DEVELOPING WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE
PREVENTION THROUGH FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH:
AN EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE PROCESS

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ADULT EDUCATION

BY

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OCTOBER 7, 2000

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a social problem that has historically been addressed through crisis intervention and public awareness campaigns. Finding strategies to prevent this insidious problem has been exacting because violence against women is part of the larger problem of women's oppression. In the last decades of the 20th century feminist adult educators, as researchers, teachers, and activists, have challenged women's oppression through empowering and participatory practices in the academy and in the community. This thesis is based on the premise that Feminist Participatory Research (FPR) is one process whereby local women can use their personal experience and knowledge to become involved in preventing violence against women in their communities. This thesis addresses these two questions: (a) Can the use of FPR increase grassroots involvement in violence prevention education?; and (b) What skills and knowledge are useful to adult educators who wish to undertake this process? A review of the literature on social change education, feminist and participatory research, and violence prevention education reveals that FPR blends these theories and creates an educational-research process that can empower women to learn about oppression in their lives and influence change at the individual, community, and societal level. FPR was applied in a practice setting providing five local women with an opportunity to pose problems, learn from one another about oppression and local safety concerns, and empower one another to take action. Using a FPR process the Women for Community Safety project achieved the goal of increasing local involvement in violence prevention education and provided examples of the skills and knowledge needed to facilitate such a process. The process of learning, researching, and acting on the recommendations of local women, can further the liberatory aims of adult education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Adult educators have a challenging and important role to play in preventing violence against women in their communities. Violence against women is a multifaceted problem affecting many levels of the community, and eliminating it requires that several levels of intervention be considered. One of these levels is prevention education, whereby people identify and explore the impact and meaning of violence against women in their lives and develop skills and strategies to end the violence directed at women. Adult educators can share their expertise as facilitators by joining women in this collective investigation and learning. Effective prevention involves changing attitudes and behaviours, making the personal political, and encouraging active participation of individuals and groups in prevention education projects.

In my experience as a community educator, feminist activist, and counsellor I have been involved in many educational and awareness activities directed at preventing violence against women in my community. These include advertisement campaigns, commemoration of significant dates, mall displays, school-based prevention programs, and informational presentations to local groups. These particular events have not engaged grass roots community involvement to the level that could spur its members to prevent violence against women. To address this problem I turned to the adult education literature that explores the methods and practice of education for social change. In the literature I found a feminist participatory research (FPR) model that I believed might assist me to (a) undertake an education-for-change process and (b) elicit information from community women that could help improve both my own and my organization's prevention activities. Using this FPR model to create a safer community for

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women though social change education struck me as one way in which adult education can realize its liberatory purpose and work to prevent violence against women.

In this thesis I describe the process and outcome of the FPR project that I carried out between September 1998 and May 1999. FPR is a three-part process that involves: (a) collective investigation and identification of popular knowledge; (b) learning about personal and structural oppression; and (c) using the information gathered and the process as a means to change the situation under investigation (Maguire, 1987). This learning and research process was used to address the issue of prevention of violence against women with an emphasis on community safety through posing problems and problem solving. I used this research process to achieve two goals. First, I identified through a collaborative process how safe women felt in our community and engaged them in making recommendations for change. Second, I explored the effectiveness of the feminist participatory research process as an adult education strategy for preventing violence against women and identified the skills and knowledge needed to facilitate this process. In essence this is a study within a study: I used the feminist participatory research process with local women to research, educate, and initiate local change; here I study the outcomes of this process and its usefulness for adult educators who work in the area of emancipatory research and education.

Background to the Study

As the Stopping the Violence Counsellor at the North Island Crisis Centre part of my mandate is to provide prevention education and awareness activities in the community. Over the past 4 years the Centre's women's shelter coordinator and I have provided presentations to local public schools, service groups, and the local college. We have also commemorated the anniversary

of the Montreal Massacre and Prevention of Violence Against Women Week with informational

booths in our local shopping mall and drug store. Although these promotions serve a purpose in

making visible the issue of violence against women, they are limited in their capacity to encourage

the community to take an active role in preventing violence. Others working in the field of

violence prevention have also found this to be true. For example, MacLeod (1994) states in her

recent study on violence prevention that education aimed at "teaching people about the prevalence,

dynamics, and factors associated with abuse is not enough"; instead she argues that "specific

means must be developed to promote value and attitude change not only around violence but

around inequality and the use of violence and control" (p. 14). My experience with these types of

events has shown that the community may not be learning from the material. Many people still

view violence against women as something they would rather not hear about or something that

does not occur in our small community. For example, we were not permitted to set up a display in

our local mall to commemorate the December 6 Montreal Massacre because the new management

felt it would dampen the "festive spirit" they were trying to create for the Christmas season.

Attitudes like this are indicative to me that the problem of violence against women is not taken

seriously by some members in our community.

Framing the Study

Literature on violence prevention (Amherst Wilder Foundation, 1995; MacLeod, 1989,

1994; Whitzman & Wekerle, 1997), education for social change (Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, &

Thomas 1996; Brookfield, 1983; Freire, 1997; Hope & Timmel, 1995), and participatory research

(Hall, 1975, 1979, 1992; Maguire, 1987; McTaggart, 1997; Park 1993; Mies, 1983; Smith, 1997;

Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992) encourages communities to take an active role in change as

individuals or as organizations. Findings by Amherst Wilder Foundation on preventing rural

violence demonstrate that programs led by community groups are more successful in preventing

violence than those led by police or the criminal justice system. MacLeod (1989) in "The City for

Women: No Safe Place" reports that there is a need to encourage local women's leadership in the

development of policies to reduce women's fear and victimization. She goes on to say this will

promote full participation of all members of the community and thus "reduce the vulnerability,

fear and victimization of women" (p. 45). These findings influenced my decision to choose FPR

because this strategy encourages the participation of local women in addressing local problems

through a collective educative process.

I chose the FPR strategy for two additional reasons. First, I wanted to initiate a research

process that could lead to the exploration of these questions: What do women in our community

know and feel about violence against women? Do they currently protect themselves? If so, how?

If not what can they do to feel safer? What changes, if any, do these women recommend for the

community or local organizations? Being open to these thematic questions would assist me in

using a problem-posing approach as advocated by Paulo Freire (1997) before engaging in

problem solving. Through this problem-posing process the educator provides a framework for the

participants to think, to analyze, and to consider problems and then find solutions (Hope &

Timmel, 1995). Moreover, answers to these questions could help me as a community educator to

better understand local women's experience and perceptions of violence and could assist me in

designing future prevention education activities.

Second, I wanted to employ an educational strategy that could involve community

women in learning about violence prevention and influencing change in their own thoughts,

feelings, attitudes, and behaviours that may lead to local action. Thus, I wanted to address the

inactivity of the community in regard to violence against women by initiating an educational

process that educates and empowers local women and community members to become active participants in the facilitation of violence prevention and local change.

Purpose of the Study

My overall intent was to learn how to encourage local women to learn about and prevent violence in their lives and in their community. The purpose of this study is to identify whether FPR can facilitate such a liberatory learning process, one that results in personal and social change. As a feminist adult educator I am concerned with the effectiveness of the strategies women-serving organizations use to educate the community in the prevention of violence against women. Through my work as a liberatory adult educator and feminist counsellor for women survivors of abuse, I have come to appreciate the learning that comes from shared experiences, consciousness raising, and conscientization (Freire, 1997). Bridging the social change education methods of adult education with a feminist and participatory research process could provide a dynamic strategy for adult educators to use in prevention education work.

The process of feminist participatory research draws upon the principles of feminist pedagogy and participatory research. Through this study I seek to add insight into two questions: (a) Can the use of FPR increase local grassroots involvement in violence prevention education and lead to personal and social change? (b) What skills and knowledge are useful for an adult educator to possess in order to undertake a FPR process? In exploring these questions this study describes a process that may be useful to other adult educators involved in social change and liberatory education and emancipatory research in their own communities.

Scope and Limitations

Using a FPR process as an education for social change tool, this study describes the

planning, implementation, and evaluation of this strategy as a means to address the prevention of

violence against women. FPR is a process that seeks to develop the critical consciousness of the

researcher and participants, to improve the lives of those involved, and to transform social

structures and relationships. These principles were used to guide the development and process of

the "Women for Community Safety" project that was implemented between February and April

of 1999. During this project five local women participated in a series of seven sessions that were

designed to (a) identify issues of concern, (b) encourage the participants and myself to learn from

one another about violence against women, and (c) develop recommendations for change. This

project was followed by an evaluation that used pre- and post-project evaluation forms as well as

in-depth individual interviews with participants to identify changes in thought, feelings, and

actions they experienced as a result of participating in the study. FPR was evaluated for its

effectiveness as a violence prevention education tool and education for social change process.

FPR projects are ideally planned, documented, and co-authored by the participants.

However, because this study was part of my academic learning experience this ideal was limited.

Where possible participants assisted with planning, and were indeed co-researchers, and co-

learners in this process. This thesis is not co-authored; rather I wrote it with the full support of the

participants.

The issue of violence against women is broad and includes not only women's fear of

violence in the public and the private domains, but also relationship abuse, dating violence,

emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and sexual assault. As a result it was necessary to narrow the

focus to women's community safety concerns and fear in the following domains: (a) public areas

such as neighbourhoods and parks; (b) work or school; (c) home; and (d) child/youth safety. This narrowing of focus is not to minimize the seriousness of other areas of violence against women. Rather, it was chosen to reflect an area of study that is concerned with the prevention of violence against women within communities and the acknowledgement of women's particular knowledge of these issues. In this regard the issue of violence against women in intimate relationships, a form of violence that often occur in a woman's home, is not the primary focus of this study. Instead this study is concerned with the level of fear and worry women have in the four areas mentioned above. For example, in regard to home safety the focus is on how safe women feel in their homes and their fear of possible intruders.

Although I made efforts to include women from all segments of the community, those who volunteered to participate were all white women between the ages of 25 and 50. I, too, am white and within this age range. These women's primary occupations involved working, caring for children, attending college, or a combination of these activities. The voices missing from the study include women who are aboriginal, senior, lesbian, adolescent, disabled, and visible minorities. Several sources of data were drawn on during the research process to fill the gap left by these missing voices. These included MacLeod's (1989) paper "No Safe Place: A City for Women," and Johnson's (1996) book Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada. These two resources include other Canadian women's experience of violence and abuse and bring their voices to this project.

Additional resources are called upon for this project. I completed a literature search on social change education, FPR, and violence against women in the context of community safety, and the role of adult education in violence prevention. I utilized articles I found as educational resources for participants. I drew upon several references extensively for planning and carrying

out the project, especially those addressing education for social change and FPR or participatory research resources.

Assumptions

Drawing from both my own experience in working toward preventing violence against women and the principles of participatory research I used the following set of assumptions to guide my project design, facilitation, and evaluation. My first assumption is that social change research and education has an obligation to improve the lives of the participants. Thus, information collected through this process was oriented toward serving the interests of the dominated or exploited. A second assumption is that the personal narratives and oral histories of these women are valuable sources of information. The participants and I collected and analyzed this information throughout the process and we challenged or validated the meanings of these individual experiences through collective dialogue. My third assumption is that participatory research is profoundly educational and can influence both cognitive and emancipatory learning. Education within this process is understood as learning through searching for meaning and understanding and then translating this knowledge into action. Fourth, I also assumed that feelings and emotions are effective as guides to action. Emotions can unearth the depth of an issue and its meaning for the participant and consequently steer the course of learning, investigation, and action. Finally, I assumed sharing control of the learning process with the participants is necessary to encourage the women to take control of the oppressive forces that affect their lives.

Several assumptions about violence against women influenced how the study was organized and facilitated. These include the following: (a) adult victims of abuse, sexual assault, and sexual harassment are predominantly female; (b) women have the right to freedom from fear

and violence; (c) women are not to blame for the abuse or violence they experience; (d) violence and the threat of violence restricts women's access to community activities and resources; and, (e) a feminist perspective is necessary to understand and address violence against women.

Definitions

Several terms used in this thesis require defining because they have several possible interpretations depending on one's philosophical or political orientation. The definition chosen here represents my value system and politics.

Feminism is a theory, philosophy, and practice of politics that addresses oppression. While emphasizing the oppression of women, feminism also concerns itself with other types of oppression and takes many different ideological forms such as Marxist, structural, liberal, or radical (Mandell, 1998). I adhere to a framework of feminism suggested by Maguire (1987) that includes the belief that all women face some form of oppression, the personal and political commitment to uncover and understand the sources and possible remedies for that oppression, and the willingness to work to end oppression individually and/or collectively.

Oppression is the result of being denied political and personal power by virtue of one's gender, class, race, age, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, location, or ability.

Conscientization involves learning to see the social, political, and economic circumstances of one's life and to take action against oppressive elements of this reality (Freire, 1997).

Consciousness raising involves sharing concrete lived experience to illuminate the nature of female oppression and learning to perceive something old in a new way (Butterwick, 1987).

Liberation and emancipation occur when an oppressed group or individual moves to change their situation.

Violence against women includes any action or inaction that serves to control a woman's right to sexual, physical, and emotional dignity. In this study I often used the term abuse which is a type of violence against women that occurs between intimates such as a woman and her partner, employer, acquaintance, teacher, boyfriend, family member and others in positions of trust.

Plan of Presentation

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature. These topics include adult education for social change, feminist participatory research, and violence against women. In chapter 3 I describe the practice of feminist participatory research through the presentation of the Women for Community Safety project I initiated and facilitated in order to study the effectiveness of this process. In chapter 4 I discuss and analyze how the study supports, challenges, and adds to the discussion of feminist participatory research, the practice of education for social change, and the prevention of violence against women. Here, I analyze the usefulness of feminist participatory research as an educational process to facilitate social and personal change leading to individual and community involvement in the movement to prevent violence against women. In the closing section of chapter 4 I summarize and draw conclusions as to the significance of this study to the field of adult education and the practice of violence prevention education.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To develop the theoretical background for this study I reviewed relevant literature. This study of feminist participatory research (FPR) as an educational and research process in relation to the prevention of violence against women required the review of the literature from three areas: education for social change, feminist participatory research, and violence against women. As FPR is an educational process that advocates for social change and the elimination of oppression I first explore the roots of this process through a review of the education for social change literature. This discussion includes an examination of adult education and social movements, the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and liberatory feminist pedagogy. Second, I explore three broad topics within the category of FPR. These include the two research areas that inform FPR: participatory and feminist research. Also within this category I explore the critiques of feminist and participatory research that are offered by feminist participatory researchers. Finally, I review the literature on violence against women with a focus on the social context of woman abuse, women's fear in the community, and the role of adult education in violence prevention. It is not possible within the confines of this review to cover each topic in detail; rather a review of the key features in the literature from each area is used to provide the foundation needed to understand the roots of this process and its applicability to this study's planning, design, and facilitation.

Adult Education for Social Change

Adult education has a long history of involvement in social change. This history developed from movements inspired by radical educators who believed that education should not be isolated from the economic, political, and social realities of society and can be used to change dominant ideologies. Adult educators and researchers who are part of these movements and who follow these theoretical underpinnings are found in diverse settings and use a variety of strategies to facilitate learning for liberation. They share in the vision of adult educators of the late 19th and early 20th century who helped found the field as a distinct endeavour (e.g., Coady, 1939; Lindeman, 1926). During the last 40 years of the 20th century their work has tended to fall toward the margins of practice due to the trend toward professionalization whereby mainstream adult educational practitioners accept the given social structures. These are the structures that social change adult educators challenge through their work.

Selman and Dampier (1991) state that adult education is a "means of empowering individuals to gain a measure of control over their circumstances" (p.117). Through a rather brief discussion of the history of Canadian social change education, they provide examples of projects initiated with specific economic, social, and political ends in mind such as the Antigonish Movement and the Women's Institutes. Through the Antigonish Movement of the 1920s and 1930s, exploited fishermen, farmers, and miners were assisted by adult educators Jimmy Tompkins and Moses Coady in joining together to set up credit unions, canneries, and cooperatives (Selman & Dampier). Brookfield (1986) describes how Coady set out to assist community members identify concerns, explore needs, develop action plans, locate resources, and implement change. Coady's purpose, suggests Brookfield, was to create dissatisfaction with current conditions and develop critical outlooks that would lead to community activism. This was achieved by going into the

community, holding mass meetings that addressed the need for social and economic change; these meetings led to networks of small study groups and kitchen meetings to identify problems and plan solutions.

The Women's Institutes provided a forum for women to discuss their ideas and to advocate on important women's issues. Adelaide Hoodless, an educational reformer concerned with women's issues during the late 19th century, recognized the need for institutes that would improve women's domestic practices; these institutes were carried out in such a way that "learning and action were shared efforts among the members" (Selman & Dampier, 1991, p. 121). Selman and Dampier describe how the initial concern of home economics was quickly broadened to include issues such as community improvement, arts, citizenship and other areas of concern to women. They explain that Women's Institutes were popular forums where women could express their views prior to their right to vote.

Brookfield (1983) reviews many community-learning projects in his book on adult education and the community. He argues that most development and activist initiatives have strong educational components in that participants are engaged in the intentional and purposeful attainment of specified knowledge and skills, as well as learning experientially. This history shows that adult education undertaken by the people of a community can facilitate social action and bring about change in that community.

Much of social change education today is connected to community education and community activist projects just as it was in the early years of the 20th century. Brookfield (1986) suggests that adult education can still work with community activist groups to enhance the educational dimension of their activities. He argues, however, that today the social purpose of adult education is often neglected in favour of the perfection of technique, needs assessments, and instructional designs. Yet, he points out that the learning that goes on in communities today still

adheres to the original purpose of adult education. The adult learning that occurs in communities is "united by a common vision of a society based upon the principle of social justice, participatory control, and democratic decision making processes" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 164).

The current texts on education for social change often draw upon transformative educational theory to define their practice. For example, Arnold et al. (1996) state that transformational approaches to education are part of a movement for the liberation of individuals and groups and seek to transform power relationships between teacher and learner, education and society, and among learners. Arnold et al. define education for social change as "an approach to education that is in the interest of oppressed groups. It involves people in a process of critical analysis so that they can, potentially, act collectively to change oppressive structures. The process is participatory, creative and empowering" (p. 5). The practice of adult education for social change is often done in the context of wider movements for social justice.

The Link Between Adult Education and Social Movements

Social change education is linked to social movements, and several authors (Arnold et al., 1996; Brookfield, 1983, 1986; Crowther & Shaw, 1997; Tobias, 1996) discuss the educational potential of these movements. Crowther and Shaw argue that social movements provide the purpose and resources for collective learning experiences:

> As germinators of alternative values and ideas social movements bring vision to our understanding of the existing order.... For adult educators they are a resource because they are explicitly educational and contribute to the creation of a critically informed public through the dissemination of ideas, values and beliefs which are in opposition to the status quo. (p. 267)

Crowther and Shaw connect critical learning to participating in social action and conclude that such involvement helps adult educators rethink the dimensions of learning that occur in community

action work. Tobias recognizes that adult education is linked to a range of social movements and as such can be viewed as a form of social, cultural, and political practice. Social change education provides a vision of the future without which "our futures would be impoverished" (Crowther & Shaw, p. 274).

The social movements in which adult educators participate usually comprise community level efforts that are designed to help disenfranchised individuals in the community to participate better within the community and within larger society. These movements may involve validating lived experiences, promoting consciousness raising, or engaging in collective action. Brookfield (1983) describes social change education as a liberating model of community adult education. He purports that adult education serves as a "compensatory and readjustment mechanism concerned to promote the collective well-being of an identified disadvantaged or disenfranchised group" (p. 69). Both Brookfield and Arnold et al. (1996) describe liberatory education as that which is in the interest of oppressed groups. Whatever the context or location, the work of social change educators is intent on making a difference in the name of social justice. Today social change practitioners and theorists continue to encourage other adult educators to consider the social and political implications of their work (Arnold et al.; Brookfield; Freire, 1997; Lovett, 1988). Among the more influential of these theorists is Paulo Freire.

Pedagogy of Paulo Freire

Social change practitioners around the world have drawn upon Freire's philosophies and ideas as justification for their work (Arnold et al., 1996; Haig-Brown, 1995; Hall, 1975; Hope & Timmel, 1995; Lovett, 1988; Women's Self Help Network, 1984). This work includes community development, community education, literacy campaigns, feminist pedagogy, aboriginal education, anti-racist education, and participatory research to name a few. As Freire's philosophical foundations and methods are complex, they are difficult to summarize; an overview is insufficient

to do his work justice. I do, however, provide a glimpse of the pedagogy that made him a leader in social change education.

Freire's personal experience with poverty and his Christian faith fueled his moral imperative to side with the oppressed and exploited. A Brazilian-born educator who worked in literacy campaigns, Freire was influenced by a Marxist critique of education and built his theories within the context of his historical beginnings, political beliefs, and a post-revolutionary society (Mayo, 1994). Mayo concludes that Freire's writings are "underpinned by the coexistence of Christian and Marxist ideals... which constitute the basis of a very important politico-religious social movement" (p. 5). Mayo emphasizes that this movement embraces a vision of a society transformed into one free from all forms of structural, explicit, and implicit violence. Conti (1977) summarizes Freire's philosophical foundations as a commitment to populist rather than representative democracy, a belief that education is not neutral and must concern itself with raising the consciousness of the oppressed, and the conviction that only through collective dialogue and action can a solution to oppression be found. This philosophy led Freire to an explicit analysis of how oppression occurs and a method of achieving the liberation of both the oppressed and oppressor.

Freire (1997) originated the problem-posing method of liberatory education. He cautions however, that this method was developed in a particular context and urges other practitioners to develop strategies that are appropriate to the setting in which they are to be used. Allman (1988) and Weiler (1991) point out that Freire is frequently read without consideration for the context in which his theories were developed and that adult and community educators often fail to distinguish between the philosophical approach and the methods used. They each conclude that Freire's methods cannot be used in isolation from his philosophy and context, and that the domestication of

his theories and methods is indeed a problem. The methods in question, namely problem-posing, dialogue, conscientization, and praxis, are described below.

Problem-posing. According to Freire (1997) those seeking to raise the consciousness of others must respect the values and cultures of those with whom they work. Problem-posing is a means of addressing issues that are relevant and meaningful to the people who bring with them cultural expectations and experiences of social discrimination. Freire describes problem-posing as a dynamic process that leads the oppressed into personal and social liberation:

> In problem-posing education people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (p. 64)

Through this process a group of people work together to describe and analyze the roots of their personal experiences to create social connections and mutual responsibility for change (Wallerstein, 1987). The problem-posing method of Freire has its own language to describe aspects of this process. This language includes key concepts such as dialogue, conscientization, and praxis.

Dialogue. Freire (1997) describes mainstream education as a banking method of learning whereby the expert teacher deposits knowledge into the empty vessel that is the student mind. He believes that each individual possesses valuable knowledge and that only through dialogue with others, the authentic form of communication, are participants able to talk about and identify their reality (Butterwick, 1987). Dialogue is "the encounter between men [sic] mediated by the world in the name of the world" (Freire, p. 69).

Conscientization. Conscientization is the process of developing a critical social conscience. This process is grounded in the lives and experiences of participants. Critical consciousness is created through an awareness of the socio-cultural reality that shapes peoples' lives and their ability to transform that reality (Butterwick, 1987).

Praxis. Praxis is a concept that recurs in Freire's writings. Praxis is a cyclic process

whereby action and reflection occur simultaneously, with liberation as a result. Freire advocates for

a kind of intellectual praxis that is capable of transforming a learner's consciousness and can lead to

social and political action (Mayo, 1994). Problem-posing, through dialogue and the

conscientization process, sets the cycle of action and reflection into motion. Hope and Timmel

(1995) and Arnold et al. (1996) point out that input from other resources such as videos, readings,

and lectures is important to this process.

Roles and Qualities of Social Change Educators

The transformative education process of Freire has added to and often inspired the literature

on the roles and qualities of liberatory adult educators. Freire (1996) argues that the educator's role

is fundamentally to enter into dialogue with the participants. Freire (1997) also concludes that this

dialogue cannot exist without profound love for the world and people, humility, and faith in human

kind. It is this stance that builds trust and hope in the people the educator works along side. Below I

present a brief summary of the literature that discusses the roles and qualities needed by

practitioners who work in the field of social change education.

Several social change educators use the terms animator or facilitator to describe their role in

the education process (Arnold et al., 1996; Blondin, 1971; Hope & Timmel, 1995; Shor, 1980;

Titmus, 1981). Arnold et al. use the word facilitator to describe their role as it denotes an equal

relationship between educator and participants. They indicate that they also use the term animator

because facilitator de-emphasizes education as a political activity. Blondin uses the more political

term of animator whose role it is to assist community groups in the development of their ability to

influence change. He explains that the animator helps the group develop skill in analysis and goal

setting, promotes cohesion among participants, and assists them in identifying relevant information

to use in the group process. According to Titmus, the animator acts as a catalyst and resource

person in a democratic process where the emphasis is on the educational value of the experience, the acquisition of learning skills, and the process of personal development. Hope and Timmel view the role of the liberatory educator as a three-pronged including facilitator, animator, and coordinator. The facilitator provides the process ensuring open communication and addressing the group process needs. The animator gives spirit and life to the group by engaging the group in critical thinking, thereby helping the group develop its creative potential. The coordinator draws events, people, and actions together helping the group make sense of its experience and maintain motivation and direction. Like Hope and Timmel, Shor identifies multiple roles for the social change educator including facilitator, advocate for missing perspectives, lecturer, discussion leader, mediator, clearinghouse, and librarian. In addition to identifying the roles of the educator, the literature on social change education suggest that these community educators possess certain qualities.

Hope and Timmel (1996), influenced heavily by Freire, suggest that educators be good listeners and have the ability to establish solidarity and trust with the participants. They describe how social change education leaders can do this by using the skills and qualities that are characteristic of counseling practitioners. These include engaging in problem formulation with people, using empathy, building supportive and caring relationships, possessing good observation skills, and having well developed interpersonal and group communication skills. The work of the British Community Work Group (1973) discusses similar characteristics and suggests that the worker must be able to build relationships characterized by trust and confidence, adapt to different circumstances, and be sensitive to the groups pace, adjusting themselves accordingly.

Through social change education learners enter into a learning process not to acquire facts, but to explore their reality in a social exchange with others. The intent of social change education is radical. Being radical, according to Hope and Timmel (1995), means "going to the roots" (p.

16). Racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressive structures are often found at these roots. Oppression makes the lives of millions of people around the world painful and inhumane. It is here among the disenfranchised, poor, and oppressed that social change educators do their work. This work often includes the critical analysis of issues relating to gender. The women's movement has added much to the discussion of education for social change. I now turn the focus of this review over to a discussion of feminist pedagogical theories.

Liberatory Feminist Pedagogy

Three bodies of knowledge influence the literature on liberatory feminist pedagogy. These include the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, feminist theory, and the method and practice of feminist pedagogy. These theoretical discussions contribute to the understanding of FPR in that feminist participatory researchers draw directly from the learning methods of the women's movement and adult education while challenging the patriarchal attitudes of education. Furthermore, feminist participatory researchers often find themselves working as both academics and activists.

Learning and the women's movement. The key to understanding the educational potential of liberatory feminist pedagogy is to examine its roots, namely, the women's movement, and its method of consciousness-raising. The women's movement, like the social movements discussed in previous subsections, is profoundly educational. However, its educational aspect is unique, as Miles (1989) explains:

> Educational theory and theories of knowledge and learning are central to the women's movement and to feminists in ways that are not true of other social movements. For feminists, personal change and growth are not guaranteed by-products of struggle that many Marxists and other radicals have tended to presume. Feminists, instead, consciously structure their practice to maximize personal transformation as both a means and end of a struggle which explicitly refuses the separation of process and product. (p. 4)

Miles describes this critical educational process as a learning experience that encourages equality, provides students with skills, resources, and intellectual tools to challenge oppressive social structures, and integrates vocational training, personal empowerment, personal enlightenment, and social action. In addition, Miles points out that social movements challenge the separation between daily life and knowledge production. A distinguishing feature of the women's movement is the refusal by their leaders to divide subject matter by discipline, preferring instead an interdisciplinary approach to real problems and breaking down the monopoly of knowledge by recognizing learners as knowledge creators. Grounded in the subjective experience of women's lives, learning through the women's movement facilitates a collective investigation of the world and the self. The primary process in which this has been achieved is through consciousness-raising.

Consciousness-raising. In analyzing Freire's conscientization method and the consciousness-raising strategies of the woman's movement, Butterwick (1987) concludes that while conscientization is well known in the field of adult education the "emancipatory power of consciousness raising activities within the women's movement has received limited attention" (p. 19). In North America consciousness-raising began in the late 1960s among women who were active in the civil rights movement and who began to demand that the strategies used by civil rights groups to achieve equality be used to address women's liberation. Weiler (1991) explains how this consciousness raising focused on issues relating to the sexual division of labour. As the women's movement began to reach less radical women it lost its commitment to community-based collective change, focusing instead on individual and personal empowerment. Accordingly, it found expression in formal education. Butterwick is of the opinion that consciousness-raising is the foundation of educational activities of the women's movement and, although in a different form, it continues today through women's studies classes, women's centres, and job re-entry

programs. Hart (1990) states that consciousness-raising "reckons with the internal and external effects of power, which precisely makes it a form of emancipatory learning entailing the process of critical reflection and self reflection" (p. 48). The women's movement and its process of consciousness-raising has contributed to feminist theory and feminist pedagogy.

Feminist theory. Feminist theory contributes to liberatory feminist pedagogy in its emphasis on the nature of structural power relationships and the links to the women's movement. Tisdell (1993) states that feminist theory deals with the nature of structural power relationships and interlocking systems of oppression "based on gender, race, class, [and] age" (p. 211). Feminist theory "validates differences, challenges universal claims to truth, and seeks to create social transformation in a world of shifting and uncertain meanings" (Weiler, 1991, pp. 449-450). Butterwick (1987) describes three common themes of feminist theory. The first includes the belief that women are oppressed, but that this situation can be changed. The second is that the personal is political, which means women experience unequal power relationships in their personal lives that contribute to their structural oppression in society. The third is that the development of a feminist consciousness can lead to personal and social transformation regardless of the ideological differences between feminists.

Feminist pedagogy. Maher (1987) notes two bodies of literature on feminist pedagogy: gender-focused literature which addresses the development of personal growth and empowerment and liberatory literature which addresses structural change and includes direct social action. Tisdell (1998) organizes feminist pedagogical literature into three models. First, like Maher she includes a psychological model that focuses on the individual with an emphasis on personal awareness and individual differences. The study of women's ways of knowing by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) is a good example of this model of inquiry.

For Tisdell's (1998) second and third models she divides the liberatory model discussed by Maher into two streams of thought: structural and post-structural feminist pedagogy. Structural feminist pedagogy is concerned with challenging social structures such as racism and patriarchy, whereas the post-structural model emphasizes the "shifting identity of student and instructor [and] positionality of all participants, including the instructor" (p.145). Positionality is a term used by post-structural feminists to identify the "connection between the individual and the intersecting structural systems of privilege and oppression that affect how participants construct knowledge, discuss their own experience, and interact in the classroom" (Tisdell, p. 146). This involves naming one's oppression and one's privilege. Briskin (1990) and Gupta (1993) discuss post-structural theory in relation to the teaching and learning in the classroom. Identifying oppression and privilege is a way feminist teachers can address the contradictions women experience as learners, teachers, and change makers.

Liberatory feminist pedagogy utilizes the essential concepts born of the women's movement to exemplify its emancipatory intent that is different from that of non-feminist social change education. Feminist pedagogy, argues Briskin (1990), is about teaching from a feminist world-view. This involves teaching in a way that recognizes relationships of power, values the experiences of women, and incorporates the affective, emotional, and experiential aspects of the learning process. The philosophy, the method, the context, the content, and the process of a learning event are perceived through a gender lens. One of the interesting themes in liberatory feminist literature is the critique of adult education.

Feminist critique of adult education. The feminist critique of adult education points out the dearth of information on the experiences of women within the field. Hugo (1990), Burstow (1994), and Smith (1992) have noted the gender bias in the study and practice of adult education. Hugo states that adult education has a class conscience but as yet no gender conscience. Hugo and

Smith report that historical accounts of women in adult education are sadly lacking as women are seldom discussed in the literature due to the power men hold in defining the field and determining what actually constitutes adult education. Some male adult educators do, however, attempt to incorporate feminist literature in their texts on adult education (Lovett, 1988; Mezirow & Associates, 1990) but this is clearly the exception rather than the rule. A recent book by MacKeracher (1996), a female adult educator, is one of the few Canadian texts on adult education that includes gender related issues throughout.

As one example of how adult education is strongly influenced by male thinkers and male hegemony, which privileges male models of learning, Burstow (1994) points out that although Malcolm Knowles contributed to adult education by changing the top-down models, he still projects a liberal male bias in his work. Burstow claims that this sets up a learning system where adult is synonymous with male, and preference is given to male modes of learning:

> There is a clear preference of: independence over both dependence and interdependence; isolation over relation; the individual over society; the explicit over the implicit; the straight forward and highly directional over the tentative, the groping toward, and the divergent; the cognitive over the emotional; the objective over the subjective or intersubjective; and the logical, scientific, and highly measurable over the artistic and non numeric. (p. 6)

Burstow concludes that what continues to dominate adult education is the white middle class male bias emphasizing rational expertise, discrediting personal knowing.

Several authors believe that the women's challenge to adult education has the potential to add to its social purpose (Miles, 1989; Stalker, 1998; Weiler, 1991). Miles, for example, says that women's analysis and integration into adult education "would strengthen the important and currently embattled social purpose of adult education and help progressive educators realize more fully many of the pedagogical principles they have developed and worked with over decades" (p. 2). Stalker, in a recent discussion of women in adult education history, states that although

women have pushed past oppressive, misogynistic barriers in adult education, there is much to be gained by uncovering and confronting the misogyny of yesterday and today. Doing so would give adult educators a new appreciation for the women in adult education's history "whose commitment and vigour strengthened the field" (p. 249).

Furthermore, Weiler (1991) criticizes Freire for his use of the male referent and lack of definition of the abstract terms he uses. In Freire's writing, argues Weiler, oppression is assumed to be a common, shared experience. She points out that Freire does not address overlapping forms of oppression that occur, nor does he explore the combination of privilege and oppression experienced by some educators (e.g., aboriginal women). The underpinnings of post-structuralist feminist pedagogy are visible in Weiler's discussion of oppression and authority. She demonstrates that feminist pedagogy can inform Freire's theories by suggesting a "situated theory of oppression and subjectivities, and for the need to consider the contradictions of such universal claims to truth or process" (p. 455).

Feminist critique is not limited to the analysis of the misogynist attitudes and gender blind aspects of adult education as a discipline. The literature also addresses the distinction between the community and the academy.

Feminism, the community, and the academy. When the literature on feminist pedagogy is surveyed, what stands out is the emphasis on feminist teaching and learning within the academy (e.g., Briskin, 1990; Briskin & Coulter, 1992; Gupta, 1993; Weiler, 1988). Starkly missing from the adult education literature is a discussion of these issues in adult community learning settings. Feminist pedagogy applications outside the academy tend to surface in small community education handbooks or when consciousness raising is discussed. Yet, on a daily basis many feminists across Canada engage in teaching and learning activities from a feminist perspective. Some examples include advocacy training in sexual assault centres, women's job re-entry programs, and

community literacy projects. Wine and Ristock (1991) point out that feminist activists have succeeded in changing the public understanding of male violence, creating networks of organizations, developing publications, and contributing to the mass educational endeavour of shifting the "consciousness of the Canadian public in terms of affirmation of women's right to equality" (p. 1).

Activism and theorizing are both important sources of knowledge creation and need to be reunited. Wine and Ristock (1991) recognize that women's studies would not exist without the activism of the women's movement and, similarly, many activist feminists come to academic women's studies programs to ground their community work in the feminist literature and to gain credentials. Although there is much overlapping and both circles can and do learn from one another, bridging this gap is not easy. Christiansen-Ruffman (1991) demonstrates how the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW) provides a context within which "feminists scattered in a variety of institutional contexts may work together, learn from each another and develop new ways to understand and to change societal institutions and to transform patriarchal social structures" (p. 281). This bridging of activism and the academy through research is not new and holds promise for uniting adult education, activism, and feminist pedagogy and research in their pursuit of social change. Feminist Participatory Research acts as a catalyst for bridging education and research as a dual process when liberation is the primary purpose and when individuals and communities are interested in researching and learning about problems that contribute to their oppression. I now turn to a review of Feminist Participatory Research.

Feminist Participatory Research

Feminist Participatory Research is a convergence of the education for social change process, a form of liberatory feminist pedagogy, and a branch of participatory research. FPR draws upon both participatory and feminist research to create a process that utilizes the

knowledge of women to facilitate women's liberation. A review of the literature on FPR

illustrates its feminist underpinnings and the critique of mainstream, participatory, and feminist

research. I begin this section with overviews of participatory and feminist research and then

discuss FPR's critique of both participatory and feminist research.

Participatory Research

Like learning for social change, participatory research in adult education sits on the

margins of the field. Adult education is still dominated by a positivist and empiricist research

approach (Deshler & Hagen, 1989). Yet, liberatory adult educators who involve themselves in

research activities choose to align themselves with research processes that reflect their philosophy

of liberation. Participatory research is one such process. The literature on participatory research is

influenced by community development workers of the south, feminist research, and

transformative adult education intended to counter domination and exploitation. The terms used

in the participatory research literature are varied; for example terms such as activist research,

participatory action research, praxis research, transformative research, and collaborative research

have been used. Today, adult educators with a liberatory perspective often use the term

participatory research (e.g., Gaventa, 1988; Hall, 1992; Maguire, 1987; Park, 1992). This

perspective regards participatory research as a vehicle for the creation of local knowledge, as a

process of learning about oppression, its origins and remedies, and as a catalyst for the use of

popular knowledge and skill to inform and engage in social change.

The goals and purposes of participatory research stem from its beginnings in the south

and marginalized groups in North America. Yeich (1996) recognizes that participatory research is

greatly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, specifically his emphasis on community control,

developing a critical consciousness, and generating learning through dialogue and interaction

with others. Gaventa (1988) points out that in the United States and other developed countries,

participatory research has developed and flourished and is used by adult educators who work with communities addressing power structures and with right-to-know movements. Much of this development is in response to the ineffective and exploitive nature of traditional social science research done on marginalized people and groups.

Hall (1975) argues that orthodox social science research methodology used to study marginalized people is based on attempts by the researchers to develop an approach to understanding human behaviour that resembles the natural sciences. Park (1992) argues that the techniques used by these researchers are rigid and privilege the experts, who control the production and distribution of knowledge for their own gain. Brown and Tandon (1983), Hall (1979), and McTaggart (1997) challenge traditional social science as oversimplifying reality and promoting the myth of objectivity while being elitist in nature. Hall suggests that this position views the production of knowledge as a commodity wherein the information gathered from the people is packaged as books, seminars, or journal articles and sold for money, prestige, or power while the need to help the people from whence the information came is a low priority. Hall also points out that for adult educators, this contradicts the principles of their practice.

Participatory research was conceived as a way to respond to the needs of oppressed people. Its purpose is to bring about progressive social change. Definitions of participatory research from the literature reflect the emphasis toward social justice, solidarity, participation, morality, and action that characterize this approach. Hall (1992) describes participatory research as "a social action process that is biased in favor of the dominated, exploited, poor or otherwise ignored men and women and groups" (p. 16). Park defines participatory research as "a way of creating knowledge that involves learning from investigation and applying what is learned to collective problems through social action" (p. 30). Similarly, Cancian (1993) emphasizes that

"participatory research is a radical type of activist social research in which the people being studied or the intended beneficiaries of the research have substantial control over, and participation in, the research" (p. 93). This research approach contains several themes unique to participatory research – participation, politics and change, empowerment, and the roles of the researcher.

Participation. Participants are expected to be full participants, not merely involved as respondents or subjects of a study (Deshler & Hagen, 1989; McTaggart, 1997). They share in the way the research is conceptualized and practised and how the results are used. This participation is a form of democratic knowledge creation through dialogue, and its success rests on the existence of a functioning collectivity (Park, 1992; Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992). Gaventa (1988) points out that this collective includes people who want a voice in decisions that affect their lives -- such as civil rights groups, environmentalists, or labour unions. Participation, clarifies Gaventa, includes encouraging participants to draw upon their popular knowledge that may include common sense, folklore, or local wisdom.

Politics and change. Participatory research practitioners and theorists agree that this research paradigm is profoundly political. Brown and Tandon (1983) explain that participatory researchers have a commitment to an explicit ideological perspective that fuels their work. McTaggart (1997) states that these explicit politics "aspire to communitarian and egalitarian politics" as people work towards justice (p. 6). Hall's (1975, 1979, 1992) numerous writings on the subject support this view. He states that the research process is the liberation of the oppressed and the mobilization of these people to create solutions to social problems. Cancian (1993) challenges the notion that "real" participatory research must include actions that radically reduce inequality and produce social transformation. Instead, she believes a project should be judged a success if it leads to change at the community level, societal level, or if it assists in the

development of a critical consciousness for individual participants. Park (1992) similarly notes that many participatory research projects provide little collective action but instead change the behaviour of participants, raise consciousness, or strengthen community networks.

Empowerment. Participatory research empowers participants in several ways. Petras and Porpora (1993) explore empowerment and power relations and suggest that fostering dialogue equally between the researcher and the community reduces the power of the researcher while empowering the community. Seeing its efforts taken seriously, "the community accordingly begins to take itself seriously" (p. 115). Deshler and Selener (1991) discuss how "through the reduction and elimination of economic, social, political, and technical oppression" the research activity can contribute to individual and local empowerment (p. 15). Deshler and Selener conclude that transformative research can empower participants to take practical action as individuals or empower groups to change oppressive structures as part of a popular liberation movement. Cancian (1993) discusses participatory research as personally empowering because participants learn critical thinking skills and research skills, increase their competencies, and make new social contacts. Furthermore, Park (1993) emphasizes the personal gains of participants, as individuals become "more aware, more critical, more assertive, more creative, and more active" (p. 2). These gains are a direct consequence of participating in the research process.

Participatory research process. One feature of participatory research is its reluctance to develop a step-by-step guide or concrete model to follow (Hall, 1975; Park, 1993). This is due to the unique nature and context of each participatory research project. Park states the design must be a reflection of the needs of the people involved and should emerge from their experience. Hall defines participatory research as a process involving three components: research, education, and action. According to Deshler and Selener (1991), the research, education, and action processes are

not separable but rather overlap and give participatory research its strength. Although in practice they are not separable, each can be extrapolated in theory.

The first component is the research process; there is controversy as to whether participatory research can be called research, because it does not adhere to the canons of scientific rigour. However, McTaggart (1997) argues, "Participatory research is research, not just political activism or oppositional politics...it is about the conscientious objectification of concrete experience and change" (p. 7). According to McTaggart, critics are typically ignorant of the methodological literature that defines this process as a research strategy. Park (1993) responds to the claim that participatory research does not keep proper distance from the subject, and thus compromises objectivity and validity, by stating participatory research cannot be judged in terms of positivist science. Park explains that these criticisms come from a branch of science that equates valuable knowledge with what the natural sciences create. Park (1992) claims that by doing this research adult educators expand the domain of intellectual knowledge and "turn up side down the relationship between theory and practice, and restore the place of ordinary people as creators of knowledge" (p. 30). For Hall (1975) the process is equally important: "Research cannot be justified solely as the basis for intellectual exercise...it is important that the community or population gain not only from the results but from the process itself" (p. 29).

The second component is the educational aspect, which is undisputed as a key element of the participatory research process (Deshler & Selener, 1991; Hall, 1975; Park, 1993; Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992; Yeich, 1996). Park argues that participatory research is profoundly educational:

> Education here is understood not in the sense of the didactic transmission of knowledge characteristic of much classroom teaching, but rather in the sense of learning by searching, or researching. The result of this kind of activity is living knowledge that gets translated directly into action, because it is created with this concrete appropriation in mind. (p. 3)

Park describes this as a direct path between knowledge creation and its utilization. His

perspective links the research and educational aspects together. Hall also makes this connection

when he states that the "research process should be seen as part of a total educational experience

which serves to establish community needs and increase awareness and commitment in the

community" (p. 29). Hall also connects participatory research to adult learning principles,

pointing out that unlike conventional research it is based on adult needs and emphasizes what

adults can do as active participants in the process.

The third component is action; unlike traditional research, participatory research is directed

toward liberatory change. The literature has little to say on action as a process in itself. Like the

previous two components of participatory research, action is dependent on the whole process.

Action is often the visible aspect of the process in which the research has provided useful

information upon which to act. Stoecker and Bonacich (1992) argue that the participatory research

process helps people behave more democratically while trying to fight racism, classism, sexism,

and other oppressions. Consequently, the emphasis is on change as a result of the inquiry.

Smith (1997) points out how participatory research is simultaneously a method for

research, a process of education in the development of a critical conscience, and also a generator of

action. She illustrates the action-reflection cycle as part of the whole:

> A group of people collectively enters into a living process, examining their reality by asking
> penetrating questions, mulling over assumptions related to their everyday struggles,
> deliberating alternatives, and taking meaningful actions. They strip away the veneer of life
> circumstances, revealing the foundation of why things are the way they are. This back-and-
> forth, action-reflection process develops increased critical consciousness among group
> members. People in PAR are overtly political, working to change the status quo where
> unjust social, economic, and decision making structures exist, to break free of constraints,
> and to open up possibilities on both inner and outer levels. (p. 177)

Smith's description explores the connection between education for social change and participatory

research. Both processes are concerned for social justice and the creation of a critical

consciousness. Both draw upon the action-reflection process to uncover these injustices and both

insist on facilitating change in people's understanding of their situation and the structures of

oppression. Participatory research adds the research component to the work of education for social

change, making it educational research for social change with both the participants and adult

educator learning through researching together. This process involves adopting specific roles that

are also shared or negotiated with the participants. While there is not a great deal on information

on the roles of the researcher in the participatory research process, what is written is helpful to

understand how the facilitation of this process can look in practice.

Researcher roles in participatory research. Groff (1995), Smith (1997) and Law (1997)

argue for the researcher to use roles that are appropriate to the needs of the group, encouraging role

sharing when possible. These various roles are discussed in participatory research literature and

can include process consultant and process moderator (Hughes, 1996), advisor (Yeitch, 1996)

motivator, organizer, and educator (Maguire, 1993; Park, 1993) time manager (Groff), and co-

learner (Brooks & Watkins, 1994; Brown, 1982; Couto, 1987; Hall, 1975). These roles are similar

to those of the social change educator discussed earlier. However the participatory research

literature, concerned with role and power sharing, discusses how these roles shift from researcher

to participant and the consequences of this for the researcher.

Smith (1997) and Groff (1995) point out that researchers often must balance these various

roles, shifting to appropriate strategies as required by the group's process and the stages of the

research. Smith suggests that this balancing is a skill that develops with practice and with attention

to cues and feedback that result over time and with involvement in the action-reflection process. It

is for this reason that Smith argues for guidance for those researchers with limited experience in

group facilitation, participatory methods, and conflict resolution. Groff emphasizes the need for the

researcher to be self-aware, self-critical, and rely on intuition and rationality when negotiating these roles throughout the research process.

In a participatory research study of parents of children with disabilities Law (1997) found that over time the participants assumed greater control over meetings and discussions, and her role then altered between support person and facilitator. She found it was important to recognize this shift and know when to disengage from the group so that they directed the process. These shifting roles are unique to each participatory research project and often result in ambiguity as roles shift between researcher and participant. Law stresses that the researcher needs to be comfortable with ambiguity because often it is unclear the direction the process will take. Moreover, the role the researcher adopts will depend on the circumstances and stages of the research process as well as on the level of the group member's participation. Smith (1997) argues "this ambiguity is deliberate, as it allows responsiveness to the particular situation and the people involved" (p. 187). Similarly, Brown suggests that continued ambiguity about method is desirable for participatory research because it keeps the process flexible and vital. One of the purposes of participatory research suggested by Smith is to shift the "power-over relations to a power-with and power-from-within" through the research process (p. 173). This shift in power is demonstrated in the sharing of roles between participant and researcher, which as discussed previously, is one of principles of participatory research.

Feminist Research

Feminist research has its origins in both the critique of the positivist social science paradigm and the women's movement. The criticisms of mainstream social research by feminist researchers mirror those of participatory researchers. Here I give a brief synopsis of the feminist research critique of traditional social science research. I also summarize the basic tenets of feminist research.

Criticisms of social science research. Similar to participatory researchers, feminist

researchers challenge the claims by social scientists to objectivity and value-free research (see

Chovanec, 1994; Gelsthorpe, 1992; Lather, 1986; Maguire, 1987). Lather argues that just as there

is no neutral education there is no neutral science because research paradigms inherently reflect

the researcher's beliefs about the world. Chovanec concurs and states that because science is not

value free, research cannot be neutral. Gelsthorpe expands on this notion in her definition of

feminist research:

> Feminist research is seen to be antipositivist; it involves a link between beliefs, life and
> research; it is opposed to what is sometimes termed "decorticated" theory – theory which
> is essentially speculative, concerned with abstractions and does not reflect knowledge
> grounded in lived experience. (p. 94)

Gelsthorpe also states that feminist research is often accused of lacking objectivity; ironically, this

is precisely the concept feminist research questions and scrutinizes as a myth. Objectivity, argue

feminists such as Gelsthorpe, is not possible as researchers and the researched bring their own

subjectivity to the work they do. This subjectivity is a primary source of knowledge upon which

feminist researchers draw.

Maguire (1987) points out that feminist research has called into question the centrality of

male power in mainstream research. This aspect of the critique finds its origins in the women's

movement. Maguire explains that in the early days of feminist research, women "came to

recognize that the study of women was absent or marginalized in their respective disciplines" (p.

76). The women's movement did for feminist research what it did for feminist pedagogy in

turning previously private and personal circumstances into public ones for the researcher and

researched, and the educator and learner. Kelly, Burton, and Regan (1994) state that early

definitions of feminist research centred on the creation of "knowledge about women through

research with women" (p. 29). Stanley and Wise (1990) recognize this definition as a reaction to

the existing sexual bias in social science research, but it was soon seen as too simplistic because categories such as women, gender, and structure failed to address assumptions and generalizations within them. Women shared experiences but not necessarily the same ones. Stanley and Wise explain that the experiences of black feminists and lesbian feminists had, until this point been invisible.

During the 1980s, women of color and lesbian researchers placed the differences between women on every feminist agenda and demanded a reworking of what feminism meant (Joyappa & Self, 1996; Reinharz, 1992). Today, the feminist research literature reflects and addresses the diversity of the feminist movement. This diversity includes feminist research that adheres to research paradigms that add to the body of cumulative knowledge as well as those that "maximize the research process as a change enhancing, reciprocally educative encounter" (Lather, 1988, p. 571).

Several authors argue that feminist research is transdisciplinary (Joyappa & Martin, 1996; Merriam & Simpson, 1995; Stanley & Wise, 1990), multiparadigmatic (Lather, 1988) and has little agreement in terms of method and practice (Joyappa & Self, 1996; Maguire, 1987; Reinharz, 1992). What this literature suggests is that feminist empirical efforts are not a monolith; rather, they consist of many voices, cut across numerous disciplines, and lack a single definition of how to do feminist research. What they have in common, states Reinharz, is the women's movement and women's experiences of outrage and hope. Reinharz also argues that a consensus on method might prevent diversity from increasing within feminist research. It is this "cumulative multiplicity," she argues, that assists feminist researchers as they look "to each other for concepts, research designs, theories, and inspiration" (p. 246). Joyappa and Self state there is no universal women's experience and feminist research therefore grounds itself in the "global agenda of improving the lives of women in the specific circumstances of individual communities where it is

practiced" (p. 16). Which theory, method, or topic a feminist researcher uses depends on that researcher's personal life, perspective, discipline, and political agenda. What has become important is the acknowledgement and naming of these differences and locations.

Tenets of feminist research. Although feminist research is diverse, it shares some common tenets. First, feminist research is the doing of feminism and facilitating women's liberation. Reinhartz (1992) states that a feminist perspective is not a method but rather a way of viewing the world. It can adhere to liberal, liberatory, Marxist, socialist beliefs, or stem from any number of political leanings. It may include methods from mainstream social sciences or those advocated by emancipatory and critical theorists, educators, and researchers. Yet the analysis of gender and oppression is central to feminism regardless of orientation and is likewise central to feminist research. The starting point for feminist research is changing the status quo and transforming patriarchy. Lather (1988) states research is only feminist if it leads to action that is in the interest of women. Feminist research has a liberatory intent and uses methods to create useful knowledge for women and other oppressed people in order to make a difference in their lives or in society as a whole.

Second, feminist researchers explore the lived experience of women and value diversity (Cook & Fonow, 1990; Mies, 1983; Reinharz, 1992). They are interested in the daily, lived experiences of women and use methods that enable researchers to hear participants' voices in order to uncover previously unknown realities (such as relationship abuse) that are submerged in women's private lives. Exploring lived experience, argue Cook and Fonow, includes taking into account the diversity and complexity of the female experience. Feminist researchers seek to honour and acknowledge the voices of all women regardless of class, race, sexual orientation, ability, religion, age, or national origin. This tenet also embraces subjectivity as a source of knowledge. Personal histories, views, feelings, and theories are gathered through interviews, group dialogues,

narratives, and collaborative inquiry processes--such as consciousness raising--in order to make visible their shared realities.

A third tenet is that feminist research is empowering and must equalize research relationships. Feminist research is not just research about women. It is research for women to be used to empower them in their personal lives, in their communities, and in their society by creating social change (Reinharz, 1992). Gelsthorpe (1992), and Kelly, Burton and Regan (1994) suggest that to facilitate empowerment feminist research attempts to share control of the research process with the individual, group, or community. It demands researchers address how their personal values and politics influence the research design and the participants. This enables researchers to insert themselves into the research activity aware of their power and their politics. Feminist researchers, aware that research has been largely a process of domination, attempt to serve the needs of the exploited and oppressed by adopting a "view from below" and working alongside the participants (Mies, 1983, p. 123).

Related to the above statement are the ethical and moral implications of feminist research. A view from below implies connection and rapport building with the participants, not to give science more authentic data but as an effort to struggle with women against oppression and exploitation (Mies, 1983). The anti-positivist stance of feminist research is in response to the unethical and immoral practices of mainstream research that takes information away from the people for the sake of the knowledge industry and gives little in return (Cook & Fonow, 1990). Feminist research is grounded in respect for the human capacity to know and to change.

A fifth tenet of feminist research is that it is educational and uses many methods. Feminist research is the process of learning to perceive political, economic, and social contradictions. This greater awareness can lead to social change. Feminist research often uses consciousness-raising and conscientization processes to maximize the dialogue and the educational exchange between

the research participants and the researcher (Cook & Fonow, 1990; Mies, 1983). The context of the research and the philosophy of the researcher influence the selection of methods to carry out this process. Gelsthorpe (1992) explains that methods from the social sciences -- such as interviews, ethnography, participant observers, and group dialogue -- are often adapted and used by feminist researchers. Emancipatory feminist researchers, however, are more inclined to use action-reflection research methods such as consciousness raising groups, participatory research, role-plays, psycho-drama, and group discussions, and are also more likely to follow the research through an action phase.

Feminist research, as a form of critical social science, generates critique of its own practices. In carving a unique place for themselves within the critical research community, feminist participatory researchers take issue with various aspects of feminist research as well as participatory research practice.

FPR's Critique of Feminist and Participatory Research

Feminist participatory research follows the tenets of feminist and participatory research and is reflected in research that uses methods that empower the researched, contribute to change-enhancing social theory, and build change into the research design. Feminist participatory researchers however, find limitations in both feminist and participatory research. Through this critique the unique aspects of FPR become apparent, thereby distinguishing it from feminist and participatory research.

Maguire (1987) attributes the same criticisms to participatory research as she does to male bias in traditional research. In reviewing the literature, Maguire found an androcentric male bias: "participatory research appears to be colluding, however unwittingly, with the prominent male bias of the social sciences" (p. 50). Although participatory researchers seek to break the positivist monopoly over knowledge production, she argues that they do not address the male

monopoly of participatory research. Women are "often invisible, submerged, or hidden in case study reports or theoretical discussions" (p. 48). Maguire finds several problems with participatory research in regard to gender. These include the predominantly male-centred language used in the literature, women's unequal access to project participation due to their multiple roles, the inadequate attention given to obstacles to women's participation, and women's unequal access to the project's benefits. She also states that participatory researchers often make unsubstantiated generalizations of their research findings to women when the data is based on men's experiences. Finally, she is critical of the absence of feminist perspective in theoretical debates and the exclusion of gender from the participatory research issues' agenda.

Maguire (1987) suggests that if participatory research begins with people's everyday experience, it must start to recognize that women's everyday experience is different from men's. Despite Maguire's critique, the literature is still largely androcentric with only a few participatory researchers in the past decade mentioning the contributions of women (e.g., Hall, 1992; Park, 1993; Stoecker & Bonacich, 1992). Apart from Maguire's comprehensive book on the subject, examples of FPR are rare. Those that are available (see Moss, 1995; Shaw, 1995; Smith, 1997) draw upon Maguire's text, feminist research theory, or participatory research literature to inform their work. Maguire points out that "as emerging radical approaches to social research, feminist and participatory research are parallel but as yet unconnected approaches and largely ignorant of one another" (p. 71). Today, this is still the reality.

Several feminist researchers advocate for a process that is directed towards social change and praxis and not merely another approach for creating data that informs change (Kelly et al., 1994; Lather, 1988; Maguire, 1987). Kelly et al. encourage researchers to adopt an anti-oppressive feminist praxis approach that aims to account for and take account of the sources of oppression and areas of privilege in women's lives. Maguire critiques feminist research for not

identifying how to go about emancipatory feminist research. Maguire also states that feminist

research adheres to an emancipatory intent but does not provide any concrete steps to act on the

results. Both Maguire and Lather urge feminist researchers to be as concerned with the process of

the research as they are with the product. Maguire argues that "until feminist research more

actively experiments with ways to make the process, not merely the products, empowering for

both the researcher and researched, the goal of producing knowledge for women's emancipation

may not be fully reached" (p. 104). Lather believes the process is more important than the product

because empowering methods contribute to consciousness raising and transformative social

action. At this point, the research becomes praxis, and praxis-oriented inquiry stimulates a

cyclical process of action and reflection that contributes to emancipatory knowledge, which in

turn is of benefit to the participant and the researcher in the pursuit of social change. In this

regard, Maguire suggests that feminist research can gain much in terms of how to go about

emancipating women by integrating the participatory research process into their research designs.

In sum, FPR uses the gender lens of the women's movement to address the women-

blindness of participatory research and attends to the inaction of feminist research by utilizing

participatory research strategies. FPR is an emancipatory learning strategy. It develops an action

and liberatory component to learning and research that is typical of adult education's historical

emancipatory purpose. Furthermore, as a research strategy and educational process it is congruent

with adult education principles, which view adults as whole persons participating actively in

society. Like participatory research, the processes that characterize FPR include investigation,

education, and action. As investigation, FPR begins with women researching experience through

problem posing. As an educational process, FPR analyzes the structural causes of named

problems through collective discussions and activities using social change and feminist

pedagogical educational approaches. As an action process, FPR encourages people to take

collective action on issues originating in the research and educational activities. All three of these processes are carried out using a feminist perspective. One area in which this process can influence change is in the prevention of violence against women.

Violence Against Women

In this section I provide an overview of violence against women within society – with a focus on the Canadian context. I then review the literature on the nature of women's fear in the community and how this fear serves both to keep women safe and to act as a form of social control that limits women's freedom to enjoy their communities. Finally, I address the impact of violence on learning and educating, and the current trends in violence prevention education.

The Context of Violence Against Women

Violence against women in Canada is a major social problem and includes a broad spectrum of events such as murder, wife battering, sexual assault, threats of violence, intimidation, and sexual harassment (Johnson, 1996). These violations are linked to the "social/economic/political structures, values and policies that silence women in our society, support gender-based discrimination, and maintain women's inequality" (Subcommittee on the Status of Women, 1991). Johnson points out that women are uniquely vulnerable to sexual violence. The socialization of women does not encourage physical violence, nor do most women have the "physical strength to engage in violence, particularly against a much bigger and stronger male opponent. Men receive both the training and the social assurance that in certain circumstances aggression will be tolerated, including violence against one's wife" (p. xix). Johnson does not dismiss the fact that men experience a great deal more reported cases of violence but rather explains that violent events aimed specifically at women because of their

gender have devastating consequences for large numbers of women in the form of fear and caution that permeate their lives. This pervasive threat of violence keeps women from achieving status that is equal to that of men (Johnson, 1996; MacLeod, 1989; Stanko, 1993; Women's Action Centre Against Violence, 1996).

Women, Fear, and the Community

Women in Canada worry about their safety. In a recent Canadian study it was found that one in two women experience at least one incident of male violence after the age of 16 (Johnson, 1996). In regard to women's concern for their safety, 40% of Canadian women worry about being home alone at night; 60% are worried about walking alone in their neighbourhoods after dark; and 83% express worry about walking alone to their cars after dark. This study further reports that 87% of Canadian women have experienced sexual harassment.

Gender differences are reported frequently in the research on the fear of crime (Gordon & Riger, 1988; MacLeod, 1989; Stanko, 1993). Young men, who recount the least amount of fear, report the highest level of violence whereas women report a lower level of victimization, while having higher levels of fear. MacLeod states that fear is linked to women's economic, social, and political vulnerability. Women are more likely than men to be poor and therefore less likely to afford safe transportation, housing, or alarms. She further explains that women are less inclined to report crime because they are more likely to be blamed for their victimization. Gordon and Riger completed one of the first comprehensive studies on the nature of female fear. Their study revealed that women's fear of crime is actually the fear of rape. Stanko concurs and adds that because women's encounters with any man could be dangerous, "women's fear of crime is in many respects women's fear of men" (p. 157). In an earlier article, Stanko (1991) describes how women are left to sort out the safe from the unsafe men. This creates a problem for women as the power to define which circumstance is appropriate for sexualized comments and behaviour is left

to men who have the prerogative to "sexualize women any time, any place, if they so choose" (Stanko, p. 57).

Feminist writers have pointed to the social control element of fear. For example, Kelly and Radford (1996) explain that women are often "caught between dominant 'malestream' definitions and their own experiential knowledge" (p. 21). They explain that malestream knowledge limits what counts as abuse through definitions in law, medicine, and psychiatry; malestream knowledge includes what men define as violating and excludes what women find humiliating and abusive. In this way it is men who decide when women are to speak up about violence and, "as the perpetrators of sexual violence [they] have a vested interest in women's silence" (p. 20). Madriz (1997) argues that the fear of crime is "one of the most oppressive and deceitful sources of informal control of women" (p. 343). She argues women's fear is exacerbated by stereotypical images of criminals and victims, leading women to restrict leisure and professional activities and to develop codes of ideal victim behaviour such as avoiding the streets and strangers, staying inside, and dressing properly; these codes clearly limit a woman's right to participate in her community.

Johnson (1996) points out that wide range of acts not considered criminal are threatening and serve to remind women that they are potential targets for sexual violence. Johnson says that because these experiences are so common they have been overlooked in understanding women's fear. These include whistling, evaluative comments, leering, humiliating comments, obscene phone calls, being followed, or being rubbed up against in buses and elevators or other close spaces. Johnson points out that women are never sure which of these activities is a precursor to a sexual assault or other crime and are often unsure what kind of response from her will deter or aggravate the situation. Sheffield (1993) calls these common sexual intimidation tactics a form of sexual terrorism that is "manifested through both actual or implied violence" and she states that

they "serve to remind women and girls that they are at risk and vulnerable to male aggression just because they are female" (p. 73).

Johnson (1996), and Gordon and Riger (1988) conclude that small doses of fear enhance a sense of prudence in potentially dangerous situations, enabling women to use precautions that help keep them safe, or at least feeling safe in their communities. Stanko (1993) points out that women's precautions do not guarantee protection and that women are assaulted more often by men known to them than by strangers. Gordon and Riger rationalize that women cannot afford to discount their fear of violence before sexual violence is eliminated. Gordon and Riger provide specific suggestions that may eradicate sexual violence. These include those that aim to reduce sexual assault, educate the community about the facts of rape, and most importantly involve people in collective activities that will increase their attachment to their community and reduce female fear to level appropriate for that community. MacLeod (1989) is of the opinion that if women are to become less vulnerable and less fearful, they must be supported in their efforts to become more involved in community life. The literature on women, fear, and the community stresses the need for community involvement and education. One way this can be addressed is through violence prevention education. The literature on violence and education provides insights as to what educators can expect from participants with a history of abuse and what they can do to help. With this in mind I turn the attention of this literature review over to a discussion of adult education and violence prevention.

Adult Education and Violence Prevention

Adult educators working in violence prevention facilitate learning that promotes the right to physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, and financial autonomy. Through such education women learn to take back their right to participate freely in their communities. In this section I

review the impact abuse has on women's learning and the trends in violence prevention education.

Impact of abuse for learning and educating. Violence affects women's educational experience. In their study on women's ways of knowing, Belenky et al. (1986) identified that many of the women interviewed had histories of male violence which impacted the way they experienced education and authority: "Some women indicated to us that their sexual history made them cautious around male professors, confused about 'what was really going on,' and consequently conflicted about receiving praise" (p. 59). Rich (1985) explains that the threat of violence is a problem for women learners, making their access to education unequal to that of men's:

> Women and men do not receive an equal education because outside the classroom women are perceived not as sovereign beings but as prey . . . the capacity to think independently, to take intellectual risks, to assert ourselves mentally is inseparable from our physical way of being in the world, our feelings of personal integrity. If it is dangerous for me to walk home late of an evening from the library, because I am a woman and can be raped, how self possessed, how exuberant can I feel as I sit working in that library? (p. 25)

Horsman (1996) states that very often a woman has been told by a past abuser that she is stupid and unable to learn. If she is still in an abusive relationship she may receive these messages daily or find that her education is undermined by his attempts to keep her from succeeding through physical, emotional, or financial abuse. Nonesuch (1996) and Potvin (1994) suggest that educators recognize that the experience of violence has an impact on women's learning and take responsibility for disclosures that occur in the learning environment. Potvin points out that, statistically speaking, educators are very likely to find abuse survivors attending their classes, training, or workshops. Being prepared for disclosures and understanding these women's circumstances while appreciating the impact of abuse on learning is useful knowledge and skill for educators to possess.

Wells' (1994) guide for setting up an employability educational program for abused

women provides a comprehensive explanation of the impact of abuse on learning and

employment. First, women with abusive histories have difficulty with self-esteem and often

underestimate their abilities or sabotage their success. Second, as a result of frequent trauma in

their lives some women may feel the need to have constant chaos in order to feel normal. This

may include leaving jobs or training due to numerous crises. Third, some of these women may

accept hierarchical structures and have difficulty letting go of traditional female roles that

discourage their attempts at self-improvement. For example, they may give up school or career

plans to please their abuser. Fourth, abuse survivors often have spent a great deal of time and

energy averting or stopping attacks. Therefore they may continue to find ways to keep peace at all

costs. This may involve avoiding confrontations, withdrawing their view if they feel challenged,

or not speaking up at all. They may develop extreme stress reactions to job or workload pressures

that can lead to physical complaints, depression, anxiety, addictions, or dissociation. These

reactions can lead to incompletion of work and numerous absences. A fifth consideration is that

abuse survivors often have a sense of powerlessness and isolation that can lead to an inability to

decide on career directions, or to develop their own opinions. Finally, some of these women have

no boundaries at all or they are extremely guarded. Poor boundaries can result in extreme anxiety

when being observed by a trainer and can increase the learner's vulnerability to sexual

harassment.

Horsman (1996) and Wells (1994) suggest strategies for addressing the issue of abuse in

the learning environment. Wells encourages the building of a learner-centred, women-centred,

and safe environment for women to learn and grow. Wells indicates that what made a difference

for the graduates of the Bridges Employability Program in Victoria, British Columbia, was

feeling safe enough to risk making changes. The Bridges staff are encouraged to model healthy

boundaries and to adhere to adult education principles such as creating a non-judgmental learning environment, honouring individual processes, and drawing upon the experience of the learner. Similarly, Horsman suggests specific strategies such as keeping confidentiality, validating experience, offering support, knowing local resources for abuse survivors, and helping them find assistance at their request.

Current trends in violence prevention education. The purpose of prevention education is to help women reduce or prevent the violence in their lives. This education generally takes two trends: (a) learning the rules and strategies for staying safe, and (b) empowering women to take back their personal and social power.

The first strategy includes traditional self-defense classes, seminars on safety tips, and rules to prevent assault. In the past decade this trend has been criticized for not empowering women. Brookes-Gardener (1990) states that women are taught to anticipate peril, profane the self in the name of safety, and appear to have an escort. She argues that such strategies "connote ineptness rather than skill, apprehension rather than ability, [and] a self debased rather than revered" (p. 312). Brookes-Gardener does not suggest women stop using strategies to keep them safe, but rather points out there are consequences for women as a result of these practices. Burton and Heillig (1993) suggest that these rules "limit our lives, curb our control and lead to blaming the victim, especially if she did not follow the rules" (p. 2). They recommend prevention education that builds confidence in one's instincts and intuition and that develops assertiveness and capability skills; these qualities can lead to regaining personal power. McDaniel (1993), a self-defense trainer, states that prevention educators must address the emotional and political ramifications of the rules and strategies for staying safe. Programs that do not "may 'disempower' individuals who are already psychologically vulnerable" (p. 133). Part of this process involves convincing women they have a right to defend themselves; that rape and fear of it are forms of

social control. McDaniel seeks to turn women's fear into anger in order to motivate women to defend themselves and make changes.

The second strategy emerges from the critique of the first and is reflected in the 1990s trend towards the use of prevention education that empowers women to make changes in their lives and their communities. Sexual harassment prevention training for work and school (Senecal 1997; Wood & Shearing, 1998), employment and job readiness programs for women survivors of abuse (Wells, 1994), literacy projects that address violence against women (Nonesuch, 1996) and community-based solutions using safety audits (Whitzman & Wekerle, 1997; Women's Action Centre Against Violence, 1996) are examples of these types of programs. As a means to measure the degree of prevention movement as a result of projects like these the Policy Circle on Women Abuse from the Family Violence Prevention Division of Health Canada developed an analytical assessment framework (MacLeod, 1994). This framework includes concrete components to ensure the prevention activity is a positive move toward (a) the reduction of unequal power dynamics; (b) increasing empowerment; (c) addressing inequality; (e) influencing changes in values, attitudes, and behaviours; (f) reducing isolation; and (g) building community. This framework reflects the recent trend to support prevention activities that look beyond the crisis oriented responses of the 1970s and 1980s and to work with women, children, men, and their communities while providing women with tools to reduce the inequality in their lives.

Summary of the Literature

Adult education has a history of facilitating social change. In the early parts of the 20th century adult education was active in the pursuit of social justice; however, the last half of the century saw the professionalization of the field at the expense of its original social change purpose. Today liberatory adult educators, while in the margins of the field, are still plying their trade. They can be found in community development ventures, literacy campaigns, and social movement

activities such as the prevention of violence against women. A variety of theories can inform their practice, including the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, liberatory feminist pedagogy, as well as feminist and participatory research.

FPR blends the theories of social change education, liberatory feminist pedagogy, and emancipatory research to create an adult education process that educates for social change, researches for social change, and does so with a broad social conscience that includes gender as a central element. FPR is compatible with the goals of violence prevention education in that it empowers women to learn about oppression in their lives, reduce unequal power dynamics, and influence change at the individual, community, and social level. Violence prevention education concerns itself with finding a way to end violence against women and reduce the occurrences of assault, abuse, while increasing a woman's sense of safety and self. Violence, its threat, and its consequences have a serious impact on the practice and facilitation of adult education. I applied the theories presented in this review in a practice setting. This application of FPR in the context of violence prevention education is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY:
THE PRACTICE OF FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

This chapter describes the feminist participatory research (FPR) study I implemented to address the issues of preventing violence against women. This study used an education for social change approach that was expected to raise awareness, build community, reduce isolation, and empower local women to affect change in their community and in their personal lives. The study described in this chapter gave me the opportunity to apply the principles of FPR and to illustrate the dynamic process it nurtures.

FPR begins with a problem. My particular professional problem was how to involve the community in violence prevention education activities. In adhering to FPR principles, it was imperative that I locate this problem within the experiences of community women. A sense of this problem arose from the people most affected by it, local women. Consequently, I began my study by assessing and reflecting on what I knew about my community; my own personal experiences; those of my clients, friends, and family; as well as my awareness of local crimes against women. This reflection led me to identify the context in which the project should take place, to select a model for facilitating the study's planning and evaluation process, and to design a process that reflected the principles of FPR. Through the project described in this chapter, I was able to answer the questions posed in the first chapter. These questions include: (a) Can the use of FPR increase local grassroots involvement in violence prevention education and lead to personal and social change? (b) What skills and knowledge are useful for an adult educator to possess in order to undertake a FPR process?

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Naming the Moment: Reflecting on the Context of the Study

Feminist participatory researchers and violence prevention educators advocate the

consideration of power relations that may influence the learning and the research process. I

followed the feminist research guidelines suggested by Mies (1983) to consider these issues. Mies

advocates replacing the notion of value-free research with conscious partiality, replacing the

researcher view from above with the view from below, thus reducing the power imbalance between

researcher and researched, and replacing spectator knowledge with active participation in the

struggle for women's emancipation. As such, part of the planning process required that I analyze

and situate the study within the context of the community and within my personal and professional

experience.

Community Context

This study took place in a small coastal community of 4,800 people. Predominantly a

fishing, logging, and mining community, Port Hardy has faced serious economic upheaval in the

last 5 years. In 1994 an internationally owned copper mine pulled out of the area, removing close to

800 jobs. In the last 3 years the logging and commercial fishing industries have faced many shut

downs and restructuring. Needless to say, the impact of these changes on the community has been

stressful. The number of people dependent on employment insurance and income assistance

benefits is high. Although, Port Hardy's population is primarily white (people belonging to the

dominant group in Canada), three First Nation bands are located in the area and make up

approximately 25% of the population. Politically, the community is divided between the right wing

and left wing parties. This community has a very small senior population but it has been growing

steadily in the past few years as people decide to stay rather than leave the area for their retirement.

My professional and personal experiences tell me that women are not safe in our community. My clients report sexual harassment by employers, known men, and unknown men. Friends report not walking in certain areas at night because they do not feel safe. These fears are fueled by personal experiences in our community such as an attempted sexual assault in an alcove of an apartment building a few years ago during which the woman screamed for help for 10 minutes before someone came to her aid. In 1991, a 6-year-old-girl was brutally raped and murdered in our community. Many other incidents go unreported but are heard about within the community through word of mouth.

Personal and Professional Context

Who I am and what I bring to this study are also important contextual factors to consider. Arnold et al. (1996) call this "painting ourselves in" (p. 11). I am white, middle class, educated, female, and a feminist, from a working-class family. My association with the Crisis Centre, my education, my class, my origins, and my skin colour give me access to privileges in my community and in Canadian society. With these characteristics comes an expectation that I identify with others of my status and that I should behave accordingly. However, I also experience forms of oppression related to my gender. As Mies (1983) suggests, I view this double consciousness as an opportunity because it gives me experiential knowledge of oppression that I can integrate into the research process while also giving me access to privileges that I can use to affect social change. I am not only an educator and researcher; I am also a participant, because I too have experiences as a woman living in this community that may relate to those of other local women.

Through this process of assessing and reflecting on the community and personal context of this study I became aware of several barriers and possibilities that influenced the choices I made in my practice of feminist participatory research. First, I concluded that focusing on community safety and women using prevention as the focus might appeal to local women because most women can

relate to the concept of fear and not feeling safe at some point in their lives. In addressing community safety there is no need to disclose information about relationship violence, sexual orientation, or political leanings. This factor may ease the reluctance of getting involved by making the topic feel less threatening.

Second, after addressing the context I became cognizant that the economic reality of the community made it likely many women could not afford childcare and also that many might be working to support their families. Therefore, they were more likely to attend at night. Building on this, if women are indeed concerned for their safety, especially at night, considering transportation problems was necessary. Third, being aware of my own privilege and the community's diversity I decided to actively pursue the interest of women from marginalized segments of our community. Finally, I remained mindful of my own agenda when planning, facilitating, and evaluating the project. I would need to be careful not to impose my sense of what the problems might be for violence prevention.

Planning the Study

Feminist participatory research is an approach to emancipatory adult education that blends the goals and philosophies of feminism with those of participatory research and emerges as a collective way of empowering women to take action towards improving the conditions of their lives. In planning the study I was guided by three bodies of literature reviewed in chapter 2. The feminist and participatory research literature guided the development of my philosophical approach and my selection of a strategy that would maximize the learning and change character of the research process. The education for social change references helped me implement the action-reflection process and provided the learning activities used in the Women for Community Safety

project. Finally, the violence prevention literature guided my planning process so that the desired social justice outcomes would indeed reflect the current definition of prevention. I predicted that planning the study within the guideline of the literature would create the link between the creation of knowledge by local women, the facilitation of local and personal action, and then result in the prevention of violence against women in our community. Below I describe specific strategies taken from the literature that guided the development and facilitation of the study.

The Action-Reflection Process

I adopted the spiral model of the action-reflection process from Arnold et al. (1996). This model has five stages: (a) start with the experience or knowledge of the participants; (b) look for patterns; (c) add new information and theory; (d) practice skills, create strategies, and plan for action; and (e) apply the action. Within this process several strategies were used that are advocated by popular educators (Freire, 1997) and by feminist participatory researchers (Chovanec, 1994; Joyappa & Martin, 1996; Maguire, 1987; Mies, 1983). These strategies set the cycle of action and reflection in motion; they include generating themes, posing problems, sharing stories, and using questions to guide discussions. The spiral model addresses the creative tension found between practice and theory, action and reflection, and participant knowledge and new input (Arnold et al., p. 39). Through this action-reflection process, I was able to continually evaluate and revise my strategies with the participants throughout the study.

Violence Prevention Education as Movement toward the Goal

To ensure this project would reflect a violence prevention framework, I reviewed literature on the subject (Brookes-Gardener, 1990; Gordon & Riger, 1988; MacLeod, 1989, 1994). MacLeod (1994) says definitions of violence are broad and, as such, the goal of prevention is often elusive. Furthermore, it is not always clear if prevention means the elimination of violence or any movement toward this goal. For this study I chose the latter. It was my hope that by using the FPR

process adult educators would be able to prevent violence against women in their practice. To create a process that would contribute to making a project a prevention education activity I followed the recommendations in the literature. This includes providing the facts, examining power issues, maximizing participation, involving the community, and influencing changes in attitudes, feelings and behaviours. Using these strategies is intended to reduce isolation, reduce structural inequality, and lead to personal and social empowerment.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation strategies I prepared for this study included pre- and post-project evaluation forms, a final one-to-one interview with the five participants, and my personal reflection upon the study's process and outcomes. I planned to use this data to gauge the extent to which involvement in the feminist participatory research project influenced changes in the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the participants and led to violence prevention. This data would also provide information to assess the effectiveness of this process as an education for social change tool. Samples of evaluation instruments are found in Appendix A.

Designing the Study

In the design of this study I considered several issues. First, I decided on a time-limited feminist participatory research project, with the possibility of continuing after the end date. I believed this to be a respectful way to begin because it acknowledges that adult women have busy schedules and many responsibilities in their lives. It also left room for potential long-term planning and action, as advocated by the violence prevention framework and feminist participatory research. If by taking part in the study the participants wanted to become more involved in violence prevention activities after the projects conclusion they would be able to do so. Second, I included

an introductory process in the study's design in which I explained the purpose, objectives, method, and process of the research for change project. The preliminary stage included advertising the project, informing local stakeholders, talking with potential participants to explain the project, and an orientation session as the first component of the implementation. During this introductory process I decided to inform potential participants about how the information was to be used. I explained that the information would be used in two ways (a) to inform local stakeholders about the needs for women's sense of community safety that might arise from the project, and (b) as part of academic research to determine the educational potential of the study's process. For the orientation session I designed a permission form for participants to sign indicating their consent for me to use information gathered from the study for academic purposes while keeping their identity private. All participants reviewed the content of the final document so as to ensure their informed consent for the use of and correct interpretation of their comments and experiences. All provided consent.

During this phase of the design I sought to recruit participants from marginal segments of the community. For example I presented at an Aboriginal Women's Wellness Conference and a Women's Studies class. During these presentations I identified several reasons why people might be interested, such as helping the community feel safer, giving something back to the community, and protecting children. I also identified several problems potential participants might have with the material or process, such as ensuring is was not a therapy group and having a specific time, place, and end date. This information enabled me to design a FPR process that was as relevant, safe, and as accessible as possible. For example, I planned to include a session on safety and children, establish that the purpose of the project was not for therapy, and hold the project during a time that was accessible to the interested women. Finally, I also spent time during the study's planning attending to the issue of safety for the orientation. Several inquiries came from women who identified themselves as abuse survivors. Discussing issues of violence and abuse can bring up

memories of abuse and strong emotions; therefore, it was imperative to address personal and emotional safety for the women who would participate.

To follow the orientation session, I designed four focused discussion sessions for the Women for Community Safety project. I planned each session to be about 2.5 hours long and to be held one evening per week. FPR is about encouraging participants to identify their own goals for social change rather than adopting those of the researcher or educator. Thus my plans for each session were broad so as not to impose my own agenda for social change. I tried to keep the schedule flexible; but basically I intended to raise the participant's consciousness about women, fear, and community safety and identify locations and situations in which local women felt unsafe. The knowledge created through this process could be used to educate one another and to influence change in the community.

Each session followed the action-reflection model whereby I started with the experiences of the women, encouraged them to look for patterns, added new information for reflection, and concluded with suggestions for action. Through participation I expected that the women would be engaged in a process of conscientization (Freire, 1997) and, thereby deepen their awareness of the social, political, and cultural realities that shape their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. The spiral model of action and reflection was expected to occur at three levels: during each session, throughout the overall event, and within me as I reflected weekly on the study.

The application of the actions named during the four discussion meetings was planned for two final sessions. The purpose of these two sessions was to narrow the focus, to identify common threads running through our discussions, to identify barriers to initiating action, and to begin action planning. This would hopefully create a dynamic process in which the women would identify the problems inherent in raising community awareness about women and fear, while raising their own

consciousness and encouraging them to be more creative, more assertive, and more involved in local issues.

I carefully chose the activities to facilitate the feminist participatory research process. I wanted to use activities and facilitation methods that encouraged sharing, analysis, empowerment, and (above all) ownership of the process. The design of the feminist participatory project included choice of the location, the focus discussions, the group agreement, and the action planning process. I selected a venue that was accessible and comfortable. The Crisis Centre's main room was chosen, as it is physically accessible and affords both a handicapped washroom and a kitchen. The room is inviting and intimate with a sofa, chairs, and a coffee table. Plants, toys, and women-friendly posters add to the welcoming atmosphere. Arnold et al. (1996) discuss the politics of furniture, maintaining that the use of space is also a statement about power relations. I arranged the furniture in the room in a circular fashion to encourage the "view from below" relationship between the participants and myself (Mies, 1983, p. 123).

I used focus discussions to extract the women's experiences during the participatory research process. The discussion method is a way of teaching and learning that assists with self-insight, reflection on experience, exploring the world-view of others, and seeking collaborative interpretation (Brookfield, 1986). Through discussion, personal narratives and oral histories can surface providing a valuable source of information. During these discussions my role was assisting the group in uncovering their personal stories, which contained a wealth of knowledge and experience about violence prevention and women's fear. To provide structure for this process I formulated questions that focused on the topic under investigation and would be used while summarizing, clarifying, and recording their responses. For example, when problem-posing on the topic of public safety I asked questions such as: (a) What do you worry about? (b) How do you

restrict your activities, dress, or behaviour? (c) What led you to worry about these issues? (d) Who else worries about these types of things?

Each focused discussion included two parts. First, I asked the group to engage in a problem-posing discussion, talking about and listing all the themes related to the topic of concern. I encouraged the participants to draw themes and ideas from personal histories and stories that they had heard from the other women. Second, I encouraged the group to reflect back on this first part and make recommendations for change. My hope was that this format would aid in the analysis of common experiences, link the personal with the political, and draw on women's ways of knowing (Belenky et al. 1986). The questions I used were open enough to encourage sharing of stories yet structured enough to stay close to the vision of social change without derailing the process into a group therapy session; I was conscious of the problem discussed by Weiler (1991) on the potential for social action groups to veer into therapy work unless a structure to prevent this is provided. Furthermore, I considered it an ethical imperative not to re-victimize the women in this group; thus, my question-posing provided boundary setting in regard to personal discloses of past abuse and victimization. I addressed this issue through a group agreement that would help the group address the potential emotional impact of participating in this process and hearing personal disclosures.

I chose to have the women formulate a group agreement at the beginning of the project to engage the participants in creating a process that could make them feel safe. Due to the emotional impact of working on the issues of woman abuse I believed it mandatory that attention be given to safety, providing any survivors in the group the time needed to deal with their pain. In addition this agreement process encouraged the women's setting of limits with themselves and others in regard to personal disclosures of abuse. I also emphasized that the purpose of the group was one of social change and education, not therapy, thereby identifying the roles we would assume as researchers and learners and not as members of a personal healing group. I chose this emphasis not to deny the

women's experience within the group, rather as a way of setting and modeling boundaries and providing support for women needing additional help that the group could not provide. Moreover, each person has a different comfort level for experiencing the strong emotions of others and these participants might also need support.

As part of the agreement process I designed an exercise locating the group on a continuum of personal growth with education at one side and therapy at the other. I explained that this group was somewhere in the middle. The purpose of this exercise was to emphasize that while the group would involve the sharing of personal stories and provide an opportunity to learn about the extent of women's fear leading to personal growth, it would not be therapeutic nor would it be purely educational; rather it would be somewhere in between providing elements of learning and personal growth. This was intended to complement and reinforce the role they would assume as co-researchers and co-learners while pointing out that their involvement had the potential to influence personal change. The next part of the exercise involved the women in creating a list of expectations and ground rules that could help them feel safe while doing the work in this group. I designed a list of possible questions to explore in small groups in order to assist participants in their discussion such as: (a) What would make us feel safe as we do this work together? (b) What do we need from others when we feel strong emotions? (c) What do we not want from others when we feel strong emotions?

For the last two sessions I planned two exercises designed to narrow and prioritize the previous 4 weeks of discussion, learning, and planning. I anticipated that there would be not only a great deal of information, but also some common themes and ideas. The other aspect of this process was identifying the barriers to action. The activities drew upon the subjective and objective as well as the emotional and the rational experiences of the process. I expected that this would provide a well-rounded assessment of the information gathered so far. The first activity was a memory-based

reflection of the previous weeks' work, which gave the women a chance to reflect on the material from a subjective and emotional standpoint. I planned to post the information we had recorded on flip chart paper around the room, to serve as a memory aid. I prepared questions for reflection that they could follow. They were asked to recommend three issues and three actions, which I could then post on flip chart paper in order to compare results. The second activity I chose was a grid analysis adapted from Timmel and Hodzi (1995). This grid would engage the women in a rational, subjective, and objective reflection process. I prepared a grid on flip chart paper that had across the top the four topics we had addressed. Down the side were questions designed to reflect on the social causes of the problems, identify who controlled the decision making, name the values and beliefs connected to the barriers to the problem, and name who already works with the problem area. I speculated that with this information we might be able to identify how, as a group, we could help—and if and when we should act on our concerns. The group was to fill in the grid. This process was intended to assist the women and myself to learn about and identify the barriers to social change in our community.

Implementing the Study

In this section I describe the unfolding of the four focused group discussions and the final two sessions in which the group narrowed their focus, analyzed their work, and made recommendations for change. I begin with a brief sketch of the participants who took part.

Participants

Prior to the first session I began to take the names of the women who were interested in attending. When women would call in to inquire I would tell them about the project, answer any questions they might have and find out if they would require daycare or transportation. I had 11

inquiries from women who were interested in participating. I did not gather a great deal of information at this point but I can say that all were white women, 9 were mothers with children still in the home, 7 of these 9 women were married and 2 were not. The remaining 2 were unmarried and did not indicate that they had children. On the evening of the first session, 5 of these women attended. Of the remaining 6 all but one had decided they were unable to participate. The remaining woman missed the first session as she had a sick child to tend to. This participant began the following week. One participant who attended the first session decided that she would not return and did not give a reason. For the purpose of discussion and clarity as well as privacy and confidentiality I have assigned each of the remaining 5 participants an alias.

Here I describe the background of each participant without divulging any identifying characteristics such as specific occupation, age, and location. As the community in which the study took place is small it is easy to identify a person with limited information. Finally it is important to mention I knew all of the participants prior to this study. Again the size of the community, my participation in the community through my work, recreational activities, and the activities of my children made it unlikely that I would not know them on some level. I use the following pseudonyms when quoting or describing the actions of a participant during the project and when quoting from the pre and post evaluation questionnaires. I do not use any names when repeating information gathered in the final one-to-one interviews. The information gathered in these interviews was often quite personal and the decision not to use names was supported by participants in order to protect their privacy.

Anna is a white female, married with two children and working outside of the home. She indicated she had not been active in the community and hope this project would provide her with the opportunity to do so, while giving her information that would help to her help children with safety issues. This woman found out about the project through a women's studies class.

Barbara is a white female, married with two children, working outside the home, and going to school part-time to gain a degree in social work. She found out about the program through the advertisement I had placed on the Community Channel. Because she was interested in human services field she wanted to become more involved in the community. Furthermore, she indicated she felt unsafe in our community and wanted to be part of improving community safety. She had been involved in community work previous to this project.

Charlene is a white female, married with four children and working outside the home. Like Barbara she goes to school part-time and is working towards a degree in social work. This wanted to attend to learn more about women's issues and find out what other women thought about safety in this community. She had not been involved in the community and was looking to become more involved.

Danielle is a white female, married with one child, and not working outside the home. She had been involved in some volunteer work and wanted to become more involved with women's issues. She indicated that this community felt less safe than anywhere else she had lived and wanted to be part of making it safer. This participant started at the second session.

Ellen is a white female and a mother with one child. She does not work outside the home, but does attend school full-time. This participant found out about the project through a friend and wanted to become involved in improving community safety for herself and for her child. She stated that by getting involved she would be giving back to the community and helping other women, which she hope to do as a career someday. This woman indicated that she was keenly interested in keeping kids safe.

Session 1

I began the first session by introducing myself and attending to housekeeping issues such as the location of the washrooms and to the scheduling of a break. I then asked each woman to introduce herself briefly and tell us why she had attended. This served as an ice-breaker and a way for me to get a sense of why they were in attendance. I then gave each woman a folder that contained information on the project, statistics on women and safety, the pre evaluation and permission form, a list of grounding assumptions, and a tentative agenda for the sessions. I purposely did not use the term feminism on many of the handouts I created so as not to threaten any woman who might have a negative association to the term.

Next, I explained the information gathered in the project as having two applications. I indicated that the project would address local women's concerns for community safety by involving them in the research process. The information we compiled would be used to recommend changes to various community organizations and services as we deemed necessary. I further explained that the study was also part of my own academic research on the utility of participatory research as an education for social change strategy. I described how I planned to document the impact that the research process had for each participant and for the community, using this information in a master's degree thesis on violence prevention and adult education. They would be informed and consulted in regard to the content of the thesis prior to it becoming a public document. I said that to gather this information I would need each of them complete pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires as well as participate in a private interview with me at the conclusion of the project. I indicated that if they did not want to be part of my academic reporting that we could still proceed with the project and I would not include their specific experiences in my academic report. With this in mind I asked the participants to sign the permission form giving me consent to use the information from this project in an academic report and then instructed them to complete

the pre-evaluation form. All agreed to participate in both aspects of the study and completed the paper work.

Once the forms were completed I then reviewed the statistics on violence against women in Canada. Several women were surprised at how high the numbers were, especially regarding sexual harassment. I then described the intent of participatory research, indicating that it was unlike traditional research in that they would be involved in directing the process of the research through their discussion of the issues and suggestions for change. A discussion about keeping information local and the utility of this prospect ensued. The group indicated it was refreshing to think that they had something of value to say that would be useful and not merely used for some government study. I also reviewed the purpose, goals, and agenda of the project, answering questions as they arose. Anna pointed out that one of the meeting nights was during spring break and perhaps we could change that. The group agreed this was a good idea. In regard to the length of the project several women commented that they liked the open format and would decide later if they wanted to continue.

After a short break I facilitated the exercise on group safety explaining both the purpose and the process. I described an unpleasant personal experience I had during a training event on the subject of abuse because the issue of safety was not addressed.. After my story, Ellen shared an experience in which group safety was addressed. She told how much better she felt about herself as a result. She said, "It gave me permission to be me and take time to compose myself without wondering what others were thinking." Once the purpose was understood I broke the group into two smaller groups to come up with a list of ground rules that would make them feel safer in the group. Each group was given a list of questions to help them formulate their list. I circled around the room to answer any questions they might have had about the task. After 10 minutes the group reconvened and a master list that everyone agreed upon was put up on the flip chart. I would

transcribe the list and give each participant a copy the following week. One suggestion made

during a discussion related to the rule "What's said here stays here." Several women in the group

interjected that they believed it important to talk about the issues with other people in the

community in order to get them thinking about the problem and perhaps get more people involved.

We agreed that issues, suggestions, and personal examples could be discussed outside the group

and for the purpose of community awareness and change as long as names were not used. This

discussion and its conclusion was in line with the purpose of the study in that the personal

experiences of local women could lead to improved community safety, violence prevention, and

the creation of local knowledge. Moreover, it was consistent with the permission they had given

earlier to use the information to further community change and the sharing of their experiences

within the academic community. Finally, this discussion indicated to me that several women in the

group were eager to raise awareness in the community and begin prevention through dialogue.

During the last half hour I explained how the next four meetings would be organized. I

described the focus discussion method and the type of information I would be giving them on each

topic, explaining that I would be giving them an article each week to read as an aid in getting them

to think about the topic and how it affects them personally. I also suggested that if they felt the

information too dry, they could ask friends or family what they thought about the issue as a means

to stir up ideas for discussion. This strategy, I decided, could address reading levels as well as

learning styles and also take the problem into the community. After I mentioned the topic and

passed around the reading material for the next week's meeting I asked if they had any questions or

any suggestions for the process. No one spoke up. As people were leaving I overheard several

comments about the importance of this project to women in the community. This indicated to me

that several participants were already invested in the process.

Session 2

I began this session with a quick check-in. There was a snow-storm over the weekend and everyone had a comment to make. I asked if anyone had anything come up for them since the last meeting. No comments were made. I did a quick "recap" of the previous session, and then I presented on the flipchart a summary of the information in the reading handouts I had given the week before. I highlighted the statistics, theories, and findings on women and public safety.

Next, we began the focused group discussion on public safety. I posted the following questions on a flip chart and explained that these questions would be used to guide our discussion each week. These questions included: (a) What do you worry about? (b) What situations make you uncomfortable? (c) Where and when do you feel most vulnerable? (d) What do you do or not do, or how do you restrict your activities, dress, and behaviour? (e) Why do you do these things? I was prepared to integrate a critical incident technique (which I adopted from Brookfield, 1990) to begin the session if no one started talking (Brookfield, 1990); however, this was not necessary as the discussion started without a problem. During this discussion I recorded responses on flip chart paper. I used open-ended questions to encourage conversation and posed questions to expand on areas or to clarify information. For example, Charlene described a situation in which a group of young men were hooting at her and following her across a field. She said this situation worried her, and I asked if she was worried about a potential robbery or an assault. She replied "robbery." Ellen related her concerns about the laundry room in her apartment building. I asked if she were more afraid of what could happen in the laundry room when she was alone or if someone was there. She said it was the fear of the potential for assault because of the room's isolated location. At the conclusion of this discussion we had identified and summarized the following problems with public safety in our community: (a) Un-lit or poorly lit areas made these women feel unsafe at times; (b) parks and green-belts felt unsafe due to poor lighting, dense bush, and broken glass, and;

(c) several apartment complexes have security problems (doors left open and poor parking lot and entrance lighting).

After a short break the group explored possible remedies to the problems they had identified. I posted another set of questions on flip chart paper to guide this discussion these questions included: (a) What would make you feel safer? (b) How can you feel less vulnerable or safer? (c) What stops you from doing this? (d) What community response would help? (e) Do we need more information? If so who could we ask? One suggestion that stemmed from the lighting problem was the potential to do a safety audit. I explained that the Cowichan Valley Safety Audit Guide had information on how to do a safety audit if we decided to go ahead with this type of project. The group was quite keen, and I agreed to bring information on the audit process next time. The women appeared to be quite engaged in the process and shared lots of stories and experiences from their lives or the lives of other women they know. Comments such as "I had a similar experience" or "you wouldn't believe what I went through when..." evidenced the mutual self-reflection that was occurring.

Session 3, 4, 5 and 6

The next four sessions followed the same format as the second session; thus, I simply provide here the highlights of each session.

The topic for Session 3 was safety at school and work. We talked about sexual harassment and I provided them with a definition taken from Johnson's (1996) book. During our discussion we explored how sexual harassment plays itself out in the workplaces of the North Island. Three of the five women disclosed personal experiences with sexual harassment. They commented about experiences they had had with customers, employers, and male co-workers. Ellen, in trying to defend herself from a customer who grabbed her bottom, was fired when she became angry with the customer. Barbara commented that in a previous place of employment a co-worker was a

notorious bum-pincher and although the women employees complained about it among themselves they had seen it at the time as a normal occurrence. During the evenings discussion, Anna pointed out and others agreed that the high number of service sector jobs in our community put many women at risk of sexual harassment and that employers often do not take it seriously. Furthermore, the group concurred that few women come forward for fear of losing their jobs. The discussion got quite passionate at one point when the participants began to discuss how unfair this was to women and how they are often in a "no win" situation.

During this discussion the women were breaking the culture of silence and reinterpreting their lived experiences. They posed three problems in regard to work and school safety for our community. First, they identified the slow response of the RCMP to call outs because of the large geographical area they must cover and the few officers available to our area. Second, they determined that working alone at night, especially for young women was a problem. Often employers have only one staff on at night to save money. Third, the women believed the service industry employees (especially women) are particularly susceptible to sexual harassment by employers, patrons, and co-workers.

During the discussion of possible solutions there was a great deal of concern for women working late at night and walking home from work alone after dark. As part of a way to raise awareness of public safety the participants agreed to do the safety audit sometime in April, while it was still dark enough in the evening to identify problem areas. The participants suggested I take on the organizing role because they all have other family, work, or school commitments and I could do much of the organizing as part of my usual workload. While I was to do the organizing, participants would help in other ways such as baking, making posters, answering phone enquiries about the audit, and so forth. They suggested that Block Parents and Citizens on Patrol might

collaborate with us on this project. I was thrilled by their level of interest to work on a major

community project so early in the process.

Anna and Charlene pointed out that sexual harassment should be addressed through

workplace policy and labour laws. This is what they were designed to address. As a solution to the

problems of women at work, the participants suggested increasing community member's

awareness about labour laws, (especially young women) and encouraging employers to have two

people working together during late shifts. Anna suggested that older women have the wisdom

and awareness to be more cautious than perhaps do young women. They stated that workers and

employers needed to support and encourage a policy of two employees working nights and

perhaps workplaces could install silent alarms that would speed up the response of the RCMP.

One particular theme stood out during this session. It involved an animated discussion

about the issue of women always having to be in control and to modify their behaviour because

they are women. Through this discussion several women began to see the ways they are

influenced by a sexist culture. This encouraged greater critical reflection of their personal

situations. Charlene summed up the conversation:

> You can't put any faith in being sure you would be safe if you drank or if you just went
> the other way on a walk, like through a trail. Instead we modify our behaviour to stay safe.
> I stay home. I never get drunk cause you just don't know. Men — it doesn't even faze
> them.

Conversations and comments like these indicated that the process was in fact involving the

women in defining their reality within the context of oppression and making the personal political.

This particular group session provided an example of a naming and defining process leading to

critical reflection. The women began to recognize how comments and gestures made by men are

often seen as normal and therefore ignored or trivialized. They identified how their social reality,

defined in relation to their gender oppression, influenced their behaviours to keep themselves safe.

Session 4 addressed the issues of home safety. Like the meetings before it, this session engaged the women in lively discussions. I presented the group with information from a study on the impact of obscene phone calls from a study of the same. In order to encourage the group to generate their own themes I then asked them what other issues in regard to home safety we could discuss. Areas of concern suggested by the participants included breaking and entering, vandalism, and home invasions. The discussion covered experiences of robberies, vandalism, and the vulnerability of the home during the day when everyone is away at work. The longest discussion centred on experiences of walk-in intruders. For example, one evening an intoxicated man just walked into Danielle's home. The participants determined that location was perhaps a factor in whether a person's home was a potential target. All but one woman felt safe in her home. However, Barbara said she had felt safe until this session and she planned to go home and put sticks in her windows as a preventive measure. Two women reported that they do not lock their homes when out unless they are away for long periods of time. This fact shook up a few who recommended that they begin locking their doors. A course on self-defense was hailed as the best idea of the evening. All were willing to help organize this if it were possible. They also suggested more patrols of residential areas by the police during the day, and perhaps a youth center to provide potential juvenile offenders with a place to keep them busy.

Session 5 had to be rescheduled because only one participant attended. She and I went out for coffee to discuss the topic on our own. The following week served as Session 5. This created a problem because we needed to either add another week or cram two sessions into one. The group decided that because Easter was coming up and I would be unavailable for 2 weeks after this, we should try to get through the agenda for the three sessions in the next two sessions. The group was willing to come early and stay late so that we would have the extra time to do the work.

Thus Session 5 combined problem-posing and problem-solving on safety for children and youth with an overview of what was in store for the last meeting. Several members of the group wanted to know if the group would continue after the next week. We agreed to table this decision for the last session. During this discussion about the agenda and future meetings the women were actively involved in reflecting on the process and indicated their preference to continue the group.

The group engaged in a short focus discussion on the topic of children and youth. Themes included supervision on the school grounds and keeping kids occupied with healthy activities to both protect them and prevent them from getting into trouble (i.e., drugs, alcohol, or crime). We discussed the rules and curfews we have, especially for our daughters. Participants strongly supported the need for safety prevention education for children and identified bullying as an issue, as it is a problem that was currently being addressed in local schools. All participants felt that there was a lack of organized activities for kids. Finally, the participants wrestled with the problem of getting people to organize the suggested programs for kids. They agreed that there were far more ideas than the time and energy needed to initiate such projects. The women decided that it was also important to ask the kids what their concerns were, and, until we knew that, there was little else they could suggest.

In the second half of the evening I explained the analysis part of the project. I did a review of the process we had been through so far to connect it to this last phase. I reviewed the action-reflection process to show how we had been reflecting on experience and were about to plan for action. Anna commented that, as a "group of mainstream white women we were not a good cross section of the community" and, as with youth, other women's voices needed to be included. I agreed with her critique and explained that all we could do was to make recommendations based on our own experiences and that this was the point of the project and the purpose participatory research. This led to a discussion about why women other than us were not present. The women

seemed to think that women often did not know that they could get involved or that they did not have the means to do so. I did agree that other women could be asked these same questions at a later date so they could effect change in their lives and in the community.

This also connected to the review I was doing in that it gave me a chance to explain that the emphasis of our work was not about hardcore data as with positivist research, but rather about raising awareness, creating local knowledge, and influencing change. The safety audit and other measures the group proposed could help that process. To prepare for closure we agreed to bring food to the next meeting to share with one another. I concluded the session with an explanation of the two activities I planned to use in the next session, the memory analysis and the reflective grid.

Session 7

In preparation for this session I hung the flip chart notes from our previous meetings around the room. Once the group had arrived and settled in I reviewed the agenda for the session. I explained that I wanted them to think back over the previous weeks' discussions using the posted flip charts as memory aids. I asked each woman to consider a series of questions (e.g., Which issues, based on our focused discussions, do you feel are most urgent?), and then to choose three priority actions and write them down. At the end of this exercise we compiled a master list to be used in the grid analysis exercise. Anna offered a suggestion that rather than write these individually, we could each go around to the flip chart pages and mark our top three preferences. I asked what the rest of the group thought and all concurred that this process would be much simpler and save us some time. Anna volunteered to calculate the top three problems and actions once they had all marked their choices.

After a short break we began the grid analysis. This grid was intended to help the group identify the barriers to social change, find out who the stakeholders were, determine if we needed more information to act, and decide when we could act or if the work should be done by someone

else. Although this technique was useful in getting the information, it was awkward to use and difficult to stay clear about the problems we were addressing and avoid getting sidetracked. One positive outcome of this exercise was the surfacing of several practical ideas. The lack of awareness of rights and services could be addressed through workshops or a newsletter produced by and for local women. One complaint was that this exercise involved "a lot of thinking for a Monday evening." I observed several concurring nods. At the end of this session I explained that I would compile the results of the results of the grid exercise and share it with them and other community members. This subsequent grid is presented in Appendix B.

Charlene pointed out that although we had noted many concerns in our community these are nothing compared to what is going on in South Africa, for example. "Canada" she said, "is still one of the safest places in the world to live." Danielle said she agreed but that "we live here and we can make it safer." I thought this was a wonderful tone for the group to end on, for they were connecting their own lived experiences with experiences of people in other parts of the world. They did this while staying true to a vision of community safety. I reminded the women that I would be contacting them in the next few weeks to do the final evaluation and interview.

Before people left for the evening we took time to discuss whether the group would continue now that the first part was complete. Two women really wanted the group to continue because they found it to be personally fulfilling, and it got them out of the house. The other three would consider it depending where and when. After some discussion about the group's purpose they chose to meet again April 26.

Evaluating the Study

Evaluating the study involved gathering and reflecting on data from two sources. First, information was gathered from the pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires. By comparing these I determined whether the women's expectations for the project were met, whether the event influenced their perceptions of how safe the community feels, and whether their understanding and awareness of women's fear and safety had increased. The post-evaluation also provided information on the effectiveness of the project design and facilitation. Second, I collected information through personal interviews conducted 3 weeks following the last session. The personal interviews provided accounts of how each woman's involvement in the feminist participatory research project influenced their thoughts, feelings, and actions in regard to woman and community safety. I also asked them to reflect on the process itself and how safe they felt during the sessions. The information from the evaluation strategies helped to determine whether the intent of the research project was met and provided evidence to assess the effectiveness of FPR as an education for social change tool in the prevention of violence against women in the community.

The original questionnaires and interview notes were given back to the participants at their request. All but Danielle completed both the pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires. As she only started during the second meeting I did not give her the pre-evaluation form. This participant did, however participate in the final evaluation interview. In addition the woman who attended only the first meeting and completed the first questionnaire, is not represented here. The results of the evaluations are divided into two sections: (a) the findings from the pre- and post-project questionnaires; and (b) the findings from the personal interviews.

Findings from the Pre- and Post-Project Questionnaires

From the first questionnaire I determined that participants' personal growth was their primary reason for attending, wanting to get involved in the community their second, and gaining knowledge their third. In an open-ended question on what they hoped to gain by their involvement I received the following responses: Anna wanted "to meet people and see what the issues were"; Barbara hoped "to engage in personal growth by becoming more involved in group activities" and use the group experience as data for a group process course; Charlene wanted to "learn about what really goes on in the community," and to help; and, Ellen wanted to "take control of her life and lessen her fear of violence by making the community safer."

In another open-ended query, I asked the women what questions they hoped to answer. Anna wanted to know if fearing for your children going out in the daylight is just enhanced by the media or is it genuine fear? Barbara's question was how the community could become a safer place and how she could feel more confident and safe. Finally, Ellen wanted to know how she could deal with the problem of leaving her child at a school at lunchtime when there is not adequate supervision. Charlene did not have a question. On the post-project questionnaires all participants indicated that the sessions met their personal and educational needs. However, there was no indication on these forms that the project met their need for involvement in the community.

The post-project questionnaire asked about the organization of the project (props, activities, discussion, and so forth) and the effectiveness of the facilitator. Overall the participants reported that the project was well organized, that the atmosphere was fun and relaxed, that the variety of perspectives they shared was significant, and that participating was a valuable experience. Suggestions for improvement included having more media attention to draw in more participants, involving the RCMP or local government in the discussions, and bringing the group back on track more often when the discussions became sidetracked.

The scales used in pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires did not prove to be entirely

reliable, as all women pointed out their responses to the question on their level of worry depended

on when (time of day), where they were, and who was with them (child, friend, or alone).

Regardless of this problem with the question their answers to two other questions showed a shift in

perception between the pre- and post-questionnaire as shown in Figures 1 and 2. There was indeed

a rise in their level of understanding of women's fear and safety and a decrease in how well they

thought the community dealt with the problem. Figure 1 shows that three participants' perception

of how well the community responded to women's safety decreased, however slight. A more

significant change is noted in the increased level of understanding the women reported after

participating in this project as demonstrated by Figure 2. These findings suggest the project did

succeed as an educative tool. The data indicates the project increased awareness and influenced

perceptions.
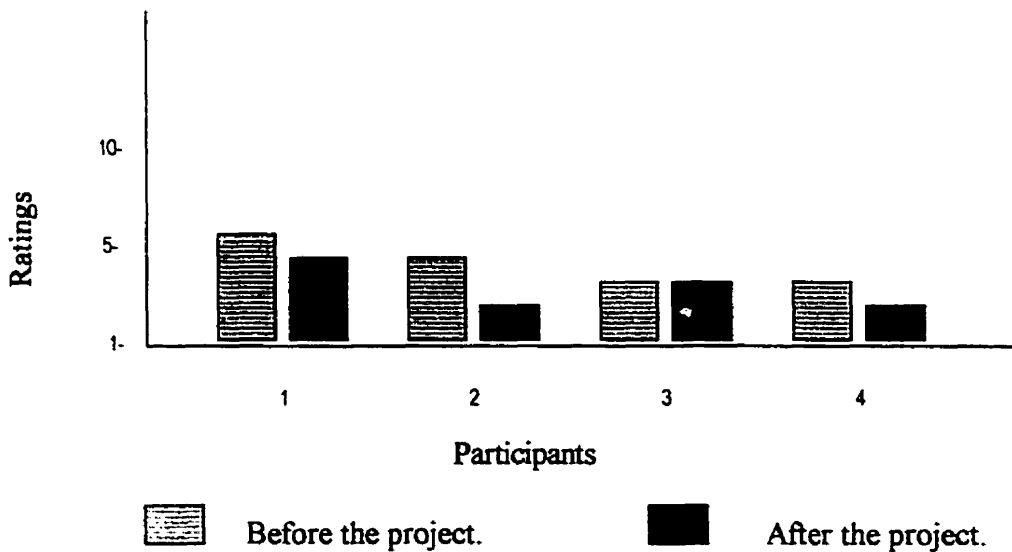
Figure 1: Participants ratings for the question: "On a scale of 1 to 10 how well do you feel our community currently responds to women's safety (10 as a minimal response and 1 as an ample response)?"
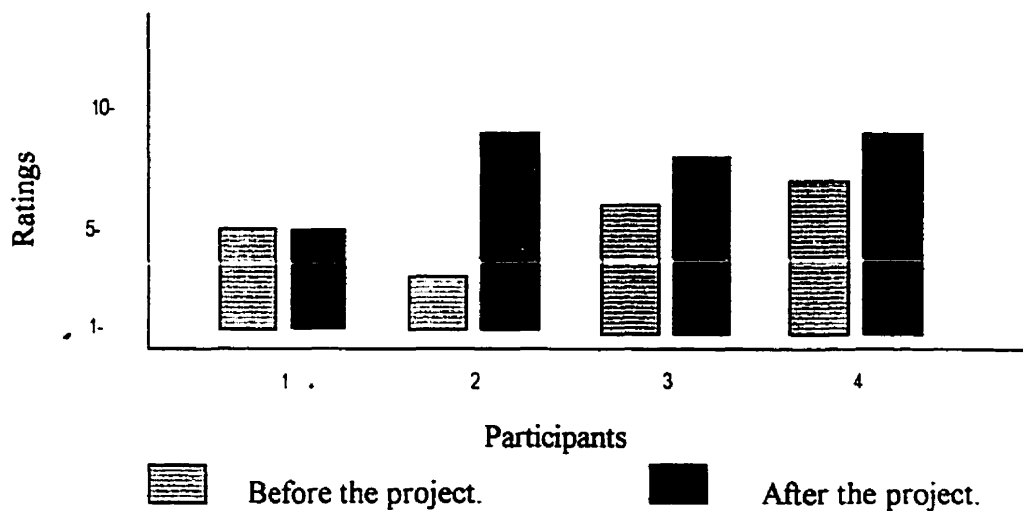
Figure 2: Participants rating for the question: "On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your understanding of women, fear and safety (10 as high and 1 as low)?"

Personal Interviews and Responses

Three weeks after the project ended I met with each participant to complete a personal interview. I gained quite a bit of information from these interviews and summarize their comments under three categories: (a) changes in thoughts and ideas; (b) changes in feelings; and (c) changes in actions. In this section participants offer their personal thoughts and feelings. In order to respect their privacy I do not use any names in this section.

Changes in thoughts and ideas. Four of the women reported changes in ideas and thoughts. For example, one participant, who thought her fear was unique her said, "It's real, the thoughts I've had are well founded, I'm not just paranoid." Another woman, who was not worried for her safety in this community, commented, "Until I was in this group I thought everyone was like me — not worried." A third participant indicated that her reality had "been broadened to include

other peoples' perspectives." Finally, a fourth woman stated that being involved helped her form new ideas. She viewed her ideas as part of a critical process and that she was now more likely to think about a situation critically and use the results to inform her actions. Using male-bashing as an example, she explained that she thinks about this differently, realizing now that men are also victims of stereotyping.

These examples indicate that for some participants, involvement in this process made them more aware of the realities of others; they reported changing attitudes such as "it doesn't happen in my back yard" or "I must be crazy for feeling this way." To explain these new understandings three women identified the idea that perception is related to experience. Women with abusive life experiences said that these experiences gave them concrete reasons to be worried whereas women without these experiences said they were perhaps too complacent but had no reason to think they were unsafe. In sum all women claimed to be more aware of the problem of women's fear and safety.

Changes in feelings. In terms of feelings all participants reported the participatory research project was a positive and enjoyable experience. Three women commented that the location of the meetings and the acceptance they felt made the group an easy place to share stories and ideas. Story sharing felt disturbing to four of the women but they found it opened their eyes. One of these four women indicated that listening to the women's stories and hearing about the statistics backed up how she felt: "I don't think that I would be swayed by others to think it is just paranoia I am feeling – and this will help me stay safer by knowing it (potential violence) is real." The impact of these stories created feelings of fear, anger, worry, and vulnerability as these comments indicate:

> "I worry about becoming more vulnerable."
> "I worry more.... I look over my shoulder more."
> "After I hurt my foot and had trouble walking I felt more vulnerable because of what I had heard in the group."
> "It's scary to know that abuse like that goes on."

"The stories by two women disturbed me."

"It makes me angry to hear what goes on."

The participants reported that they did not find the impact of the material or the stories traumatic. No one reported any stress symptoms. Two did, however, report improvements in their self-image and esteem. One woman was using the group to practise her group participation skills and the other saw her involvement as a part of her healing journey. The first woman stated her participation made her "feel stronger inside" which gave her a sense of freedom. The second woman stated, "I feel more accepted and more worthwhile. People are beginning to see me as personally useful," and "I've discovered I have leaderships skills." Through dialogue and personal reflection these women were gaining not only a better understanding of the issues but of themselves as well.

Changes in actions. The information obtained from the interview questions about changes in actions the women had made fell into two themes: personal changes and an increased involvement with the issue of women's safety. In regard to personal changes, three participants reported that they already do a lot to keep themselves and their children safe (not walking alone at night, carrying bear spray, avoiding certain areas, and keeping their car and homes secure). They stated that the project confirmed for them that they were doing the right thing and they planned to continue using these strategies. A fourth woman said she would be more cautious than she had been before this study. A fifth woman said she refused to live like a prisoner and that although she felt more aware, she would not be changing her current habits. One of the women who reported she engaged in cautious behaviour had decided she was going to work on staying fit, and for the first time it was for something meaningful to her and not just to look better for her husband. This woman was deeply concerned by the level of violence directed at disabled and older women and intended to improve her health in order to stay safe and less vulnerable as she aged.

All participants had plans to become more involved in preventing violence. Four women were going to help with the community safety audit. All wanted the group to continue and perhaps work on some of the issues we had been discussing. Two were intent on being more proactive in their personal lives by speaking up when they witnessed injustice or abuse. One woman had decided she wanted to pursue a career in the field of women's justice, perhaps through social work. This woman was already investigating a problem in child safety at a local elementary school, was involved in the sexual assault prevention campaign at the college she attended, and was actively involved in organizing the safety audit.

Summary of the Feminist Participatory Research Project

The FPR project succeeded in raising the participants' consciousness about women, fear, and community safety. The project also resulted in the collection of information about specific sites and situations in the community where women feel unsafe. The women reported that they learned from one another what it is that women typically fear and what strategies women use to keep themselves and their children safe. They also indicated that the process had led to personal changes for them. The involvement of the participants and other community members in the safety audit and requests for information on community safety by local groups were an indication of increased commitment to the prevention of violence against women at the grassroots level.

The FPR process described in this chapter provided me with the experience of engaging in an education for social change process and enabled local women to participate in a form of social activism. During this study the principles of FPR were applied using education for social change activities and models. The process helped local women, including myself, learn about the fear experience by women in our community. By engaging in the participatory research process women

began to appreciate their own lived experiences and personal knowledge and were able to use these as a source of information to plan for action to prevent violence against women. In the next chapter I compare my results with the findings of others in the literature. I outline the principles that emerged through the practice of feminist participatory research in the context of violence prevention, respond to the questions posed in the purpose of this study, and provide conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 4

REFLECTION ON THE PRACTICE OF FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this study was to determine if FPR could increase local grassroots involvement in violence prevention education and to identify the skills and knowledge needed by an adult educator in order to engage in this process. I have reflected on the process and findings of this study and on the experiences of the participants and on my own experiences in light of the literature presented in chapter 2. In this chapter I discuss this reflection and compare my findings and experience to the relevant literature. First, I assess the effectiveness of FPR in practice. Second, I consider how adult education can contribute to the prevention of violence against women. Third, I address the value of FPR to the practice of adult education. Following this discussion I draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the two original questions: (a) Can FPR increase local participation in violence prevention education and (b) what skills and knowledge do adult educators require in order to undertake this process?

Assessing the Effectiveness of Feminist Pedagogy and Research in Practice

In my search for a process to facilitate violence prevention education and research in the community in which I live, feminist theory and practice were of paramount concern to me. As a feminist I am cognizant of the need for feminist analysis to understand violence against women specifically and female oppression generally. In my study I found that this feminist analysis, in the context of FPR, was instrumental in creating a process that was empowering and change oriented. I organize this section around three themes: These include exploring enhancers and barriers to participation, recognizing and equalizing power, and educating and researching for change. I

caution that this categorization is artificial, in that my experience in the practice of FPR indicates that these categories overlap and are interwoven into a dynamic process. Within these categories I consider the effectiveness of FPR as a strategy that encompasses feminist pedagogy and research.

Exploring Enhancers and Barriers to Women's Participation

Participation is a cornerstone of the FPR process. Throughout the study I gave consideration to the degree of participation of women in the study itself and to the participation of the women during the Women for Community Safety sessions. In planning the study I was influenced by Maguire's (1987) research experience. She found that the social and political realities of women's experience influenced their participation in community research projects. Other literature confirms that women's limited participation in education is directly linked to the social conditions of their lives (Belenky et al., 1986; Burstow, 1994; Miles, 1989; Rich, 1985). My findings are consistent with this earlier research.

After considering the possible barriers to the participation of women in the study, I attempted to enhance the potential for participation by providing childcare, transportation, and holding the event during the evening. The participants reported that attending to these issues was important to them. For the three that worked during the day, having evening meetings was crucial to their participation. Danielle, a stay-at-home mom, was only able to attend during the evening because her husband was home then to care for their child. Ellen, a single mother on a limited income, was able to attend because of the availability of childcare.

The lack of interest by marginal groups of women in our community indicates that there were still limitations to participation in my study. Park (1992) suggests that participation depends "on how acutely the problem is felt by the community and how motivated its members are to do something about it" (p. 10). Park and Hart (1990) have suggested that the extent of the problem may still be submerged in a non-critical consciousness. This study did not provide data to either

support or dispute these barriers to participation, but the lack of aboriginal, adolescent, senior, or disabled women confirms that the problem exists.

During the FPR collective process women are expected to be full participants not just respondents. As suggested by Smith (1997) I encouraged participants to be active in the project through ownership of the questions, agenda, and process. I facilitated this by following Arnold et al.'s (1996) ideas for getting started in an education for social change project. Consistent with their suggestions, I discovered that using activities to set the atmosphere and to build relationships was conducive to encouraging the women's participation in and ownership of the process. First, I began by finding out why each participant was present. This technique gave everyone a chance to participate right away and established an atmosphere of sharing. The women began to see that they had similar reasons for involvement, such as contributing to the community and protecting their children. During this sharing process I connected their reasons for attending with the theme of the project thereby situating how their participation fit within the context of the study. This confirmed that they did have something concrete to share and gain from being involved in the process.

Arnold et al. (1996), suggest that when starting a social change education project facilitators should identify the participant's expectations. I found that describing the participatory research process unearthed assumptions the participants had about research that had helped mold their initial expectations. I discovered that several women had assumptions related to traditional research. For example, Anna questioned the validity of any data gathered from such a small group. I was able to explain that validity in participatory research was different from that of traditional positivist research. Moreover, by reframing their assumptions about the project from traditional research to non-traditional research I was able to shift their perceived role from that of respondents to that of co-researchers and co-learners.

The inclusion of the group agreement activity gave the women an opportunity to negotiate how they might safely participate in the project. Their negotiation engaged them in the creation of group norms for disclosures and discussion. Barbara commented that the exercise was useful to her: "The first thing you asked – 'How can you feel safe in this group?' – gave me the opportunity to include my own input. Participating in this activity gave me the chance to include my preferences." All women indicated during the final evaluation and interview that they felt quite safe while participating. These comments reinforce for me the emphasis that Belenky et al. (1986), Briskin (1990), and Horsman (1996) place upon the issue of safety with participants who may include abuse survivors.

Recognizing and Equalizing Power

Power is central issue in the FPR paradigm and is based on the premise that traditional education and research use power over processes and fail to recognize the power dynamics inherent in all relationships. Consequently, in my study I analyzed my own level of power in relation to the participants and the relationships of power between the participants. Like Brown (1982), Groff (1994), and Smith (1997) suggest, my role as facilitator involved being cognizant of my power and how I negotiated my role with this in mind. As Tisdell (1998) recommends, I considered my positionality and integrated this awareness into my practice. For example, I chose a venue and a discussion format that was non-threatening. I made sure that the participants designed a group process that was safe by negotiating a group agreement with everyone's input. I also took care to shift my role to that of co-researcher and co-learner by encouraging group members to take on roles such as organizer and discussion leader. Anna's suggestion to re-design one of the final activities and the groups re-negotiation of the last two sessions are examples of this role-sharing. In doing so, I was able to adopt what Mies (1983) calls a view from below.

I found that being aware of the power I possessed in the role of facilitator, animator, and content expert enabled me to recognize when the participants might defer to me for ideas. I consciously used this power to reduce my power. For example, I would purposely say that although the research on the subject of abuse says one thing, that does not necessarily mean this is true for our community or for each person in the group. This deferring back to the group as experts by virtue of their experience served to equalize the power relationship between the participants and myself. I discovered that I did not have to do this for long, as by the third meeting they were predominantly building on each others' stories as useful sources of information. My experience is similar to what Law (1997) found in her study, in that I experienced the shifting of roles from facilitator to participants. Similar to Smith's (1997) suggestion, I was practising the move from power-over to power-with, and power-from-within.

Several comments from the final evaluation indicate the women appreciated hearing the stories and experiences of the women in the group and that this was important to their understanding of violence against women in their community. One woman said, "The community is as unsafe as I suspected. The stories by the women confirmed that." A second participant stated that, "By hearing their stories I have become more aware, I shouldn't be so complacent." Another woman, also found the story sharing increased her awareness: "There is more fear than I thought. Talking about it made me think more about it." Consequently the sharing of power was important to the success of the FPR project.

Although I was cognizant of the issues of power among participants I did not get a sense that this was an issue for the group. The women were all white and from middle and upper middle class backgrounds and knew each other in other community contexts. Differences in lifestyle, such as bar-hopping or staying home, and in problem-solving style such as aggression versus assertiveness created some controversy during the problem-solving discussions. Consistent with the

findings of Arnold et al. (1996), I found these moments a "source of energy and insight" (p. 132). Energy and emotion were heightened as a result but so was the depth of our discussions. Using my experience with group processing and understanding of group dynamics I was careful to make sure all participants' ideas were valued and that each person's position was connected to the task at hand. The evaluation of the project by participants indicates that no one felt unheard. My experience confirms Hope and Timmel's argument that counseling skills are useful to the education for social change process. Having a sound background in counseling and group work made balancing my various roles while engaging in group process work possible. This experience also gave me the insight to recognize that I was overwhelmed at times with the demands of these multiple roles.

Educating and Researching for Change

FPR is simultaneously a form of research and a process of social change education. The literature on feminist and participatory research makes it clear that the strategies used to facilitate the process are less important than the process itself (Hall, 1992; Mies, 1983; Smith, 1997). This process is consistent in the liberatory literature and involves a series of steps including research, reflection, education, and action (Arnold et al., 1996; Freire, 1997; Hope & Timmel, 1995). I made use of the spiral model of action-reflection such as Arnold et al, Hope & Timmel, and Smith advocate, to guide the process of my FPR project. I found that by structuring the project around this model the participants and I created a dynamic collective process whereby everyone was both an educator and a learner; the experience of the participants was a central component in the learning and research; this experience made suggestions for local change possible.

After reviewing the literature on methods to facilitate this action-reflection process I decided to use a group discussion strategy. To facilitate the group discussion process I turned to Brookfield's (1986, 1990) suggestions for using this strategy. Like Brookfield, I found the

discussion method highly suitable for promoting reflection, for exploring the views of participants, and for encouraging their analysis of the experiences that were voiced. This technique also assisted both the learning and research process during the problem-posing activity, through the adding of new information, and while the group was engaged in problem-solving and action planning. Through discussion the women set out to present their experiences, understand the experiences of others, and identify contradictions that developed. This process led to what Hart (1990) calls "mutual self reflection" and resulted in the de-privatization of the women's experiences in which "each individual woman's life became meaningful *for herself* because it became meaningful within the larger context of women's oppression" (p. 56). They were able to heighten their self-awareness, collective awareness, and social-awareness—as the comments in Table I illustrate. Not only did this process help the women to name their experiences and to make connections between their personal experiences and social reality, it also resulted in action.

Table I: Comments That Illustrate Levels of Awareness

Self Awareness	Collective Awareness	Social Awareness
• I see that I have leadership qualities and I could personally do something. • I have become more aware. I shouldn't be so complacent.	• This is unfair. *We* expend so much time and energy on being afraid. • Until I was part of this group I thought everyone was like me, not worried.	• The problem is so vast, the root causes – violence and oppression – are so pervasive. We can be more proactive. • It makes me angry that there are differences between men and women and safety.

Consistent with the findings of Hall (1992), Joyappa and Self (1996), Mies (1983), and Maguire (1987), the use of the FPR created knowledge that led directly to action and change. By uncovering local knowledge the women in this group were able to make practical suggestions for

change that would lead to greater equality for women in our community. For example, this group decided that to improve a sense of safety for women in the community, completing a safety audit would be a useful strategy. Four of the five women helped to organize and carry out this audit. This particular action led to the involvement of other community groups including the RCMP, Citizens on Patrol, Block Parents, two female citizens, and two female teens. The results of this audit included repairing of street lamps, trimming bushes along local trails, and improved lighting around several apartment complexes.

To counter oppression and violence against young women in the workplace the group also made a suggestion to the local legal advocacy group to provide education on labour law to local youth. This suggestion was acted on within a few months. During the final interview the participants stated that they planned to become more active in women's issues in their workplace or the community, at their children's school, or individually by speaking up about violence. Through the process of action-reflection, the FPR process facilitated personal and social change that could result in the prevention of woman abuse in our community, which indicates that adult education has a role to play in violence prevention.

Preventing Violence Against Women Through Adult Education

Adult educators have a role to play in the prevention of violence against women. The alarming statistics on violence against women and children indicate it is highly likely that adult educators will have a number of abuse survivors in their classrooms, workshops, community development, and research projects. With this in mind adult educators have a moral responsibility to be aware of the impact of potentially disturbing material for these learners and to be prepared to address the emotional responses that learners can have to almost any material. This responsibility

involves responding to women's experience of violence and creating safety for learning and researching. For adult educators working in violence prevention education, FPR offers a process that responds to the distinct nature of this work.

Responding to Women's Experience of Violence

My study confirmed that violence against women and the fear of violence is a reality for our community. The women provided examples of being sexually harassed on the job, being fearful of certain places in the community, and preferring not to go out alone in the evening. Furthermore, three of the women indicated that access to education was influenced by their fear of the location of the community college and the poor lighting in that area. They also discussed the consequences of bullying and sexual harassment in our public schools for our children's and youth's education. Adult education for social change is driven by a philosophical intent to address such social inequality. Therefore, at the suggestion of feminist adult educators such as Horsman (1996) and Briskin (1990), I structured my study with the intent of taking a stand against violence and validating women's experience of violence. My definition of violence is broad and includes any action or inaction that serves to control a woman's right to sexual, physical, and emotional dignity.

In planning and facilitating this study I assumed that the majority of the women would have experienced violence in some form at some point in their lives. Taking this position is supported by the literature (Briskin, 1990; Horsman, 1996; Potvin, 1994; Wells, 1994). I was correct in this assumption, as all women disclosed some form of abuse or violence in their lives. It was not until the end of the process that the women were able to see how experiences such as being followed and unwanted touching fit into the definition of woman abuse. This process of de-privatizing women's experiences, as discussed earlier, was also a way to validate the women's experience of abuse and reduce the tendency for them to minimize these experiences and blame

themselves. Validating the experiences of violence for women in society is a strategy supported by Horsman. By doing so as an educator I am taking a stand against violence and making a powerful statement about what is or is not acceptable social behaviour.

Women often feel they are to blame for the violence in their lives. In this study the women linked theory and experience by connecting different types of violence (experience) to the oppression of women in general (feminist theory). As a result the participants experienced a reduction in their sense of shame and guilt and were more likely to share their own stories. One woman in particular spoke to this issue during the personal interview: "Previous experiences of abuse made me feel like I was living among the dredges of society. Then society makes you feel bad because of your experiences. Facing this stuff is part of my healing." She went on to explain that being involved in this group made her feel more valuable as a person, that her past was not something of which she needed to be ashamed, but rather part of how she had taken on society's views and blamed herself. By realizing she was not alone in her experience and that no one was going to judge her she felt safe to share her experiences. Validating and normalizing their experience of violence and telling them it is not their fault is one way I, as an adult educator, could respond to the shame and guilt often experienced by abuse survivors. The FPR process attempts to create links between theory and experience and assist participants to make the personal political by learning the abuse is part of the structure of oppression and not the result of individual shortcomings (Maguire, 1987). Validating and normalizing the experience of violence and abuse is only one of the ways adult educators can respond to violence against women. Another strategy I found useful was to attend to the safety issues in the learning environment.

Creating Safety for Learning and Researching

Horsman (1996) suggests that part of the responsibility of adult educators who endeavour to respond to the violence women experience is to create a safe learning environment. Drawing

upon my experience as a counselor for women survivors of abuse and the literature on responding

to abuse survivors in educational settings (Horsman; Nonesuch, 1996; Wells, 1994) I decided I

needed to find a way to set boundaries and to prepare for disclosures. I used two exercises to meet

this need.

Four of the five participants described the group agreement exercise as useful for making

the process feel safe. Although I have discussed this exercise previously in regard to participation,

it was also a useful strategy for addressing emotional and physical boundaries. In this exercise the

women were asked to consider what would make them feel safe while participating in the

community safety project. Together they came up with a list of group rules that addressed personal

and emotional boundaries. All group members wanted their personal style of responding to the

content and emotions respected. During this process each participant was able to describe to the

group their preference for dealing with social contact and handling strong emotions. For example,

one rule included asking before hugging and respecting a person's right to take a personal time-out

for dealing with emotions when necessary. This was helpful in two ways. First it gave women

permission to take care of their emotional needs on their own terms and second it prevented women

who may be inclined to rescue from taking away another woman's right to her own pain. What was

most important about this exercise was that it gave the women a venue to discuss the issue of

boundaries, a subject that is central for many women who have experienced violence and abuse

(Wells, 1994).

The second exercise was used to locate the Women for Community Safety group on a

continuum between education and therapy. This was another way to establish boundaries for the

learning environment, explain the type of relationship I anticipated with them, and provide an

avenue to discuss where women could find the support they would not get in the group. This

particular exercise was appreciated by Barbara who had been in a learning situation where too

much personal sharing made the group feel intense, leaving her with a sense of vulnerability. I found it helpful to explain my relationship with them as one of a co-learner and co-researcher. Because I was also a women's counselor I wanted to establish that I was not going to be in this role; rather, my relationship in the project was one of concern for community safety just like many of them. Feminist and participatory researchers, such as Groff (1994), Hall (1992), Maguire (1987), Mies (1983), and Park (1992), support this strategy of defining the researchers role. Finally, explaining that the group would not serve as a place for therapeutic group support provided me with the opportunity to discuss where they could get additional support. Horsman (1996) encourages educators to know the community resources for abuse survivors. I too found this to be an important factor as I was able to answer questions such as whether the community has a shelter and who to talk to at 4 a.m. when you cannot sleep. These strategies acknowledged the potential impact of the context of this study in relation to their experiences as women in a sexist world by validating their experiences, honouring their feelings, and respecting their ability to take control of their lives.

Horsman (1996), Nonesuch (1996), and Wells (1994) suggest educators find support for themselves when working in the context of violence. As a participant-researcher I found it helpful to follow my own advice and to use the suggestions made by the group. As a result of my counselling work I was quite aware that hearing the details of violence is difficult. I had already established a process of debriefing with my colleagues and this was used for the duration of the study. This debriefing was not a process of discussing the details of the women's stories for that would be a breach of confidentiality; rather, it was a way for me to discuss my reactions to the content and process of the project. What I found missing in this process of finding support was the absence of having someone with whom to discuss the implications of FPR for the design, facilitation, and findings of the study. I did not heed the caution of Smith (1997) who suggests

apprenticing or employing the guidance of a seasoned participatory researcher. In hindsight I appreciate her caution and pass her words of wisdom on to others attempting this type of research. Isolation was also experienced by Maguire (1987) in her FPR case study. This isolating experience made me more aware of the need to find both intellectual and emotional support while doing this work.

Moving Towards the Goal: Violence Prevention Education

One of my questions in forming this study was whether adult educators could prevent violence against women by using a FPR process. Similar to the FPR work done by Maguire (1987) and Mies (1983), my study focused on violence against women and led to specific changes that are considered steps towards the goal of prevention in the violence prevention literature. The literature on violence prevention suggests that educational programs aimed at prevention must educate about the facts; lead to changes in attitudes, feelings, and behaviours; and involve women in collective activities that lead to their participation in the community (Gordon & Riger, 1988; MacLeod, 1994). I discuss each in turn. Because violence prevention is also about social change some of these themes are repeated in other parts of this thesis. I discuss them specifically here in an effort to link the social change aspect of FPR to its potential for preventing violence against women.

Providing the facts. In the prevention of violence literature there is controversy around the providing of information on how to stay safe. Brookes-Gardener (1990) argues that teaching women to protect themselves through self-defense classes reinforces victim-blaming and fuels fear. In my study, I found that women already had a set of rituals for keeping safe and knew a great deal about who and what to fear. For example, two women always have their keys ready when they go out to their cars, and they always check the back seat. One of these two women and another participant kept their homes locked up tight whether they were home or not. Consequently, my study supported the idea that violence prevention education needs to do more

than tell women how to protect themselves; violence prevention education must empower women to make changes in their communities so they can reduce their fear and begin to participate in the life of the community as is their right. The trend towards empowerment found in the literature was present in my study.

Influencing changes in attitudes, feelings, and behaviours. As with social change education, violence prevention is concerned with changes in people and in communities. Because FPR is a process of renaming and rediscovering the world and the self through the building of a critical consciousness it has the potential to change attitudes, feeling, and behaviours. This type of change takes time but evidence of such movement was present in my study through comments from the one-to-one interview. For example, Ellen, a single mother, said, "I vocalize more, I pass on the knowledge to increase awareness." She was hopeful that her new awareness would enable her to help others. Anna, a working professional with two teenage daughters, explained that she discovered that a person's sense of safety depends on age and whether they have children. She felt this experience made her more sensitive to other people's fears, but that she did not experience the same level of fear. Barbara, a student and married mother of two, indicated that she had taken action to secure her home (using sticks in her window sills), but that the main change for her was internal: 'It's in my mind, I can't get it out. I will now keep my eye out for that kind of thing. We need to watch out for one another. I am more motivated to stay fit so I won't look or become vulnerable."

Upon reflection on the changes expressed by the women in the study, I became aware that they indicate few changes in attitudes. Attitude changes recommended by MacLeod (1989), include attacking those attitudes that degrade women, view them as unequal to men, and condone violence against women. In my study it appeared that the women did not hold these attitudes themselves but did see them in the community and made recommendations to address them such

as teaching about gender stereotyping in the public schools and supporting sexual harassment prevention training for women and youth.

Collective activities and community participation. The literature argues that violence prevention education should empower women to take an active role in their community (Gordon & Riger, 1988; MacLeod, 1989). In my study the women increased their planned participation in collective activities as well as in community participation. By the end of the study the women were eager to follow through with their suggestions and to continue the work of the group. This included planning and participating in the community safety audit, making recommendations to town council to improve street lighting and traffic safety, and being more active in the women's movement by advocating for women's rights. Moreover, their involvement influenced other change. Ellen, a single mother and full time student, organized a Preventing Violence Against Women Week display with support from her involvement with the Canadian Federation of Students. During this display she promoted the No Means No Campaign that focused on raising awareness about violence against women. Furthermore, this display was presented in the local shopping mall, the same mall that denied us space the previous 2 years. As a result of Ellen's participation in this project and her subsequent influence on her friends and acquaintances, in December 1999, we were welcome to commemorate the Montreal Massacre with an informational table in the busiest part of the mall. The FPR project was indeed having an effect on the community.

The Value of FPR to Adult Education Practice

FPR can enhance the social purpose of adult education practice, provide guidance for teaching and learning about oppression, and provide a method of connecting both the academic and activist work of adult educators who are fighting for social justice. In this section I describe how the

centrality of gender to this process plays a role in achieving social justice. I also present my findings as to what FPR can offer adult educators who engage in liberatory education. Finally, I explain how my study supports the idea that community groups can create knowledge and learn from the theories and experiences found in the academic literature.

Enhancing the Social Purpose of Adult Education

FPR is a process adult educators can use in their struggle for social justice. Throughout the study I was curious as to how this process would live up to the ideals of liberatory adult education. Like the historical adult education movements discussed by Brookfield (1983) this study gave participants a measure of control over their circumstances and united them through a vision of a community that is just, equitable, and inclusive of the voices of its members. My study is similar in approach to that of Coady's work with exploited fishermen, farmers, and miners in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. He met with community members in local homes and halls to explore their dissatisfaction with the oppressive economic conditions and to plan for action; in this study I drew together community women at the local women's center to explore their concerns in regard to violence against women and make recommendations for change. Similar to Hoodless' Women's Institutes, described by Selman and Dampier (1991), the Women for Community Safety project gave women a venue to express their opinions and work for community improvement. Unlike the women who attended the Women's Institutes of the 19th century, the women in this study can take their new awareness to the public arena when they cast their votes.

I discovered that the addition of the feminist perspective enhanced the study's social purpose because it put gender at the centre of the analysis. Using Weiler's (1991) situated theory of oppression I created a process in which the participants could examine the contradictions of experience between men and women in our community. The women began to see gender as significant to their understanding of women's fear and safety in the community as Danielle's

comment suggests: "Men are still in charge in the community and do what they see fit. They don't see how women experience the community . . . it's these attitudes of men that keep us stuck inside." For this participant gender was the determining factor in how she understood who had the power to make changes in the community. The use of a gender analysis was crucial to her learning how the political realities in our community influenced her personal freedom. For me this was a good example of how FPR can enhance the social purpose of adult education.

Teaching and Learning About Oppression

Oppression is a human condition with personal and political origins; thus teaching and learning in this context is rich with emotion. Similarly, in this study the subjective feelings of the women were central to educating for personal and social change. During the first session two women expressed their excitement about the prospect of being able to voice their opinions and personal concerns about a topic close to their heart. Later, one of the women explained, "This experience was positive for me. By interacting with people I opened up some areas . . . . Getting and receiving feedback improved my awareness. I mean, I now feel that something can be done." Throughout the study, I noticed that the women were more animated and creative when the topic under discussion raised strong emotion. This finding is consistent with Freire's (1997) observation that starting with issues that the group had strong feelings about broke through their sense of powerlessness.

During this educational intervention I also discovered that learning about oppression can also lead to negative reactions for participants. Sharing and hearing stories about abuse and fear evoked emotional reactions in women that increased their sense of powerlessness. Two women reported they felt more vulnerable as a result of talking about women and fear. Both of these women reported they looked over their shoulder more, and one of them worried about becoming more vulnerable with age. Two participants described hearing some of the stories of the women in

the group as emotionally disturbing. Yet, by the end of the 7 weeks all women reported they were

angry about the oppression of women and motivated to influence change. By participating in the

actions that they themselves suggested the women began to regain their personal power. My

research experience implies that adult educators should be cognizant of the impact of oppression;

although it can enhance the learning process, it can also add to a sense of powerlessness without

direct liberatory intervention. My study supports Horsman's (1996) suggestion to be prepared to

offer practical support for negative reactions when working with abuse survivors. For example, I

demonstrated this support by ending each session with care through a winding down process

whereby the focus was no longer on personal stories but, instead was turned to ways to prevent

violence and feel empowered.

Teaching and learning about oppression involves the development of a critical

consciousness. Maguire (1987) found that she did not give enough attention to the development of

a critical consciousness through education. Following her advice I established a meeting format

that was conducive to maximizing learning and exploring issues by asking not only "what" is

happening, but also "why." Thus through questioning I engaged the group in identifying the root

causes for some of these problems. This strategy is support by the education for social change

literature (Freire, 1997; Hope & Timmel, 1995). Although the women did not identify themselves

as feminists all of them were able to explore these issues through a critical gender lens. This

analysis was made easier because two of the women had just finished a first year women's studies

course and another woman was taking training in social work. After the third session I observed in

my journal:

> This group has a good handle on the analysis of sexism and other forms of oppression. All
> appear to have had some training in this regard whether it is life experience, formal
> education or a combination of these. The analysis is there. All I need to do is mention it.
> There is no need to explain what it is.

Another way to engage in critical reflection and learn about oppression suggested in the literature is the use of action planning. During the last session I used two activities adapted from Hope and Timmel (1995) to assist the action planning process. The first exercise I used to prioritize the problems was helpful to pare down the enormous amount of information. The second activity, the grid analysis, was helpful to develop critical awareness in that it presented a picture of how problems are linked together. The women were able to look over the information they had created and to see a bigger societal picture from it—in the words of Hope and Timmel, to "move from seeing isolated problems as situations in themselves, to seeing the structures of society which control and dominate people's lives" (p. 62).

The comments made by participants during the grid analysis indicate that they had uncovered many of the values and belief's behind the issues we had been discussing. For example, they recognized that they had a collective critical consciousness during a discussion of the role economics play in the prevention of violence. They pointed out that in the domain of work and safety, making money was more important than female employee safety. In regard to public safety, male decision makers, who do not experience fear as readily because of their gender, were seen as unlikely to spend taxpayer dollars on improving lighting in the community. One woman commented that seeing the results up on a chart like that made her appreciate what we had done but also pointed out that preventing violence in our community would be an enormous task. Thus my use of problem posing and action planning indicate that FPR is a useful strategy in developing critical consciousness.

Like Maguire (1987), I found that researching and teaching about oppression made great demands on me emotionally, physically, and mentally. I recognized the parallel between the multiple roles I experience in this process to the multiple roles I experience as a woman on a daily basis. Consequently, it was not a leap to determine that my multiple roles as educator, researcher,

activist, participant, and student influenced this demand. My experience of the need to balance

multiple roles is supported in by literature (Groff, 1994; Smith 1997). First, as an educator I needed

to pay attention to my facilitation skills and structure each session to maximize the learning for the

participants. Second, as a liberatory researcher my role involved ensuring the process attended to

the women's experience, encouraged critical analysis, and promoted knowledge creation--as well

as recording their suggested problems and solutions. Third, as an activist I was aware that my

agenda was one of change and I needed to make this agenda for change clear to the group, while

being ever vigilant not to impose my political agenda on the participants. Like Law (1997) I found

that my activist tendencies were useful for teaching and researching about oppression. Being a bit

of a rebel, not liking being told what to do, and having a healthy sense of skepticism, assisted me in

looking at things differently, and modeling critical analysis. For example, one evening when

discussing the problem of not being allowed to use the local mall to commemorate the Montreal

Massacre, I told the group how I was incensed by the mall's policy. I described how I shared my

views with others, beginning a campaign that led to development of lapel buttons to be worn during

the holiday season that said: "Peace is not a season, Peace is a way of life." This example showed

that I was not likely to accept the status quo and was willing to join with others to make a

statement. Several women remembered this campaign and felt is was a good way to raise

awareness.

My fourth role was that of participant. As a member of the community and a woman I had

experiences that enabled me to contribute along with the other participants in knowledge creation

and action planning. The literature on feminist and participatory research supports the idea that the

facilitator originate in the community (Park, 1992) or spend a great deal of time building

relationships with the community before starting the research process (Maguire, 1987). Comments

such as "Knowing people made it easier. I always eye up a situation before speaking" indicate that

relationships made sharing possible. Yet, trying to be a participant while facilitating the process was extremely exhausting.

Ever present in my mind was the reality that I was also a student and would need to record this process and write about it for my personal educational goals. I struggled emotionally with this issue, because the purpose of FPR is to create knowledge for the benefit of those involved and not for academic gain. I did not want to create a situation in which I contradicted the purpose and ethics of FPR. After a great deal of reflection I was confident that my intent was honourable and that by writing about my experiences with FPR and the experiences of the women I would be contributing to the feminist movement by connecting activism and the academy.

Linking the Academy With Activism

Once I had reconciled my dual role of researcher and community member, I did not experience the level of tension expressed by many feminist and participatory researchers such as Cancian (1993), Maguire (1987), and Small (1988). My study did support the idea that community groups and individuals can and do create knowledge and engage in social change education, as similarly observed by Brookfield (1983). This is significant, for adult education as activism and theorizing are both important sources of knowledge creation that link the academy with the community. For example, I drew upon research to inform my practice and I provided information to participants about the experiences of women in other communities doing similar work. Furthermore, by writing about my own and the women's experiences in this study for my graduate work I link the work done in the community to the academic world of adult education. My experience is consistent with that of Cancian, who said, "To do activist research, researchers must have stronger ties with the community and/or policy makers than is typical of professors" (p. 93). I believe that my links in the community and my previous relationships with the participants were useful to both the process and outcomes of the study. I found that FPR served as a

catalyst to bridge the work of the activist and the academic, both of which are important aspects of adult education.

Conclusions

This thesis began with the general intent of involving community members in finding out how safe women felt in the community by engaging women in a process that researches and educates for change. Adult education, I speculated, could achieve this though the use of the FPR process. The questions I set out to explore were whether the use of FPR would increase local grassroots involvement in violence prevention leading to personal and social change and what skills and knowledge adult educators require to facilitate a FPR process in the context of violence prevention education. The conclusions that follow, attempt to add insight into these questions.

1. FPR, as an education strategy for social change, can realize adult education's liberatory purpose. The women involved in this study uncovered personal experiences of gender oppression through a collective critical self-reflection process and used this knowledge to formulate solutions for preventing violence against women in their community. FPR increased the grassroots involvement in violence prevention for those who participated and encouraged other levels of community involvement. It also encouraged the women to become allies in the process of ending violence against women locally.

2. On its own, FPR does not guarantee participation by marginalized groups of women. While concerted effort was made to advertise the "Women for Community Safety" project in all segments of the community and to reduce physical barriers by providing daycare and transportation, other invisible barriers persisted. I do not attempt to speculate what these might be. I

acknowledge, however, that not having the voice of marginalized women is perhaps the weakest aspect of this study.

3. Despite the relatively small number of participants in this study, I infer that women entering into educational and community research projects typically have histories of violence, abuse, and gender oppression that influence their experience of these events including what, and how they learn, and how they participate. The personal and emotional safety measures taken and this project's structure were conducive to the participants' sense of safety within the learning and research process. The group agreement and the act of locating the group along a continuum between research and therapy assisted the participants to establish and to legitimize physical and emotional boundaries.

4. Social and personal change is equally important to the education for social change, action-reflection process. Connecting the personal with the political as a feminist goal involves women learning to see themselves in relation to the world and in relation to other women. Women can link individual and social histories to collective social change concurrently through a process of mutual self-reflection. In order to be able to speak of something in a collective sense, women must also name and define these personal experiences and social histories. Once the women have completed this process, they are personally changed for they now view that history in a new way. FPR provides a process whereby this personal and collective knowledge can then be translated directly into action. Personal change does not, however, guarantee social action in the revolutionary sense. For some, social action might involve speaking up when abuse is occurring or spreading the word that certain behaviours are oppressive.

5. Power imbalances between teacher and student, and between researcher and researched, are unavoidable in any adult education endeavour. As this project had an emancipatory intent I needed to identify my own personal history and biases. The awareness of my oppression as a

woman, my personal experiences of abuse and harassment, as well as the potential oppressor within me (based on my class, race, education, and status as the "researcher") gave me the ability to view the project with both the understanding of one who has been oppressed and one who can potentially become an oppressor. This understanding helped me, as an adult educator, to be cognizant of the power differences within the group and my need to actively encourage the role sharing in the group. A commitment to continue my own self-assessment of these issues assisted in equalizing the relationships between the participants and myself and facilitated the creation of a learning environment that was respectful, relaxed, safe, and engaging. Positioning myself as a co-investigator with a view from below reduced the power imbalance between the participants and myself.

6. Doing FPR on one's own is an isolating and lonely experience. The theoretical support gained through the literature is helpful but does not replace the utility of a mentoring relationship with someone experienced in the philosophical foundation and practical application of FPR. Moreover, facilitating the FPR process is extremely difficult to do on one's own when the role of student in a graduate degree program is added to the multiple roles of the researcher. The multiple roles of the researcher, like those of women generally, are demanding. Although sharing the role of researcher and learner is desirable in the context of FPR it is not necessarily a desire of the participants nor does it fit well when the researcher is required to address particular learning needs in the process of credentialing.

Recommendations

On the basis of my learning and the comments and experiences of the study's participants

I make the following recommendations to adult educators who want to implement the a similar

process.

1. I recommend that prior to making a decision to use the FPR process adult educators

need to decide if this process is appropriate. The FPR process must be used to understand the lived

experience of women and to organize them with the intent of facilitating women's liberation. It can

be used when action is required and research information is needed to inform that action. It is not a

process to use merely to gain information about women abuse, nor just to organize for social

action. Other methods are available for these purposes.

2. I recommend that adult educators ensure they give adequate attention and time to

including women from marginalized groups in the community. The very nature of oppression

makes it difficult for these women to find the time and energy to attend and to see the relevance of

such projects to their lives. The usual channels of advertising and the Feminist Participatory

Research process do not guarantee that these women will be able to overcome barriers to

participation. Perhaps personal invitations to these women might be of some help.

3. I recommend that adult educators endeavour to attend to the women's emotional and

physical safety. The emotional impact of sharing personal stories within the theme of woman

abuse can be quite difficult for women and especially for abuse survivors. Giving the group time

to set their own boundaries and identify among them, what they need and do not need in terms of

support is crucial in preventing re-victimization and boundary violations. Furthermore, learning

can be disorienting of women whose world views are challenged or fears confirmed. Ideally the

facilitator should have a background in handling disclosures or, at the very least, a plan for referral

and support that the women can access. Establishing a safe and trusting learning environment is critical for educating for social and personal change. The impact of abuse on learning and facilitating adult education is an area that requires further research and discussion.

4. I recommend that when assessing the success of any FPR intervention adult educators consider the degree of social and personal change equally. FPR emphasizes social and collective change. For social change to occur the women need to work toward seeing themselves in relation to the world they want to collectively change. Through the process of insight and reflection on personal experiences, as they relate to women's collective reality, individual women come together to facilitate social change. Adult educators should appreciate that if one woman changes her perception of safety and therefore keeps herself safer by altering her personal habits, a measure of success has been achieved. A woman will have been liberated from her oppressive reality in which she felt she was safe when she was not or she dismissed her fear as irrational.

5. I recommend that adult educators address their personal bias and social history in any venture that claims to be liberatory. Being clear about one's own prejudices, political agenda, and social identity can help an adult educator build cooperation, mutual respect, and engagement in an educational process. This critical self-awareness during an FPR process can assist a researcher to become seen as a co-investigator in the efforts that are designed to improve the participants' lives. Building oneself into the research can assist the adult educator in choosing appropriate activities, and in doing a realistic assessment of the degree of power and influence that he or she has over the process and the participants. This assessment will help the researcher clarify the roles they take on in the process and those they will share with or defer to the participants.

6. I recommend that adult educators attempting FPR for the first time do one of two things: (a) establish a mentoring relationship with someone versed in the principles and process of FPR, or (b) ensure co-facilitation is available or shared facilitation with group members is agreed

upon at the onset of the project. In keeping with the principles of FPR, I think the latter is ideal. This may require spending additional time with the participants teaching them about the process of FPR and how to share facilitation. However, because FPR involves a particular philosophical approach that may not be shared by all community members, the consequences of co-facilitation for less homogenous FPR groups needs further exploration. I also recommend further discussion and research by feminist participatory researchers in regard to the multiple roles of the feminist facilitator in this process. Currently these facilitators must draw upon participatory research, feminist research, or social change education theory to inform their practice. Finally, it appears that FPR mirrors the multiple roles women have in society in general, and as such this subject is worthy of further discussion.

In closing, FPR must be seen as the beginning of a long-term strategy for ending violence against women and as a tool for organizing women and communities. Contributions made by local women through FPR can lead to collaboration between women and community agencies such as local government and social service providers, for the purpose of local change. FPR is an effective educational process through which adult educators can facilitate increased awareness and develop collective and personal action strategies that lead to local involvement in the prevention of violence against women.

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Appendix A: Evaluation Instruments

Post-Project questionnaire:

Name: Age:
Marital Status: Number/ages of children:

1. What would you say is your primary reason for betting involved in the Women for Community Safety project? (Personal experience, helping the community, curiosity, concern for others, political etc.)

2. What do you hope to gain personally from participating in this project?

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well do you feel our community currently responds to women's safety?

   Minimal   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Ample
   Response   Response

4. On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your understanding of women, fear and safety?

   Minimal   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Ample
   Response   Response

4. On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your level of worry in Port Hardy in regard to the following?

Public Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
School/work Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Child Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. What is the main question you hope to answer during this project?

7. Please add anything you feel is relevant.

Post-Project questionnaire:

Name:

1. Describe how this project met or did not meet your expectations.

2. Please comment on the overall delivery of the project. What did you find helpful to the process and what could be improved upon?

3. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well do you feel our community currently responds to women's safety?

| Minimal Response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Ample Response |

4. On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your understanding of women, fear and safety?

| Minimal Response | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Ample Response |

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your level of worry in The community in regard to the following?

Public Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
School/work Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Child Safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. Please comment on how the facilitator's effectiveness. What did she do that was helpful to the process and what could be improved?

7. Please add anything you feel would be helpful to improve this project if it were to be done again.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Notes: Explain to interviewee that her responses will be used to explore how her involvement in the Women's for Community Safety project influenced their thoughts, feelings, and/or actions. Also discuss that I will be taking notes and once the information from all participants has been gathered, reviewed and documented the notes will be returned to them. No names or other identifying information will be used.

Thoughts

1. What do you think you learned by being involved in this project about yourself, your community, or women's safety?

2. How have your ideas changed?

3. What value do you see in this knowledge or how useful is it to you?

4. Other?

Feelings

1. How did your involvement in this project feel to you? For example did you experience any emotional reactions to the content or the process that impacted you in a positive or negative way?

2. How did these feelings affect you personally?

3. How did these feeling affect your life generally?

4. Did you feel safe enough in this group to participate freely?

5. What helped you to feel safe or unsafe in the group?

Actions

1. What do you do differently as a result of being involved in this research project?

2. Do you experience the community or relationships with people differently as a result of your participation in this project?

3. Have you decided or do you plan to become more involved in some aspect of this project? If so, how (i.e. women's movement, community involvement, involvement in safety at work or school)?

Do you have any final comments you would like to add that would help explain your experience in this project?

Appendix B: Grid Results from Session 7

What we are up against?: Getting Focused

Domain →	public	work/school	home	child/youth
Social Causes of the problem. (Why?)	• Physical Environment. • Lack of awareness of how women are as a group worried.	• Lack of awareness	• Kids with nothing to do. • Alcohol and drug problems.	• Kids with nothing to do. • Kids can't vote. • Child/Youth not Gov priority. • Social problems and the effect on family values.
Who controls the decision making? (Who?)	• Town Council. . • Property owners. • School District. • Male decision makers	• RCMP • Employers • Male Bosses?	• RCMP • Seniors Centre • Family Centre	• Schools • Families • Youth?
What are the values and beliefs behind the issue? (Why and what?)	• Money values: who pays. • Values about women. (victim blaming etc).	• Making money more important than employee safety. • Why slow response? (priorities, location of dispatch?)	• We don't value our seniors or youth seniors.	• Money values (not spending on youth/child care. • Don't value youth. • Values are not taught. • Family values need supporting.
Is there a local policy or organization dealing with this problem? (Who?)	• Block parents, COPS, Crisis Centre, RCMP. • District Building Codes	• RCMP • 911 Dispatch (Courtenay?) • Advocacy program • Schools • Multicultural society	• RCMP • Citizens on Patrol • Neighbours	• Crisis Centre • Family Place • MCF • RCMP • P.A.C. • School Board • Block Parents
Possible Barriers to the solution? (Who, what, when?)	• Values of policy makers and community. • Values about spending. • Lack of interest/ awareness.	• Heavy load already on schools. • Lack of time and money. • No interest by employers/ees. • Fear of losing jobs.		• Lack of jobs for youth. • Money for a youth centre. • Interest by youth or community. • Cost of programs. • Who does it?
How can we as a group or individuals help? (How?)	• Encourage public knowledge. • Get other women involved in awareness. • Approach district re: clean-up and safety audit.	• Suggest an orientation of E.S. Act to Students at High School. • Suggest NICCC to E.S. Act Awareness Education.	• Suggest to realtors that they not display contents of people homes in windows.	• Encourage youth involvement in youth centre development. • Create safety flyers for children. • For all issues develop a news letter to raise awareness.