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Community gardeners: Planting the seeds of a sustainable future

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COMMUNITY GARDENERS: PLANTING THE SEEDS OF A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By

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Abstract

My personal and academic journey with community gardening began in the spring of 1997, when I joined my first community garden and became involved in a local community group called the Community Gardening Network of Waterloo Region. It was during a graduate course that I first heard about community gardens and other community food projects. I had not been aware of the significant participation of citizens, like me, in such projects. In the classroom, we had discussed community food projects, like community gardens, as alternative settings in the context of broader social change considerations. Due in part to this exposure and to my own early experiences with community gardening, I was increasingly coming to believe that community gardens presented important opportunities for community development. But I wondered how others who were locally involved perceived their activities, and this was the research question that guided my work.

To answer this question I decided that I wanted to interview local community gardeners and I chose to use a narrative approach. I found more than a methodological approach in narrative, as I also discovered a powerful theoretical framework within which I could make sense of my emergent thesis focus.

Consistent with a narrative approach to method, I used an open ended unstructured interview guide which I believe gave participants the freedom to narrate their experiences in ways which were meaningful to them. I framed participants' stories as part of the evolution of a community story, and in this way, narrative theory helped me to make sense of the data.

My interpretation positions community gardening and the work of the Network in a process of social change directed towards creating sustainable communities, and, as such, provides an example of how stories can be used to challenge the status quo. My findings suggest that local community gardening could serve as a powerful metaphor, providing a vision for building community, caring for the environment, and meeting basic human needs at broader societal levels.

I conclude with personal reflection on the value of my thesis experience, and suggestions for fruitful directions with respect to further research and action.

Acknowledgements

Although I experienced the writing of my thesis as a very individual process, there are many people who helped me along the way, providing me with their ideas, support, and encouragement.

Using some gardening metaphor, I'd like to begin by thanking my committee members for their unique contributions to my thesis research. I would like to begin by thanking Ed Bennett. It was during a graduate class, facilitated by Ed, that I first heard about community gardens and other community food projects. I had not been aware of the significant participation of citizens, like me, in such projects. Learning about these initiatives in Ed's class left me wanting to actually *ground* myself in the experience. As a result, I began to connect my personal interests, experiences, and values to a conception of my "place" in community psychology. I have Ed to thank for *planting those seeds*.

Next I would like to thank Mary McGeown. As a committee member Mary *nurtured* me throughout the process, and in the final stages of organising my draft, gave me the *tools* I needed to *harvest* my thesis. I have Mary to thank for *grounding* me and continually bringing me back to the personal experience of the political.

Finally, I would like to thank Richard Walsh-Bowers. I do not think I could have chosen a better thesis advisor. Richard provided the perfect "*growing medium*" giving me just the right amount of guidance and support. As a result, at the end of my thesis I am able to feel that the work is mine. I have Richard to thank for helping me to *grow* as a community researcher.

I would also like to thank the members of the Community Gardening Network of Waterloo Region who participated in my thesis research and served as my community

advisory committee. Although my thesis did not evolve into a collaborative research project, my participants still gave me a small *taste* of what it feels like to do community research. I owe them my thanks for the experience.

Friends in the program also deserve thanks. Although our group did not arrange for formal thesis support meetings, after I moved out of Waterloo Region, I missed the informal support I had taken for granted while living there. Telephone calls and e-mail correspondence provided *sunshine* on some of those dreary days spent staring at the computer monitor.

I would like to extend special thanks to my friend Corey Helm. My friendship with Corey began in the spring of 1997 when we met in a community garden. Corey was also completing a graduate degree and chose to frame her thesis work on community gardening. Over the past two years my relationship with Corey has *grown*; she was first a fellow community gardener and member of the CGN, then a research participant and academic peer, and then most importantly, a friend. Having already gone through the process of completing her thesis research, Corey provided me with continual encouragement during the final stages of my thesis process.

Finally, I must thank members of my family for listening and understanding. As I wrote this section, my partner Peter joked with me that he should receive special mention as he lived with me during the completion of my thesis! For this reason and too many others to mention, Peter does deserve special thanks. His unconditional love and support help me to *grow* as a person each day. I would also like to thank my parents as they, perhaps more than anyone else, have shown me the value of self-sufficiency and the joy in living simply.

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"It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story" (Berry, 1988).

Introduction

The Creation Of A New Story

In the heart of Vancouver, British Columbia, a non-profit community gardening association manages two adjacent community gardens that together comprise seven acres of communally maintained productive urban landscape. Combined, the gardens contain a few hundred plots, an extensive herb garden, a wheelchair accessible section of raised beds, a social area, and children's water play area. In addition, the garden is home to a large heritage apple orchard and kiwi fruit arbour, the city's largest bee colony,[i] Vancouver's only community composting operation,[ii] and a state-of-the-art eco-pavilion.[iii] Using a network of silicon solar panels, a flush-less composting toilet, and a grey water filtration system, the eco-pavilion operates outside both the public power and sewer grids, and the system is the first of its kind to be approved by local health inspectors for use in a public building. Over 100 species of birds, including a large number of songbirds, as well as ducks, pheasants and red-tailed hawks have returned to the local area, and a nearby swamp teems with life as frogs, snakes, and salamanders have rediscovered an urban habitat (Cosgrove, 1998; Meikle, 1996; Sarti, 1997).

I begin with this Canadian community garden story, as I believe that it is a small demonstration of sustainable urban living. I believe community gardens are unique settings because they have the potential to integrate social, environmental, and economic concerns, enabling those who participate to contribute to the creation of sustainable communities. Wherever they are located, they have an impact on both the social and the natural ecology, and this unique aspect of the community garden makes them important alternative settings for community development, particularly related to creating sustainable communities.

With roots reaching back hundreds of years, Canadian community gardening consciousness appears to be growing during the 1990's. In Waterloo Region, community gardeners are participating in this growing movement as they too begin to plant the seeds of a sustainable future.

It was during a graduate course that I first heard about community gardens and other community food projects. I had not been aware of the significant participation of citizens, like me, in such projects. Learning about these initiatives in a graduate class left me wanting to actually ground myself in the experience. So when I saw a poster advertising a local community garden, I decided to join. In many ways, the story you are about to read is as much my story as it is the story of local community gardeners, and so the story begins in the classroom.

Who Knows, Maybe We Can Be Farmers After All

I was profoundly affected by my experiences in the community psychology and social intervention course during my first year of our M.A. program (1996-1997). It was at this time that I began to connect my personal interests, experiences, and values to a conception of my "place" in community psychology. I worked on a group project with friends that we entitled "Working towards community ownership of the food production system on PEI: Planting the seeds of change." The last line of our project read, "Who knows, maybe we can be farmers after all" (Griffin, MacLeod, & O'Reilly, 1997). My personal and academic journey with community gardening began there, as I realised that indeed I could become a farmer of sorts. I became a community gardener.

I joined my first community garden in the early spring of 1997. The garden was already well established, having been created several years earlier.[iv] I chose to become

involved in a communal plot[v] because I wanted to meet others with similar interests. I was also a novice and wanted to learn from more experienced gardeners. That year, it seemed all those who joined the communal garden had the same idea and it was not long before we realised we were all novices! However, I enjoyed the experience immensely. I had many positive experiences and was also challenged in many ways, as I learned new things, not only about gardening, but also about community.

One of my early observations was that our garden group seemed to lack a strong sense of community. While working in the garden I would sometimes be one of only a few people there. Outside of the garden, I saw few of the other participants and guessed early on that many of us probably did not live near one another.

Equal to my desire to realise social benefits through community gardening, was a desire to learn more about potential environmental benefits and to live in a more environmentally conscious way. For example, I wanted to walk or bike to the garden and was excited about the idea of composting all of my kitchen scraps. However, the other demands of my life and the garden's location made walking or biking difficult and more often than not I, like many other participants I observed, drove to the garden forgetting, in my haste, to bring along my kitchen scraps!

For these reasons I started to wish that the garden were closer to my home and that I knew more of the people who were involved. Based on these early experiences, I came to believe that potential social and environmental benefits would more easily be realised in a local neighbourhood garden.

I eventually met another woman, Corey, in the garden. She was involved as a volunteer community development worker with the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. We

started to make an effort to go out to the garden together, as well as encourage others to do the same. Eventually we started to talk about how we would have preferred to belong to a garden in our uptown Waterloo neighbourhood.

That same spring I also became involved in a local community group called the Community Gardening Network of Waterloo Region (hereinafter referred to as the CGN). The CGN was a newly formed, loosely knit group of individuals and organisational representatives interested in the promotion of community gardening in Waterloo Region. Early on, I met Sara and Greg, who were then involved in a project called the City Food Project. Their work involved supporting a local organic food co-operative, working in the community to support existing community gardens, and helping create new gardens in Waterloo and Kitchener. Over the course of a few CGN meetings Sara, Greg, Corey and I began to talk about working together to create a garden in uptown Waterloo for the following season.

The Development Of My Research Focus

During this early phase of my involvement, my research focus was informed by my initial experiences with community gardening, which had led to my desire to create a neighbourhood community garden. As such, I planned to document the story of Sara, Greg, Corey and my efforts to create an uptown Waterloo community garden. The practical work of trying to create a community garden led us to look more and more to the CGN for guidance, as many of the CGN members had experience in organising community gardens. In addition to the "how-to" aspects of community garden creation, I came to be more interested in *why* community gardeners created their gardens. As I mentioned earlier, I had been exposed to the concept of community gardens in a graduate

course and my classmates and I had discussed community food projects, like community gardens, as alternative settings in the context of broader social intervention[vi] considerations. Due in part to this exposure and to my own early experiences with community gardening, I was increasingly coming to believe that community gardens presented important opportunities for community development, but I wondered how others who were locally involved in community gardening perceived their activities.

I decided that I wanted to document some of these "creation stories" for my thesis. I also saw a parallel creation process occurring through the CGN, as garden creators and community gardeners (not necessarily mutually exclusive groups) were endeavouring not only to create and sustain their individual community gardens, but were also working to create and sustain a community group. The concept of stories was appealing to me, and at the time I conceived of my thesis as documenting parallel stories: both the "creation stories" of the individual community gardens and the "creation story" of the CGN. Our personal "creation story" (Corey, Sara, Greg, and I) was no longer the sole focus of my thesis, but rather had become one of many stories in a much larger story.

In order to be able to understand aspects of this story, I think it is important for the reader to have an understanding both of how I, from a community psychology perspective, define community gardening and of why I believe it is important. I also think it is useful for the reader to have a sense of the historical background of community gardening. In addition, to be able to consider both the historical and current activities in Waterloo Region in some context, I believe the reader must have a sense of the extent of current community gardening activity in North America. Finally, and perhaps most germane to social intervention considerations, I believe the reader must have an

understanding of the larger theoretical and conceptual frameworks within which I understand community gardening and within which I have positioned my telling of the local story. In the following sections I provide these important contexts.

What Is Community Gardening?

In the literature the term has been used in a few different ways. First, some authors have used the term community gardening in a broad sense to describe all gardening activities undertaken by groups of gardeners. It is my sense that the term is used in this broad way at a local level in Waterloo Region. Others have used the term in a more specific way to describe gardens where people garden communally and tend one large plot, sharing both the work and the harvest. Some of these authors have differentiated these types of community gardens from, what they call, allotment gardens, where gardeners tend their individual plots and reap their own harvest. In this case, the different use of the term is based upon individual perceptions about the quantity and quality of social interaction in the different types of gardens. From my own experience having been involved in both a communal garden plot and what some authors would call an allotment garden, I think the level of social interaction is not always largely dictated by organisation but rather by the sense of community experienced amongst the gardeners.

Some authors have also used the term to differentiate gardens based on the impetus behind their creation. For some a community garden is one created because of a community need that was recognised, voiced, and acted upon by community people. In contrast, other authors use the term allotment garden to describe gardens "allotted" to communities primarily by municipal governments and human service organisations without the expressed need and leadership coming from the given community.

Finally, some authors have used the terms allotment garden and community garden synonymously, and some view "community garden" as the modern term for allotment garden.

From my perspective, a community garden is one where "communities of people" garden together, either in individual or communal plots. And "community" can be defined in several different ways. For example, some gardeners may define their community geographically, as in a local neighbourhood garden whose members are primarily people from the local neighbourhood or community. Other gardeners may define their community as an ethnic one, as in a garden whose members share a common cultural heritage. Many partners can be involved in the creation of a community garden, but I believe it is critical that the members of the garden define both their community and their needs and resources.

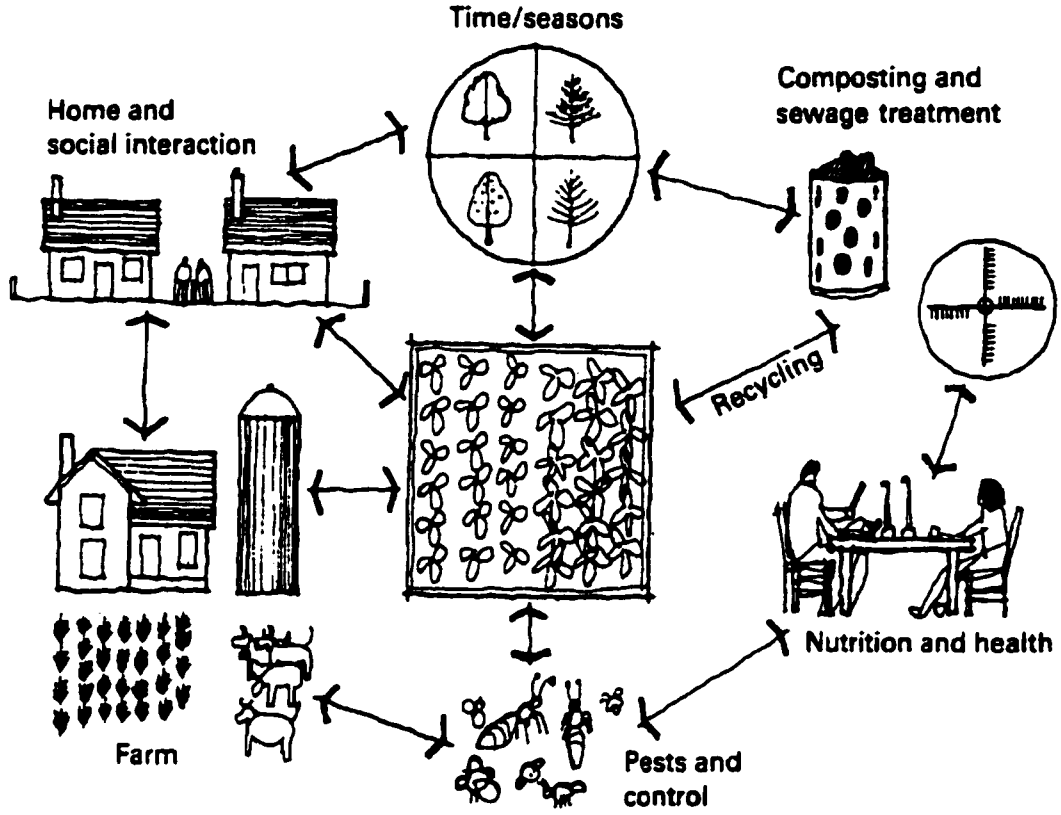
In my thesis, I have used the terms somewhat interchangeably reflecting variations in use across content areas in the literature. For example, as I discuss the historical origins of community gardening, I use the term "allotment," as it is the term consistently used across authors within the historical literature. And while I discuss more modern activity, I use the term "community garden," as it is the term consistently used across the literature. Before moving on to a discussion of the historical origins of community gardening, I will briefly explain why modern community gardening is important to me.

Why is community gardening important? Participating in a community garden is a small way that I can feel I am practising my values. As I *produce* some of my own food, I reject the role of *consumer*. As I compost my kitchen and yard "waste," I am

returning organic matter to the soil, replacing some of the resources I have used. My experiences raise my awareness of larger related issues. For example, as I tend my garden I gain insight into the problems facing small farmers. While I water my garden I become aware of my use of resources and am made to think about energy conservation. At the end of the day while I eat from my garden, I experience just a *taste* of independence and self-sufficiency. In the community garden I understand that my personal experiences are illustrative of larger political issues. For me, the community garden is a potent metaphor for sustainable living.

Similarly, Michael Hough (1995) suggests that, through the garden, urban dwellers are provided with a realistic basis for understanding the cycle of the seasons, soil fertility, nutrition and health, pests, and appropriate methods of control. He further claims that daily experiences in the garden are illustrative of broader regional and international issues. He explains, "Questions of soil fertility are connected with composting, the source of nutrients in the treatment plant and the recycling of organic materials. The close proximity of food production to home is connected to the energy costs of food production on the farm. The human energy and time invested in urban farming provide economic rewards and social benefits, as leisure time is channelled into productive endeavours" (p. 26). In Figure 1, I reproduce Hough's (1995, p. 26) illustration of some of these larger connections.

Figure 1. Experiences in the Community Garden are Illustrative of Larger Issues



When I became involved in community gardening I was unaware that local community gardening initiatives actually had a history spanning this century. And when I started doing some digging, I was surprised to discover that this history began on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean over two hundred years ago.

Historical Context

The allotment: European historical roots.

Allotment gardening began in England during the 18th century. The enclosure of common lands was the catalyst. Allotments were small parcels of land "allotted" to the poor by local governments, wealthy landowners, and charitable institutions. They essentially replaced broader traditional rights of the poor to cultivate and raise animals on the land (Andersen, 1992; Crouch, 1992). These once traditional rights were denied with the enclosure of common lands, which began in England during the 18th century. The enclosures were but one manifestation of much larger forces, those of agricultural transformation, industrialisation, and urbanisation, which radically altered both the rural and urban landscape of England during the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Warner, 1987). The enclosures and the subsequent introduction of modern agricultural practices brought about widespread rural and urban poverty (Warner, 1987; Wilson, 1991). Allotments arose as a charitable response, provided to the poor in an effort to ameliorate the effects of poverty on their lives and to reduce public welfare costs (Bassett, 1981; Crouch, 1992; Thorpe, 1975; Warner, 1987; Wilson, 1991).

European allotment gardens became institutionalised early in their history (Bassett, 1981). In the early 1900's English Parliament passed a law that required local governments to provide allotment gardens to citizens who could not secure land by their

own means. England's allotment gardening programs served as a European example, and by 1900 all the northern European countries had established similar programs (Warner, 1987).

The move to enclose common lands was an important aspect of capitalists' efforts to exert control over food. England's Great Enclosure Act of 1845 effectively brought an end to the economy of the commons (Toronto Food Policy Council, 1994a). This is where the commodification of food began as food was removed from its place as a social and cultural good and was transformed into a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace of the new market economy. In addition, the traditional connection between people and the land began to be severed, as the forces of industrialisation and urbanisation caused a largely rural population to begin moving to urban centres in search of employment (Hough, 1995; Warner, 1987).

North American roots. Allotment gardening has had a shorter history in North America beginning in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Canada's earliest community gardens, the railway gardens and school gardens, were the "horticultural offshoots" (von Baeyer, 1984, p.11) of the reform movements that swept across Canada between 1890 and 1930.[vii]

The CPR began corporate gardening around 1900 (von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996). By the 1920's there were railway gardens across the country along almost 26,000-km of railway track. The CPR maintained these gardens for beautification purposes and to create revenue from new passenger and freight traffic. So the CPR used the gardens to promote the fertility of western Canada to pioneers (von Baeyer, 1984; von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996).

The reform movements also inspired the creation of school gardens in Canada, and education departments embraced the idea, particularly here in Ontario (Quayle, 1989a). Graduates and faculty of the University of Guelph (then the Ontario Agricultural College) enthusiastically supported the school gardening movement (von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996). In central Canada, the movement was also actively promoted by horticultural societies. With the passage of the federal Agricultural Instruction Act in 1913, grants were provided to the provinces to promote school gardens. By 1915, there were over 400 school gardens in Manitoba alone (Dick, 1996). School gardens were also popular in the United States in the early decades of this century. Around the same time United States reformers were also promoting "garden city plots" for beautification purposes as part of a civic cleanup and greening campaign (Bassett, 1981).

However, prior to the latest resurgence of activity, which dates from the early 1970's, allotment gardens were more often a response to social and economic crises mainly brought about by economic recession and war (Bassett, 1981; Cosgrove, 1998; Quayle, 1989a).

The economic depression of the 1890's had a devastating effect on the railway-car-manufacturing sector of Detroit. Then Mayor, Hazen S. Pingree, initiated the first allotment gardening program for the urban poor in the United States; Pingree's "potato patches," as they came to be known, were imitated across the country (Andersen, 1992; Bassett, 1981; Hynes, 1996; Warner, 1987). During the Depression, a number of American cities repeated the 1890's experiment and provided their citizens with temporary potato patches (Bassett, 1981; Warner, 1987).

During WWI the National War Garden Commission formalised allotment gardening into a nation-wide program in the United States (Andersen, 1992; Bassett, 1981; Warner, 1987). The campaign urged Americans across the country to grow food in support of the war effort; and in 1918 five million gardeners grew $520,000,000 worth of food (Hynes, 1996). Most Canadian communities with populations of greater than 10,000 also participated in the effort (Guberman, 1995) amounting to over 1000 gardens across Canada (Quayle, 1989a). Canadian government authorities of the time even called upon the nation's school children to grow food to support the war effort (Dick, 1996).

During WWII allotment gardening resurfaced in Canada (Quayle, 1989a) and in the United States (Andersen, 1992; Hynes, 1996). Allotment gardening was again formalised into a nation-wide program, called the National Victory Garden Program, by the War Food Administration in the United States (Bassett, 1981). In 1944, some 20 million gardeners produced 44% of the fresh produce consumed in the United States (Hynes, 1996; Warner, 1987). Canadian citizens were also urged to grow food in support of the war. In Vancouver, British Columbia, the city agreed to provide vacant land to gardeners for a small fee. As a result, in 1943, citizens grew 31,500 tonnes of fresh produce equivalent to $20 million worth of supermarket produce in 1979 prices (Harrowsmith Report, 1979; as cited in Hough, 1995).

In summary, modern community gardens have their roots in the charitable allotment gardens of 18th century Europe. Similarly, during the economic crises of the 1890's and the 1930's, the efforts of community garden promoters were driven by charity politics, and the poor largely tended community gardens. However, during WWI and WWII organisers promoted community gardening as a patriotic duty and as a result

community gardens were tended by a much broader segment of the population (Andersen, 1992; Bassett, 1981; Hynes, 1996; Landman, 1993; Warner, 1987).

Despite this increased citizen participation during the first half of this century, gardeners themselves were still not involved in organising community gardens. It was not until the 1960's that community gardens came into being through the community organising efforts of citizens. Sam Bass Warner (1987) suggests that the most dramatic changes in the popular image of community gardening have been realised since the late 1960's and early 1970's. He claims that it was at this time that community gardeners themselves, in the spirit of self-help and local empowerment, began to organise and seek resources from their municipalities in order to create and maintain their own community gardens. According to Warner (1987), it was only when the general public adopted this self-help orientation that the political situation of community gardening began to change. In addition, as Hough (1995) contends that more and more citizens are becoming interested in participating in city affairs, it is likely that the political situation of community gardening will continue to change.

This latest wave of community gardening activity corresponds to the beginning of the modern environmental movement. Although social, political and economic conditions were different in Canada and the United States, the late 1960's and early 1970's witnessed the emergence of widespread environmental awareness among the North American population. The energy shock of 1973 and resultant increased food prices, concerns about increased agricultural pesticide use, and high inflation and unemployment rates, have all been cited as factors influencing the resurgence of community gardening in the 1960's and 1970's (Bassett; 1981; Cosgrove, 1998;

Guberman, 1995; Quayle, 1989a; Towle, 1989). More recently, increased leisure time, early retirement, and unemployment have been cited as influential factors in explaining the latest resurgence in community gardening activity in the 1990's (Hough, 1995).

I believe the history of community gardening is important as it demonstrates both how the image of community gardening has been transformed over time, and how much broader interest among the general population has become, particularly during this century. Today the impetus to create gardens more often comes from community gardeners themselves, and gardens have more diverse memberships who participate in the activity for many different reasons. Modern community gardeners are a culturally diverse group in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, and they participate in the activity for social, environmental, as well as economic reasons (Bassett, 1981; Crouch, 1992; Quayle, 1989a). For these reasons I believe present community gardens, unlike those from the past, are here to stay.

Current Activity

The American experience. Community gardening is well established in the United States. Large non-profit community gardening umbrella organisations operate in several American cities. Most of these city-wide community gardening organisations were created in the 1970's. At this time informal community groups were organising and creating gardens across the United States (Andersen, 1992; Warner, 1987). As the movement grew some of these informal groups converged and grew into city-wide initiatives. Organisations like the Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG) and New York's Green Guerrillas have their organisational roots in such grassroots citizen participation (Andersen, 1992). In the United States there is also a national organisation dedicated to

promoting the growth of community gardening and other greening initiatives. Formed in 1978 by community gardeners and organisers from across the country, the American Community Gardening Association (hereinafter referred to as the ACGA) is the main advocate for national involvement in community gardening (Cosgrove, 1998; Hynes, 1996; Warner, 1987).

All levels of government in the United States also extensively support community gardening. Since 1976, the United States Department of Agriculture has supported a national urban gardening program by funding state agencies run as agricultural extension services, and employing their extension staff to train urban residents in the arts of vacant lot cultivation. In 1993, 23 cities in 23 states had initiated urban gardening programs. Patricia Hynes (1996) described an early evaluation of the program, which revealed that every dollar invested yielded a six-dollar return in food produced. However, despite its cost effectiveness Hynes (1996) reported that the program lost federal funding in 1993. More recently, however, the United States Congress passed the Community Food Security Act which funds collaborative grassroots initiatives involved in food production for low income urban and rural communities (Thompson, 1996). And at the municipal government level a few cities, like New York and Seattle, for example, operate their own community gardening programs. Seattle's P-Patch program is part of the Department of Housing and Human Services, making it one of the few programs that is part of a city government. From this vantage point P-Patch has been involved in shaping city planning issues (Inglis, 1992) and likely played an influential role in the recent passing of a precedent setting open space ordinance in Seattle requiring land be permanently set aside for community gardens (Thompson, 1996).

Efforts to build "institutional capacity or depth" are also on the rise in the United States. Community gardening umbrella organisations "are initiating a new generation of skills-building in community gardeners to ensure that the gardens become the richest possible social and environmental asset to their neighbourhoods" (Hynes, 1996, p. 159). For example, the ACGA recently established an organisational mentorship program to assist new organisations with organisational development issues and community organising skills (Hynes, 1996).

Community garden preservation, as opposed to community garden creation, appears to be the major issue today for American community gardeners. Preservation has become a high priority for New York's Green Guerrillas as many of the over 1000 community gardens in New York City are threatened by real estate development (Inglis, 1992; Tietz, 1993). And Philadelphia Green, perhaps the most comprehensive community greening organisation in the United States, and the Penn State (USDA) Urban Gardening Program, founded a city-wide urban land trust in an effort to preserve some of the over 2000 community gardens in Philadelphia (Hynes, 1996). In the United States the movement has evolved from one driven by charity politics and poor reform to a citizen movement based on self-help and local empowerment (Andersen, 1992; Warner, 1987). Hynes (1996, p. xiv) claims that "Thousands of tributaries, emanating from the civil rights, women's liberation, environmental, and social justice movements, feed this broad-based national community garden movement."

The Canadian experience. In contrast here in Canada it seems that community gardening is only just beginning to flourish and it is a relatively new activity in many parts of the country with most gardens being created in the 1990's (Fulford, 1998). In

addition, very little has been written about community gardening in Canada. Edwinna von Baeyer (1984) and Edwinna von Baeyer and Pleasance Crawford (1996) highlighted some aspects of the evolution of community gardens in their work on Canadian gardening history. Moura Quayle (1989a/1989b) has also detailed historical and more recent periods of community gardening activity in Canada. And Sean Cosgrove (1994/1998) has provided details about community gardening activity across Canada in the 1990's. As such, much of the following discussion of current Canadian activity is largely based on his work.

According to Cosgrove (1998) there are no strong community gardening umbrella organisations in Canada, although he suggests that provincial networking is building in Ontario and Quebec. Consistent with Cosgrove's assessment, I have become aware of three such networks in Ontario. In addition to the CGN, there are community gardening networks in Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa. In Canada there is no national organisation dedicated to the promotion of community gardening. However, at the ACGA conference in Montreal in 1996, Cosgrove (1998) reported that a group of Canadian officials and activists held the first Canadian Community Gardening Network meeting. He states that the group is very informal, communicating mainly via e-mail.

Urban food production is not a priority of Agriculture Canada or of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Ontario. In 1990, Ontario's provincial government implemented a one-time grant to communities interested in exploring the possibilities of community gardening (City of Toronto Interdepartmental Technical Working Group on Urban Food Production, 1993). Although not supported at a provincial or federal level,

community gardens do receive fairly extensive support, both formal and informal, at the municipal government level.

For example, in the 1970's, Montreal developed a municipal community gardening program and today has one of the best community gardening programs in North America (Cosgrove, 1994). Cosgrove (1998) contends that it is the most centralised and resourced program in North America. As a result Quebec is the most developed in terms of community gardening activity, and Cosgrove (1998) suggests that efforts throughout the rest of the country likely only equal the efforts of the 25 Quebec municipalities with community gardening programs.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, community gardening consciousness has developed during the 1990's. However, Cosgrove (1998) contends that political organising has centred on broader food security issues. However, despite the lack of an organised community gardener's association, community gardeners, with the support of local food security organisations, were able to convince the Vancouver Parks Board to develop a community gardening policy to assist in the development of local community gardens. In 1996, the Parks Board adopted the first official community gardening policy document in the region (Cosgrove, 1998). Many other Canadian municipalities provide informal support to community gardeners on a case by case basis.

Unlike in the United States where many citizens are struggling to save their community gardens, here in Canada, we are only just creating them. It remains to be seen if Canadian community gardening will evolve into a social movement. It is my sense that here in Canada, charitable roots remain strong.

Local Context

Local historical roots. Since the early 1900's there have been periods of community gardening activity in this region, similar to the periods of activity elsewhere in Canada and the United States over the span of this century.[viii] Local horticultural societies in Waterloo Region were committed supporters of the school gardening movement. For example, in 1914 the Waterloo Horticultural Society assisted in the creation of school gardens at the Central School by making over sixteen hundred packets of seed available. The local school gardening movement was also supported in Kitchener by the Kitchener Horticultural Society through organised school garden competitions. A few years later, in 1918, the Waterloo Horticultural Society also led a campaign to convert all vacant lots in the town to vegetable and flower gardens. Although it is possible that local citizens participated in allotment gardening during the first half of this century, documentation of relief gardening during the Depression or of liberty or victory gardening during wartime is lacking (Helm, 1998a).

In the early 1970's the Community Services Department of the City of Waterloo created a community garden behind Parkview Cemetery on University Avenue. The garden only existed until mid-1980 even though the garden grew from a couple of dozen plots in early years to almost 300 plots in later years. The City of Kitchener created an allotment garden on their city limits in the early 1970's as well. The garden began with 300 plots and continued to expand over the years; at one time there were over 1,000 plots. This garden is still in existence today and is located behind the Williamsburg Cemetery with approximately 300 plots currently. In 1976 the City of Kitchener created a second allotment garden due to increased demand for garden plots. The garden site was actually

located in Cambridge and at one time had between 500 and 600 plots. Finally, in 1975 the University of Waterloo started an allotment garden on the north end of the campus. During the first year almost 100 plots were planted, and the number increased to over 200 in later years. Further university development on the north campus ended the existence of the garden in the mid-1980's (Helm, 1998a).

Current local activity. More recently, the desire for a community garden at the University of Waterloo was revived again during the spring and summer of 1997 as a group of students created a garden on the north campus. The garden was short-lived, lasting only one season.[ix] However, with only a few exceptions, the current community gardens in the region were all created during the 1990's. These recent developments in local community gardening activity are significant in that they may be an indication that community garden creators have been influential in motivating others to create similar settings.

Upon discovering this rich tradition of community gardening, particularly here in Canada, I was anxious to locate community gardening stories. I wondered why people had participated in community gardening and what meaning community gardening had for them. I quickly discovered that Canadian community gardens have been poorly documented in all eras (Quayle, 1989a). With only one exception (von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996), I was able to find little information, either about the gardens or about the individuals who had participated in them. This disappointing discovery served to further increase my interest in documenting local community gardening stories.

So in concert with the development of my research focus, I also began to explore methodological sources and was drawn to the narrative approach. The focus on stories

was intuitively appealing to me, and I began to read more in an effort to achieve an understanding of the approach. I found more than a methodological approach in narrative, as I also discovered a powerful theoretical framework within which to make sense of my emergent thesis focus. I found feminists (Riessman, 1993) and community psychologists (Rappaport, 1995) who identified with the approach, and who had begun to explore applications within their respective disciplines. Before I move on to discuss my conceptual framework I think it is important for the reader to have an understanding of the narrative approach and its relation to community psychology concepts and values.

My Theoretical Framework: The Narrative Approach

A basic assumption of the narrative approach is that storytelling is an important way in which individuals create and communicate meaning (Mishler, 1986) and this assumption extends to the research context. "Storytelling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us. The story metaphor emphasises that we create order, construct texts in particular contexts" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1). As an approach to inquiry, the narrative approach fits within the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Consistent with this paradigm, the approach is relativist; participants' stories are not regarded as reflecting a "world 'out there'" (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). Rather, the stories that participants construct are regarded as interpretative creations based upon the location and context of the storyteller (Riessman, 1993). In addition, research findings are constructed through the interaction of researcher and participant; in effect, stories are created through the subjective and transactional nature of the research relationship. Stemming from these ontological and

epistemological assumptions, a narrative methodological approach calls for collaborative relationships between researcher and participants (Rappaport, 1995).

Narrative theory and methods have been employed extensively across disciplines and professions (Riessman, 1993). Some of the published work can be found in psychology, although most psychologists who have studied narratives have either engaged in linguistic analysis or have been concerned with "cognitive representation and memory" (Rappaport, 1993, p. 249). However, within the last decade, Julian Rappaport has begun to explore narrative theory and methods and their potential application to community psychology research, theory, and practice (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1993; Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport & Simkins, 1991; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996).

The narrative approach in community psychology: Stories, narratives, and dominant cultural narratives. Rappaport (1995) suggests that the term "story" be used "to refer to an individual's cognitive representation or social communication of events that are unique to that person," and that the term "narrative" be used "to describe stories that are not idiosyncratic to individuals" (p. 803). A "community narrative" is then a story that is shared among a group of people, and as such, a group of people who share a narrative in common may be conceived of as a community. Through social interaction, texts, and other forms of communication (pictures, performances, and rituals) the community narrative is shared amongst group members (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1995). If a group is very large or is very well organised, it may sometimes have its community narrative preserved in written form; and the text often provides members with organisational history and the organisation's mission, vision, and values

(Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995). In addition, the community narratives of larger and more organised groups are often preserved and communicated independent of any particular individual(s) (Rappaport, 1995). Of particular significance to my research, Rappaport (1995) suggests that the elusive concept of the psychological sense of community may be best understood through an analysis of community narratives.

Lastly, at a societal level, it is useful to refer to dominant cultural narratives. Rappaport (1995) defines these narratives as "over-learned stories communicated through mass media or social institutions that touch the lives of most people, such as television, newspapers, public schools, churches, or social network gossip" (p. 803). These dominant cultural narratives are internalised by many of us and "serve as an influential backdrop against which more localised community narratives and personal stories are told" (p. 803). Being able to discern and relate the concept of narrative across multiple levels of analysis is useful both practically and theoretically, as it allows one to apply a narrative lens to social intervention considerations.

Rappaport (1995, p. 802) asserts that "The ability to tell one's story, and to have access to and influence over collective stories, is a powerful resource." Further, he states, "If narratives are understood as resources, we are able to see that who controls that resource, that is who gives stories social value, is at the heart of a tension between freedom and social control, oppression and liberation, and empowerment versus disenfranchisement" (p. 805). He further adds that "If we view the power to create, select, and tell stories (that are positively valued) about one's self and one's community as a resource, we quickly see that like most resources it is distributed unevenly, in about the same proportion as other resources, such as money and social prestige" (p. 805).

Shared community narratives are powerful resources and can be used for good or ill (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995). Stories and narratives have been used to justify oppression (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991) and to maintain the status quo (Rappaport, 1993; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995). However, they have also been used to challenge the status quo (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1993; Rappaport & Simkins, 1991).

In this respect Rappaport contends that "Much of the work of social change, organisational and community development in the direction of greater personal and collective empowerment, may be about understanding and creating settings where people participate in the discovery, creation, and enhancement of their own community narratives and personal stories" (Rappaport, 1995, p. 805).

With the narrative perspective as a lens within which to view social intervention considerations, I move now into a discussion of the larger conceptual framework within which I have come to understand the importance of community gardening. An alternative to the dominant cultural narrative of unlimited growth and consumption is the concept of sustainable communities. After a discussion of some manifestations of the growth and consumption orientation in our modern urban communities, I present an alternative narrative, suggesting that urban production, and more specifically, urban food production, may represent one small way that urban living could be more sustainable.

Sustainable Communities: An Alternative To The Dominant Cultural Narrative Of Growth And Consumption

Disconnection from land and community. Most human civilisations began with community-based subsistence agriculture (Quayle, 1989a), and throughout most of

history human civilisations have created cities with gardens and open spaces (Warner, 1987). For thousands of years gardens, farms and common grazing land for animals were integrated with dwellings, marketplaces, public buildings and sacred places (Hynes, 1996). This integration between rural and urban functions was necessary for survival in pre-industrial cities (Hough, 1995). It was not until the late 18th and early 19th centuries that this changed. The period of the Industrial Revolution signalled a dramatic shift away from subsistence agriculture as gardens and open spaces were banished from the cities (Hynes, 1996; Quayle, 1989a; Warner, 1987; Wilson, 1991).

In addition, David Suzuki (1997) reminds us that our modern urban civilisations are a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of human settlement patterns in that for 99% of our existence we have lived in small family groups of nomadic hunter-gatherers. He further claims that for thousands of years these close-knit communities provided for the social needs of their members. Although Suzuki (1997) acknowledges that the nature of human relations has changed as world populations have expanded and technology has increased, he still suggests that it is in this century that the changes have been most accelerated and most profound. From Suzuki's (1997) perspective, our transition from a largely rural to a largely urban society has been accompanied by a tearing of the social fabric that once held communities together. Similarly, Seymour Sarason (1974) contends that the communities in which many of us live today are political entities with which we feel little connection. Although Sarason (1974) suggests that we can derive and experience a sense of community through our families and friends, neighbours and co-workers, and our membership in various formal and informal community associations, from his perspective, it is the rare person who experiences a sense of community from

more than one or two such sources. As a result, Sarason (1974) contends that many people yearn to experience a broader sense of community.

Consumer culture. Our uniquely North American consumer culture began in earnest after World War II as science gave birth to new technologies and consumer products on an unprecedented scale (Berry, 1988; Hough, 1995; Suzuki, 1997). To feed the ever-growing consumer demand constant economic growth is required (Suzuki, 1997).

This consumer culture has grown to pervade every aspect of our lives. We have been so adequately transformed into consumers that today few of us can produce *anything* at all for ourselves. Our recent ancestors grew much of their own food, were able to craft their own clothing, household utensils, furniture, and homes. Many people today still have these skills. They are farmers, and crafts or trades people, but these titles obscure the fact that we once all possessed such basic survival skills. In just one or two generations we have transformed ourselves from self-sufficient citizens to dependent consumers.

Paralleling post-war developments in the production of consumer goods, John McKnight (1995b) documents a significant development in the production of human services and the growth of a "powerful service economy and its pervasive serving institutions" (p. x). Just as in the production of goods, McKnight (1995d) contends that the consumer mentality has come to pervade our thinking about human service systems, we now have health care and social service consumers. He suggests that we have been so adequately transformed into human service consumers, that in the face of our most pressing societal problems, instead of focusing on building our own community capacity,

many of us believe that what we need is more effective human service systems. From McKnight's (1995b) perspective, "...we have become a careless society, populated by impotent citizens and ineffectual communities dependent on the counterfeit of care called human services" (p. x).[x]

In our modern day, largely urban environments we are profoundly disconnected from community and from any relationship with the natural world. According to McKnight (1995d, p. 172), as our human service institutions have grown more powerful, "...we have become too impotent to be called real citizens and too disconnected to be effective members of community," and that "...while we have reached the limits of institutional problem-solving, we are only at the beginning of exploring the possibility of a new vision for community." In addition, in our urban environments we collectively live our lives as though we exist outside of the limits imposed by nature (Nelson, 1996; Suzuki, 1997). As urban dwellers we consume far more than we produce and we generate more "waste" than can be managed within city boundaries. Geographically speaking, cities cover only 2% of the earth's surface yet consume up to 75% of the earth's resources (Garnett, 1996b).

Today, increasing urbanisation, industrialisation and continued agricultural transformation remain threats to the sustainability of human populations and our global existence on the planet. Over half of the world's population today lives in cities (Hynes, 1996; Lyman, 1991; Suzuki, 1997; The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992; as cited in Garnett, 1996b) and the largest growth of cities is taking place in the "developing" world (Suzuki, 1997). The move to industrialise continues to expand rapidly. China and India, for example, aspire to reach already unsustainable

North American levels of consumption, aspirations which would increase their current levels of consumption sixteen to twenty times (Suzuki, 1997). Today it is industrialisation that poses the greatest threat to China's presently sustainable food system (Nelson, 1996). And modern agricultural transformation continues with genetic engineering (Kneen, 1998).

Our growth and consumption orientation is not sustainable (Berry, 1988; Hough, 1995; Kneen, 1989; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Suzuki, 1997). As Edward Bennett and Stephanie Campbell (1996) claim, the modern philosophy preaches growth to the detriment of community and our planet's dwindling resources. As Thomas Berry suggests (1988), we are desperately in need of a new narrative.

A New Narrative: Urban Production

Hough (1995) suggests that a profound shift in our social and environmental values would recast the city and its inhabitants as producers of resources rather than producers of waste. From his perspective, important opportunities for re-establishing such productive relationships with one another and with the land are linked to the food that we eat. According to Hough (1995) urban environments have tremendous potential for small-scale agricultural production; so the connections between people, food growing, "waste", and city space *can* be creatively reconnected in the city. Similarly, John McKnight and John Kretzmann (1995) suggest that enterprises dealing with life's basic needs, such as food and energy production, and waste management, may be more efficient and economical if pursued at the local level. In such sustainable cities, citizenship would be synonymous with participation; citizens would not only consume resources, they would produce resources and wealth (Dresdner & Sudol, 1992).

There are signs that social and environmental values and priorities are shifting in this direction (Berry, 1988; Hough, 1995; Suzuki, 1997). For example, public interest in and concern for the environment has grown world-wide in the 1980's and 1990's (Hough, 1995). During this same time, Suzuki (1997) claims that the media have focused almost entirely on debts, deficits, and the global economy as the most important issues for people around the world as we move into the next millennium. However, despite this intense focus, polls continue to indicate that there is widespread global public concern about the environment (Suzuki, 1997). More importantly, Hough (1995) suggests that in the 1990's, in particular, society has witnessed the emergence of an increased public consciousness and awareness about the importance of diverse and productive *cities* as the basis for a sustainable future.

This urban consciousness is particularly important because despite growing environmental consciousness and the increasingly urban nature of our global existence, mainstream environmental activism and research has largely remained non-urban in focus (Hough,1995; Hynes, 1996). Urban food production presents an opportunity to broaden the focus while bringing it closer to home. The community garden could provide a fruitful starting point for creating healthy and sustaining worldviews that strengthen people's connections to the social and natural world (Francis & Hester, 1990). Urban living can be sustainable if we work to build vibrant local communities and if we seek out a balance between consuming and producing (Mancini, 1996; Suzuki, 1997). The resurgence of community gardening is but one small indicator that social and environmental values and priorities are changing (Hough, 1995).

My Research Focus

Part of me finds comfort in believing that community was easier to experience in the past, and that maybe if we can just "get back to our roots" we can create a more sustainable world. Just as tempting as the mindset of modernity is the temptation to view the past idyllically and my intention has not been to present the past in this way. As Sarason (1974) noted, whether or not it was easier to experience community in the past begs a much more important question and that is, how did it happen that our communities allowed a kind and pace of growth that so effectively destroyed community? By way of explanation he suggests that growth, in and of itself, has not been responsible. But rather that growth, ungoverned by the overarching value of creating or maintaining community, has been.

I would argue that a growth and consumption orientation, governed by any values, is not compatible with creating sustainable communities. It was some 25 years ago that Sarason (1974) proposed that the psychological sense of community should be the "overarching value by which to judge efforts to change any aspect of community functioning" (p. 9). More recently Rappaport (1987) has proposed the concept of empowerment as an overarching value to guide community psychology research, theory, and practice. This recent emphasis on empowerment overshadowed the psychological sense of community, an earlier and influential phenomenon of interest for the field (Riger, 1993). Rather than emphasising one at the expense of the other, Stephanie Riger (1993) suggests that both concepts be the focus of our study as an understanding of each is integral to our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our communities. I believe Julian Rappaport's recent work on stories and narratives, empowerment, and the psychological

sense of community has laid some foundation to begin integrating these two concepts. However, I still believe we need an overarching value that includes both the social *and* the natural ecology. In community psychology we have concepts, like the "ecological perspective," which could integrate concerns for the social *and* natural world.

However, as a discipline we have focused on and studied the social ecology, and have not placed the same emphasis on the natural ecology (personal communication, Ed Bennett, 1997). Our discipline has not been concerned with naturism (i.e., our oppression of the natural environment) to the extent that we have focused on other oppressions, or with conceiving, in collaboration with citizens, of strategies for change. In effect, our discipline has not pushed the ecological metaphor to its "logical and moral conclusion" (personal communication, Richard Walsh-Bowers, 1997). I am suggesting that the concept of sustainable communities represents both an ecological perspective, and an overarching value by which we can judge our social intervention efforts.

I used a narrative approach to listen to the stories of local community gardeners and organisers involved in the CGN in an effort to understand how these individuals perceived their activities. I hoped to gain an understanding of why they participated, both in their individual community gardens, and in the CGN. Specifically, I wondered if they viewed their activities in a larger social change context. As a recently formed and loosely knit group in the early stages of organisational development, the CGN does not yet have a community narrative as defined by Rappaport (1995). The narrative is being newly created, individual stories are converging in the creation of a community narrative, and these and other individual stories will determine the CGN's community narrative.

As Rappaport (1995) suggests defining the psychological sense of community as a community narrative, he is in effect suggesting that much social change work may be about understanding and creating settings where people experience community. My thesis may represent a written record of the beginning of a community narrative. In the stories, I discerned themes that I believe could be important influences in the future development of the CGN, the group's influence on local community gardening development and the role community gardening may play in the creation of sustainable communities. The community development, community gardens can inspire, could be the beginning of new visions for social change, visions grounded in an expanded definition of community, a truly ecological perspective that encompasses the social and natural environment.

Method

The Narrative Method And How I Will Tell The Story

Although the literature in community psychology regarding stories and narratives focuses on how community narratives influence the individual stories of group members, the process is considered to be dialogical. Individual stories are understood as contributing to the creation and revision of community narratives (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1993; Rappaport, 1995). My approach was to gain insight into both the stories of individual members and the evolving narrative of the CGN. The community narrative of the CGN is in the process of creation. As a small and loosely organised group, the CGN does not have a community narrative in written archival form, and members have only recently begun to talk about such issues as the group's mission, vision, and values. So unlike the research protocols outlined in the community psychology literature, my purpose was not to delineate aspects of the CGN's community narrative in the service of comparing the similarity of individual stories to the narrative. Rather, my purpose was to re-create the voices of CGN members and share each member's story in a collective format in order to highlight the potential CGN members have to contribute to a collective story. However, this collective story is to be differentiated from a community narrative. As I mentioned above, I perceive the community narrative of the CGN as being newly created. However, I do believe that aspects of the collective story that I will tell could and should be important elements of the CGN's evolving community narrative.

The case study as a story. Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985) describe the writing of a case study to be like the writing of a novel and suggest that the writer should

have skills in creative writing. Robert Stake (1995) describes the collection of data for case studies as the collection of stories, and in terms of presentation, he leaves the writer to decide how much of that story form to preserve in the actual case report. However, he also claims that it will not often be useful to write the case study in story form, and that case study reporting is usually not the art of storytelling. Ron Labonte and Joan Feather (1996) describe the use of "case stories" in health promotion. These authors have renamed the case study to reflect their emphasis on the storytelling aspects of the approach.

In my thesis, I chose to use a storytelling approach. Part of my decision to do so was simply intuitive, and perhaps is an expression of my Irish cultural heritage, where the storyteller is revered. Another part of my decision was informed by my personal experiences in the local community gardening "scene." I met a wide variety of people who exposed me to different ways of viewing community gardening. I was, in effect, getting a different "story" from different people, and it only made sense to me to consider their experiences as such. Finally, in the narrative approach, I found a theory-driven methodology that was appropriate to my research focus.

My roles and possibilities for the roles of others. During the course of my thesis research I was a community gardener, a member of the CGN, as well as a researcher. I was, and still am, part of the story that I am endeavouring to share. Throughout the process there was, and still is, much permeability between my roles. It was challenging for me to be actively involved in the CGN and to reflect on my experiences and write about them. However, my immersion also grounded me in my work, and CGN members'

ideas and insights were critical to the development of my research focus, my subsequent analysis of the data, and my presentation and organisation of the information.

In October of 1997, after four months of CGN meetings, I made a presentation at one of our regular meetings about my thesis research. As part of my presentation, I asked members to consider serving as a community advisory committee for my thesis. All were supportive of my work and offered me their initial ideas about what would be important to know and how I could further focus my thesis question. This presentation marked the beginning of a very informal process whereby members made unique contributions to my thesis research process and focus of inquiry throughout the winter and spring of 1998.

During the presentation I also suggested to the group that my thesis could become part of a collaborative project co-ordinated by CGN members. As one idea, I suggested putting together a popular document about local community gardening. I envisioned others conducting interviews or photographing local community gardens, for example. Corey, a CGN member and graduate student in Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo, was interested in my collaborative project idea and a short time later designed her thesis project to build on the idea. She and I were excited, both about the process of supporting one another through our research projects, and about the possibilities for collaborative work on a popular document with other CGN members.

My approach to selecting participants. I employed a mixed, purposeful sampling strategy as I selected information-rich cases for in-depth study; as my sample emerged during my fieldwork, my strategy was an opportunistic one (Patton, 1990). I began with an intensity-sampling strategy, focused on identifying individuals who had been or were presently involved in creating community gardens in Waterloo Region. I sought to

choose "excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest..." (Patton, 1990, p. 171). Through a garden directory (see Appendix 1) compiled by CGN members, I was aware of all of the community gardens in Waterloo Region and I knew basic information about each. With this knowledge and my own experience as my guide, I set about trying to categorise local gardens in an effort to have a basis for selecting cases. I found it difficult to categorise the gardens and could devise no meaningful rationale for choosing one garden over another. As such, I found it difficult to limit my sample. However, as I read more about the narrative approach, I was increasingly coming to view members of the CGN as contributors to a community narrative. The narrative approach provided me with a theory-driven methodology that informed my sample. As a result, I chose to contain my sample to the CGN to explore the stories and narratives of group members. A practical example of a theory-based construct (i.e., the creation of a community narrative) had emerged for me during my fieldwork. So I changed my strategy and employed a theory-based or operational-construct sampling strategy (Patton, 1990). Although my participants were all members of the same group, the characteristics of their individual gardens and their motives for creating and participating in them were unique. Even though I did not set out to use a maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 1990), I believe that I inadvertently experienced the results of the strategy; as I spoke with participants, I found that within their diversity of experience there were significant common experiences.

I also made a decision to further limit my sample to those individuals whom I considered to be core group members. Because of the short history and loosely organised nature of the group, membership was fluid, and people joined and left the group over

time. However, there was a core group of individuals who had been involved from the outset and who consistently attended the meetings and/or became involved in CGN activities. These were the individuals I wanted to interview. So I provided each one of them with an information letter (see Appendix 2) and an interview guide. I then contacted each person to ask her or him if they were interested in participating in my thesis research project. To my delight, all of the core members whom I contacted were enthusiastic about my research and agreed to participate.

The research participants. My participants were ten members of the CGN. Due to my immersion in the research context as a participant-observer I include myself as a participant. The participants were representative of eight local community gardens; five of the participants were community garden organisers and five were both community gardeners and organisers. Three of the participants were paid staff employed by their respective human service organisations to function as community garden co-ordinators. The remaining seven participants were involved as volunteers in both their individual community gardens and in the CGN. Of these seven, three were students; two others were recent university graduates looking for work; and two others were interested community members volunteering their time, one through a church and the other through a local community centre. Nine of the participants were white, and one was Hispanic. Five of the participants were in their twenties, four were in their thirties or forties, and one participant was in their sixties. Eight of the participants were women, and two were men.

The phases of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide guidelines for looking at the inquiry process in "phases." They describe three phases, which they term

the "orientation and overview phase," the "focused exploration phase," and the "member check phase." I experienced much overlap between and among these phases during the process of my thesis research; but for clarity I will discuss the phases and the activities that comprised each as separate processes that primarily occurred within distinct time periods.

During the spring, summer and fall of 1997, I was very much in the "orientation and overview phase." During this time I was primarily immersed in activities related to my own participation in a community garden; this involvement spanned a period of several months from early spring until early fall of that year. During these months I was also immersed in the activities of the CGN; at this time members were meeting roughly every two to three weeks. This was an exciting time for me. I was experiencing the convergence of my personal and academic interests, and I was part of a group whose perspectives were informing that convergence. It was during this time that I asked CGN members to serve as a community advisory committee and my thesis focus began to take shape.

In January 1998, I conducted a "pilot interview" which helped me to further develop my thesis focus and question. The months between January and May 1998 comprised part of the "focused exploration phase" of my thesis during which I conducted all of my interviews and recorded my most extensive field notes. I scoured methodological sources on narrative before I conducted the pilot interview, as I wanted to have a clear idea about how I was going to interview participants, transcribe the interviews, and analyse the data consistent with a narrative approach. I found in the literature an ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspective with which I

identified, but I found the literature lacking in prescription. I proceeded with my research guided by the narrative approach but my procedures, particularly in transcription, and in analysis, were informed by other approaches. The months of June and July 1998 comprised a second part of the "focused exploration phase" of my thesis during which Corey and I conducted an exhaustive and systematic search of the literature (see Appendix 3).

Over the fall and winter months of 1998 and 1999 I analysed the data, read and made sense of the literature, and began the task of writing my thesis. By the early spring of 1999 I was prepared to present participants with excerpts from my findings section. And later in the spring Corey and I invited our research participants to a joint community presentation of our research findings. These latter activities, combined with an earlier review of transcripts in the spring of 1998, comprised the "member check phase" of my research process where participants were given opportunities to provide me with their feedback.

The creation of information. I primarily used two data collection methods as data sources: personal interviews and field notes based upon participant-observation. As I approached the interview phase of my research, I was profoundly influenced by the work of Riessman (1993) and Mishler (1986). In their work on the narrative approach, I found a critical research perspective with which I could identify. From this critical perspective, the research "interview" is regarded as a discourse between speakers where the meaning of questions and responses are contextually grounded and created through the interaction of participant and researcher (Mishler, 1986). "Interviews are conversations in which both participants -- teller and listener/questioner -- develop meaning together, a stance

requiring interview practices that give considerable freedom to both" (Riessman, 1993, p. 55). Consistent with a narrative approach my interview guide (see Appendix 4) was unstructured, consisting of five broad open-ended questions which I believed would give participants the freedom to narrate their experiences with community gardening in a way that was meaningful for them.

I was comfortable with this informal approach, and so I attempted to "demystify" the interview process for participants before we began. As such, I shared with them that I conceived of our interview as a conversation and as such, that I was not going to ask them a set of standard questions. Rather, I explained to them that, as I had provided them with the interview guide prior to the interview, I would let them decide both what they wanted to share and how they wanted to proceed in the interview. Some participants appreciated this approach and told me that they had felt much more comfortable with an open-ended conversational interview. Others came to the interview with the expectation that they would be "interviewed" and so requested that I direct the conversation somewhat. I was prepared for both scenarios, as I was unsure how participants would react to the approach. To bring closure to each interview I asked participants how they had experienced the interview process. Their comments about the narrative approach were very positive.

After the pilot interview I revisited both my interview guide and the methodological and theoretical literature on the narrative approach. As a result, I began to see members of the CGN as creators of the group's community narrative. I had not had this insight prior to my pilot interview, so I added two broad questions concerning the CGN to my guide. I felt that I needed to transcribe and at least preliminarily analyse

my pilot interview before I continued with subsequent interviews. So as I mentioned above, I revisited methodological sources looking for prescription. My journal entries from this time period evidence my confusion about the narrative approach as a methodology. The time span between my pilot interview and second interview was over one month. Even though I still did not feel I knew what I was going to "do" with my interviews, I had conceptual clarity about my phenomenon of interest and so felt comfortable proceeding. I then interviewed two more members, allowing myself several days between the interviews to write field notes, listen to the tape(s), transcribe the interviews, and reflect on them. At this early stage, I began to see some similarities in content across the interviews. I conducted four more interviews within a week and a half time period. In retrospect, I feel that I needed more time between these interviews. I fell behind in writing my field notes, and did not finishing transcribing previous interviews before moving on to subsequent interviews. I did not have much of an opportunity to reflect on the interviews. Consequently, I spent just over one month catching up on transcribing and reflecting on the interviews I had completed. After spending considerable time reflecting on the interviews and noting similarities and differences across the interviews, I believed that I was experiencing a degree of redundancy. However, I still believed that it was important to talk to a few more members. I conducted two more interviews over the course of a few days and decided to make these my last interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition, I kept a "reflexive journal" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in order to document daily activities with respect to the research, as well as methodological notes, personal reflections, and insights. As my thesis research focus became clearer so did my

field notes. When I began thinking about theoretical and methodological concerns, my field notes were a written record of the evolution of my thinking in these areas. After I conducted interviews, I recorded my thoughts and reflections as field notes. During data analysis, I recorded reflections in my field notes. While I read the related literature I recorded my insights in my field notes. As a participant-observer immersed in the research setting, I was able to compile extensive field notes based on my observations. My journal was an invaluable source of data throughout my thesis process.

Living with the data: Transcription, organisation, and analysis. After each interview I made an honest effort to sit down and reflect on the process and record my reflections in my field notes, and I found these reflections invaluable later. As all of the participants allowed me to tape our conversations, I was also fortunate to be able to "relive" the interviews, in a sense, as I listened to them at later dates. Taping and transcription are regarded as essential to narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993). I began with a rough transcription of the entire conversation, putting both the words and other striking features of the conversation down on paper (Riessman 1993). Then with the rough drafts in hand I listened to the tapes again, reading along to make sure that I had not missed either any content or any notable features of the conversation such as long pauses or increases in volume, for example. It was in transcribing that I departed from the narrative approach to transcription as described by Riessman (1993), as I did not believe that the procedures she described were well suited to my data or to my research interests. For example, Riessman (1993) suggests re-transcribing portions of the text that appear to take a narrative form and contends that these portions are to be differentiated from non-narrative segments such as "...question and answer exchanges, arguments,

chronicles, and other forms of discourse" (p. 58). Rather than structurally categorising the data based on whether or not segments conformed to some predetermined criterion for inclusion as a narrative segment, I viewed each interview and the resultant transcription as a narrative whole, as each participant's individual story, which was an analytical decision largely influenced by my theoretical framework.

My organisation and analysis of the data were also largely influenced by my theoretical framework (Patton, 1990). As I wanted to gain insight into each individual's experiences with community gardening and how these experiences were contributing to the evolving narrative of the CGN, I began with a case analysis approach (Patton, 1990). I used my interview guide as "...a descriptive analytical framework for analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 376) and organised the information from each participant's transcript into a "case record" of sorts, with sections based on the topic guides I had provided in my interview guide. The "case record" was organised into two broad, related parts that I felt depicted the process of the creation of a community narrative. In my interview guide I asked participants to consider both why they had become involved in community gardening and what meaning community gardening had for them. I also asked each participant to consider both why they had become involved in the CGN and what future visions they had for the CGN. Most participants talked about these issues and expanded their stories to include their future visions for community gardening and reflections on their experience of the CGN. To organise the information for analysis I created each participant's case record by collapsing the topic areas that each had addressed into two related sections. The first section primarily concerned participant's stories at the level of their individual community gardens and was subdivided into three subsections, including

why the participant had become involved in community gardening, why they believed community gardening to be important, and their future visions for community gardening. The second section, largely concerned with participant's stories at the level of the CGN, was also subdivided into three sections, including why the participant had become involved in the CGN, how they had experienced the CGN, and their future visions for the CGN.

Organising the information in this way was time-consuming but invaluable in reacquainting me with the data as I reread each participant's transcript, re-listened to the tapes, and integrated related information from my field notes. I believed that once I had the information organised in this way it would be much easier to organise each participant's story. Although I had approached the organisation of my interview data with the assumption that I would be composing and analysing individual "stories, " when it came to analysis I did not feel it was appropriate to analyse the stories individually.[xi] I was also thinking ahead to the presentation of the information. Thus, because my participants had been drawn from an organised group I felt that it was more appropriate to present their "stories" in a collective format. My sampling strategy influenced how I chose to use my "case records" and my approach became one of cross-case analysis (Patton, 1990).

Although data analysis was an ongoing process, I began my final analysis of the data after I had organised all of the data and was no longer immersed in the setting. I revisited my initial research question and reviewed my field notes to examine analytical insights and interpretations that had emerged for me during fieldwork and data collection (Patton, 1990).

In analysing the interviews, I was primarily focused on their content. Though I did not utilise a specific analytical technique such as grounded theory, my approach may be characterised as a content or theme analysis. A narrative analysis, however, demands attention to both structure and content (Riessman, 1993). I did not structurally analyse the data as described by Riessman (1993) and Mishler (1986). However, in my analysis I did attend not only to *what* was said, but also to *how* it was said. For example, after my first few interviews I noticed that participants had used many natural metaphors during our conversations. And in one of my later interviews, one participant actually noticed that she was using natural metaphors during our conversation and we reflected on this observation together. I recorded this and other analytical insights that occurred during data collection in my journal. The insight led me to attend to an underlying theme in members' thoughts on why community gardens were important, namely, that community gardens connect us to nature.

To begin my cross-case analysis, I worked from the "case records" I had organised. Working in this way made going back to the transcripts less overwhelming as I worked across participants. I find it hard to articulate what I actually "did" with my data or what procedures my analytical process entailed. I quote a section here that I believe begins to elucidate what happened for me in data analysis. The section is from Patton (1990) and reads, "The analytical process is meant to organise and elucidate telling the story of the data. Indeed, the skilled analyst is able to get out of the way of the data to let the data tell its own story. The analyst uses concepts to help make sense of and present the data but not to the point of straining or forcing the analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 393). Although I searched for and documented negative cases, I did not search for

competing themes or test alternative interpretations of the data as described by Patton (1990). Narrative analysis assumes perspective (Riessman, 1993) while the process of testing alternative interpretations suggests that there is a, more or less, objective interpretation of the data.

My analytical approach was at once inductive and deductive. From my own early experiences with community gardening I believed that community building was an important aspect of community gardening. My interview guide, at least in structure, also reflected my interest in the idea of a community narrative. And when I read Rappaport's (1995) work on stories and community, particularly his thoughts about the connections between community narratives and the psychological sense of community, I experienced a convergence of my community and academic interests. In both of these ways, I believe that my process was deductive, as these ideas were influential on my work in data collection and analysis. However, at the same time, my approach was also largely inductive; grounded experience informed my understanding of local community gardening activity. I also chose an open ended interview approach, which allowed participants to describe their experiences with community gardening in ways that were meaningful for them.

Patton (1990) suggests that there are two ways of representing patterns that emerge from data analysis. First, one can make use of indigenous concepts, categories created and understood by participants, in organising the presentation of themes. Or one can make use of sensitising concepts, concepts that the researcher brings to the data often from social science theory or the research literature, in organising the presentation of themes. "Community" and the concept of "sustainable communities" were indigenous

concepts for many of the participants with whom I spoke. The importance of a sense of community and community building were concepts, which were understood and experienced by people in the community. And some participants explicitly placed community building within the larger perspective of creating sustainable communities. As a part of this community, I experienced the convergence of the indigenous concepts of community gardeners with the sensitising concepts of our discipline. Participants primarily had an appreciation for the social aspects and benefits of community gardens and the importance of community gardens in building a sense of community. In a parallel fashion, participants had become involved in the CGN because they were looking for a sense of community. I was able to bring the narrative framework to the data and frame participant's stories as part of the evolution of a community narrative. In essence, my theoretical framework helped me to make sense of the data, and within my conceptual framework I found that the data largely spoke for themselves.

The trustworthiness of the information. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe criterion and procedures for enhancing the trustworthiness of research data. The trustworthiness of my data can be demonstrated in the following ways.

Firstly, I believe that I amply satisfied the criterion of prolonged engagement in the setting. Throughout my data collection and my search of the literature, I remained actively involved, both in my own community garden and in the work of the CGN. It was only when I moved out of Waterloo Region that my active involvement ceased. Because of the nature of my immersion I think it was easier for me to build trust with participants. Accordingly, I was in a unique position to observe persistently, hence, adding depth to the data I gathered.

Secondly, I was able to triangulate with respect to data sources. As there were different individuals, groups, and organisations represented within the CGN, I was able to compare the perspectives of participants from different points of view. In addition, as I gathered information based on participant observation and interviews, I was able to compare observational data with interview data.

Thirdly, I aimed to provide the "thick description" that Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as necessary for making assessments of transferability. A comprehensive and thorough description of the research context, as well as processes observed provided most of the thick description.

Fourthly, the keeping of a journal documenting my personal reflections and insights as well as notes on methodological decisions also contributed to the overall trustworthiness of the data. When I completed a draft of my entire thesis, I returned to my journal and read all of my entries. In doing so, I felt assured that, in my thesis, I had integrated my most significant personal reflections, as well as important methodological and theoretical insights.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) also describe procedures for "member checks" suggesting that our data, as well as our analytic categories and interpretations, should be taken back to our research participants. In the spring and early summer months of 1998 I gave participants an opportunity to review their transcripts, a preliminary step of the "member check phase." I asked participants to read the transcription and decide if they were comfortable with the information that they had shared with me. I explained to them that they could add or delete information as they wished. I also asked them to consider what aspects of their "story" they felt were most

important. In addition, I explained to them that the process of the transformation of their transcript into a written and readable text could take place with varying degrees of their involvement, ranging from limited to substantial involvement on their behalf. No participants had time or were interested in assuming primary responsibility for the work; most expressed to me that they trusted my judgement and would prefer if I made the decision as to how to present the information. However, a few participants presented me with their wishes by writing comments to me in the margins of their transcripts.

Much to my regret, my analysis of the interviews was largely completed in isolation. It was no longer geographically possible for me to be immersed in the setting, as I had relocated to Toronto, Ontario in the late summer of 1998. It was during the fall of 1998 that I began my most intense period of data analysis. I would have liked for participants to provide a "member check" on my interpretations of the data during this time; I think CGN members' insights would have been helpful. However from a narrative perspective, Riessman (1993) contends that it is questionable whether or not participants can validate a researcher's interpretations. In addition, individual participants cannot provide a check on a researcher's theorising across participants (Riessman, 1993) and this is how I chose to analyse the data. My interpretations are just that, they are my creations. It is undoubtedly the case that others may have created different interpretations of the data.

In the early spring of 1999, I was able to provide CGN members the opportunity to review selected excerpts from my "findings section." At minimum, I wanted to ensure that each participant was comfortable with the quotes that I had chosen to use. However at that time, without a reading of my entire thesis, CGN members could not provide a

check on the larger context in which I had discussed the local community gardening scene and shared their stories.

In June of 1999 I was able to provide CGN members with a sense of this larger context. Corey and I invited our research participants to attend a community presentation held in Kitchener, Ontario. We made a joint presentation of our research findings, presenting them in the context of our larger theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Although only half of my research participants were able to attend, my interpretation seemed to resonate with many of those present. The community presentation was extremely important to me as it allowed me to receive a check on my interpretation of the data and on the larger context in which I had discussed local community gardening and shared the stories of my participants. Although I believe that participants reviewing their transcripts and consenting to the use of direct quotations were very important parts of the member check phase, for me, the most important part was to present my participants with my interpretations in the context of my larger interpretative framework. Even though participants had not had the opportunity to read my entire thesis, after the community presentation I felt comfortable that they understood the larger context in which I had shared their stories. Later that evening I returned home to Toronto feeling that my participants had validated my interpretation of the data.

Even so, my process in creating, analysing, interpreting and presenting the data was circular. As I mentioned above, my sample and the structure of my interview guide reflected my interest in the idea of a community narrative. In my analysis of the data I chose to organise the description in such a way as to demonstrate the evolution of a

community narrative and this analytical decision then framed my subsequent interpretation and presentation of the data. In the final analysis, the work is mine.

The research relationship and ethical concerns. Discussing the research relationship that I was involved in segues nicely into a consideration of ethics. I have my own sense of who I am morally and ethically and it is very much connected to the feminist concept of relationality. However, I chose not to explicitly describe how feminist methodology and theory informed my work. Although I believe theoretical and methodological connections are implicit throughout my thesis, I chose not to explicitly make these connections in my work. Had I done so, I believe my thesis would have been much more about how I, rather than how my research participants, understand the importance of local community gardening.[xii]

I agree with Terry Mitchell and Joyce Radford (1996) that the research relationship is an intersubjective one where the participant and researcher exist "...in an embodied reality, in a social world, in which they have an impact on one another" (p. 58). So, inasmuch as the participants were more than data sources, I was more than a data-collecting instrument. In addition to being a researcher, I was also a community gardener and a member of the CGN. During the course of my thesis research, these dual roles presented me with some ethical considerations.

Firstly, it was difficult for me, at times, to trust the group process and I had to remain aware of my own stress regarding completing my thesis requirement and meeting departmental deadlines. For example, as part of my thesis research, I was interested in facilitating a focus group with CGN members to begin exploring the group's mission, vision, and values. However, this is a process that the group has *yet* to undertake. My

idea was premature and, had I suggested it at the time, would only have served to drive the group process and I did not want my academic investment or its related stresses to undermine the group in this way.

Secondly, I also felt uncomfortable about my status as a participant-observer who was documenting information for my thesis. Sometimes I believed that my status made others uncomfortable and I wondered, at times, if my presence was stifling group discussion. To address the issue, I endeavoured to be open and honest in sharing that I had personal as well as academic interests related to community gardening.

Thirdly, Corey, one of my research participants, was also a student who was framing her thesis research on another aspect of local community gardening. Throughout our work we debriefed as friends and as academic peers (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We considered the ethical issues involved in our relationship and agreed early on not to discuss our participants nor to disclose information from their interviews. Outside of these early concerns for confidentiality, our relationship posed no further ethical issues for either of us.

Finally, on occasion, my unique position as participant and researcher also required me to examine to whom I was accountable. Patrick O'Neill (1989) states that problems can arise when one has loyalties to groups or individuals whom may have conflicting agendas. I agree with Jean Pettifor (1996) that as psychologists we need to feel that we are part of a moral community, and I do. I identify with community psychology values, which are similar to feminist values. I also identify with the Canadian Psychological Association's Code of Ethics and its emphasis on relationship. I feel accountable to our discipline in these respects.

However, in my community work, I encountered individual and organisational perspectives that were not always congruent with mine. Most salient were perspectives supportive of the notion of charity. As a community psychologist in training, I believed I was accountable to the community. But "the community" proved to be an elusive concept. With my values as my guide, I navigated my way through these conflicting interests and pressures throughout the process of my research (Pettifor, 1996). In the end, my interpretation of the data may not resonate with some CGN members. However, as a community researcher I believe I could not ignore my social responsibility to share my perspective.

In addition to presenting ethical dilemmas, I believe my dual role also served to enhance the integrity of my research. My involvement in the CGN gave members the opportunity, both to make an informed decision regarding their participation as a community advisory committee, and more importantly, to direct the focus of my research. This collaboration represented the early stages of the process of recruiting participants and gaining their free and informed consent. As part of the more formal process of gaining informed consent, I began my interviews by having participants review and sign a consent form (see Appendix 5).

During the interview, I believe that the relationships I had established with group members helped my participants and I to be appreciative of each other's diverse experiences and perspectives. And for this reason, I think the research posed more benefits than risks for participants. I think that participants benefited from the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and the importance of their work. However, I was sensitive to the possibility that some participants may have been uncomfortable

expressing their perspectives, particularly if they felt that other members of the group did not share them. Because I ensured that each participant had an opportunity to review her or his transcript and give final approval for the use of direct quotes or paraphrased material, I do not believe that my research posed any risks to participants in this regard.

As I involved CGN members in the process of focusing my thesis, participants were aware of my decision to limit my sample to the CGN. For this reason, I could not ensure the privacy of the identity of my research participants throughout the research process. However, because participants trusted that only my research advisor and I would have access to the interview tape(s) and subsequent transcript, I could ensure the privacy of their responses during data collection and analysis. All participants stated a preference to have their actual names used in my thesis and, as such, I made no effort to conceal their identity or the identity of their individual gardens in my final thesis document.

Finally, consistent with the principle of providing informative feedback on research findings to participants, as I described on page 51, in June of 1999, I co-facilitated a community meeting where I presented my findings. And in August of 1999, I provided participants with written feedback. In the report I summarised my research question and the purpose of my work. I also described my theoretical framework and methodological approach and outlined my research findings. I concluded the report with a summary of implications for future community gardening development. In addition, I provided participants with my address and telephone number should they wish to contact me for further information. I plan to provide the CGN with a bound copy of my thesis in the fall of 1999.

"Tell me a story, a story that will be my story as well as the story of everyone and everything about me, the story that brings us together in a valley community, a story that brings together the human community with every living being in the valley" (Berry, 1988).

Research Findings

In my findings presentation I provide detailed descriptive information and extensive direct quotations from participants, two elements considered essential to qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). Before I present my findings I think it is important to give the reader some context surrounding local community gardening activity and it is my hope that this brief section will serve to provide this context. In addition, I will briefly describe each of my research participants. Combined with the extensive direct quotations from participants and the descriptive information in my findings presentation, I hope to give the reader a holistic understanding and appreciation of the work of local community gardeners.

Description Of The Research Context

From my perspective, much has happened in the few short years that I have been involved in and aware of community gardening in Waterloo Region. More and more gardens have been created each gardening season. New organisations have become involved in community gardening and local municipalities have increased their support and involvement. At least one new non-profit food security organisation has been created and the CGN has both grown and become more politically minded. Below I will briefly categorise and describe the local community gardens and highlight some of what I believe are the most important recent developments. The section ends with a brief description of my research participants.

Using Cosgrove's (1998) typology I have classified local community gardens into three categories: allotment gardens, social housing gardens, and neighbourhood or community-based gardens. Approximately three-quarters of the community gardens in

Waterloo Region could be considered neighbourhood or community-based gardens. There is only one allotment garden in Waterloo Region, administered by the City of Kitchener. The remaining gardens are social housing gardens, located on the property of housing co-operatives and available only to members of the respective co-operatives.

My knowledge of local community gardens is limited to those gardens whose members were actively involved in the CGN during the time of my engagement with the group. Through the CGN I was also able to access our inventory of gardens in Waterloo Region which provided basic information about each garden. I use these sources to briefly describe some of the characteristics of local community gardens.

A small number of human service organisations are involved in supporting local community gardening, either by organising or sponsoring individual gardens.[xiii] Members of local churches have organised community gardens or have helped to make needed resources available to gardeners, most often by making their private property available to landless community gardeners.[xiv] Local housing co-operatives have supported local community gardening by organising gardens for their memberships.[xv] And community centres and community health centres have become involved by making land available and providing other resources to gardeners, like seed and tools.[xvi] In addition, many individuals and community groups have donated their time, skills, and resources in helping to make several community gardens come to life.[xvii] Finally, local municipalities have made some of their resources available to support local community gardening.[xviii]

Community members have founded the majority of the community gardens in Waterloo Region. The only exceptions are the City of Kitchener's Allotment Garden

Plots and a small number of gardens founded by an equally small number of human service organisations.[xix] Individuals and small groups of citizens from housing co-operatives, churches, neighbourhoods and other communities of interest founded the remaining gardens.

Many local gardens have insecure land tenure as they are sited on private property and renegotiate agreements governing use each season.[xx] A few gardens are located on municipal or regional land.[xxi] However, without formal policies governing use one could argue that these gardens are just as insecure as those sited on private land.

The gardens range in size from the very small to the very large. No comprehensive inventory has been completed to date documenting the size of local community gardens, the numbers of people involved, or their demographic characteristics. However some of this information is available for a couple of gardens. For example, in 1998 the Bridgeport Hispanic Agricultural Group garden was estimated to have grown to 41 Latin American families (between 100-150 people) who were cultivating between 8 and 10 acres of land!

The majority of gardens are organised to accommodate individual plot gardening. A few gardens consist of one large communal or collective plot, and a few offer both communal and individual plot gardening. Each garden has its own unique features. For example, the Queens Greens gardeners are developing a communal fruit plot in the centre of their garden. They are also cultivating native plant varieties in an effort to restore lost bio-diversity to the area. At the St. John's Kitchen garden members are collectively growing food to supply the St. John's Soup Kitchen. And residents of the Beaver Creek Housing Co-operative ensure their community garden has a minimal environmental

impact through organic gardening techniques and the use of water efficient gardening methods. Although not all community gardeners practice organic gardening, many of the gardens promote organic gardening and offer related workshops and demonstrations.

In addition to the support of established human service organisations, new organisations, both formal and informal, have been created. Unique to these organisations, is a sole focus on community gardening and other urban food production initiatives. In addition to the informal CGN, which I will discus in more depth in subsequent sections, a new non-profit called The Power of Vegetables, has been co-founded by a CGN member. The organisation is working to increase food security by assisting people to re-claim tracts of public right-of-way land for small-scale organic food production. The organisation is working from a sustainability perspective and as such has social, environmental, and economic goals.

All of this local activity has created increased local government and local media interest. Although the City of Kitchener administers their own community garden program and has informally supported other gardens in the past, in 1998 city officials began working towards a policy document governing local community gardening activities. In the fall of 1998 CGN members were invited to attend a workshop at Kitchener City Hall to assist in the development of policies and guidelines. Although I was invited to attend the workshop I was not involved in policy work within the CGN. Other members like Sara and Greg worked more closely with city officials in developing the policy and to the best of my knowledge work on the document is still in progress. For readers who are interested, the implications of such government involvement are discussed in Helm (1999). In addition to local government interest, a freelance writer

from WholeLife Magazine, a local alternative publication, contacted several CGN members in the fall and winter of 1998 and 1999 to consult about an upcoming article she was writing for the spring issue. The article was excellent and provided a broad perspective on the benefits of community gardening for people from all walks of life (Carver, 1999). The article highlighted more than the economic benefits of community gardens for those on low incomes, which has been the focus of some local newspaper reports (see Goodwin, 1998).

Founded in the spring of 1997, the CGN has grown to include more members who have become increasingly involved in both technical and political work. For example, in the spring of 1998 members were very involved in political work supporting the co-ordinator of the Victoria Hills community garden in her struggle to save the garden from planned real estate development. While this past spring members turned their energies towards technical work and responded to community requests from new gardeners seeking assistance in starting up their gardens. In addition CGN members have organised community garden tours, published a community gardening newsletter, and by participating in several community events, have promoted community gardening to the larger community. Below I provide a description of the CGN members who participated in my research.

The people behind the plants.[xxii] *Sara* and *Greg* were the co-creators of the downtown Kitchener garden known as Queen's Greens. Both recent university graduates, they were looking for work that was consistent with their values and interests. In co-creating the garden in the spring of 1998, they created spring and summer employment for themselves. In a similar fashion, *Sue Gallagher* not only wanted to

create sustainable employment opportunities for herself, but also for the individuals with whom she worked. Project G.R.O.W., a horticultural program and market garden project was the answer, and got off the ground in the spring of 1998. *Shirley* is a member of a local church, and along with a group of determined volunteers from the congregation, created the Forest Hill United Church community garden in the late spring of 1996. *Elba* works as a community development worker with the Food Bank and 1997 was her first year co-ordinating the Food Bank garden. Coincidentally, Elba is also a student in the community psychology program. In 1998, *Corey and I*, in collaboration with community members, and members of a local church and seniors residence, were involved in co-ordinating the St. John's Good Earth garden in uptown Waterloo. Corey and I were also both working to complete our Masters degrees at the same time. And like I, Corey focused her thesis on local community gardening. *Gary* was involved in a community garden located in a Kitchener resident's backyard. With a background in Environment and Resource Studies from the University of Waterloo, Gary put his knowledge of sustainable agriculture into practice. Now living in Toronto, I have encountered Gary at community gardening events in the city. In 1993, *Sue Hilderly* was involved in creating the Woolwich community garden in Elmira. Working from an enabling perspective, Sue provided resources requested by gardeners in her role with Woolwich Community Services, but remained strong in her belief that garden members should co-ordinate the garden. As a result, the garden is currently in its 7th season, even though Sue has moved on from her position. Finally, *Cyndi* struggled to create a community garden at her local community centre. The garden was not realised in the spring of 1998 despite Cyndi's determination. At the time a community nutrition worker and Master Gardener in

training, Cyndi worked as hard as she could to get the garden off the ground. In the end, it was the ground that presented the biggest obstacle, as city officials were concerned about possible contamination on the site. In 1999, a raised bed garden was created on the site.

With my description of the research context and participants as a backdrop I move now into my findings presentation. I present the individual stories in a collective format, primarily because I see them as contributing to a collective story, an evolving community narrative. My presentation consists of two broad sections: the evolving community narrative and the stories. Although the very way I have organised my presentation of the findings constitutes the basis for my interpretation, in this section I have tried to let the voices of my participants take centre stage. The section begins with Table 1, which summarises the themes in my findings section. Elaboration on my interpretations is presented in a section following the findings.

Table 1. An Overview of My Research Findings

The Evolving Community Narrative	Community Gardeners' Sense Of Community	Need for a supportive community
		The experience of community
		The CGN: A forum for sharing stories and producing community
The Stories	Sustainable Communities: A Truly Ecological Perspective	Cultivating community
		Connecting with nature
		Creating economic opportunities
		Consciousness raising and the development of political awareness

The Evolving Community Narrative

Community Gardeners' Sense of Community

Through the CGN participants found a supportive community, the sense of community many had hoped to find through joining the group.

Need for a supportive community. A few participants were explicit in stating their desire to be part of the creation of a community gardening organisation. Gary wanted to see the number of community gardens in the region expanded and he wanted to see increased community interest and support for the activity. For these reasons he wanted to be part of an organisation dedicated to the growth of the movement. And Greg was inspired by the activities of another community gardening network in Hamilton, Ontario, and had become particularly interested in networking after he attended the ACGA conference in Montreal in 1996.

However, most participants spoke generally of their desire to find a supportive community to sustain their work. Sue Gallagher described her need for support in this way:

> "I'm from the city, I've got limited experience....I do want to get involved with other people to hear about their successes and failures and tips and [try] doing things collectively..."

Gary felt the same desire to be involved in a collective and said:

> "We all have our little sphere of influence....the larger we congregate, ya' know, the more influence we can potentially have....I am really interested to know what people like when they come together, ya' know, when they put all their ideas and needs together, what comes out of that..."

Shirley felt the same need, and described it in this way:

> "I think probably why I became involved in the CGN was because I thought 'oh, here is a resource, people, other people who are interested in community gardens and are involved in community gardens, and I really felt the need of some support, [of] a support system..."

Cyndi felt that she had the support of local politicians in her community, but felt that she lacked support from local neighbourhood people and from the community centre where she was trying to start the garden. In her words:

> "I felt that because I wasn't getting any support and anything with the community centre, and I thought well maybe I'm just not tapped into the right, ya' know, right grain of people....that was part of it, was just the support, and just trying to, ya' know, just trying to find out what other people were doing and to basically sort of see if I was heading down the wrong road or if I was heading down the right road....I feel that it's sort of, like it's all political people, ya' know, that I can call out and tap into and can say this and that to, but it doesn't feel like there is much support..."

Sara, the co-co-ordinator of the Queen's Greens garden, felt the same way during the planning stages of the garden. Her work partner Greg sensed that community garden activists in Kitchener-Waterloo felt that they were working in isolation. From Greg's perspective it was only sensible to get together to share knowledge and ideas and to support one another.

Both Corey and I felt the need for a supportive community to sustain our work in trying to create a community garden in uptown Waterloo. In Corey's words:

"I think being able to share with other people, our experience, and learning from them, I thought that would be good. I mean we were just starting to, trying to start a garden, and there are these people that already have the gardens, and how can we learn from them? And becoming involved in the network seemed like a good way to do it."

In addition to our practical work in trying to create a garden, we had each chosen to focus our thesis projects on community gardening and so felt the need to immerse ourselves in a supportive community to inform our work.

Further, I felt the need for a supportive community to sustain other aspects of my personal narrative. I found others who were vegetarians, as I am, and who were interested in more sustainable living.

Not all of those involved in the CGN sought out the group primarily to find a supportive community. In contrast, at least one organisation became involved to offer support to others. For example, Elba shared that the Food Bank became involved with the CGN primarily to *offer* organisational support to groups interested in starting their own gardens.

Overwhelmingly, participant's experiences in the group were positive. Greg experienced the CGN as a "grassroots thing" in that people were "coming together, making it happen." In addition to the grassroots nature of the CGN, participants also noted the involvement of organisations, the active participation of students, the strong presence of women, the intergenerational nature of the group, and the consistency of a small core group, as important characteristics of the group.

Cyndi, in her struggles to create a garden at her local community centre, experienced tremendous support from the CGN. Cyndi had many relationships to negotiate as community centre staff and city staff became involved in the process. Cyndi found Elba, and the Food Bank, to be particularly helpful in this regard:

> "...so when we had this meeting....Elba was there 'cause I called her up and I said, "you have to come with me for support, I need somebody,"....so she was there....it was just Elba and I sort of sitting there going, "yeah, yeah, we can do, ya' know we can do this, we can do that....so it was really, really great that way....Elba was right there, "I can help out with that" [canning workshops]. It's like, "oh good," ya' know, 'cause we have the facility and stuff, but we don't have all of the utensils to follow through..."

Sara felt that the involvement of students was really important within the CGN and I appreciated that she felt Corey's and my participation, as students, had made a difference in the group:

> "I love how students will come in, you guys have your ideas for [your] Masters, but without you two, you and Corey, we wouldn't have been as successful, because you're so devoted to studying the idea of community gardening and since you're studying how the network works together....that's what's kept it going."

Sue Gallagher appreciated the strong presence of women within the CGN:

> "...it struck me at the first meeting when I saw this whole circle of women. I thought "women are the nurturers extraordinaire" and that's a very positive statement about women."

Both Sue Hilderly and Shirley appreciated that the CGN had a mixed group of members from different age groups, and Shirley joked with me about being the only grey-haired lady at the meetings:

> "Its wonderful to think that, you know, all you young people are getting involved in this. You know, I feel sort of funny when I come, here I am the only grey-haired old lady, you know? You young people, I'm so proud of you....really, I'm just so pleased, I know my father would just be so delighted to think that there are young people who are still interested in gardening....I love it....I really enjoy going to the meetings, because there is such a variety, and it really delights me to see so many young people involved in this."

Corey really enjoyed that the group seemed to be growing and there were new people involved all the time, but she still felt that the core group presence, which I believe she was a part of creating and maintaining, was important for the group.

The experience of community. I think that due in large part to these group characteristics, participants very strongly felt that their involvement with the CGN had provided them with the peer-based support and sense of community that they needed to continue with their work.

In the process of trying to create the Queen's Greens garden Sara found the CGN to be an invaluable support system:

> "I think the network has been a solid foundation for me. It's nice to have a group of people you know who are doing the same kinds of things or have done it before and you can talk about it, exchange ideas. It has been wonderful just to know that

it's there. [We] wouldn't even have to meet necessarily, [just] pick up the phone."

Shirley felt the same way, although for her the support she received from the CGN helped her to maintain her involvement in her community garden:

"...the continued support and encouragement and motivation, you need to be with other people, involved with other people who are doing gardening. Because sometimes you get discouraged, so the network for me has been a support system."

Sue Hilderly derived energy from attending the CGN meetings. Sue told me that she needed to be around others who shared her energy and the CGN fulfilled this need for her.

Through our friendship, Corey felt that she and I had been invaluable supports for one another in our work to create an uptown Waterloo community garden. She also found inspiration and support in other CGN members, especially in Sara, who was working with Greg to create the Queen's Greens garden:

"I think meeting Sara and Greg, Sara especially, like I just saw that she was so excited and so keen and so hyper and just wanted to keep going, she sort of kept us [Corey and I] going."

And about the CGN as a group Corey said:

"You know that there's people there that support you and that are behind you, and if you really needed their help that they would, they'd help you."

A few participants were frustrated by some of the group dynamics they experienced. Specifically, a few members, myself included, were uncomfortable with

what they perceived to be an organisational dynamic on behalf of the Food Bank to have ownership, both of the creation of individual community gardens and of the grassroots community initiative that has created the CGN. One participant explained:

> "The Food Bank does seem to be closed up to their information to a certain degree, or closed, like they're sort of withholding information in some ways. And that may be the nature of the institution or their organisation....I get the impression that the Food Bank is protecting their name a little bit, ya' know, I mean they're putting a guarantee that they can say they started all these gardens."

Irrespective of this tension, individuals came to the CGN looking for a supportive community, and in finding one, have become involved in the process of creating a community narrative.

The CGN: A forum for sharing stories and producing community. Two participants' thoughts about the role of the CGN resonated with me and serve to conclude this section of my findings.

Greg said that he felt that what people ultimately wanted do in the CGN was "share stories" more. And Gary felt that the most important role of the CGN was its role in producing a sense of community amongst members:

> "Use it [the CGN] as a source of community or for producing a sense of community, sense of mutual support, sense of belonging, a sense of identity, a sense of place, a sense of pride...a source of sustenance...a source of friendships, a source of interactions and events and creativity, ya' know, and history, ya' know, it creates history, creates culture, ya' know, new possibilities."

The Stories

Although community gardening has a history in the region that spans this century, with few exceptions, the present day gardens are not direct ancestors of these gardens; rather, most of the present day gardens were initiated in the 1990's. When participants shared with me why they had created their gardens I discovered many different motives. For example, Sue Gallagher desired to integrate profit sharing and a therapeutic experience in market community gardening for the self advocates with whom she worked. Cyndi wanted to teach children about horticulture, and Shirley felt it was important to provide a group of apartment dwellers, who had no space to garden, with that much-needed space. However, underneath these different individual motives I discerned a very important common motive. Through local community gardens, participants saw the potential for social, environmental, and economic benefits, suggesting an important future role for community gardens in the creation of sustainable communities.

Sustainable Communities: A Truly Ecological Perspective

Cultivating community. Participants appreciated the social aspects and benefits of community gardens, and primarily recognised the importance of community gardens in building a sense of community amongst participants; this "sense of community" emerged as a strong theme across several participants' stories.[xxiii] Some participants shared with me their thoughts about how community gardens could build a sense of community. Cyndi, who was trying to organise a community garden at her local community centre, felt that community gardens should be created where the people are. In this way, they could contribute to an increased sense of community. In her words:

"I think all the way around it just helps to create better community, because it gets people out, it's at the community centre where you want people to congregate....it's for the kids, you know, to actually get them to plant a seed and see it grow....and get them to nurture it and learn something....they don't know what it's like to nurture something and *reap* the benefits of it...."

Corey had similar notions about the importance of creating gardens in locations where people "naturally" gather. And Corey recognised a future role for community gardens to play in creating sustainable communities. From her perspective:

"[Community gardening is] also about creating more dense communities....people having connections close to where they live and where they work and where they play and where they meet their friends....just keeping people closer together....and enabling people to connect with nature, especially in the city....I'm talking about creating sustainable communities."

Elba too saw community gardens as having much potential to build community. From her perspective, local neighbourhood gardens involving local people had a greater chance of leading to other community initiatives. She touched on how she thought these additional initiatives could be realised:

"[Community gardens] provide the opportunity to know another [person]....to break isolation and also to improve the community relationships....working together you can know another....you start talking with them, you discover that you have something in common with them, you make friends....we [the Food Bank] see the community garden as a way to build community, because you can

discover with the people [the] many skills some people have, and depending [on] how the people get organised it can benefit the residents of the community..."

Gary, in his use of natural metaphors, perhaps most eloquently described the importance of community gardens for building community when he said:

"I really see them [community gardens]....as a source of relationship, friendship, it just seems that people are all...just doing their own thing....it's very chaotic [and it's] hard to form constructive relationships, *symbioses*....I feel the need for a community really, I feel a sense of lack of community, a sense of lack of mutual support and a sense of *rootlessness*, I guess what I'm trying to say is there needs to be a way to give people connection to and continuity with a place....a sense of meaning, purpose and fulfilment....all that kind of stuff can happen [in a community garden]..."

Other participants actually described their experience of this elusive concept in their individual gardens. Shirley described how everyone in the garden had gotten to know one another so well and how some newcomers to the church had been given another means to get to know their fellow parishioners:

"...the most interesting thing was we got to know each other so well and it was a community experience. I think that was one of the good things that came out of the garden....a couple of newcomers to the church....came out to help and now are very actively involved in the church and in the garden..."

At the Queen's Greens garden, the local neighbourhood came together to design the garden and supply needed materials. Greg was amazed at how the garden had brought together not only the participants, but also other community members as well:

"It's really amazing, Jan, what's happening in terms of community mobilisation....all the people who are living on the four streets around us....there are people from all four of those streets....involved in the garden....we couldn't hope to get more people involved....a number of them will be participants [and] a number of them are just supporters....everybody knows somebody else who has....some wood we can use or some extra plants, or somebody has design skills, and somebody else is a carpenter and has a woodshop just down the road."

Sue Hilderly, the creator of the Woolwich Community Garden, believed that community gardens were a medium to facilitate a relationship building and community building process among people. During our interview, she described her pleasure at how a core group of gardeners had remained together over the years since the garden's inception. Sue integrated the use of a beautiful natural metaphor to describe the development of these friendships in the garden. Sue believed the garden was able to *cultivate* long-term friendships as it gave people, who may not otherwise interact, the chance to really get to know one another. For this reason, Sue conceived of community gardens as unique and special settings for building community. She explained:

"My reason for working is that I want to build community around people and that's exactly what happens in the garden; its kind of like you're *cultivating* the garden but you're also *cultivating* friendships and some of the most interesting people interact....that's been a real positive thing for me, is seeing the relationships *growing*....I've seen the relationships develop in the garden over four years, and there has been some different people in it each year, but there is a core group of about probably nine families that keep coming back....you don't

have to be able to speak English well to garden well....it's intergenerational....in our garden there's children, there's teenagers, there's young people in their twenties....there are older more mature and wiser people who can help, so there's a lot of intergenerational stuff going on....that [intergenerational exchange] doesn't happen in a lot of other places where activities go on."

Connecting with nature. In addition to appreciating the social aspects and benefits of community gardens and their potential to contribute to a sense of community, participants also appreciated the environmental aspects and benefits of community gardens, primarily their potential to connect urban dwellers to nature. Although not as strong as the community building theme, this "connection" emerged as a strong theme across the stories of several participants.

While sharing their thoughts about the potential of community gardens for building a sense of community, Cyndi, Gary, and Corey also each described the important role they saw for community gardens to play in connecting people with nature. Cyndi talked about how important she believed it was for children to learn how to nurture, how to "plant a seed and see it grow." Through community gardens, Corey highlighted the importance of people not only building connections with others, but also with nature. For Corey, these connections formed the foundation for the creation of sustainable communities. Corey described her own personal experience watching seeds grow as an "awe-inspiring" experience:

"You have this seed and you put it in the ground and you guide it a little bit but it grows, and it's life and it's amazing. Community gardens are awe-inspiring. I

find it amazing to watch things grow. I feel connected to nature and the larger processes of life and death."

Gary talked about how participation in a community garden could contribute to one's sense of *rootedness* or one's sense of connection to a place. And Gary described how he had developed a caring connection with the plants in his garden:

"When I first took gardening seriously I guess...ya' know, when I planted these seeds and had them coming up and stuff and how they were all growing successfully, ya' know, and these are all little life forms...and they're all dependent on me to water them, and...weed them and everything and wow, ya' know, it just causes you to start talking to them and really caring for them...really getting connected with them."

Shirley believed that for many urban people, such opportunities to connect with nature in the city were unavailable. She explained:

"I think a lot of people are interested in getting back, getting their hands in the soil and making things grow, watching something grow, something living. And when you are living in a high rise apartment or an institutional place like the shelter [Mary's Place], and there isn't the opportunity [to connect with nature], I think that people really appreciate that chance to come and work in a garden [and] grow their own vegetables and flowers or whatever."

In a similar vein, Sue Gallagher believed that the self-advocates with whom she worked experienced limited opportunity to connect with nature. Project G.R.O.W., a horticultural program for self-advocates, was created, in part, to address the absence of these opportunities:

"Many people would say, 'I want to work.' That would be one thing. Other people would like to be out in the country, they'd remembered fishing or picnics and things when they were children. They were in the city, and there was no way of getting out I guess, relying on public transit. So I felt people were missing some interesting parts of life....other regions and areas in Ontario had opportunities for people in a rural area which connected them with nature, with plants and animals."

Two participants touched on permaculture [xxiv] ideas in discussing the implications of community gardens. Each believed that settings like community gardens, which allow us to interact with and impact both our social and environmental wellbeing in positive ways, had an important role to play in the creation of more sustainable city living. For example, Greg's involvement in local community gardening activity was influenced by his interest in permaculture. Although he felt permaculture presented an "inspirational philosophy" for living, he believed it was short on ideas for practice in an urban setting. He described the philosophy:

"...permaculture embodies a whole bunch of beliefs that are *rooted* in the idea of sustainability....and that's I think, a really neat philosophy 'cause its taking the principles of how nature works and using that as a model for human living, of organising our activities, our institutions or whatever based on the relationships that we see in nature and that are working [read systems without pollution or waste]...things like, ya' know, diversity, co-operation..."

Greg's interest in permaculture led him to start thinking about what citizens could do locally to produce food. To Greg, community gardens seemed very practical and

perhaps even demonstrated an application of permaculture principles in an urban setting, a living example that could become part of a movement towards more sustainable city living:

> "...there really is that whole environmental kind of a thing behind community gardening....who knows, maybe community gardens are a real part of pushing, ya' know, the envelope of what we think is acceptable in terms of the aesthetics of the city."

Gary had also developed an interest in permaculture, and described those who practised its principles as individuals who thought in an "ecological way." For Gary, the community garden was a place where permaculture principles could be practised, and where questions about our relationship with nature could be explored:

> "I suppose it's correct, ya' know, feels correct anyway. Feels more correct than taking genes and splicing them and manipulating them and everything, creating something that nature didn't create....you really get into the whole ethical question about what it's appropriate for humans to do to nature and to ourselves."

For Sue Gallagher and the advisory committee of the G.R.O.W. project, the garden led them to want to learn more about environmentally respectful principles. As a long-term project vision, they planned to build a solar greenhouse to supply the plants necessary for their business. Sue explained:

> "We have a committee of people and they're people from the community and members of A.I.M. and members of G.R.O.W., so there's a mix of people on this committee with different ideas and [it] seems like everyone's very idealistic, including myself, about what we want to do. And one of the things we wanted to

do is educate ourselves about environmentally respectful principles and so our dream, one of our dreams, is to do a state-of-the-art solar greenhouse so that it is showing what is possible."

And at her local community centre, Cyndi promoted the community garden she wished to create as part of an "environmental night," along with a clean up and tree planting in a local park.

In summary, I believe that for many of us the community garden was a way to make changes in our personal lives consistent with our visions of building sustainable communities. For example, Sara and Greg are each committed to and active members of Waterloo's only organic food co-operative, The Ebytown Food Co-operative. I know that Cyndi and her husband are enthusiastic supporters of community shared agriculture, and are also exploring alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power. I also discovered that Greg, Sue Gallagher, and I shared vegetarianism in common. I was interested to learn that Greg attributed his initial interest in food issues to his upbringing as a vegetarian, and during our interview, Sue Gallagher and I talked about the positive environmental aspects of our food choices as vegetarians.

Creating economic opportunities. In addition to appreciating the social and environmental aspects and benefits of community gardens, some participants also believed that community gardens presented important opportunities for local economic development. A few participants described their current involvement in such initiatives while others shared their visions of an alternative urban economy.

For example, Elba described the Food Bank's involvement in a community economic development initiative called Community Food Enterprises of Waterloo

Region. As part of the initiative, existing food bank programs, like the collective kitchen and community garden programs, could be transformed into economic development programs.

Another participant, Sue Gallagher, described her involvement in a market garden project for self-advocates. Project G.R.O.W. could provide a working model of how community gardens could be transformed into small business enterprises. From my perspective, Project G.R.O.W. is a consumer business in the making.

Sara, Corey, and Gary shared their ideas about how community gardens could create employment opportunities. Sara believed that a strong local community gardening movement could be a vehicle for job creation for many people who are involved and that the CGN could play a major role in this area:

> "The community gardening movement is really *blossoming* in Ontario, so this network is going to stay...we can create jobs for ourselves, the network can play a big, really big role in that, sort of the guidance for the movement...we [the CGN] could be a sponsoring agency for conferences...just being [a] resource for people who want to learn more about the movement."

Corey envisioned long-term spin off industries, "green industries," created by a strong local community gardening movement. In addition, Corey believed that community gardens could be part of larger changes at the community level towards more sustainable living. For Corey, community gardens presented a step in the direction towards creating more sustainable urban communities:

> "Community gardening is not just about the food growing....I guess it means different things to different people....I see community gardens as part of an

alternative vision for society....I sort of envision, I don't know [in] 20, 30 years, every little neighbourhood, whether that be a few blocks or whatever, having a garden, having a community composting centre, having locally based sewage treatment, having a little market....I think every little step is going to get us closer."

Corey felt that the CGN could be an important forum for community gardeners to start making the connections between their activities and larger issues such as those mentioned above:

"One of the things I see it [the CGN] becoming [is] something that can link together some of these different issues, issues about local economy, issues about green space, issues about health...somehow tying those things together and then showing how community gardening has a role to play in that, in that bigger picture. I think then that part of the role of the network could be the education, sort of grappling with those issues first and trying to get a sense of it and then sharing that with...the public generally, with government, business...it [the CGN] needs to make the broader links..."

Gary too imagined what a more localised green economy might look like in the future:

"What if we were to replace the shopping mall with a big community garden? Ya' know? With a little market area, farmers market area kind of thing. And, ya' know, give people the loans to start these little micro-enterprises, having neighbourhoods where, ya' know, they all sort of, are part of enterprises...producing things with herbs and with materials grown from there,

fibres and, ya' know, even wood. I've been reading about community forests and things like that, urban forestry...just anything you need, grow it, right?...with gardening all of that can happen..."

And Gary believed that community gardens and the CGN could be a part of bringing about such healthy, sustainable communities:

"...getting a sense that the world is getting greener and healthier and people are becoming more self-reliant and less dependent and less vulnerable...hopefully that translates into our built environment and our social environment...it [community gardening] goes from a small microcosm out to the macrocosm...community gardens and the garden network, ya' know, can be part of...bringing about healthy communities, sustainable communities..."

Consciousness raising and the development of political awareness. Many CGN participants have raised their consciousness, particularly around food issues and related implications for creating sustainable communities. For some, involvement in a community garden had perhaps initiated some of that consciousness raising. I know this was the case for Corey and me. We went through a parallel process in many ways as we came to explore food issues, which were novel to both of us. Through what she called "blind faith," Corey was drawn to the Food Bank's community development program and chose to become a volunteer in the community gardening program. It was in the Food Bank's garden that Corey and I met, and as our lives converged, so did the development of our interest in, and knowledge of, food issues. Corey described the raising of her/our consciousness:

"....while getting involved in the [Food Bank] community garden...and then thinking about our [at the time we were still trying to access a site in uptown Waterloo] garden I started to learn more about food and the food system. And just in reading, and the things [Organic Farming Conference, Global Teach-In: Challenging Corporate Rule] we've been going to, and joining Ebytown [a local organic food co-operative]....I don't think I would ever have joined had I not been involved in the community garden. It just sort of was a way for me to see the bigger picture, it was sort of the starting point for me to learn more and to see those connections....I think that's what people have to be able to see somehow....that there are alternatives."

Other participants already seemed to have an awareness of the political implications of their activities. Some participants explicitly talked about community gardening and related issues in a political context. For Sue Gallagher, the very act of growing part of one's own food supply was a political act. And for Greg community gardening raised contentious land use issues for the city.

In 1996, Greg attended the ACGA's annual conference in Montreal, the first time it was held in Canada. Greg was excited that community gardens were being talked about as a means to achieve political ends:

"I was amazed at how politicised people were at that event...It seemed pretty natural for people to be able to talk about issues, ya' know, food issues, and housing issues, and, ya' know, land issues, through community gardens....there was a lot of political voices that were coming out of it..."

Many participants shared with me that they had initially become involved in community gardening because of an interest in related political issues. And a few participants explicitly identified themselves as social activists or social critics. For example, Shirley is very active in her church, and the Forest Hill United Church community garden was actually born out of her active involvement in her church community. In 1996, the moderator of the United Church appealed to all congregations to form committees to create action plans to ameliorate some of the hardship facing those affected by the social assistance cutbacks implemented by the conservative government. In the spring of 1996, Shirley and a small number of other parish members began meeting, and later that season the community garden was created. Shirley described her motivation in this way:

> "...at heart I'm sort of a social activist. I come from a family with Christian values, and I think those values have sort of manifested themselves in concern for other people, and concerns for the poor and the underdog. And so when there seems to be a need I get involved. And that's why the garden has a lot of meaning for me. Because of my Christian background and my value system."

Sue Gallagher, the co-ordinator of Project G.R.O.W., described herself as a social critic:

> "I guess I still tend to be a social critic and I always will be....I do tend to observe and be critical about what goes on in our world, so this way [by creating the self-advocates market garden], I'm taking something [and] I'm positively acting on it instead of being critical of what is [and failing to act]."

In community gardens, Shirley saw the beginnings of an alternative to food banks as well as to the notion of food charity. During our interview, Shirley shared some of her knowledge about the connection between food banks and the collapse of our social safety net and she emphasised that in European countries with adequate levels of social assistance, food banks have been non-existent. For Shirley, community gardens signalled the beginning of alternatives and a small step toward ending what she called "food dependency":

> "I think that's what makes me feel good is that people can grow part of their own food supply and that helps, that's an alternative to food banks....I really think that having community gardens is important here in Canada as an alternative to lessening the demand on food banks...there's a lot of opportunity to become a better nation, you know, to get ourselves out of this food dependency, on food banks, if we can just keep working at it...if we can't get through, you know, bureaucracy and agri-business then we're going to have to circumvent them."

During interviews with participants it became clear to me that others, like I, had developed a critical analysis of the notion of food charity and the inability of food charity organisations to create lasting solutions to poverty and food insecurity. It was interesting to be able to get a perspective on how our local food bank, involved as they are in community gardening efforts, perceived of their work. During our interview Elba explained:

> "We as a food bank, we are not able to make...solutions...we provide food as an emergency alternative, but we cannot provide them [food bank users] with a

lasting solution to poverty, because the causes are more profound...we know that just doing community garden[ing] people won't be out of poverty..."

"The gardener who labours with a social conscience, then, may fall into the assumption that real political activism is defined by the hard edge of protest, usually with an urban cast. Until recently, very few city activists have seen gardening and social protest as mutually supportive activities. Most view small-scale food production -- the well wrought plot in the landscaped backyard -- as a pastime for the privileged few. A growing number of people, however, are beginning to regard urban agriculture as a small but potent step toward social change....Gardens do have a part to play in a broad agenda for social change....growing food can give us a taste of independence from the multinationals and the inhumane regimes that are the source of much of our imported food. Without this basic knowledge and awareness, protest alone will never reconstruct the world. This is why gardening is not only political but subversive: nothing works like people who quietly assert their power to reclaim their humanness, beginning with understanding how to feed themselves well..." (Giangrande, 1987; as cited in von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996, p. 170-171).

Interpretation of Findings

My interpretation of the findings is linked to my evolving research question, my theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and my own personal location in the research context. As such, as I present my interpretative explanation of the data, I integrate personal reflections and insights as well as learnings from the research and methodological literatures.

The amount of research literature regarding community gardening is limited. While a few researchers have surveyed community gardeners (Quayle, 1986; Waliczek, Mattson & Zajicek, 1996), more often researchers have collected their data through observations and interviews (Ashiabi, 1995; Blair, Giesecke & Sherman, 1991; Clark & Manzo, 1988; Crouch, 1992; de Luca, 1990; as cited in Landman, 1993; Francis, 1987a; Francis, 1987b; Francis, Cashdan & Paxson, 1984; Hynes, 1996; Jamison, 1985; Landman, 1993; McGregory, 1994; Patel, 1991; Schmelzkopf, 1995). In addition to the empirical literature, there is also a much larger body of popular writing regarding community gardening. In magazines, popular journals, and newspaper articles, hundreds of community gardening stories can be found. In combination with my own experiences, this popular work provided me with rich descriptive context within which to regard both the empirical literature, and my own research findings.

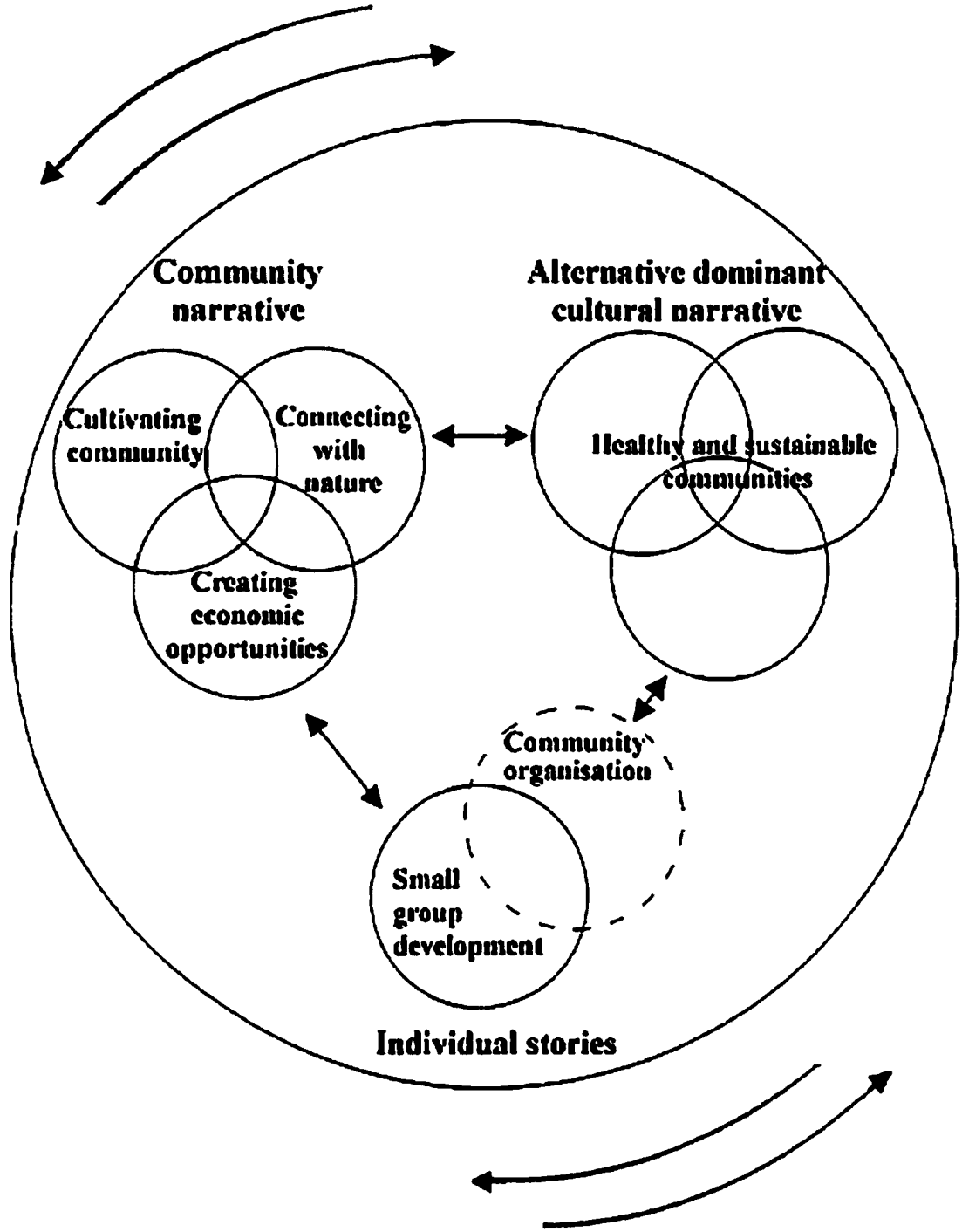
As I mentioned earlier, the very way that I have chosen to organise and analyse my data forms the basis for my interpretation. Using the larger framework of sustainable communities, I viewed the data through a narrative lens and framed participants' stories as part of an evolving community narrative. My interpretation positions community gardening and the work of the CGN in a process of social change directed towards

creating sustainable communities and, as such, provides an example of how stories and narratives can be used to challenge the status quo.

Figure 2 represents an illustration of my interpretation of the data. The sphere of "small group development" symbolises the CGN's present state of development. The arrow moving towards the "community narrative" depicts that, in small group development, individuals are involved in creating a community narrative (i.e., an understanding of their mission, vision, and values). Inside the three intertwined circles of the community narrative are themes from the interviews, such as the importance of cultivating community and connecting with nature, that I believe should become important parts of the CGN's evolving narrative. At broader societal levels, these themes represent the foundation for building healthy and sustainable communities. Together, they serve as an alternative dominant cultural narrative representing the future realisation of societal transformation. The arrow moving from the "community narrative" to the "alternative dominant cultural narrative" suggests that the alternative narrative can provide the group with vision as they work towards societal transformation. The broken line encircling the sphere of "community organisation" represents a social change strategy that CGN members have yet to pursue. Finally, the arrows encircling the outside of the largest sphere are meant to symbolise the dialogical relationship between stories, narratives, and dominant cultural narratives. Although individual stories can contribute to the creation and revision of narratives (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1993; Rappaport, 1995), it is important to remember that established organisations and settings already have community narratives, and that elements of these narratives can exert a powerful influence upon individual stories. In addition, it is also important to

understand that local stories and narratives are created against the "influential backdrop" of dominant cultural narratives operating at the societal level (Rappaport, 1995).

Figure 2. My Interpretation: Placing the CGN in a Social Change Process



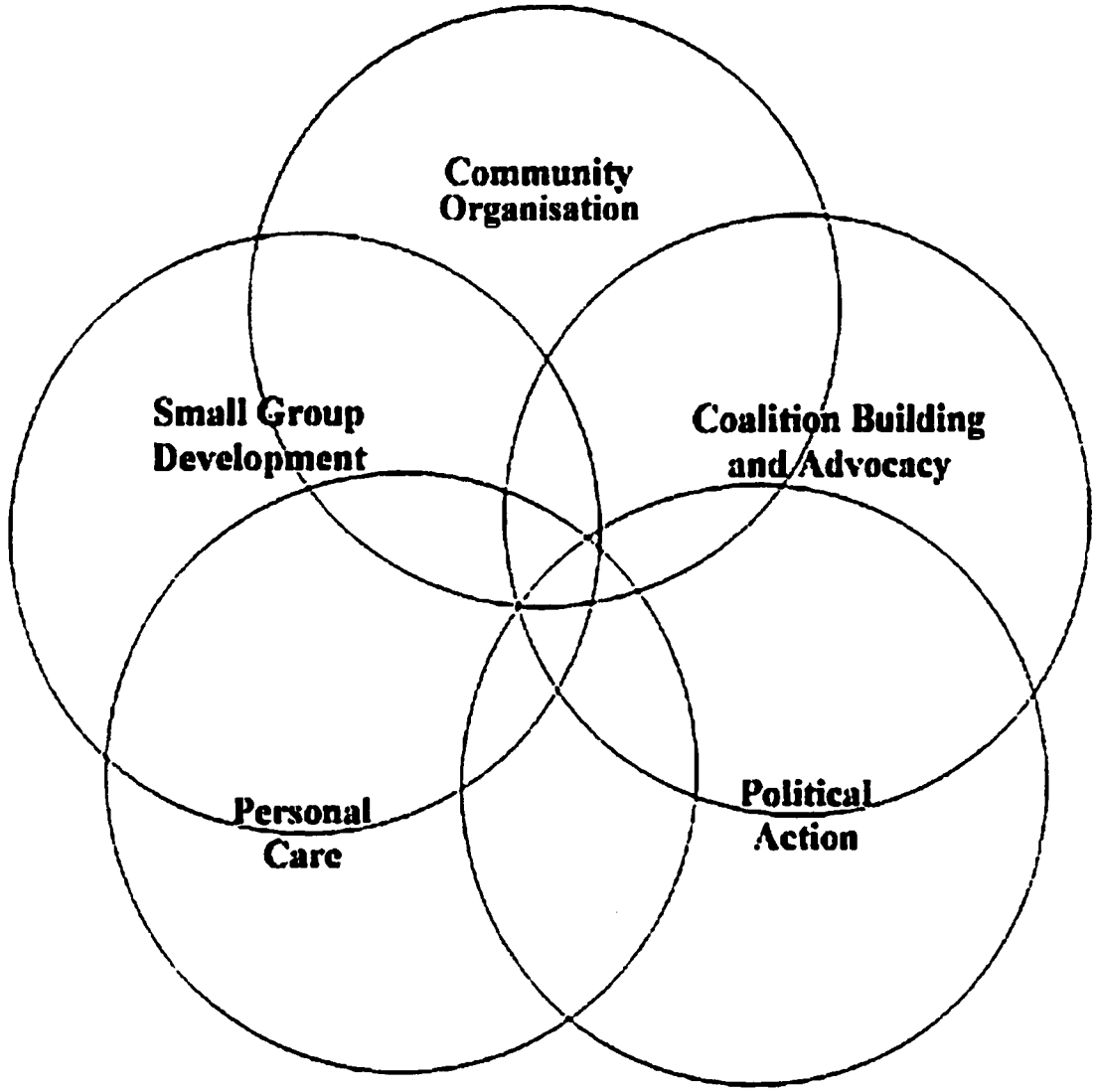
I begin by describing how CGN members' individual stories are converging in the creation of a community narrative.

Small Group Development: Creating A Community Narrative

Labonte (1996) provides a useful model within which to consider the CGN and its present state of development. The Empowerment Holosphere (Figure 3) represents overlapping spheres of social change[xxv] strategies. It is important to note that, although Labonte discusses the strategies from enabling professional and organisational perspectives, I believe they are just as applicable to individuals and small groups or communities of interest. In Figure 3, the overlapping spheres represent the complexity of social change processes and imply that practice should incorporate the entire "spheres" of strategies. From my perspective, the spheres represent the overlap between community development, social planning, and social action strategies. The spheres of "personal care," "small group development," and "community organising" largely correspond to a community development approach, while the spheres of "coalition advocacy" and "political action" largely correspond to social planning and social action approaches, respectively.

I believe one of the spheres, that of "small group development," best characterises the CGN's *present* state of development. As such, my discussion will focus on processes involved in small group development. The interested reader can refer to Labonte for his elaboration on processes involved in other strategic spheres.

Figure 3. A Holosphere of Empowering Strategies



Labonte (1996) describes some small group roles such as those of improving social support, promoting behaviour change, and providing support for lifestyle choices. From a narrative perspective, Rappaport (1995) suggests that such support is essential as it is challenging to create and sustain new personal stories on ones own. He further suggests that individual change can more easily be sustained in the presence of a supportive collective, in part through the experience of a shared story, a community narrative.

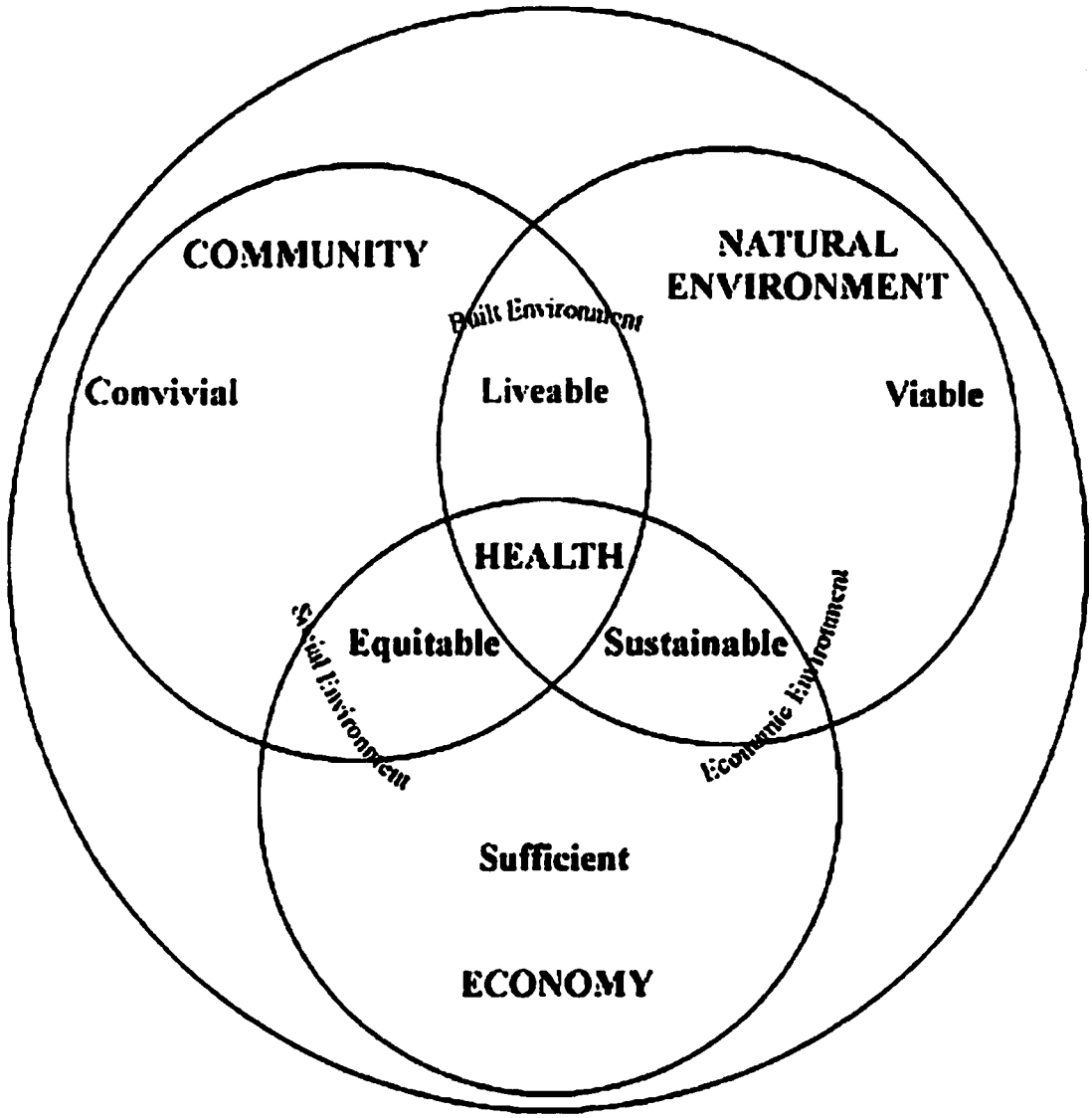
"Need for a supportive community" emerged as the strongest theme when participants shared with me why they had sought out and become involved in the CGN. Each was looking for a supportive community to sustain aspects of their personal narrative. A few participants were explicit in stating their desire to be part of the creation of a community gardening umbrella organisation. However, most participants spoke more generally of their desire to find a supportive community to sustain their work.

Participants noted the "grassroots" nature of the group, the involvement of organisations like the Food Bank, the active participation of students, the strong presence of women, the intergenerational nature of the group, and the consistency of a small core membership, as important positive characteristics of the CGN. I think that, due in part to these group characteristics, participants felt that their involvement in the CGN had provided them with the sense of support and community that they needed to continue with their work. Earlier, Sue Hilderly remarked that the garden provided a forum for community building as it gave people, who may not otherwise interact, the chance to really get to know one another. In the same way, it seems that the CGN, in bringing together a diverse range of individuals, has created a forum for building community at a

small group level. As both Greg and Gary suggested it should, it appears that the CGN *has* become a forum for sharing stories and building community.

Henderson (1993; as cited in Labonte, 1996) reminds us, however, that our greater challenge is to build community at broader societal levels; this is part of the larger vision of creating sustainable communities (Labonte, 1993). Labonte also provides a useful model within which to consider community gardening and its potential social change implications. The model represents the larger conceptual framework of sustainability, a framework within which I have come to understand the importance of community gardening. The Holosphere for Healthy and Sustainable Communities (Figure 4) provides a vision for societal transformation. The overlapping circles represent the interconnectedness and complexity of our social, natural, and economic environments in producing health. According to Labonte, a healthy and sustainable community requires a social community that is convivial,[xxvi] a natural environment that is viable, and an economy that is sufficient. In their interdependence, these contexts contribute to the creation of equitable social environments, sustainable economic environments, and liveable built environments. To work towards the vision, Labonte suggests that our three major health goals should be to create community, to ensure the viability of our environments, and to ensure basic human needs can be met through the sufficiency of our economies.

Figure 4. A Holosphere for Healthy and Sustainable Communities



I believe that community gardens are an important vehicle for realising these goals at a *local* level. In this respect, local community gardening could serve as a powerful metaphor for building community, caring for the environment, and meeting basic human needs at broader societal levels.

Creating Sustainable Communities: A Community Narrative

In my research, participants expressed an appreciation for the environmental aspects and benefits of community gardens, primarily their importance in reconnecting urban dwellers to nature. In addition, participants suggested that community gardens presented important opportunities for local economic development. These themes emerged as important aspects of the community gardening experience across several participants' stories. However, participants *primarily* recognised the importance of community gardens in building a sense of community. And while some shared with me their thoughts about how community gardens *could* build a sense of community, others described their *experience* of this elusive concept in their individual gardens and surrounding neighbourhoods. In addition, participants' expressed that their primary motivation for becoming involved in the CGN was their need for a supportive community to sustain their work. From my perspective, community building emerged as the most important aspect of the local community gardening experience.

Among the small body of empirical work described earlier, a few researchers have engaged in extensive participant observation, conducting in-depth interviews with their participants. And consistent with my research findings, one strong theme throughout this selected body of work is that community gardens are important settings

for building community (Ashiabi, 1995; Crouch, 1992; de Luca, 1990: as cited in Landman, 1993; Hynes, 1996; Landman, 1993).

My review of this literature begins at home in the community psychology literature. A former student in my community psychology program, Godwin Ashiabi (1995), framed his thesis project around his experiences as an apprentice in a community market garden in Goderich, Ontario. The Huron Community Garden operated as a community shared agriculture project (CSA). In such projects local people purchase a share in a food growing operation which entitles them to receive a regular supply of produce (usually organically grown) throughout the growing season. As a participant-observer, Godwin was able to gather extensive observational data as well as interview both the organisers of the project and several of the shareholders. He was interested to gain insight into how shareholders experienced their involvement in the CSA. Among his main findings, participants felt that they had experienced an increased sense of community through their participation.

Other researchers, like Patricia Hynes (1996), Ruth Landman (1993), David Crouch (1992), and Maria de Luca (1990; as cited in Landman, 1993), have drawn similar conclusions. Patricia Hynes (1996) shared the inspiring stories of community garden projects located in four large American cities. From her perspective, a central aspect of the modern American community gardening movement is rebuilding neighbourhood community. Across the stories she documented, those involved spoke of the sense of neighbourhood and community that was experienced in their gardens.

Ruth Landman (1993) interviewed members of several co-operative settings in Washington, D.C., among them several community garden projects. Across settings she

found that the members shared a longing for community and that building a sense of community was primary to the gardens. Three quarters of the gardeners she interviewed expressed the belief that community gardening builds a sense of community.

David Crouch (1992) is considered an authority on the history of allotment gardening in Great Britain and in the late 1980's he interviewed gardeners from across Great Britain. Based on his interviews and observations he contends that the sense of community felt by gardeners, what he terms "a shared sense of identity," is a central aspect of the community gardening experience.

In her prize-winning film, aptly titled "Green Streets," independent filmmaker Maria de Luca (1990; as cited in Landman, 1993) took her camera to the streets of New York City. Moving from gardens located in some of the poorest to some of the most affluent neighbourhoods in the city, she documented the vibrant and diverse community garden culture of the city. She interviewed gardeners from over 30 community gardens; they repeatedly spoke of how their gardens had created a sense of community both amongst participants as well as in the larger community.

Finally, in the anecdotal literature, community building emerged as an important concept, experienced and understood by community gardeners. For example, in a community garden CSA project for homeless men and women in northern California, participants spoke of how it was through the garden that they experienced a sense of belonging to the community (Heffron, 1995). Across countless other anecdotal sources, community building was highlighted as an important aspect of the community gardening experience (Brule, 1986; Fulford, 1998; Garnett, 1996a; Garnett, 1996b; Guberman,

1995; Lewis, 1979; Mancini, 1996; Meares, 1997; Meikle, 1996; Paxton, 1997; Taylor, 1996; Thompson, 1993).

I believe community building is perhaps the most important aspect of community gardening because, in theory at least, the experience of a sense of community is thought to foster increased community participation around local issues (Chavis & Wandersman, 1984; as cited in Clark & Manzo, 1988). One of the participants in the Huron Community Garden expressed the viewpoint that through the garden a familiarity amongst members was developed that enabled them to discuss and act upon social issues deemed important by the group as a whole (Ashiabi, 1995). This is also a viewpoint often expressed in the anecdotal literature; and many claim that the sense of community developed in community gardens leads members to become involved in collective action on other social issues (Cosgrove, 1998; Francis & Hester, 1990; Garnett, 1996b; Sommers, 1984).

Additional research also suggests that community gardens are important forums for consciousness-raising, an important part of the community development process (Marti-Costa & Serrano-Garcia, 1987). In a comprehensive study of community open space projects in New York City, many of them community gardens, researchers concluded that the political awareness, developed through the projects, provided participants with an incentive to organise around local issues such as housing (Francis et al., 1984). And further research suggests that those involved in community gardens are more likely to become involved in other community food projects, neighbourhood beautification projects, and social events (Blair et al., 1991). There is anecdotal evidence as well that through involvement in various community food projects citizens become

aware of local issues and, as a result, other social and environmental community projects usually develop (Tietz, 1993; Whitfield, 1987).

I know that involvement in community gardening initiated a consciousness raising process for Corey and me. Our experiences in community gardening led each of us to explore our food system in more depth and, as a result, we became more informed about the corporate domination of the Canadian food system. Both because of its contribution to and support of the notion of food charity, we came to regard our current food system as socially unjust. In addition, as we learned about the environmental costs associated with the production and distribution of food, we also came to consider our food system as environmentally unjust. However, we also became increasingly aware of important alternative foods such as those grown organically and important alternative food sources, such as community gardens, community supported agriculture projects, and local food co-operatives. I think it is true, as Carole Giangrande (1987; as cited in von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996) claims, that "Without this basic knowledge and awareness, protest alone will never reconstruct the world" (p. 170).

However, in the comprehensive study mentioned above, the researchers also found that across projects, few participants perceived their activities as political or as having political implications (Francis et al., 1984), and other researchers have come to similar conclusions (Clark & Manzo, 1988). In contrast to these findings, participants in other studies have expressed the belief that their activities are political (Ashiabi, 1995; Hynes, 1996; Jamison, 1985) and the perspectives of community gardeners in Waterloo Region add another layer of political voices to the dialogue.

A few participants, like Corey, Gary, and Greg, explicitly talked about community gardening in the context of the creation of sustainable communities. In addition Greg, along with other participants like Shirley and Sue Gallagher, explicitly talked about community gardening as a political activity. This conscious awareness of the political implications of community gardening and of the larger framework of sustainable communities suggests that many participants have placed their community gardening work in a process of social change.

Such a holistic appreciation for the benefits of community gardening has important and profound implications for the future development of local community gardening. Community gardens could become important alternative settings for community development, particularly related to creating sustainable communities. As CGN members move to become more involved in community organising activities, the long-term vision of creating sustainable communities could serve to guide their efforts. Such a vision of a better world is an essential component of community organising practice (Biklen, 1983). Although formal discussions of mission, vision, and values remain future tasks for the CGN, it is clear, at least at an informal level, that members desire to become some kind of community gardening umbrella organisation and engage in both technical and political work. I believe the foundation exists for members to begin this task, eventually moving the group from organisational development to spheres of community organisation, coalition building and advocacy, and political action (Labonte, 1996).

Although individual stories can contribute to the creation and revision of narratives (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1993; Rappaport, 1995), it is

important to remember that established organisations and settings already have community narratives, and that elements of these narratives can exert a powerful influence upon individual stories. In addition, it is also important to understand that local stories and narratives are created against the "influential backdrop" of dominant cultural narratives operating at the societal level (Rappaport, 1995). It is in this way that stories and narratives can serve to maintain the status quo.

It has been argued that community gardening has largely served this function. In a critical historical analysis of community gardening in the United States, Thomas Bassett (1981) argues that community gardening served as a "supportive institution" during critical periods of American history. He asserts that the activity served to reinforce traditional values and, as such, primarily served an ameliorative function, helping people adjust to living under stressful conditions during periods of social and economic crisis.

In addition, Michael Jamison (1985) suggests that the modern community gardening movement in the United States has been co-opted by the institutionalisation of community gardening. Jamison (1985) asserts that during the 1970's the movement consisted of several hundred local groups and non-profit organisations operating at local, state, and national levels. He claims that these "movement organisations" were often collectivist in structure, defined community gardening as a collective activity, viewed gardens as alternative settings, and considered gardeners to be members of the collective and participants in a social movement. Jamison (1985) reports that other organisations, mostly public agencies, also supported the movement by providing resources to movement organisations and by establishing and administering their own gardening

programs. In contrast to the organisational structure and culture of the movement organisations, Jamison (1985) claims that these organisations were usually bureaucratic, defined community gardening as a self-help activity, viewed gardens as recreational facilities, and participants as project clients. From Jamison's perspective (1985), the American experience provides a lesson demonstrating the challenge of attempting to create alternative settings while remaining dependent upon dominant ones.

During our community presentation to the CGN, one member called this challenge a "dance" and expressed the viewpoint that members of the CGN were going to have to make some decisions regarding organising for the groups needs and resources. Some of my research findings highlight possible future issues facing CGN members in this regard.

Community Organising vs. Professionalism and Charity[xxvii]

The "negative instances" (Patton, 1990) in my research findings can serve as illustration of small group development issues, and more importantly, for those with a long term vision of creating sustainable communities, as issues to be confronted at broader societal levels.

Earlier I discussed CGN members' motivations for becoming involved in the network and I noted that the Food Bank's motivations differed from those of other participants. In contrast to the motives of the majority of those involved in the CGN, the Food Bank became involved with the CGN primarily to *lend* organisational support to other groups interested in starting community gardens. One participant noted this aspect of the Food Bank's involvement as an important and positive characteristic of the group. However, a few participants were frustrated by some of the group dynamics they

experienced. Specifically, a few members, myself included, were uncomfortable with what was perceived to be an organisational dynamic on behalf of the Food Bank to claim ownership, both of the creation of individual community gardens and of the grassroots community initiative that has created the CGN.

I perceive these tensions as stemming from two sources. The first source involves the concept of professionalism. I believe that most members conceive of the CGN as an evolving group and of themselves as participants in the creation of the group. In contrast, the Food Bank, through its community narrative, has at times been presented/or presented itself as the creator and organiser both of certain individual community gardens and of the CGN. The Food Bank desires to assume a community-organising role; their community development program, which includes the promotion of community food projects like community gardens, forms the foundation of their effort to do so. After an inaccurate newspaper article regarding the Food Bank and their role in organising local community gardens, Corey wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. In her article, she expressed her belief that this kind of human service professionalism was serving to stifle community leadership in, and ownership of, grassroots community garden projects (Helm, 1998b).

The second source involves the concept of charity. I think that more tension stems from some members being uncomfortable with the type of organisation the Food Bank is. Irrespective of their community development initiatives and their involvement in community gardens, food banks are food charity organisations. They are recognised as such by some members of the CGN and undoubtedly by the community at large. The

community narrative of the organisation is embedded in, and supports, a dominant cultural narrative supportive of the notion of food as charity.

Members of Toronto's Food Policy Council (1994b) claim that although caring individuals and organisations both drive and support the food charity system, the system itself does not possess the capacity to address systemic issues. In contrast, they suggest that food banks have only served to contribute to the continued existence of the charity system. For these reasons I do not believe the Food Bank can assume a central role in local community organising. Even if the local food banks change their practices in attempts to better serve the community, they are at best reforms and do not represent instances of social intervention.

At the small group level, CGN members are in the process of creating a community narrative and this is the hard work of small group development. Because the group is composed not only of individuals but also of organisational representatives, in addition to individual stories there are established community narratives being shared within the group. It is to be expected that individual stories and narratives will both resonate and come into conflict with one another as the group develops. Although organisational development issues were not the theoretical focus of my thesis work, I undoubtedly desired to help facilitate an empowering group process in my practical work with the CGN. The meaning of community gardening for each individual should shape how the group both defines community gardening and the messages the group gives to the larger community about what community gardening is and why it is important. I think that the community narratives of some established organisations were, at times, dominant in our group discussions, making it difficult for individual stories to be heard.

Consciousness about the power differentials between members of the CGN may increase the potential of the network to become a more empowering setting where members are active participants in the "discovery, creation, and enhancement" of their own personal stories and community narratives (Rappaport, 1995, p. 805).

To bring this section of my interpretation to a close, I do believe there is a *present* role for local food banks in community gardening activities. However, their organisational community narrative represents one perspective among many other community narratives and individual stories. The individual stories of community gardeners, and the community narratives of other organisations[xxviii], need to be heard. However, in our current political climate, the dominant cultural narrative of charity tends to dominate and this is expressed at the local level through food charity organisations.

For those of us trying to promote the community garden as a medium for social intervention, our stories and narratives must communicate this potential. For this reason, I do not believe there is a *future* role for food banks in a sustainable community. Further, I believe that community gardening and its association with the notion of food charity may serve to hinder future development of community gardening and related social change goals. Community organising often involves conflict (Labonte, 1996; McKnight & Kretzmann, 1995; Reinharz, 1984; Wandersman, 1984), and Labonte (1996) claims that an integral aspect of community organising involves raising such conflict to the conscious level. My purpose in presenting these tensions was to raise consciousness about systemic issues. From a community psychology perspective, these are the issues most relevant to the future development of community gardening and its potential as a vehicle for social change.

As CGN members become more involved in community organising, I believe consciousness about strategies may also assist in guiding their work. Jack Rothman and John Tropman (1987) in their useful overview of community organisation strategies suggest that practice often involve the "mixing and phasing"[xxix] of community development, social planning, and social action strategies. In the absence of research confirming the superiority of one strategy over another, they further suggest that community organisation practice can only be enhanced by the flexible use of strategies. In the discussion below, I emphasise the community development potential of community gardens. However, consistent with Rothman and Tropman, I acknowledge that future efforts of CGN members may involve the "mixing and phasing" of strategies. For this reason, and so as not to distract the reader from the present discussion, in Appendix 6, I reproduce Rothman and Tropman's overview.

Citizen Participation in Community Development

The involvement of citizens in present day community gardening efforts can best be described as grassroots citizen participation (Wandersman, 1984). In the United States, the birth of community gardening organisations can be attributed to the active participation of citizens working together in community groups to revitalise their neighbourhoods and communities. There is a growing interest in using community gardens as a tool for community development and a related dialogue is beginning to emerge across both the empirical (Hynes, 1996; Jamison, 1985; Patel, 1992) and anecdotal literature (Cosgrove, 1998; Garnett, 1996a; Garnett, 1996b; Knack-Eckdish, 1994; Lewis, 1979; Paxton, 1997; Whitfield, 1987).

McKnight and Kretzmann (1995) contend that given the realities of our communities today, many of Saul Alinsky's classic community organising assumptions and strategies need critical revision. They describe declining rates of participation in three of the four organisational building blocks Alinsky theorised to be crucial to effective community organising (churches, political organisations, labour unions, and ethnic groups). In addition, they contend that in our "global economy" it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify the visible, local, and capable decision-making bodies that Alinsky targeted for confrontation. For these reasons, they conclude that traditional community organising strategies are nonsensical. They insist that new strategies must rest on a community organising process that has as its focus the creation of both a sense of community and a community's own capacity, through building local social, political, and economic structures that create forums for citizens to make decisions and engage in action.

Earlier I discussed how a profound shift in our social and environmental values could recast urban communities as centres of production as well as consumption (Hough, 1995). From a community organising perspective, McKnight and Kretzmann (1995) suggest that such a shift in values should also be accompanied by a parallel shift in strategy focused on confrontation over production and the resources necessary for local production.

What McKnight and Kretzmann are describing above overlaps significantly with community economic development, a long-term strategy that Bennett and Campbell (1996, p. 5) describe as a means for "...local communities to mobilise their resources to sustain and to enhance their economic and social well-being and achieve political

efficacy." Michael Swack and Donald Mason (1987) claim that community economic development often involves novel approaches to land ownership and capital acquisition. In this respect, they suggest that community land trusts, and loan funds become important tools for citizens to gain control over important community resources such as land. In addition, Bennett and Campbell (1996) claim that the development of such "mediating structures" not only serve to assist citizens with the challenges of local economic development, but can also serve as a "resource base" and "support setting" for social interventionists.

Community gardeners in the United States have begun to use community economic development strategies in efforts to preserve established community gardens (Guberman, 1995). As I mentioned earlier, Philadelphia Green and the Penn State Urban Gardening Program (USDA) founded a city-wide urban land trust in an effort to preserve community gardens in Philadelphia (Hynes, 1996). I found no literature documenting the use of these strategies in Canadian community gardening efforts. However, Kitchener's Working Centre promotes the use of such community tools. With respect to community gardening, Mancini (1996) suggests that a community tools approach would involve community land trusts in purchasing land for community gardeners.

Few participants expressed explicit awareness of community economic development strategies. However, some believed that community gardens presented important opportunities for local economic development. A few participants described their current involvement in such initiatives while others shared their visions of an alternative urban economy. I think most importantly, some participants believed that the CGN could play an important future role in this kind of development in Waterloo Region.

Creating sustainable communities is long-term social change work requiring second order change.[xxx] However, such systemic change can also involve many within-system changes (Bennett, 1987); and it is in this "within-systems change" context that I understand current local community gardening activity; the activity is a small one but it can nourish a broad outlook (Landman, 1993; Warner, 1987). As I mentioned above, I believe the foundation exists for CGN members to begin moving the group from organisational development issues to community organisation (Labonte, 1996). As the outlook of the CGN shifts to the larger social milieu, community based economic development may be one community organising strategy for members to pursue. From Sarason's (1974) perspective, such citizen participation and community organising to define local needs and control local resources should be regarded as expressions of the profound need for a broader psychological sense of community. McKnight (1995a) reminds us that human service professionals and programs cannot meet this need for a sense of community. And in fact, citizen participation and any promise it holds for community development can be undermined (wittingly or unwittingly) by human services systems (McKnight, 1995a; Wandersman, 1984; Sarason, 1974/1988).

As I prepare to conclude this section of my thesis, I want to return my discussion to the level of local community gardening activity. Local community gardens are hopeful examples. Although they are small settings, they do nourish a broad outlook. In this respect, Bennett and Campbell (1996) contend that such examples are valuable in the process of social change. For those of us who have a vision of a more sustainable future, our role as community psychologists could be to act, guided by that vision, and work with citizens in our communities to effect change. Bennett and Campbell claim that in

the past community psychologists have more often served as consultants, suggesting that today there is a need for more community psychologists to be social interventionists. They further assert that by grounding our work in our communities, and collaborating with citizens as equal participants for social change, we are making the personal political. And so I come full circle. I begin the last section of my thesis with reflection on my personal experience of the political.

Discussion

In this, the final section of my thesis, I begin with personal reflection regarding the value of my thesis experience. I then describe the degree to which I believe my thesis research represents an original contribution to the literature. I conclude with suggestions for fruitful directions with respect to further research and action.

Personal Reflection

In my thesis research I endeavoured to integrate learnings from my classroom and community experiences that resonated with my personal interests, experiences, and values. As a result, over the last three years, a new personal and academic world has revealed itself to me. And as my research process comes to an end, other processes are only just beginning.

I leave the program with an interest in pursuing community economic development as a strategy for meeting basic human needs. Although I am particularly interested in urban food production, the applications are broad. Food production, for instance, could efficiently be integrated with energy production, waste management and other enterprises dealing with life's basic requirements (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1995). In pursuit of these interests, I will be working to contribute not only to the wellbeing of others but also to my own wellbeing. Although previously aware of the feminist-rallying cry "the personal is political," only now do I think I am beginning to understand its profound meaning. Working to build sustainable communities will benefit us all. I also leave the program with a strong set of values, the most salient being the importance of community. Although Sarason (1974) contends that the experience of community is at best a transient one, I am optimistic as I leave the program with a new-found

understanding and appreciation of community research and its importance as a tool for social change. Finally, my thesis represents my first major qualitative research project, and the experience has given me a small taste of what it is like to do community research. As a budding community psychologist and community researcher, it is with anticipation and excitement that I look forward to joining others in the process of creating a sustainable future.

My Contribution

My research documents local community gardening experiences and, as Canadian community gardens have been poorly documented in all previous eras (Quayle, 1989a), serves to preserve important, local community history. In this way, my work represents a contribution to the community gardening literature.

Secondly, my thesis shares the individual stories of community members, as part of a collective story, serving to shed light on the process of the creation of a community narrative. And my interpretation of the data demonstrates the dialogical relationship among stories, community narratives, and dominant cultural narratives. Eric Mankowski and Julian Rappaport (1995) contend that there is limited knowledge both about how community members create community narratives or about how these narratives support or impede those who seek to change the stories and narratives they live by. According to Mankowski and Rappaport, these are important considerations for social interventionists and, in this respect, I feel my work is a contribution.

Finally, in attempting to explain why people participate in community gardens, some researchers have suggested that access to and experiences in nature are more strongly associated with participation than gardeners' attachment to community. As a

result, they suggest that researchers must look beyond traditional variables, like sense of community, to characterise community participants (Clark & Manzo, 1988). Rather than look beyond concepts, as community psychologists we possess concepts that can serve to integrate concerns for the natural ecology. I believe my thesis serves as an example in that my interpretative framework includes considerations for the social *and* natural ecology and, as such, provides an example of a "truly ecological perspective." In addition, my research suggests that other community psychology concepts and values can also serve as integrative concepts. The concepts of the "psychological sense of community" and of the "person in context" could be conceptualised in more holistic ways to include communion with nature and an appreciation of our fundamental context in the natural world. In this sense I believe that my holistic appreciation of these concepts and values, and my understanding of their relevance to my thesis work, represent a contribution to the community psychology literature.

Areas Ripe For Future Research

In my research, I endeavoured to understand how local community gardeners perceived their activities. However, choosing to limit my selection of participants to members of the CGN undoubtedly influenced my findings. The perspectives of CGN members may not be representative of the larger gardening community. In fact, it could be argued that some group members were already oriented towards activism before becoming involved in community gardening or in the CGN. As a result, my interpretation of the data must be viewed in the context of my approach to selecting participants (Patton, 1990).

In addition, the collaborative project idea that I envisioned at the beginning of my thesis did not develop. Although my work was not successful in this regard, I learned much from the experience. In particular, I gained an appreciation for the significant human and material resources that are required to conduct such research.

I have an idea for a future research project, which would address these shortcomings, and more importantly, serve as an action research project for the group. When the timing is right for the CGN, I believe the community development approach to needs assessment, as described by Sylvia Marti-Costa and Irma Serrano-Garcia (1987), could be a more valuable project co-ordinated by CGN members. They suggest that when needs assessment is used as a tool to increase local participation and control in decision making, it becomes a technique that can facilitate second-order change.

I think my research has laid the foundation for some future group development in this direction and as a community researcher, it is my responsibility to facilitate some of this development. Although my formal research process has come to an end, community processes continue and I believe it is important for me to play a continuing proactive role. Although I am no longer residing in Waterloo Region, I am aware that Network members plan to create a web-site, which will serve to facilitate communication.

As my selection of participants was limited to CGN members, in the future the group may want to conduct a comprehensive inventory or survey of local community gardens to gain an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of local community gardens and gardeners. Describing and understanding the experiences of the larger gardening community would be an essential first step in a community development focused needs assessment (Marti-Costa & Serrano-Garcia, 1987). My graduate education

has provided me with extensive training in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches and methods, and I have a solid understanding of their application in developing and evaluating community-based interventions. This first step, described above, would be focused on assessing the community's food production resources in an effort to decrease dependency. The information collected would be returned to the gardening community to facilitate local decision-making. If Network members decided to conduct a community development focused needs assessment, I could help to facilitate some of the research process.

Prior to assuming such an organising role in the larger gardening community, the CGN must clearly articulate their mission, vision, and values. In this regard, members may want to plan a series of focus groups or visioning workshops. Network members may organise such focus groups or workshops this winter and I plan to be involved. As part of the overall needs assessment approach, CGN members should continue to facilitate collective activities as these are necessary for consciousness raising. Through an action research approach, the CGN could help to facilitate local participation and control in decision making with regard to urban food production and the resources necessary to produce.

Planning for food production at the local community level is part of the larger vision of creating sustainable communities (Guberman, 1995), and urban food production has profound implications as a potentially sustainable alternative to our present food system (Brule, 1986). Local community ownership of critical community resources, like land, is essential to this agenda. In this respect, Canadian community gardeners could learn much from the "political savvy" (Cosgrove, 1998) of their American counterparts.

Our current food system, pursuing the logic of distancing, has disconnected citizens from any relationship with food other than that of consumer (Hough, 1995; Kneen, 1989). Hough (1995) suggests that our relationship with food changed after World War II when food first became readily available irrespective of season or distance. Brewster Kneen (1989) suggests that any efforts to transform the food system will first have to confront and overcome this disconnection. My research suggests that community gardens may be one means to this end.

The impact of the growth and consumption orientation is evident within our food system. Anthony Winson (1992) has aptly termed food our most "intimate commodity." No longer the centre of families and communities, today many sectors of the Canadian food economy are under the tight control of a few powerful corporations (Winson, 1992) and international trade agreements govern the marketing and distribution of food (Hough, 1995). In an insightful historical analysis, members of Toronto's Food Policy Council (1994a) argue that today's "global markets" are just the present expression of the expansion of the enclosure movement, representing global capitalists continued efforts to exert control over the production and distribution of food. It is outside the scope of this discussion to present a critical analysis of food systems and their contribution to social inequality and environmental degradation. The interested reader can refer to the following sources for insightful Canadian analyses (Kneen, 1989; Winson, 1992).

However, I would like to discuss the characteristics of a sustainable food system as described by Kneen (1989). According to Kneen, a sustainable food system is based on proximity, diversity and balance. Pursuing the logic of proximity, he suggests that drastic and healthy consequences would ensue if all cities produced 50% or more of their

vegetable requirements within city limits. Such a proximal food system would have many benefits including maximum nutritional quality, food security, energy efficiency, and return to those who contribute most to production. In combination with proximity, he suggests that pursuing the logic of diversity would increase the varieties of locally and regionally grown produce serving to preserve the genetic resources that are essential not only to a healthy food system but also to a healthy environment. Finally, in a sustainable food system Kneen believes a balance must exist between growers and preparers, distributors and consumers, and between resource use and resource replenishment. Community gardens could lay some of the groundwork for the future creation of sustainable urban food systems.

As community organisers, CGN members must possess an optimistic perspective, because in order to effect change they must passionately believe that change is possible (Biklen, 1983). In 1987 Carole Giangrande, a Canadian radio broadcaster and journalist, wrote an article for Harrowsmith Magazine. In the article she described the role of gardens and gardeners in social change. I would like to close with excerpts from "Political gardens" (Giangrande, 1987; as cited in von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996, p. 170-171), as her words continually inspire me to remain optimistic.

"...the garden is emblematic of the new world, a society of co-operation and involvement on a human scale, a sharing of ideas, a fruitfulness, often beyond what we ever hoped for or planned. It is the classic metaphor for peace; it gives real meaning to the world. In fall, we take in our harvests, struck by the sense that the garden gives us back more than we put in or expect to receive. In part, there is the mystery of nature's bounty, but even mysteries teach political lessons: in this case, that a generous earth is one worth saving. We do our part, gardening with little more than tools, skill and the trust that our labour can transform *one* place on this planet. For a moment, we hold off the threat of cataclysm and, even worse, the fear that we might give up in the face of it. Now, we think, maybe everyone can do this. Like the earth itself, hope is worth cultivating" (Giangrande, 1987; as cited in von Baeyer & Crawford, 1996).

Appendices

Appendix 1

Community Garden Directory

Community Gardens in the Waterloo Region

Kitchener's Community Gardens

Cedar Hill community garden. Nestled off Madison Avenue where Church ends on the property behind A.R. Kaufmann School. This quiet garden began in 1997 as a local community initiative. Contact: Chris Smith @ 741-2491.

Centreville Chicopee community garden. Located at the community centre this garden has one large collective plot. Community members started the garden in 1998 with assistance from the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. Contact: 741-2490.

City of Kitchener allotment garden. 1541 Westmount Road East behind the Williamsburg Cemetery. These plots are owned by the City of Kitchener and are rented to gardeners each season. Gardeners may have the same plots every year. Contact: Barb Devought/Ted Potwarka @ 741-2557.

Queen's Greens. Located at the corner of Queen and Mill across from the Joseph Schneider Haus. A raised bed garden with a developing fruit plot and native flowers, built by the neighbourhood and supported by the City of Kitchener, The Working Centre and the Friends of the Environment Foundation. Contact: Sara Macdonald/Greg Newton @ 743-1211.

Forest Hill United Church community garden. Located beside the Forest Hill United Church. A group of volunteers from the church started a small potato patch on church property in the spring of 1996 in response to the increasing demand on food bank services. All the potatoes were donated to the House of Friendship. Currently, residents of Eby Village garden there collectively; next year the garden may be open to other groups. Contact: Shirley Wigle @ 744-3481.

Sand Hills Co-operative Homes garden. Open to residents of the co-operative. This garden was run informally in 1997. It was up to individual residents to co-ordinate and maintain the plots. Contact: 744-2783.

Steckle Gardens. The farm is located in the rolling country hills just outside of Kitchener at 811 Bleams past Strausburg Road. Agricultural and day camps are offered to children's groups and often the public is invited to participate in special farm days. Contact: Jean Steckle @ 748-5719.

Victoria Hills multicultural garden. Located on the land surrounded by three apartment buildings on Mooregate Avenue. The Safer Community Group started this project in 1993 in Victoria Hills as a community building and crime prevention effort. The gardeners come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. There is a picnic area for the participants, volunteers and residents. Garden ideas and news are shared through The Groundhog Gazette. In the fall of 1998 development will begin on this property despite great efforts by the co-ordinator to find an alternative. The future of a garden in this community is uncertain. Contact: Marilyn Clarke @ 749-0163.

Bridgeport Hispanic Agricultural Group. Located on land owned by the Catholic Church in Bridgeport off Sweiter Road. The 8-10 acres are open to all Latin American families. Originally this group farmed collectively at the Steckle Farm but has grown since to 41 families (100-150 people). Contact: Harold Shantz @ 896-0974.

G.R.O.W. (Green Rural Opportunities for Waterloo Region). Located at the corner of Bloomingdale Road and Kraft Drive on land owned by the Waterloo Regional District School Board. Open to members of A.I.M. (Achievement in Motion). This project links self-advocates to their environment. Members participate in therapeutic

activity, learn skills, and have an opportunity for profit sharing. Plants and produce are sold on Saturdays at the Waterloo Farmer's Market. Contact: Sue Gallagher @ 741-1666.

Waterloo's Community Gardens

Beaver Creek Housing Co-operative garden. Located at the co-operative – 3 Bearinger Road. Since 1983 this garden has been maintained in the co-operative spirit. The participants ensure their gardening practices have a minimal impact on the environment. They grow perennial vegetables and use water efficient gardening methods! Contact: Cathy Middleton @ 746-8023.

Brighton Yards Co-operative garden. Located at the co-operative at 64 Peppler Street. This garden was started to create a beautiful and social space contributing to the co-operative spirit of the housing co-operative. Contact: Dawn Martin @ 746-1765.

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region garden. 580 Weber Street North at Northfield Road on the land owned by National Cash Register (NCR). This is a multicultural garden where you'll feast your eyes on vegetables grown for international dishes. Gardeners participate in canning workshops and group workdays. Contact: Elba Martel @ 743-4517.

The St. John's Good Earth garden. 22 Willow behind the St. John's Lutheran Church. A peaceful garden created by the local community, the church, and the senior's residence with support from the City of Waterloo, and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. Handmade benches and a scarecrow add to its beauty! Contact: St. John's @ 886-1880.

Cambridge's Community Gardens

The Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank garden/The Gardens of Tomorrow. Located on a farmer's property off Highway 8 in Galt down a lane 1-km past Branchton Road. Holy garden! Built by the efforts of a local farmer and engineer, the Caring Communities Grant, and the Cambridge Food Bank, this garden boasts three acres of vegetable heaven. Food bank members grow their own food and tend the communal "plot" of veggies that will be used at the food bank or sold. Contact: Pat Singleton @ 622-6550.

H.O.P.E.S. Program garden (Cambridge Family and Children's Services). Located on the west side of Franklin Blvd at Sheldon. This unique garden has been running since 1992 as a fundraising effort for the H.O.P.E.S. Program (Having Opportunity for Participation Encouraging Self-Help). The program is for single mothers and their children, some of whom take part in the garden. The experienced gardeners here grow everything, even black currant bushes! Contact: Bonnie Droven Reipert @ 623-6970 ext. 2145.

Lang's Farm Community Health Centre garden. Located on the land owned by the South Waterloo Housing Authority on Langs Drive. The garden was started in 1997 with 30 local participants. Contact: Kelly Higgs @ 653-1470.

Gardens In Other Parts Of The Region

The Woolwich community garden. Located behind Woodside Bible Chapel near a small creek where Whip-poor-will and Barnswallow meet. The land was donated in 1993 by Birdland Development. Potatoes grown are donated to the Good Food Basket. Contact: Margaret MacWhirter @ 669-5139.

New Hamburg-Wilmot community garden. Located on the private property of a member of the Trinity Lutheran Church. This peaceful garden has been running since 1996. Contact: Doreen West @ 662-2731.

The St. John's Kitchen garden. Located beside the Meadow Acres Garden Centre in Baden on land owned by the centre. This is a collective plot open to anyone involved with the St. John's Kitchen (inquire!). The participants are growing food for the kitchen and are looking forward to expanding next year! Contact: Joan Rawski @ 745-8928.

Appendix 2

Information Letter

Information Letter to Participants

Dear

My name is Jan O'Reilly. I am a community gardener and a member of the Community Gardening Network of Waterloo Region (CGN). This year I am also involved in working with people in my neighbourhood to create a community garden. My experience is limited to having been a participant in a community garden, and as such I realise that I have much to learn from the experiences of other garden creators. I believe that you have valuable knowledge to share about how and why your garden was created, and how and why it is recreated each year. I am also interested in the reasons why you became involved in the CGN, and what vision(s) you have for the future of the network.

I am also a student in the Master of Arts program in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. I am presently working to complete my Master's thesis with the guidance of my academic advisor, Richard Walsh-Bowers, Professor of Psychology. In an effort to combine my community involvement with my studies, I am interested in exploring how and why community gardeners create their gardens, and how and why they sustain them. Further, I am interested in why garden creators desire to be involved in the network and what vision(s) they have for the future of the network. As part of my thesis, I would like to interview local garden creators/re-creators and document these "creation stories" for my thesis. I think that the information could also serve other important purposes.

The information could inform the effort of others who are working to create gardens, giving them the opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges other

gardens have experienced. The information could be the beginning of the documentation of important local history. The information could also help the CGN get a sense of the community gardening "scene" in the region enabling us to network better and plan for our future.

The "interview" would last for one to two hours and with your permission would be audio taped. I have an "interview guide" of topics that we could discuss but I would like our meeting to be an informal one and be conversational. As such I don't have a set of questions that I want you to answer. You can decide what you feel it is important to share. I would be willing to meet with you at a time and place that is convenient for you.

When I complete my thesis research I plan to gather all who participated to share the work. I would also provide you with written feedback at that time.

I will follow up this letter with a telephone call to see if you are interested.

Sincerely,

Jan O'Reilly

Appendix 3

Literature Review Process

Literature Review Process

Using the search terms listed below, Corey and I searched the following databases, indices, and bibliographies.

Search Terms:

Community garden/gardens/gardening
Urban garden/gardens/gardening
City garden/gardens/gardening
Communal garden/gardens/gardening
Allotment garden/gardens/gardening
Urban agriculture
City food projects/production
Urban food projects/production/systems
Community food projects/production

Databases, Indices, and Bibliographies:

Alternative Press Index
America History and Life (includes Canadian History Abstracts)
Avery Index (architecture)
Canadian Business and Current Affairs
Canadian Periodical Index
Dissertation Abstracts
Environment Abstracts
Environmental Periodicals Bibliography
Geography Index
Historical Abstracts
Humanities Index
Library of Congress
MLA Bibliography
Psychlit
Social Sciences Index
Sociofile
SWETSCAN

Appendix 4

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Tell me about you present/future garden.

Why did you work/are you working to create the community garden?

What meaning does the garden have for you? Why do you do it?

Why did you become involved in the CGN?

Do you have a vision for the future of the CGN? What do you see?

Appendix 5

Interview Consent Form

Consent Form

I, _____, agree to take part in an "interview" with Jan O'Reilly. I am aware that Jan is a Master's student in the Community Psychology Program at Wilfrid Laurier University. I am also aware that she is conducting the interview as part of her Master's thesis research, which is being supervised by Richard Walsh-Bowers, Professor of Psychology. I understand that my interview is an opportunity for me to share my story about the garden I co-ordinate, and about my involvement in the Community Gardening Network (CGN). I am also aware that the information may be presented in a popular document produced by the CGN.

I understand the "interview" is meant to be informal and conversational in nature and that Jan does not have a set of questions to ask of me. I do understand that she may ask me questions that emerge throughout the interview but I can choose which information I want to share and have the freedom not to answer questions I do not wish to answer. I also understand that I can ask Jan questions and she has the same freedom.

I understand that with my permission the "interview" will be audio taped and that Jan and her academic supervisor are the only people who will have access to the tape and the typed transcription of the tape that will follow. I also understand that Jan will contact me and receive my permission to use direct quotations either in her thesis or any document produced by the CGN.

I also understand that on an agreed upon date in the future, Jan will share her completed thesis research with myself and other participants through a presentation accompanied by written feedback.

Signed (Participant): _____ Signed (Interviewer): _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Thank you very much. Your interest, time and participation are greatly appreciated.

Appendix 6

Three Models of Community Organisation Practice According to Selected Practice Variables

Three Models of Community Organisation Practice According to Selected Practice Variables

Practice Variables	Locality Development	Social Planning	Social Action
Goal categories of community action	Self-help; community capacity and integration (process goals)	Problem solving with regard to substantive community problems (task goals)	Shifting of power relationships and resources; basic institutional change (task or process goals)
Assumptions concerning community structure and problem conditions	Community eclipsed, anomie; lack of relationships and democratic problem-solving capacities; static traditional community	Substantive social problems; mental and physical health, housing, recreation	Disadvantaged populations, social injustice, deprivation, inequity
Basic change strategy	Broad cross section of people involved in determining and solving their own problems	Fact gathering about problems and decisions on the most rational course of action	Crystallisation of issues and organisation of people to take action against enemy targets
Characteristic change tactics and techniques	Consensus: communication among community groups and interests; group discussion	Consensus or conflict	Conflict or contest: confrontation, direct action, negotiation
Salient practitioner roles	Enabler-catalyst, co-ordinator; teacher of problem-solving skills and ethical values	Fact gatherer and analyst, program implementer, facilitator	Activist advocate: agitator, broker, negotiator, partisan

Medium of change	Manipulation of small task-oriented groups	Manipulation of formal organisations and data	Manipulation of mass organisations and political processes
Orientation toward power structure(s)	Members of power structure as collaborators in common venture	Power structure as employers and sponsors	Power structure as external target of action: oppressors to be coerced or overturned
Boundary definition of the community client system or constituency	Total geographic community	Total community or community segment (including "functional community")	Community segment
Assumptions regarding interests of community subparts	Common interests or reconcilable differences	Interests reconcilable or in conflict	Conflicting interests which are not easily reconcilable: scarce resources
Conception of the client population or constituency	Citizens	Consumers	Victims
Conception of client role	Participants in an interactional problem-solving process	Consumers or recipients	Employers, constituents, members

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[i] The bee colony produces 227 kilograms of honey annually which members sell to raise money (Meikle, 1996).

[ii] The neighbourhood-scale composting operation uses kitchen and yard waste from nearby homes and restaurants (Sarti, 1997).

[iii] The eco-pavilion was constructed as part of an employment training program for young women from the Environmental Youth Alliance (Sarti, 1997). Operating from a sustainability perspective, the Environmental Youth Alliance is dedicated to creating a healthy environment and a sense of community (Meikle, 1996).

[iv] The Food Bank of Waterloo Region was the co-ordinating organisation and secured agreement from AT & T to use the land. The garden actually began as a partnership in 1991 between The Waterloo Public Interest Research Group (WPIRG) and The Food Bank of Waterloo Region. Today, it is most often referred to as "the food bank garden."

[v] A communal plot is one large plot where several people plant and tend one large garden, sharing both the work and the harvest.

[vi] Ed Bennett (1987) summarises three approaches to social change. While the social technician and traditional social reformer are interested in change *within* the system (first order change), the social interventionist is interested in change *of* the system (second-order change). However, Bennett (1987) suggests that second order change can involve many first order changes. In my thesis, I use the broader term "social change" to describe strategies involving first and second order change. I use the term social intervention to specifically describe a social change strategy aimed at change of the system.

[vii] I am referring to Canadian urban social reformers who criticised the conditions of urban environments (von Baeyer, 1984).

[viii] Corey, a member of the CGN, was interested in conducting some archival research to see if she could uncover a history of community gardening in Waterloo Region. She published her findings in our first newsletter, published in August 1998, "The Urban Gardener, Newsletter of the Community Gardening Network of Waterloo Region." The local historical information that she was able to find parallels some of my discussion of the larger historical forces surrounding community gardening during this century. Absent in her findings is any documentation of community gardening activity during the decades between 1920 and 1960, the period of relief gardens and war gardens.

[ix] Brenda Inouye, a University of Waterloo undergraduate student, created the community garden. She wrote a proposal to establish an on-campus, organic community garden as part of a course requirement (Sustainable Agriculture/Environment and Resource Studies). Brenda left Waterloo Region after the 1997 gardening season and in the spring of 1998, no individual or group of individuals took leadership in re-creating the garden for the 1998 season. During the spring of 1999, I was in contact with Brenda and learned that she is involved in co-ordinating a community gardening network in Ottawa, Ontario.

[x] As a caveat, McKnight (1995c) does acknowledge that there are human services that support community life and these are to be differentiated from those that create dependence.

[xi] Before I made the analytical decision to use a cross-case analysis approach, I did organise one participant's story from their case record and presented the participant with a draft. The feedback I received served to strengthen my belief that a cross-case analysis was more appropriate (the participant questioned me about how I was going to bring all the stories together).

[xii] The connections between community gardening and feminism could form the foundation for another research project.

[xiii] These include Achievement in Motion, Cambridge Family and Children's Services, the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank, the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, and the Working Centre.

[xiv] These include Forest Hill United Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, and Trinity Lutheran Church.

[xv] These include Beaver Creek Housing Co-operative, Brighton Yards Co-operative, and Sand Hills Co-operative Homes.

[xvi] The Centreville Chicopee Community Centre and Lang's Farm Community Health Centre have supported local community gardens in these ways.

[xvii]For example, a local farmer and engineer helped to create Cambridge's Self Help Food Bank garden. Seniors from the St. John's Lutheran Church and the adjacent senior's residence were instrumental in helping to get the St. John's Good Earth Garden off the ground. And the Safer Community Group played a key role in helping to organise the Victoria Hills Multicultural garden.

[xviii] These include the City of Kitchener, the City of Waterloo, and the Region of Waterloo.

[xix] These include the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank garden, the Food Bank of Waterloo Region garden, Project G.R.O.W., the St. John's Kitchen garden, and the Woolwich community garden.

[xx] Local community gardens are sited on private property owned by churches, housing co-operatives, individuals, corporations, and real estate developers.

[xxi] The gardens are located on land owned by the City of Kitchener, the Region of Waterloo, the South Waterloo Housing Authority, and the Waterloo Regional District School Board.

[xxii] I borrow this term from community gardeners involved in the St. John's Good Earth Garden. In the summer of 1999, I visited the garden and was happy to see that the present gardeners preserved our 1998 map of the garden. The map contained a layout of the garden and indicated who was gardening in each plot.

[xxiii] Under the theme "Sustainable Communities: A Truly Ecological Perspective" I present three sub-themes. The order of their presentation reflects the strength with which I interpreted the sub-themes to be present in the stories of my research participants. I also believe the order reflects the present stage of local community gardening development.

[xxiv] Permaculture is a science, an ethic, and a lifestyle. As a science the field involves the study of natural systems in an effort to understand those that function without pollution or waste. As an ethic, it requires that we support the ability of our earth to sustain life. Finally, as a lifestyle, the science and ethic of permaculture must be put into practice. We can grow organically, build natural non-toxic homes, recycle waste, and work towards energy self-reliance. This information was adapted from a brochure produced and distributed by The Permaculture Community Action Worknet, a Canadian non-profit organisation founded in 1995. A review of the field of permaculture is outside of the scope of my thesis; however, the following references should provide interested readers with somewhere to begin (Bell, 1992/1994; Mollison, 1987/1988; Mollison & Holmgren, 1981).

[xxv] Here I use the term broader term "social change," as the strategies that Labonte (1996) describes are oriented to change both *in* and *of* the system.

[xxvi] Labonte (1993) borrows the term from Ivan Illich. A convivial community is one where people experience a sense of community.

[xxvii] I borrow the title for this section of my interpretation from Douglas Biklen (1983) who argues that the "main tenets" of both charity and professionalism serve little purpose for the community organiser.

[xxviii] For example, Kitchener's Working Centre, a local community development organisation, is involved in community gardening. As they work from an enabling perspective, their work serves to support community life (McKnight, 1995).

[xxix] "Mixing" involves the use of practice variables from different strategies, while "phasing" involves moving primarily from the use of one strategy to the use of another (Rothman & Tropman, 1987).

[xxx] Edward Bennett (1987) describes second order change as "Change of a system involves a shift or transformation from trying to solve problems within a system which itself remains unchanged to a higher logical level of problem-solving which considers changing the assumptions, values, structural relations, and rules governing the system itself" (p. 13). In discussing the possibilities of how social intervention can proceed Bennett states, "On the nature of change of the system, our position is that it can involve a multitude of within-system changes" (p. 15).