will not be discussed). If everyone in the group agrees, the meetings of the community advisory group will be audiotaped. The information discussed by the group will need to be kept confidential to the purposes of the research.

Your rights

The inclusion of discussions held by the community advisory group in the research data means you are a 'research participant'. As a participant you have the right to:

Decline to participate

Refuse to answer any particular question

Withdraw from the study at any time

Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation

Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give written permission to the researcher

Be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded.

Accountability

As you know, I am accountable for the research to the community advisory group. However, should you have concerns about the research that are unable to be addressed within the advisory group, then you can either contact my supervisor Dr Mike O'Brien or Prof Phillip Dewe, Chairperson of the Human Ethics Committee, Massey University.

My university supervisors are:

Drs Mike O'Brien & Marilyn Waring
 Dept of Social Policy and Social Work
 Massey University Albany
 Private Bag 102-904
 Northshore.
 Ph 443-9700

If you have any complaints about ethical matters relating to this project you may contact:

Dr Phillip Dewe
Chairperson
Human Subjects Ethics Committee
Massey University
Private Bag
Palmerston North.

If you have any questions or you want to know more about the study, please phone me on
Ph: (09) 818-1063

Thank you for taking the time to read this.
Lewis Williams.

Appendix Six

Information sheet for Housing Action and Advocacy Project workers

Poverty, Policy and Participation Equity Study

Introduction

My name is Lewis Williams. This research project is part of my Ph.D. research that I am undertaking within the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University. Since May of 1998 the research has been developed in conjunction with the organisation 'Y', a combined initiative with community workers in community 'A'. Through my work with this project and community 'A', housing issues facing low-income group have become a focus within the research.

Overall aims of the research project

The study aims to answer the question of "how can low-income communities living in Aotearoa New Zealand have more control over their health and well-being?" The research seeks to promote the empowerment of people from disadvantaged communities, through advocacy and community action activities. A main objective of the study is to contribute information about 'what works' for low-income groups in Aotearoa who are involved in community action and advocacy with the aim of strengthening their communities and improving health and well-being.

Some background

So far most of most of the research has taken place with the Women's Advocacy Group of which I am a member. Consisting mainly of Samoan and Tongan women living on low-incomes, this group has been meeting for the past nine months for the purpose of sharing experiences and taking group action on issues of poverty and health. We have been gradually building our strength through sharing our life stories, problems to do with low-income, as well as learning some advocacy skills. The group has decided to focus its action on problems to do with housing and will be beginning some advocacy and community action activities soon.

Your participation

I am interested in community action and advocacy methods used by other groups as a way of learning more about what we have been doing in community 'A' to strengthen the communities control over health and well-being. Therefore, I would like the opportunity to interview you as a member of the Housing Advocacy Project. I am interested to talk with you about things such as how and why you became involved in the project, how you have experienced the process so far and what you hope will be the benefits for your community from it. I anticipate that the interview will take from 1 – 1 ½ hours.

What will happen to the information?

Any information that you give will be confidential to the research and any publications arising from it. You will remain anonymous unless you decide that you would like your name to be identified with you comments.

Your interview will be transcribed (by a transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement) and returned to you for comment on accuracy and elaboration/clarification of themes. Main themes and the range of viewpoints on these emerging from the interviews will be identified. Following this, each participant will receive a draft copy of the findings for comment. A final copy of the findings of this part of the study will be made available to you should you wish to discuss the findings further with your own communities.

Your rights

As a participant you have the right to:

Decline to participate

Refuse to answer any particular question

Withdraw from the study at any time

Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation

Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give written permission to the researcher

Be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded.

Ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time.

Accountability

I am accountable for the research to the community advisory group that is made up of Glen Innes Community members and people from the Oasis Project for Mutual Empowerment. I meet with this group approximately monthly for guidance and support

My university supervisors are:

Drs Mike O'Brien & Marilyn Waring
Dept of Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University Albany
Private Bag 102-904
Northshore.
Ph 443-9768

Dr Ronald Labonte
Communitas Consulting
29 Jorene Drive
Kingston, Ontario,
K7M 3X5, Canada

If you have any complaints about ethical matters relating to this project you may contact:
Dr Phillip Dewe, Chairperson, Human Subjects Ethics Committee
Massey University
Private Bag
Palmerston North.

If you have any questions or you want to know more about the study, please phone me on
Ph: (09) 818-1063 or (09) 443-9766 (Massey University).

Lewis Williams (Ms)

Appendix Seven

Interview schedule for Housing Action Group project workers:

Poverty, Policy, Participation Equity Study

What is the purpose of your work?

- Which communities within 'X' do you mainly work with?
- How would you describe the 'X' community?

How and why did you become involved in project 'X'?

- How did you hope that the 'X' community might benefit?
- Did you have any reservations about participating?
- Did you need to get the buy in of your organisation/community?

How would you describe the process of the project to date?

- How was this established and agreed upon by the group?
- How was the information gathered
- Have any groups been noticeably absent from this process? Why?
- How were people directly affected by housing issues involved?

How has the project impacted on the group/wider community so far?

- Networks (housing and other)
- Sense of community
- Strengthening individuals or groups
- Building community/shared vision around housing?
- Critical (analyse and understand circumstances)
- Build knowledge and skills?
- Community resources (Build up or sustainable use) learning for those involved?
- Enhanced participation of community members? – fair distribution of power that has sought inclusiveness of all members of the community?

What other impacts do you anticipate?

- What are your hopes for the community?

How have cultural issues around housing been identified and dealt with by HAG?

- Have responses differed according to agency/organisation?

What are the next steps for the project?

- How will responses to the report's recommendations be monitored?
- How do you see your role as a community worker in promoting community empowerment (local solutions to local problems) within the present policy context. Do you experience any tensions within this role?
- Overall, how do you see your role in assisting community empowerment?

Appendix Eight

Information sheet for Pacific women community workers

Poverty, Policy, Participation Equity

Introduction

My name is Lewis Williams. This research project is part of my Ph.D. research that I am undertaking within the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University. Since May of 1998 the research has been developed in conjunction with project 'Y', a combined initiative community workers in community 'A'.

Overall aims of the research project

The research aims to answer the question of how can low-income communities living in Aotearoa/New Zealand have more control over their health and well-being? The study seeks to promote the empowerment of people from disadvantaged communities, through advocacy and community development activities. The idea is that in addition to influencing policy change that is relevant to their lives, the participants and their communities will also strengthen and gain new skills and information towards being effective in this area.

Some background

As part of this research I am a co-participant in the Women's Advocacy Group. Consisting mainly of Samoan and Tongan women living on low-incomes, this group has been meeting for the past nine months for the purpose of sharing experiences and taking collective action in relation to issues of poverty and health. We are now just over half way through part two of the research, which is about the group learning advocacy skills. A good part of last year was spent getting to know each other and sharing our life stories. For most of the women this meant sharing about their life in Tonga and Samoa and their experiences as immigrant women coming to Aotearoa. In part three of the project which is about to start shortly, the group will be doing some advocacy and community action around housing issues.

Objectives for interviews with Pacific and Palagi women community development workers

During the our work together as a group, some very interesting issues have arisen to do with the participants relationship to hierarchy, authority and power as Tongan and Samoan women who are wanting to promote change in and for their communities. It is also likely that some of these issues will also apply to women more generally. It seems that further exploration of these issues as they relate to Samoan, Tongan, other Pacific and Palagi women could be fruitful.

The objectives for the part of the project are:

- To further explore and clarify the main themes/challenges (as they relate to the issues of hierarchy, authority and power) for Tongan and Samoan women community development workers in work with their communities.

- To explore how these issues differ and overlap with those experienced by Palagi women community development workers in their work for change.
- To create a platform or forum for further discussion of these issues for those interviewed if there is sufficient interest.

The Research process and your participation

The overarching process being used for this research is Participatory Action Research. In essence the research is a continual unfolding process, aimed at social action, active participation and benefit to the communities involved.

Therefore, at this stage of development of the study, I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in a semi-structured interview to talk about your ideas around the sorts of issues that I have mentioned. I anticipate that the interview will take around 1 – 1 ½ hours. Depending on what emerges from the interviews, a forum may be organised for interested participants to come together with other women who have been interviewed to discuss some of the themes as a group.

What will happen to the information?

Any information that you give will be confidential to the research and any publications arising from it. You will remain anonymous unless you decide that you would like your name to be identified with your comments.

Your interview will be transcribed (by a transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement) and returned to you for comment on accuracy and elaboration/clarification of themes. Main themes and the range of viewpoints on these emerging from the interviews will be identified. Following this, each participant will receive a draft copy of the findings for comment. In cases where the views of participants differ from those of the researcher in drawing any conclusions from the interview findings, these comments will be bracketed separately in the final report. A final copy of the findings of this part of the study will be made available to you should you wish to further discuss the findings within your own communities.

The contribution of participants will be acknowledged in the report of the findings from this part of the study. (Those participants wishing to remain anonymous will not be named). As the researcher, I will hold copies of the research data and may in the future publish research papers arising from my analysis of the research findings.

Your rights

The inclusion of discussions held by the community advisory group in the research data means you are a 'research participant'. As a participant you have the right to:

Decline to participate

Refuse to answer any particular question

Withdraw from the study at any time

Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation

Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give written permission to the researcher

Be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded.

Accountability

I am accountable for the research to the community advisory group which is made up of community 'A' members and people from organisation 'Y'. I meet with this group approximately monthly for guidance and support

My university supervisors are:

Drs Mike O'Brien & Marilyn Waring
 Dept of Social Policy and Social Work
 Massey University Albany
 Private Bag 102-904
 Northshore.
 Ph 443-9768

Dr Ronald Labonte
 Communitas Consulting
 29 Jorene Drive
 Kingston, Ontario,
 K7M 3X5, Canada

If you have any complaints about ethical matters relating to this project you may contact:

Dr Phillip Dewe
 Chairperson
 Human Subjects Ethics Committee
 Massey University
 Private Bag
 Palmerston North.

If you have any questions or you want to know more about the study, please phone me on
 Ph: (09) 818-1063
 Ph (09) 443-9767 Ex 9794 (Massey University, Department of Public Policy and Social Work)

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Lewis Williams.

Appendix Nine

Interview schedule for Pacific women community workers

Poverty, Policy, Participation Equity Study

Introduction

As part of getting started it would be useful to talk a bit about where you come from (what brought you to be doing community development work with Pacific women in New Zealand?)

What project/s are you currently working with?

How would you describe your cultural identity (ethnicity especially)?

What's your background regarding formal education/training?

Regarding your own cultural transition within Aotearoa – where are you on the cultural identity continuum?

What have been the main changes in your thinking during your time in Aotearoa?

General question

What do you think are the main issues for Pacific women in settling in and making their way (get access) to basics such as decent housing, health, education, income) in NZ society?

Identity

In your own experience of working with Pacific women, how has the sense of a shared identity as Pacific women influenced their ability to act for change?

Has this been helpful in organising for change?

Does identity get in the way at times?

What things are important in giving Tongan/Samoan/Pacific women who've come to live in NZ a sense of a place to stand (a place to speak out from).

Authority

Have these kinds of issues to do with authority surfaced in your own experience of working with Tongan/Samoan/other Pacific women in social change or community development projects?

How have these issues surfaced?

How have they affected the ability of these groups to make change?

Are there ways in which issues of authority & the ways in which they arise, are related to whom the community action is directed at (eg own community, Pakeha institutional structures, men etc?)

Hierarchy: structural and institutional power

How do you see cultural norms of hierarchy being played out in your own community organising work with Pacific women?

How does cultural protocol around hierarchy within Tonga/Samoan/Pacific Community assist or inhibit PI women to act for social change

-within their communities?

-outside of their communities?

How do structural issues of power (gender, race, age, social status) get played out within households?

Church

Have you ever been involved in any church-related community development work?

If so, how does the church support and nurture both individual and a collective sense of power/strength for Tongan/Samoan/Pacific people?

How does the church hinder the development of individual and a collective sense of power/strength for Tongan/Samoan/Pacific people?

How do relationships with Palagi people

-take away power/strength?

-give power/strength?

Leadership

In your community development work with Pacific women have you noticed how ideas or beliefs about leadership in the group have impacted on their activities and relationships?

-get in the way of acting for social change?

-are helpful to the group?

Issues as community development workers

As a community development worker working with Pacific women/people in Aotearoa, are there any lessons that you have learnt that you think would be helpful for other people to know about?

What do you need as Pacific women (engaged in community development) to walk forward in Aotearoa?

Appendix Ten

Information sheet for Canadian community development workers

Poverty, Policy and Participation Equity Study

Aims of the research project and background

My name is Lewis Williams from Aotearoa/New Zealand. My interview with you is part of my PhD research that I am undertaking. The central question addressed by the research project is: *“How can economically and culturally marginalised communities (and individuals) be more self-determining and increase their control over resources for health and cultural well-being within a globalised context”*. To assist with this research, I am interviewing a number of community development workers and researchers about their experiences in working for change with these communities.

To date most of the fieldwork in Aotearoa/New Zealand has been with a women’s advocacy group made up mainly of migrant Tongan and Samoan women living on low incomes. We have worked together for over 16 months in a ground up process of community development and action, and successfully entered policy debates on child health and safety conditions of the State owned houses that most of the women are living in as tenants. My role with this group has been as a community practitioner/researcher.

A significant part of the work has been working together as a group to increase our range of roles / ways of being in the world to enable members to exercise greater agency within the group’s advocacy activities.

Your participation

So I’m interested to talk with you about your knowledge and experiences gained along the way as a community developer, researcher or programme leader whose been working with processes of self-determination and empowerment for communities. Therefore, I’d like the opportunity to interview you about things such as the project’s development and your role, the barriers to self-determination for participants, the impact of culture on organising processes and your reflections about your own practice.

What will happen to the information?

The information you give will be confidential to the research and any publications arising from it. You will remain anonymous unless you decide that you would like your name to be identified with your comments. Your interview will be transcribed (by a transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement). At this stage I’m unsure how the thesis will be written up. If funding is available and the format of the thesis permits, I will endeavour to make a summary of the findings available to you.

Your rights

As a participant you have the right to:

- Decline to participate
- Refuse to answer any particular question
- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give written permission to the researcher
- Be given access to a summary of the findings when it is concluded.
- Ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time.

My university supervisors are:

Dr Mike O'Brien
 Dept of Social Policy and Social Work
 Massey University Albany
 Private Bag 102-904
 Northshore.
 Auckland
 New Zealand

Dr Ron Labonte, Director
 Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit
 Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan
 107 Wiggins Road,
 Saskatoon
 Saskatchewan S7N 5E5
 Canada.

If you have any complaints about ethical matters relating to this project you may contact:

Dr Phillip Associate Professor Sylvia Rumball
 Chairperson
 Human Subjects Ethics Committee
 Massey University
 Private Bag
 Palmerston North.
 New Zealand.

If you have any questions or you want to know more about the study, please phone me on

Ph: 0064 9 818-1063

Ph 0064 9 443—9766 (Massey University, School of Social Policy and Social Work)

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Lewis Williams.

Appendix Eleven

Interview schedule for Canadian community developers

Poverty, Policy and Participation Equity Study

Introduction

As you may know the advocacy work and research that I've been involved with in New Zealand is to do with issues of self-determination and empowerment for low income and marginalised communities. In relation to this work, I've been in the roles of community developer and researcher, researching how people and communities can have stronger and more active roles in determining their futures through some sort of community action or engagement in policy debate. So I'm interested to talk with you about your knowledge and experiences gained along the way as a community developer, researcher or programme leader whose been working with processes of self-determination and empowerment for communities.

Background information

Can you tell me about the community/group you worked with, the particular project and your role in it?

- Basic demographics of community and group, and were there differences within the group/project membership re ethnicity or other types of cultural identity?
- What sort of issues/problems do participants face in their daily lives
- What are the core values of the project and how are these enacted in the day to day running?
- Which people within the group/community have the most social status/power and why?

Can you tell me a bit about yourself re your own identity and values? For example, migrant/Canadian born, ethnic group

-What's your relationship to the community you've been working with? For example, do you live there? In what ways do you experience similar barriers to self-determination, health and well-being in your own life? Can you describe any differences between you and the other participants?

How do minority group institutions and discourses structure minority group's choices for agency

Sometimes minority groups are not recognised properly by dominant culture. Often such groups are invisible to policy makers, social institutions and mainstream society. For example, policy makers may have a very different understanding of the issues than those people more directly affected by them. And/or the same groups may actually be stigmatised or discriminated against by more culturally dominant groups.

- What sorts of barriers did community members face when they tried to do something to help remedy the issue, both before the project and during it?
- Did you notice any ways in which commonly held beliefs by society about the participants either as 'low-income people' or as members of a minority group, affected the way participants saw themselves? If so, how, and how did this affect their ability to take action on issues of concern? Can you tell me about any particular examples or stories of this that you can recall?

How might individuals become more active protagonists in constituting their own subjectivities, identities and subject positions?

The following questions relate to capacity building processes as these concern relationships between project members:

- What sort of changes did you notice in participants during the project?
- What processes appeared to contribute to this?
- How did participants' self-identities and ability to take action change as a result of interaction with each other? How did you know? Are there one or two examples/stories of this that you can tell me about?
- If there were ethnic and other identity differences within the membership of the group/project how did this affect their relationships with each other and the development of the project? Can you tell me about a particular example?
- How did any changes in identities and ways of seeing the world affect the power relations between group/project members? Between project members and sponsors/funders? Between project members and any people/institutions that held some position of authority in relation to them? Can you tell me any stories about events that occurred within the project that relate to these questions?

The following questions relate more to capacity-building processes as these concern relationships between project participants and other members of their communities.

- How did changes in identity, ways of being in the world, (for example, use of personal power) impact on relationships project participants had with others within their immediate community and family?
- Did other community members resist these changes? If so, how and why? Is there a story you can tell me that highlights an example of this?
- Were there instances in which other community members were enabling of of project members exercising new roles and increased personal power? How did you know this? And what do you think allowed for this to happen? Is there a story you can tell me that highlights an example of this?

In what ways do community workers own subject positions influence community organising processes?

The next set of questions relate to your thoughts about the impact of your roles and identities on community organising processes.

- If your cultural identity is in any way different to the majority of project participants and how did this impact on your relationships with them and the project's development?
- If you had more or less authority/social status in the eyes of the participants, how did you know this and was this significantly reflected in the work of the group?
- Did you become aware during the project that your view/construction (in your role as community developer/researcher) of the issues faced by participants was different from theirs? How did this impact on your relationship with them, the development of the project, and the agency of participants?
- Did you become aware at any stage of the project that the way you saw participants was different from how they saw themselves? If so, how did you become aware of this? How did this impact on your relationship with them, the development of the project, and the agency of participants?
- Did you experience any tensions/difficulties in managing different accountability structures within the project (eg community/institutional/funder accountabilities). If so, in what ways?

What conditions are necessary for minority groups to position themselves outside of dominant social, cultural and policy discourse?

- Did your group/project position itself as having different cultural needs in relation to particular policy issues? If so, in what ways?
- How did the group come to decide to position itself as having culturally different needs and concerns? (i.e., outside of the dominant policy discourse). If the group/project did not position itself in this way, why not?
- Was there any resistance to this within the project membership?

Were there particular kinds of partnerships with other groups that enabled your group to adopt and maintain that position?

- What were the qualities within the partnership that assisted with this?
- Did the other groups whom you worked with occupy different places within social structures (i.e., had more structural power)?
- Were the other organisations/groups made up of people who were culturally different in some way? What made it possible to work across these differences?

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