'COMMUNITY' AND CONTRADICTIONS:
THE ROLE OF A COMMUNITY CENTRE
IN A ST. JOHN'S HOUSING PROJECT

JAMES G. RICE

**'Community' and Contradictions: The Role of a Community Centre
in a St. John's Housing Project**

by

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology
Memorial University of Newfoundland

August 2002

St. John's                                                    Newfoundland

# Abstract

This thesis examines the role that a community centre plays in the 'practice' of community in a social housing project in west St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. My analysis focuses on the tensions and contradictions involved in the course of daily life around the Centre as the staff attempt to realize the goals of the Centre, enhance the social conditions of the area, and help to develop the 'cultural capital' of the residents. Particular attention is paid to the core analytical themes which emerged during the course of my fieldwork, such as 'community,' 'empowerment,' and 'ownership.' I examine how these themes are invoked as 'mobilizing metaphors' to serve the agendas of government, the staff of the Centre, and tenant-activists from the project, contrasted with how these same themes are realized as practices in daily life. I also analyze some of the historical, political and economic contexts in which the Centre is situated which relates to a key contradictory tension the Centre is placed within: the strengthening of 'community' within a housing project that is mandated as 'transitional' housing.

# Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank the three people without whom this thesis would not have been possible: Joanne Cag of the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador for her initial suggestion of the centres as a possible research topic and for her initial contact with the managers on my behalf. Thanks for paving the way for me. Secondly, I would like to thank Sharon Roseman, my thesis advisor. I do not think I am capable of articulating my respect for you as a scholar and a thesis advisor. You went above and beyond for me for all matters related to this thesis and other matters, and I thank you. Last but not least, I would like to thank 'John,' the manager of the Froude Avenue Community Centre. I am not happy about having to use pseudonyms, as I think we should be able to accept the responsibility that the use of actual names entail, but no matter. A pseudonym cannot hide the strength of your personality and your integrity. You have been open, honest and supportive of me the entire time of my research at the Centre. I hope I do not ruffle any feathers with this and it is of some use to you. Thank you.

I would like to thank all of the staff and residents that I spent my summer with. I wish I could use your names here, but I will have to use pseudonyms and I apologize for it. It's not like you all won't be able to figure out who is who. As I explained during my research, anything of a contentious nature would be qualified with 'A resident told me…' or 'A staff member told me…' which I have done. Other than that I am not sure who we are fooling. 'Bill,' I thank you for all the thought provoking discussions we had at the Centre or over breakfast. I took great care in what is and isn't included in this thesis, but the gaps speak volumes. To 'Helen' and her daughter, the preschool was one of the highlights not only of my research but my life. I wish I could have spent more time there during the thesis writing stage, but I was swamped. I will never forget the 'hop-hop' dance and I am glad that my sober nature was shaken up, at least for the moment. To 'Keith' I would like to thank you for making me feel at home. It was also good to have someone to commiserate with during our coinciding break-ups. To 'Kate,' I would like to

iii

# Table of Contents

Chapter One:

Chapter Two:

Chapter Three:

Chapter Seven:

Chapter Eight:

# List of Abbreviations

**AFDC:**  Aid to Families with Dependent Children (U.S.)

**CAP:**  Canada Assistance Plan

**CHST:**  Canada Health and Social Transfer

**CMHC:**  Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

**CSC:**  Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador

**FACC:**  Froude Avenue Community Centre

**HCS:**  Health and Community Services (Newfoundland and Labrador)

**MHA:** Member of the House of Assembly (Newfoundland and Labrador)

**NEA:** Neighbourhood Enhancement Association (Froude Avenue)

**NLHC:**  Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation

**RNC:**  Royal Newfoundland Constabulary

**SJHC:**  St. John's Housing Corporation

**SJMC:**  St. John's Municipal Council

**SPAN:**  Single Parents' Association of Newfoundland

**SSP:**  Strategic Social Plan (Newfoundland and Labrador)

**TRO:**  Tenant Relations Officer (NLHC)

## List of Appendices

# List of Main Research Participants by Pseudonyms

| | |
|---|---|
| John | - Manager of the Froude Avenue Community Centre |
| Bill | - Educational/Literacy Coordinator (FACC) |
| Helen | - Preschool Teacher (FACC) |
| Keith | - Program Coordinator (FACC) |
| Nancy | - President of the NEA (tenant) |
| Kate | - Secretary of the NEA, key volunteer at the Centre (tenant) |
| Doreen | - Vice-President of the NEA, volunteer at the Centre (tenant) |
| Laura | - Key NEA member (tenant) |
| Mike | - Long time resident of the Froude project |

# Chapter One

# Introduction

This thesis examines the role that the Froude Avenue Community Centre plays in the 'practice' of community in public housing project located in the west end of St. John's, the capital city of the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have borrowed the term the 'practice' of community from Rhoda Halperin (1998). In her work, she challenged the notion of 'community' as a bounded, geographic whole and argues instead that community should be understood as, "a dynamic, contentious, and changing process that plays out as a series of everyday practices" (Halperin 1998: 2). However, the focus of this thesis is somewhat narrower than Halperin's work as my focus is on a community centre and its staff rather than the Froude Avenue[1] project itself. But I retain Halperin's broader analytical framework of 'practice,' which includes not only the small details of daily life in an urban community, but also the impact of the larger forces of the political economy. I approach my analysis of the Centre on three key levels.

I consider the intricacies, nuances and tensions of daily life around the Centre as the staff go about performing their jobs and implementing the goals of the Centre, as seen in their mission statement (Appendix A). I also examine the contradictions and tensions between the metaphorical uses of terms like 'community,' as seen in the discourses of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC)[2], the Centre's staff, as well as that of the tenant-activists from the Froude project, and how these metaphors contrast with the practice of daily life around the Centre. The third focus is perhaps the most

broad. The Froude project was built in 1951, shortly after Newfoundland's entry into the Canadian Confederation in 1949. The project was built at a time when collectivist thinking in government was at its strongest and the cornerstones of the Canadian social welfare state, laid from the period after the First World War and on through to the Second, were being built upon and strengthened. For a variety of political and economic factors in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the Canadian social welfare state has slowly been dismantled and weakened. The prevailing neo-liberal *Zeitgeist* has affected government fiscal and social policies, as budgets are trimmed, services are reduced and benefits are cut. Not only has the investment in new social housing ground to a halt, in the province and across the country, but in the process the relationship between the individual and the state is also being redefined. Collectivist ideologies have been replaced with an individualizing discourse in which 'self-reliant' individuals are to be 'weaned' off of their supposed dependency on the state. Ironically, the ideology of the 'self-reliant' individual or the *homo economicus* (Wilk 1996: 14), is often couched in collectivist, grass-roots terms, such as 'community' or 'empowerment.' As such, these terms become 'mobilizing metaphors' (Shore and Wright 1997: 20) or 'masterwords' (Spivak 1989: 127) which are strategically used to promote a political agenda, from below as well as from above.

My analysis throughout this thesis moves from the broader influences of the political economy, to the tensions between metaphor and practice, down to how these tensions and contractions are played out around the Centre in daily life. The rest of this introductory chapter outlines the design and methodology of the research project itself. Chapter Two is a discussion of the history of social housing in St. John's and the Froude

project itself, also exploring some of the concerns and reservations which have been raised in regard to large concentrations of the poor in housing estates. Chapter Three outlines the process behind which the Froude Avenue Community Centre was built in light of these concerns, as well as introducing the Centre, the staff and the programs. Chapter Four is the first of a series of analytical chapters which will be the focus of the second half of this thesis. Each of chapters Four, Five and Six examine specifically a core theme which emerged during the course of my fieldwork. The chapters on 'community,' 'empowerment,' and 'ownership' examine how these concepts are invoked (by government, the Centre's staff and tenant-activists) as mobilizing metaphors and why, the disparity between metaphor and practice, and how these concepts are enacted in practice by the staff and the residents of the project. Before the summary and conclusions in Chapter Eight, I will devote Chapter Seven to an analysis of 'cultural capital' and the tensions and contradictions involved with the attempts by the staff to provide the children, youth, and to an extent the adults of the project with the educational, social and vocational skills so that they may succeed in terms of educational endeavours and future employment prospects.

## 1.1 - Getting Started

When I first arrived in St. John's in late August of 2000, I already had an idea in mind for an ethnographic research project on a social welfare office. After completing two independent reading courses for my undergraduate degree that had dealt with the rise of the social welfare state, I had developed an interest in the subject. I was also, in my

own way, responding to Laura Nader's call to 'study up' to counter the "mind-set whereby social scientists tend to study-down, analyzing the poor, the ethnics, the downtrodden" (Nader 1980: 37). In the same paper she also advocated a 'vertical slice' approach which examines the impact of the political economy and governmental policies upon people's lives. However, my patient thesis advisor allowed me to discover for myself that while these issues are important, the practicality of gaining access to a government bureaucracy, especially given the time constraints of a four-month fieldwork project, had to be considered.

I pondered this situation for some time. I was somewhat uncomfortable with a fieldwork project that focused on issues of urban poverty, given the criticisms and sensitivity to Oscar Lewis' (1970) 'Culture of Poverty' theory within anthropology. One such criticism held that these kinds of psychologically reductionist theories serve to perpetuate the negative stereotypes of the poor by focusing, "almost exclusively on the pathology of the intergenerational transmission of destructive values and behaviors among individuals within families," (Bourgois 1995: 16) while ignoring issues of exploitation, discrimination and structural poverty. After considering the sensitive and thoughtful way that anthropologists such as Carol Stack (1997 [1974]), Philippe Bourgois (1995) and Rhoda Halperin (1990; 1998) had dealt with the subject, my initial fears were lessened. Further, I felt that if I truly wanted to understand the impact of the economy, policy and bureaucracy, upon the daily lives of people struggling to cope with these factors, then a ground-level fieldwork project would be the route to take.

As luck would have it, I had interviewed a senior organizer with the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador for a graduate methods course. She described to me the importance of the community centre program for the major social housing estates within St. John's. She specifically cited the Froude Avenue Community Centre, given that the current manager has been there almost from the time the Centre was opened, and that the area is unique as the oldest social housing project in Newfoundland and Labrador and one of the oldest in Canada. She also pointed out that there are some longstanding families residing in the area, dating back to its initial occupation in 1951. She felt that if I was looking for 'community' within the context of a social housing project, then Froude would be the place to work. Being a former graduate student in social anthropology herself, she cautioned me that I would not be able to reach or interact with local residents who did not use the Centre if I limited my research to the Centre itself. She advised me that four months would be far too short a time to conduct a community level study. She also cautioned me that despite the fact that she thought very highly of the people she met at Froude, the area had a reputation for being "a little rough."

During the course of our subsequent discussions, she offered to approach the managers of these centres on my behalf. She reported back to me that the manager of another centre was interested in the project. I had wanted to work at Froude, but decided to approach this other centre instead. I took the proposal to the manager and he said that he would take it to their Board of Directors for approval. I was later crestfallen to hear that the proposal was rejected on the basis that they were soon to begin the process of

constructing a new centre, and that the area was suffering from, in his words, "research fatigue," which I could well respect. He gave me the names and phone numbers of the other area managers and specifically cited Froude as a good possibility, as they have a longer history in dealing with researchers.

There was still a significant amount of snow on the ground when I first visited the Centre in March to have a meeting with John the manager. I found the Centre tucked away in a cul-de-sac at the end of Froude Avenue taking up what was once a four-unit block. I found John to be quite outgoing and accommodating. He said that he would pass my proposal on to Bill, the educational coordinator, for review. Bill called me later to say that he was impressed with my proposal and the "clear and concise" manner in which it was written. As a former principal with a Master's of Education, and an impressive writer himself, I found this to be high praise indeed. John told me that he would take my proposal to the Centre's Board of Directors, but assured me that given his length of time as manager (1986 to present) and the respect and trust he has earned with the residents, that his stamp of approval would almost certainly allow the research to proceed. His assessment proved correct and by late April we met again to decide how to begin and conduct my project.

## 1.2 - Qualitative vs. Quantitative Social Research

The choice of methods, the nature of a field site and the questions and issues that are to be investigated are intimately interconnected. As an ethnographic project, I intended participant-observation to be the approach that I would use in my research,

which Stanley Barrett describes as the "defining feature of anthropological methods" (Barrett 1996: 75). I was interested in the role that the Centre played in the daily life of the area and therefore felt this to be the best-suited research method for this kind of inquiry. In the early stages of the planning, I decided that I needed a 'site,' a place to be and a reason to be there. I needed a participant role to fill during the four-month time frame. The Centre offers a number of programs, some of which are dependent on volunteers. Participating in these programs not only would satisfy the methodological concerns raised above, but I felt that I would be able to give something back and at least partially assuage my concerns about solely 'extracting' data from the residents and staff.

From the early stages of the fieldwork right through to the thesis writing stage, some of the staff and I wrestled with the practical and ethical dimensions of social research. Oftentimes, this discussion seemed to gravitate towards the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. John was initially concerned that I might be planning to do a survey. The previous researcher to work in the area was an advanced undergraduate student of social work and some issues had arisen from that project, one of which was the manager's concern with what he felt to be the rather intrusive procedure of an outsider knocking on doors and disturbing the residents. John was also intrigued with the personal and involved methodological approach that I had outlined in my proposal. He argued that the last thing he wanted was another needs assessment, but he valued my focus on considering the benefits the Centre provides to the area, as well as the perspective of an outside researcher who would develop an appreciation of the complexity of running the Centre and the role that it plays.

The issue of qualitative versus quantitative research was also raised in that the staff felt that it is difficult to document the good that the Centre does and the trials of day-to-day operations with a survey or statistical figures. When it comes to issues of poverty, statistical demographics tend to highlight what Halperin refers to as the 'bad numbers': rates of illiteracy, school dropouts, and rates of disease, crime and so forth. What are often neglected are the 'good' numbers: "longevity in the community, frequency and intensity of intergenerational ties…caring patterns in and among households" (Halperin 1998: 104). I was initially tempted to collect this kind of data, but I had to remind myself that my focus was on the activity in and around the centre, not the community as a 'whole.' During the time of my research, the population of the project consisted of some 300 individuals according to the NLHC statistics (Appendix B). This is a number that I felt would not prove to be amenable in terms of a participant-observation method of research, especially given my time constraints.

One morning in late June myself, John, Bill and Keith, the program coordinator, were having a somewhat animated conversation on the front steps of the Centre. We were all a little on edge as some issues had arisen following the preschool graduation ceremony held the night before in regards to one particular parent. We were talking about this, among other things, when I raised the issue as to how I could best document the positive impact of the Centre. As he would often do, John responded to my question or concern with an anecdote, of which he seemed to have an unlimited supply. John told me that some years ago he had given a child a birthday present and some extra attention, which he had noticed this child would not have received otherwise. He said that it is not

8

surprising in these kinds of cases to have someone knock on your door years later saying, "You may not remember me, but that time you that gave me a birthday present when no one else did made all the difference in the world to me." My interpretation of this story was that these aspects of the efforts of the Centre and the staff often 'fly under the radar' and that the positive impacts are not only difficult to document, but may even take years to manifest. I commented that qualitative research is perhaps the best-suited method of research for the kinds of issues I am interested in. Bill jumped in and said, "Yes, that is exactly what you are doing, qualitative work, but how do you quantify that?" implying that one cannot. I agreed, but admitted that it seems that the language of policy, of bureaucracy and of power wants "stats and not stories."

## 1.3 - Participant-Observation

I felt that the least intrusive way in which to do research was through participant-observation while actively taking part in the programs offered at the Centre. In this way I felt I could get to know the staff and some of the residents through daily interaction, but it was also a way for them to get to know me. The course of my participant-observation fieldwork was generally pleasant and problem-free. I tried to avoid getting underfoot of the staff, but I also did not want to make the local residents feel uncomfortable or feel that their private lives were under scrutiny. At the end of my final interview with Kate, a key local volunteer, I thanked her for tolerating my presence and said that I hoped my presence over the summer was not too much of an intrusion. She replied in her somewhat abrupt manner (which I think many people misinterpret), "Don't be so foolish." I was

pleased given that when I first arrived and Kate found out I was a researcher, she exclaimed, "I guess I had better be on my best behaviour then." I cannot say if the staff or residents regulated their behaviour in my presence. At times I suspected this was the case, but not always. I was in the uncomfortable position once of being temporarily alone in the front room of the Centre when a mother of one of the preschool children was being verbally abused by her partner. I do not believe this individual knew I was a researcher, and I suspected he would not care if he had.

Generally I also noticed an overall increase in the use of crude or vulgar language by some of the residents as time wore on, perhaps indicating an increasing level of comfort with my presence or perhaps a signal that they began to forget my role at times. I felt that this was additionally significant given that the Centre actively discouraged the use of offensive language on the premises. The issue of language is an important theme that I will return to in Chapter Seven, suffice it to say here that it appeared that some of the residents would censor their language around the Centre in the presence of the senior staff, but tended not to do so if only I were present.

John had cautioned me right from the beginning that I should focus more on 'hanging out,' observing, talking to people, and getting to see what the Centre was all about, rather than on 'volunteering.' While I did participate in all of the major programs at the Centre, I also spent a lot of time sitting around the kitchen table talking, listening and watching activity around me. During the summer program, when I was not actively engaged with the children, I spent time chatting on the front steps of the Centre, having breakfast or lunch with the staff, or just stopping to chat with a local resident I knew.

During the time I was there from late April until early September, I participated to varying degrees in the breakfast program, the after-school recreation and homework programs, and the preschool. The summer program ran over July and August and from Mondays to Fridays for full eight-hour days, which enabled me to greatly increase my time at the Centre. I also participated in some off-site events such as an overnight party at a lodge outside of the city, which was organized and hosted by the Neighbourhood Enhancement Association (NEA). I also attended a summer camp for the older youth and watched some of the league softball games the Froude team played in. I sat in on numerous staff meetings, two Centre Board of Directors meetings and one Resource Group meeting. In late September I was invited by the NEA to participate in a tenants' conference entitled *Enhancing Community Capacity* that they had organized in conjunction with the tenants organizations of the other four major social housing estates[3] in St. John's, which was funded by the Capital Coast Development Alliance, the Community Centre Alliance and the federal HRDC (Human Resources and Development Canada).

## 1.4 - Interviews

From the beginning of the designing of the project I had planned to conduct a series of taped interviews. I wanted to have a series of interviews on record to make sure that I had collected certain biographical information from my key research participants. I also wanted to have the interview on tape so that I could accurately inject some of their words and voices into the text of my thesis. It has been argued that informal

conversations are essentially 'unstructured interviews,' which everyone does in the course of daily social interaction (Bernard 1994: 208). The interviews that I had in mind were perhaps more semi-structured in nature. I prepared a list of questions before each interview tailored for the specific individual, but during the course of the interview the list was not rigidly adhered to. I found that the interviews with the staff and residents whom I knew well tended to be somewhat free flowing, but interviews with people that I did not know well tended to follow the list more closely. Some of the interviews were very engaging and fruitful, one lasting for over two hours, while others were less so.

I found that what I was told was also dependent upon my own personal relationship with each research participant. Their answers to my queries were also of course mediated by my position as a researcher, which James Clifford has aptly described as, "circumstantial responses" (Clifford 1986: 107). The following are notes I had made after an interview that I conducted with a resident, whom I met for the first time. A local I knew quite well arranged the interview on my behalf, but my interview subject and I were still strangers and I found many of his responses to be somewhat more guarded than those of residents with whom I was familiar. However even an interview which does not evoke candid responses may still be fruitful in other ways.

> I did not tape, as Housing was replacing some clapboards at the back of the building, and the concourse construction was going on across the front....I also felt that the tape recorder may make him uncomfortable...[He] was often vague and evasive, as I am a total stranger. The 'problems' of the area were never explicitly discussed, but I feel that he sees a lot from his chair on his porch. When I roughly sketched a kinship chart as a visual aid for myself, he became alarmed that I was "doing a survey for Housing," which I quickly refuted.

A great deal of what I was told will never see the light of day and did not even appear in my unedited fieldnotes, partly for reasons of professional ethics, partly because I care about the people I have worked with and am concerned about how certain things would look in print. At the same time, researchers cannot expect research participants to be candid with them until they know who you are, what you are doing, and what kind of person you are. The above excerpt was from one of my last interviews in August, at the point when I thought I was long past the stage where people may have thought I worked for Housing, or from a younger person's perspective, that I might have been a 'narc.' I was troubled in the early stages upon hearing conflicting accounts of events, to the point where I found myself doubting what I was being told at times. It was only later, in the initial stages of analysis, that I worried less about the 'validity' of what I was told, and realized how valuable the interviews were in terms of helping me to understand people's discourse strategies, the tensions between what I was told and what I had seen, and to appreciate the variety of interpretations that may exist about an issue.

I had made the decision to focus more on participant-observation rather than interviewing as the primary research method, as I felt that it was prudent to base most of my findings on my own observations. However, by late August I found myself wondering if I should have conducted more interviews. I was only convinced that I had made the right choice during the thesis writing stage when I discovered the extent to which I would rely on my fieldnotes rather than interview transcriptions. I had many long conversations in offices, around the kitchen tables, at restaurants, or even on the steps of the Centre that were spontaneous interviews, but without the benefit of a tape recorder. I

found these to often be more intimate and engaging than the planned and recorded sessions. Perhaps what benefit the tape recorder has in providing accuracy is counterbalanced by a reduction in the degrees of intimacy and spontaneity.

In all, I interviewed all of the key senior staff, and the manager twice. I interviewed the President and two other key members of the Neighbourhood Enhancement Association (NEA) in a group interview session, which was a new experience for me. I also followed up with a later interview session with the President alone. I interviewed my key local research participant twice, and she had arranged an interview for me with a long-term resident who had moved into the area as a youth in 1951. Helen, the preschool teacher, arranged for me to interview some of the parents of her students, one of whom had lived in private housing on Froude Avenue, which enabled me to be able to gain some insights into an outsider's perspective of the estate and the Centre. I interviewed the current NLHC Tenant Relations Officer (TRO) for the area, and a past TRO who had actually written the proposal for the Froude centre back in 1984. I also interviewed the current secretary for the Centre's Board of Directors who had also served as the Chair for two years. I was pleased to discover during the course of the interview that she is the Regional Planner for the North-East Avalon region (essentially the greater St. John's area) for the implementation of the province's Strategic Social Plan (SSP), an initiative that strives to link social and economic development.

## 1.5 – Library and Archival Research

Archival research proved to be extremely valuable in documenting the history of the area, and sorting out some of the confusion that seems to exist as to the dates and labels of the two social housing projects that had existed in the same locale. I was able to find some historical sources at the Queen Elizabeth II Library at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. I also found the university's Centre for Newfoundland Studies to be a valuable source for newspaper articles and NLHC news releases. Shortly after my fieldwork began, I discovered that Bill and I both share a passion for history and we were frustrated in our attempts to locate archival material on the area either at the City of St. John's Archives or the archives of the CMHC.[4] We were told that the kinds of archival data we were looking for either did not exist, were destroyed or lost, or that to locate them would take much more of a time investment than we were perhaps willing to undertake. I felt my energies would be better spent doing fieldwork around the Centre than archival research.

My saviour in this regard turned out to be Dr. Christopher Sharpe of the Department of Geography at Memorial, who shares some of the interests I have in the historical aspects of housing in Newfoundland, and is familiar with archival information on housing in St. John's. He generously made copies of some documents he had obtained that were relevant to my research, some of which were the minutes of meetings of the St. John's Housing Corporation (SJHC) from the 1940s and even some correspondence by its Chair, Brian Dunfield. I was also generously supplied a map and some critical statistics by the TRO for the area, such as population figures, the number of units in the

project, as well as social assistance rates. She retrieved this information for me from the NLHC databanks, for which I am deeply grateful. I now turn to Chapter Two in which I use these and other sources to present the historical context of housing in the City of St. John's in which the Centre is situated.

# Endnotes to Chapter One

[1] This project, built in 1951, is formally known as 'Westmount' and colloquially as 'The Blocks.' As none of the residents or staff refers to the area as Westmount, and The Blocks is somewhat derogatory, in this thesis I will refer to the area as the Froude project or estate. Some of the staff and residents I spoke to indicated that 'The Blocks' has a somewhat negative connotation, even though I have heard some residents, both young and old, use it on occasion.

[2] The NLHC is often referred to simply as 'Housing' by the residents, the staff and even a former and present NLHC Tenant Relations Officer.

[3] Throughout this thesis I use the terms 'projects' and 'estates' interchangeably to refer to social housing developments. 'Estates' appear to be the preferred term in the UK whereas 'housing projects' appear to be the more common term in North America. The NLHC Tenant Relations Officer I spoke with on several occasions used the term 'social housing concentrations,' however for reasons of brevity I alternate between project or estate.

[4] Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

# Chapter Two

# The Context: History & Housing

## 2.1 - Research Setting

St. John's essentially began its existence as a fishing village. Fishing continued to be the dominant economic activity in the area until the eighteenth century (House 1984: 109). From the limited settlement in the sixteenth century, the growth of St. John's was slow until the first quarter of the nineteenth century (Baker 1982a: iv). Due to its natural harbour and proximity to Europe on the eastern coast of the Avalon Peninsula, St. John's grew to become a major regional port and distribution centre for the island. Combined with an increased migrant population, notably from Ireland, and the concomitant growth of secondary economic activity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, St. John's developed into the "commercial, governmental, administrative, financial, judicial, religious, educational and communications centre of Newfoundland society" (House 1984: 105).

According to recent figures from Statistics Canada the population of the province, as of 2001, was approximately 512,930 of which 172,918 live in the St. John's metropolitan area (StatsCan 2001). The 2001 figure represents a seven percent drop in provincial population from the last census taken in 1996, which was a cause for concern in the province and was widely discussed in the local media. The unemployment rate of the province is one of the highest in the country at 16.1%, although St. John's fares somewhat better at around 9.1% (StatsCan 2001).

As previously mentioned, the site of my research was a community centre located within, and serving, a social housing estate in the west end of St. John's. A discussion of the process behind the construction of the housing project itself, as well the decisions to construct and fund the community centre, will serve not only as a historical background for the reader, but it will tie into many of the themes and issues that I encountered in my research. It must also be remembered that social welfare policies and bureaucratic agencies play a role in this research, as they do in the lives of the people of the Froude Avenue estate. These issues will be explored later on in this thesis; however, as a matter of context, between 1984 and 2001 the percentage of single parent households in the Froude housing area has increased from 32.1 % to 47.9 %, while the number of households dependant on some form of social assistance has risen from 71.6 % to 86.4 % out of a total population of 128 households consisting of some 308 individuals with an average family income of $9789.12 per year for 2001 (see Appendix B).

## 2.2 - Social Housing in St. John's

The issues of urban renewal and adequate housing are by no means limited to Newfoundland and Labrador. Shortly after the turn of the century there was a general North American concern as to the perceived state of the deterioration of large urban centres. Christopher Sharpe, writing from a Canadian perspective, points out that, "By 1920 the widespread shortage of decent housing had become popularly regarded as Canada's greatest social problem, and suburban planning accepted as the most acceptable solution" (Sharpe 2000: 3).

The issue of the quality of housing was a significant social and political concern in St. John's in the early years of the 20th century. Poor quality housing was hastily built in parts of central St. John's to replace the losses of stock as a result of the 1892 fire. The low quality of this housing was cause for concern as it posed both a fire and a health hazard (Baker 1982b: 29). These areas were often inhabited by the more impoverished sectors of St. John's society. I interviewed Mike, a long-time resident of the Froude area, who had lived in one of these central slum areas as a child. He lived on Cuddy Street in the Barter's Hill area in the downtown. Cuddy Street was then colloquially known as 'Tank Lane,' due to its proximity to a communal source of drinking water. These outdoor stand-pipes were known at the time as 'tanks' (Godfrey 1985: 202). During the interview, Mike spoke fondly of the area as he reminisced about the daily chore of fetching water from the tanks. But he had no qualms about calling the area a 'slum' and suggested that his was a poverty that most young urban Newfoundlanders of today could not imagine.

Mike's father worked sporadically as a longshoreman and all eight members of his family lived in a two-bedroom house. The house, typical of others in the immediate area, lacked the amenities that many contemporary urban dwellers take for granted, such as running water, electricity, and centralized heating. He said that they had a coal stove, but that all manner of material would be burnt in it for cooking and heating. He described the buildings as dilapidated, damp and cold, with the upstairs usually being infested with rats. He danced around the issue of human waste disposal, briefly saying that it would be disposed of in a ditch outside by the street, to be collected and dumped into the harbour. Another long-time Froude resident, who came from similar conditions in the East End of

the city, told me that her father was a "night soil collector," pausing to ask me if I knew what that was. With a mischievous grin she added something to the effect of "Yeah, I was born with a ring around my arse," in reference to the use of pails.

Before representational government was established in Newfoundland in 1832, poor relief was primarily the responsibility of various denominational and charitable organizations, such as the Society for Improving the Conditions of the Poor (1804) and the Benevolent Irish Society (1806) (Baker 1982a: 17). By the turn of the century, relief was provided for widows, orphans and the infirm, building on what Boychuk refers to as "a strong tradition of state assistance for the seasonally unemployed, especially for those employed in the fisheries" (Boychuk 1998: 38). How 'strong' this 'tradition' was is a matter for debate. James Overton points out that seasonal relief for fishers in pre-Confederation Newfoundland was by no means an easy existence. He writes, "The relief system was harshly administered and policed" (Overton 2000: 8). As meagre as the existing social welfare system may have been, nothing on the scale of significant social housing was attempted in Newfoundland before World War One.

After the turn of the century, the issue of the conditions of the central slums grew in significance in public and political arenas. The term that was used in common currency of the day to describe them was "squalor" (Godfrey 1985: 201). While the slum areas were undoubtedly a health and fire concern, they were probably also an eyesore for the wealthier sectors of St. John's. Baker writes that the merchants and elites of the city desired to "shift the labouring poor to tenements in the growing suburbs" (Baker 1982a: 31). However, it is misleading to suggest that all social policy decisions were shaped

solely by the whims of the elite. Overton (1988) points out that a great deal of the pressures to improve the social conditions within the city also came from the poor and working classes. Protest marches, riots and mob violence were tools which were used to accomplish these goals, which increased in intensity in the early 1930s and forced the government to rescind various austerity measures (Overton 1988: 152-158).

A citizens' committee, chaired by William Gilbert Gosling, studied the issue of housing in St. John's and decided that the city should have the authority to build public housing for sale or rent. This authority came to be in 1917 with Gosling as mayor (Baker 1982b: 37). Twenty-two houses were constructed between 1919 and 1920, and another thirty in 1920 (ibid: 29). The project proved to be more costly than anticipated, and the homes were sold privately at prices beyond the means of the working poor (ibid: 39). In any case, it also seemed that the small number of units that were constructed would still have been insufficient to seriously address the housing problem. By 1925, the findings of the City Clerk relayed the sobering news that there were 1,100 unsewered houses in the city, eighty percent of which were "unfit for habitation" (Sharpe 2000: 3). Godfrey argues that the issue of housing remained somewhat in limbo after this period, with neither the city nor the central government accepting responsibility (Godfrey 1985: 202). However, the issue of the central slum clearance did not die within some political circles.[1]

The city-funded Commission of Enquiry into Housing and Town Planning in St. John's came to be in May of 1942, chaired by Brian Dunfield (Sharpe 2000: 6). One mandate of the Commission was to conceive a plan by which the central slums could be

cleared, while also rehousing the displaced inhabitants (ibid: 8). The Commission released a series of interim reports. One of the major recommendations was the creation of a housing corporation with the power to expropriate land, so that major development projects could proceed without being burdened by the extra costs inherent in the process of land speculation. This housing corporation was realized in July of 1944, with the creation of the St. John's Housing Corporation (ibid: 10).

The argument as to whether social housing should be interspersed throughout the city, often constructing on vacant lots (infill housing), or in large centralized developments (housing projects or estates), was voiced in the early days of the SJHC. During the course of my research, I engaged in debates with some of the Centre's staff, residents and housing officials over the advantages and disadvantages of large housing estates when I asked them for their views. Many of the contemporary issues and arguments that were raised differed little from those voiced in the early 1940s. In a letter written by the chair of the SJHC in 1945, Brian Dunfield argued for centralized housing estates on what he saw were practical grounds. He felt that it would be more cost effective to purchase large tracts of land rather than dealing with individual private property owners throughout the city (Dunfield 1945: 1). The obvious choice was to purchase land outside of the downtown. Dunfield pointed out that, in his view, locations outside of the downtown would not be problematic for the population he had in mind. He wrote, "Nearness to the business area is not an advantage in the case of these people, and I feel that if there is any available ground in town it would be better reserved for those who have to go to their daily work" (ibid). I had asked Mike about the initial isolation of

the Froude Avenue estate in the early 1950s, and he felt that it was not much of a factor. He said that even though the roads at the time were not paved, a bus route did pass by the area. As the city grew around the area, isolation as a factor receded. All of the residents I spoke to said that the location of the Froude Avenue estate was ideal, especially for those without cars, given its close proximity to many shops and services that have developed around the area. Two large strip malls with two large grocery stores, a recreation centre and many other services are within an immediate walking distance of the area. The Centre of course is within the project itself.

Dunfield also pointed out that the centralized nature of a large social housing project is also ideal for "control and management" as well as for the delivery of services. Dunfield wrote,

> I think that a project for the indigent of this kind, if it is to be a success and to be kept clean and decently run, must be looked after as a unit, and have a sort of central office from which the supervisor or social worker will operate (ibid).

Clearly, Dunfield envisioned a social housing project that would be managed in some way. Mike told me that he remembered that there used to be a SJHC office, which was located where the basketball court (or the 'cage' as it is known locally) now stands. As far as he could remember, its function seemed to be mostly geared towards building maintenance and the collection of rent. As it will be shown, the SJHC did little in terms of addressing the social concerns of the area.

As World War Two was drawing to a close, the SJHC's intent was that the primary recipients for these envisioned social housing projects would primarily be widows and orphans, as well as some of the residents of the central slum areas. However,

within the ranks of the Corporation some reservations were voiced at a SJHC meeting in 1945 as to the possible negative social ramifications of a centralized housing project.

> The question of segregation or dispersal was argued. It was pointed out by us that it was very undesirable for all these widows and their families to be segregated in what would come to be known as pauper buildings. This would be bad for the children's morale. We were very desirous of having them dispersed among the other working class tenants. Everybody agreed that this was desirable in principle (SJHC 1945: 2).

However, this view did not seem to be shared by the chair of the SJHC. Sharpe argues that Dunfield was not one to tolerate dissent and that his advice "was apparently considered to be infallible" (Sharpe 2000: 10). Dunfield's vision of centralized social housing projects prevailed, and the negotiation for the "Ebsary property," described as being located near Blackmarsh and Campbell Avenues, was discussed in a St. John's municipal council meeting shortly after (SJMC 1945: April 14). At this point it is important to point out that there were originally two social housing projects in the Froude Avenue area. The first was the Ebsary Estates, colloquially known as the Widows' Mansions and 'the Blocks,' a group of tenement blocks that stood where the centre field now exists (see Appendix C). The second was called Westmount, which was constructed around the Widows' Mansions, and what is the site of this research project.[2]

City council purchased the Ebsary property in question and paid for the water and sewage services (*Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing* 1972: 6). One source (*Evening Telegram*, 29 November 1947: 6) cited the costs as $70,000 while another cites the costs at $1,200,000 (Mahoney: 1947). Whatever the accurate figures were, the Ebsary Estates were ready for occupation in December of 1947. The project consisted of,

"seventeen concrete block buildings containing four apartments each of which consists of a kitchen, living room, complete bathroom and three bedrooms" (ibid). For the former residents of the central slums, the Estate was described as being like "Eden" for them (ibid). This article also reported that they were to be rent-free. Mike told me that he remembered the Widows' Mansions. I showed him a picture of the buildings that I had and he could even identify the vantage point from where the picture was taken. He told me that a Mr. Ebsary had originally owned the land and had lived on Froude Avenue. I have heard this from several sources but have not been able to confirm it. Mike added that the Widows' Mansions were also the origin for the term 'the Blocks,' which is still used today by some to refer to the Froude Avenue/Westmount area.

The Ebsary Estates were intended for widows and their families; however, a substantial reduction of the central slums would require further social housing to be built. *The Evening Telegram* urged that, "more such projects are urgently needed before all the slum areas can be vacated and eradicated" (*Evening Telegram*, 29 November 1947: 6). However, the costs of these projects were somewhat prohibitive. Baker argues that council avoided the issue of social housing and that further slum clearance schemes, "had to await Newfoundland's entry in 1949 into the Canadian Confederation and the subsequent infusion in the 1950s and 1960s of Federal funds" (Baker 1982b: 41).

This infusion of federal monies was not short in coming. In 1949, the National Housing Act was amended to allow housing projects to be developed as a joint venture between any provincial government and Canada. The first such venture in the country was Westmount, known as St. John's F.P. 1/50 (*Urban Renewal and Low Income*

*Housing* 1972: 6). Westmount consisted of 140 housing units, 100 of which were three bedroom duplexes and 40 were four bedroom units. They were constructed around the Widows' Mansions, arranged into twenty-two blocks along parts of Froude Avenue and the Cashin Avenue Extension and all of Vimy and Vickers Avenues (see Appendix C). Westmount was completed and ready for occupation in 1951, costing approximately $1,132,000 (ibid). Mike, who had moved into the area in 1951 as a result of the central slum clearance scheme, told me that in contrast to his previous living conditions it was "like moving into a mansion." He and his siblings initially ran around the house flipping light switches off and on. He admitted that he could not tell me much about the rental costs and arrangements, as those matters were taken care of by his parents and were not discussed with the children.

In the early 1960s, the SJHC investigated the deterioration of the Widows' Mansions. A consulting firm recommended that the buildings had deteriorated to the point where their demolition was the most practical course of action. The last of the Widows' Mansions were torn down by 1970 (*Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing* 1972: 6). A grass-covered field remained in the centre of the Froude Avenue estate. The field was utilized for recreational purposes by some of the residents, including the addition of a children's playground at the Froude Avenue end of the field. When I began my fieldwork in May of 2001, I soon learned that a major renovation project of the field by the Grand Concourse Authority was planned for the summer.[3] The plans I saw included a paved circular path and a centre boat sculpture that could serve as a stage. Somehow it was to be linked with further projects in Mundy Pond, but no one at the

Centre was sure how this would come to be. The field has always played a central role in the Centre's summer program, so the issue as to how it would affect the summer program was raised throughout the spring and summer at the Centre. The construction did not get underway until July, though by August we still used the field when we could. At one point, the summer staff, children and I were playing a game of soccer baseball in the field while the construction was ongoing. I had to continually look over my shoulder for bulldozers and survey markers. Eventually the senior staff decided to suspend most of the activities on the field. At the end of the field by Cashin Avenue, there were some small artificial hills topped with small evergreen trees. On my way home one day towards the end of August, I had noticed that these hills were being levelled. I was intrigued to see that these hills seem to have been composed primarily of large grey cinder blocks as filler, presumably left over after the demolition of the Widows' Mansions. I debated whether or not to take one as a souvenir, but thought the better of it and took a photograph instead.

During the demolition of the Widows' Mansions, a new provincial housing agency was created as the result of a series of provincial housing conferences. The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation came to be on May 9, 1967, and receives a significant portion of their funding from the federal CMHC. At the time, the mandate of the NLHC was, "to provide an agency which would have the necessary legislative authority and the capacity to embark upon a major housing and land development program" (NLHC 2002: 1). The NLHC amalgamated with the SJHC in 1981 and assumed control of the major housing projects under its care.

## 2.3 - Rethinking Housing Estates

Several more housing estates were constructed in St. John's since those in the Froude Avenue area were built, but opinions being developed among housing researchers and officials began to question the wisdom of these ventures. These critiques were often similar to those raised by the city council and SJHC back in the 1940s. The NLHC Tenant Relations Officer (TRO) for the Froude area told me that today it is unlikely that you will ever see any new large scale housing projects in the province again. She cited the issues of isolation, stigmatization and concentration.

> You're not going to see obviously the larger housing areas, such as Froude and Buckmaster's, because I think fortunately we have learned in the sense that you cannot put two hundred families in such a small geography….and not have social problems. We find that with infills and smaller housing areas…..[that we] are looking to 'integrate' and what we've done is 'isolate'…we've isolated the community, we haven't integrated…so that it is targeted, so that it is labelled, and they don't step outside of that community…its very unusual that you would think that, but that's what has actually happened.

Stuart Godfrey, a former senior official with the provincial Department of Public Welfare, argued in retrospect (1985) that it was an ill-conceived plan to concentrate poor and special needs tenants into centralized areas without an adequate social support infrastructure in place. He implies that, without the proper planning and support, the SJHC was simply meeting the needs of physical shelter and ignoring the social investments that might prevent simply replicating a slum in a new locale. Speaking specifically of the Ebsary Estates, Godfrey writes,

> Little or nothing was done to develop the physical features of the area. Nor did the initial planning include a preparation programme preceding the transfer of families from slum areas, or the organization of tenants into committees and self-help groups, which might have led in time to a community centre (Godfrey 1985: 204).

Godfrey also argued that the planning underlying the Ebsary Estates was also predicated on other uncertain grounds. It was believed that the project would only provide temporary housing. Once a family was able to maintain and improve their income they would surely move out and make way for needier families in a 'filtering-down process.' A source in the NLHC told me that their mandate today is still that of transitional housing, even though the average length of residency in the Froude project is 12 years (see Appendix B). Godfrey only supplies a partial and unsatisfactory answer as to why the filtering-down process may not have occurred. He argues that it did not occur "largely because the overall housing situation in St. John's had not improved" (Godfrey 1985: 205) in the years immediately after the construction of the project. While this may be so, what is missing here are the strategies employed by people living on the economic margins in capitalist states with a social welfare infrastructure. In this context social housing can become affordable housing for the working poor, not just social housing for those dependant on the state. It is understandable that the basic standard of living and security, which may be achieved in social housing, would act as a disincentive to seeking more expensive private housing, especially given the uncertainties of the labour market. Even more critical, Godfrey ignores another important factor: that of the nature of urban community. As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, a favourable locale, localized kin and social networks, local and accessible services geared towards residents' needs,

involvement in local tenants organizations, and a sense of 'ownership,' combined with the economic factors noted above, seem to act as strong counters to any incentive to leave. These will form central themes in the subsequent arguments in this thesis. However strong counter arguments, which highlight many negative elements, can and have been made against centralized social housing projects.

In 1969, the *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* was released. The task force investigated urban housing conditions across the country, motivated in part by the concerns over unregulated urban growth, and partly by the fact that policy makers have not had a comprehensive report from which to draw upon since the Curtis Report of 1944 (Canada 1969: 1). The 1969 report highlighted the importance of the federal government's role in housing during such times as the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War Two and post-wartime housing needs, noting such significant legislation as the National Housing Act (1944), revised in 1954, as well as the creation of the federal housing agency, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (1945). However, the 1969 report's relevance here is its focus on the social aspects of housing rather than the standard 'bricks and mortar' approach, which Kemeny argues is a rather "myopic" approach to housing issues (Kemeny 1992: xv). The 'bricks and mortar' view of housing is one of a narrow focus on the logistical or technical concerns related to buildings and urban planning, rather than that of buildings and space as sites of human social interaction and as cultural entities imbued with meaning. Margaret Rodman writes,

> We should not see buildings as "frames" standing apart from social life. They are contested, created processes, not

> the simple products of plans…we can best apprehend
> relationships between buildings and the communities they
> foster or inhibit, create and house by approaching them
> through the experience of place and its social production
> (Rodman 1993: 137).

The authors of the 1969 report were concerned with the social dimensions of housing and they took a rather dim view of the state of social housing projects as they existed across the country during the time of their investigations.

One important criticism the report made of social housing projects was in reference to the lack of tenants organizations, especially in regards to how they could aid in giving tenants a voice and the ability to confront governmental agencies. Writing specifically of tenants affected by gentrification projects, the report comments,

> Lacking an effective vehicle through which to assemble
> their collective problems and express their collective will,
> these people seemed totally unable to penetrate the
> bureaucratic mass (Canada 1969: 14).

The authors of the report visited twenty social housing projects across the country and found a series of common themes and issues faced by the residents such as: a high level of stigmatization, vandalism and a lack of facilities geared towards their needs (ibid: 19). They also commented on the physical appearance and design flaws of the projects, describing them in general as, "incredibly drab and institutionalized….without any of those places of encounter that help make life more than existence" (ibid: 45). The authors of the report felt that the high levels of vandalism that they encountered was the result of a lack of residents' pride in their surroundings, due to the perception (and perhaps rightly) that they were tenants of government-owned property rather than living in their own homes (ibid: 54).

The 1969 Task Force Report also drew upon the Goldfarb Report, the work of a Toronto-based consulting firm. This firm painted an even bleaker picture, arguing not only that public housing had not alleviated any social problems but quite the opposite. In the authors' view, large housing projects have, "produced a new, unique, complex conglomerate of social and psychological concerns" (ibid: 54). One such concern that the Goldfarb authors highlighted was what they felt was the creation of a social climate which promoted the value of 'cheating the system' among the residents. In the words of this report, the entire system of rent-geared-to-income elevates, "successful cheating to a symbol of success" (ibid: 54). The Goldfarb Report also used the rather unfortunate analogy of comparing the tenants of social housing projects to, "Indians who are on reserves" (ibid). The issue of 'cheating' or 'manipulation' will be addressed further in this thesis. Suffice it to say at this point that this statement not only reflects the class-based biases of the authors, but a lack of understanding of the necessary strategies employed by those living on the margins of the capitalist market system, as well a crude generalization about those who live in social housing. Another key problem that the authors of the Goldfarb Report saw with public housing estates was a lack of "community spirit" (ibid). The problem that I see with their assessment is that the term 'community spirit' to my mind is neither adequately explained nor defined. Furthermore, the 'lack' of such that they posit for housing projects conversely implies the existence of 'community spirit' in private housing areas, which is a generalization that must be questioned. 'Community' in an urban context is often used in an ambiguous way, referring to anything from a geographical area, a social ideal, to a simple term of convenience.

'Community' is often invoked in place of a theoretical concept derived from grounded research. I will further explore the critically important concept of community in Chapter Four.

However, the findings of these two reports agreed that something was amiss with social housing projects. They added their views to an increasing chorus of voices that posited that concentrating the poor in centralized transitional housing areas was creating more problems than they were solving, and that steps had to be taken to address the situation. The Task Force was also critical of the bureaucracies that managed and operated social housing projects, perhaps sensitive to the unproductive rhetoric of 'blaming the victim.' The 1969 report argued that it was necessary,

> to erase the kind of lord-and-master relationship which now tends to exist between tenants and their public supervisors [which] could well produce a greater sense of community involvement and participation among public housing residents (Canada 1969: 55).

The implications of the report appear to suggest not only a halt to large social housing projects, but also a radical re-thinking of public housing in general. The report recommended that no new social housing projects should be constructed until these social issues could be addressed (ibid: 55). But it also recommended the improvement of the ones already in existence. The authors noted the dangers of simply demolishing existing projects, that by doing so, "communities are dispersed and long-standing and vital social links [are] shattered" (ibid: 65). A re-thinking of more than the 'bricks-and-mortar' approach to housing was required. It appears that the construction and funding of tenant

organizations, community centres and other 'community building' projects in social housing estates in St. John's were realized as the result of these kinds of critiques.

As I will subsequently demonstrate, the creation of the Froude Avenue Community Centre, and the funding of the local tenants association, was a response to the call to ameliorate the social conditions of public housing projects. However, I will also argue that there are contradictory tensions at work in these plans. Organizations and institutions such as community centres and tenants associations were implemented to help to foster a sense of 'community' and 'empowerment,' here referring to communal involvement and participation, and that of 'ownership' referring to the sense of the residents as living in their own homes (rather than government property) and having a stake in addressing the issues faced by the area. As laudable as these efforts are, it must also be remembered that a sense of community here is trying to be developed, reinforced and reproduced in a 'community' of transitional housing. Constant pressures are being applied to the residents, through Housing's policies and those of other social assistance agencies and in some ways the Centre as well, to make the transition to full employment and ultimately private housing. Throughout the course of my research I wrestled with the tensions between community and transitional housing. To dismiss the area as 'lacking' in community does a disservice to the families who have resided in the area for at least three generations. The existence of intimate, localized networks of reciprocal social and material support would also challenge a denial of community. Yet, I could not ignore the fact that the area is transitional housing. Continued residency is dependent on meeting the constraints set by Housing. I could also not ignore residents who spoke of high turnover

rates and a limited knowledge of other residents. I also had to consider the staff, some of whom pointed to limited participation by local residents at the Centre and with the local tenants organization. Perhaps what is needed is a refined concept of community which takes into account sometimes mobile urban populations, which is not limited to housing projects but is characteristic of contemporary urban populations in general.

Before introducing the Froude Avenue Community Centre and the decision process behind why it was built and funded in light of the issues discussed above, a brief divergence here is necessary. I have outlined the history behind the decisions to build the housing projects on the Froude site, but what needs to be discussed are the reasons why the construction of new large social housing projects in St. John's, and the nation in general, have ground to a halt. This is partly related to the concerns about social housing concentrations discussed above, but this may have only played a limited and partial role in the re-thinking of housing projects and of social housing in general.

## 2.4 – Housing and Social Welfare Policy

It would be misleading to suggest that the decision to cease the development of large social housing projects was solely a rational response to the possible negative social ramifications cited above. Raymond Apthorpe points out that the rationalistic view of government policy greatly exaggerates the primacy of governments as problem-solving entities (Apthorpe 1997: 52). While the critiques of the large social housing projects may have been significant factors, it would not explain why the construction of even the much

vaunted smaller-scale infill public housing has ceased. A source at the NLHC told me that,

> It's been many years since I can remember that we'd actually get a budget from government, federal government, announcing new dollars for social housing. What we are struggling with now is maintaining a budget to refurbish and maintain our present housing stock and that's been a challenge for us.

The reduction of dollars for social housing has to be seen in the overall context of the general reduction and re-thinking of the social welfare system as a whole across many contemporary North American and European states, notably argued in the Canadian context by Allahar and Cote (1998), Burman (1996), Hurtig (1999), and McQuaig (1995). The cries that the costs of the social welfare infrastructure have spiralled out of control are simply not satisfactory. To use an extreme example, the fact that in the U.S. social assistance in the form of AFDC benefits and food stamp programs accounted for only about 1 percent of the federal budget in the mid 1990s (Piven 1998: 22) suggests that the heightened attention to welfare and drastic cutbacks under the former Clinton administration had little to do with solving a problem in terms of an immediate budgetary crisis. Social policy is not simply the result of elected officials and civil servants formulating solutions to problems as they appear. It is more illuminating to view social policy as reproducing (or recasting) a particular model of society and the role of the individual in the system of production that is historically and materially rooted.

Housing policy and the general issues of social welfare are intimately interconnected both practically and ideologically. Gerard Boychuck (1998) has developed a typology of 'welfare regimes' to characterize and chart the historical development of

provincial and federal social welfare programs in Canada. Drawing from some works on the development of the English welfare state, such as Polanyi (1957), Boychuk has adapted and applied these insights to the Canadian experience. These categories, though somewhat simplified here, are useful in understanding the ideological forces behind the debates about social housing policy.

The 'Residual/Market' model argues for the avoidance of direct government building and managing of public housing. The availability of low-income housing is to be achieved through providing low-interest loans or subsidies that encourage private owner-occupation. Donnison and Ungerson (1982) point out that most industrialized nations are reluctant to become involved in a comprehensive national housing program due the large amount of resource investment it entails. Aside from the costs involved in funding the actual building and land development, there are additional costs for services, research and projections, unit management, maintenance, tenants programs and various other logistical concerns (Donnison and Ungerson 1982: 81). The forces of the market are held to be the most efficient method of resource distribution in a Residual model. As such, Residual programs are viewed as temporary and as a general impediment to the free operation of the market, only needed to correct economic fluctuations.

The 'Conservative' model holds that social welfare programs are a necessary adjunct of the market economy, but that the provision of aid should be based on merit, not a universalistic vision of need. Merit here is referring to a notion of the 'deserving poor,' such as widows, the elderly and the disabled. Perhaps in a contemporary context this could be extended to temporarily unemployed workers. Similar to the Residual

model, its ideological aim is to encourage market participation, but it is inherently more stigmatizing. The notion of 'less eligibility' is the basis on which the Conservative model is predicated. Less eligibility holds that dependency can be lessened and the abrogation of self-reliance can be avoided through providing government aid that is always less than the lowest wage that can be earned in the labour market. In contrast, the 'Redistributive' model is that of the universalistic welfare state in which aid is given based solely on need. This model ideally provides aid without the stigmatization of the Conservative model, and unlike the Residual model sees inequality as an inherent feature of the market system, not a temporary fluctuation. The intention is to address and lessen these inequalities. A more radical Redistributive model would seek the elimination of these inequalities as the ultimate goal.[4]

The Great Depression of the 1930s had drawn attention to the structural causes of unemployment and the uncertainty of the market economy. The vast numbers of people who had suddenly found themselves out of work forced a re-thinking of the earlier views of the 'moral failings' of the unemployed and of the poor in general. The Canadian government began to scrutinize the existing workfare or workhouse relief programs and discovered that it cost $2 to provide $1 in workfare wages (Guest 1997: 54). In the period immediately after the end of the Second World War, the federal government, concerned about the impact of the sudden demobilization of thousands of troops, realized that a 'hands-off' approach to governance in the social arena was no longer acceptable (McQuaig 1995: 221). James Laxer presents an alternate interpretation, suggesting that this was not a case of governmental foresight but rather the Canadian government having

succumbed to the pressures of returning servicemen. He writes, "Workers, who fought in the armies that defeated the Nazis and the Fascists, developed the conviction that they had a right to a better deal" (Laxer 1999: 128). As a result of these pressures, the postwar years saw a string of social legislation which was universalistic in scope, starting with the Family Allowance Act of 1944 and perhaps culminating with the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) of 1966. CAP was an effort on the part of the federal government to consolidate and upgrade social services and to address regional inequalities (Guest 1997: 149).

It is within this context of universalistic thinking and federal intervention that the creation of the CMHC and the infusion of federal monies to construct large-scale public housing in Newfoundland must be seen. CAP was probably the 'high-water mark' of universalistic social welfare thinking in Canada.[5] The tide began to turn with the shock of the oil crisis in 1973 and the resulting period of high inflation, especially in the early 1980s (McQuaig 1995: 236). However, economics alone does not explain this paradigm shift in thinking about the values of the social welfare state. McQuaig argues that it reflects a deeper shift in thinking about such issues as the relationship of the individual to the state. Those who favour the reduction (or even elimination) of social programs often desire to, "wean us away from the notion of government as provider and equalizer, to establish the discipline of the marketplace" (McQuaig 1995: 7).

The economic historian Karl Polanyi, writing during the Second World War, was extremely critical of the early laissez-faire philosophy, and he would probably be as critical of its contemporary neo-liberal guise today. Polanyi eloquently writes,

> To allow the market mechanism to be the sole director of
> the fate of human beings and their natural environment

> ...would result in the demolition of society...Robbed of the
> protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings
> would perish from the effects of social exposure (Polanyi
> 1957: 73).

Liberalism and neo-liberalism are somewhat confusing terms. William Epstein points out that social liberalism can be seen in the position that economic inequality is morally unjust and it is a problem that must be addressed, often with governmental intervention. Social conservatism holds that this economic disparity is essentially just or 'natural,' as the result of inheritance or the awarding or personal talent (Epstein 1997: 37). By contrast, economic liberalism has its origins in the economic thought of Adam Smith and David Ricardo (see Buchholz 1999), who argued for the establishment of free markets and argued against protectionist tariffs and isolationist policies. I use the term 'neo-liberal' in the same sense as Shields and Evans (1998) and many other critical scholars of social justice, to refer to the contemporary dominance of economic liberalism, married with elements of social conservatism. It is 'new' in the sense that it has regained its former stature after decades of Keynesian[6] economics. A typical neo-liberal view can be seen in the position that social assistance is an impediment to the free market, a drain on governmental resources, and only serves to foster dependency on the state. Poverty is therefore not structural, but morally based on personal shortcomings and deficiencies. A neo-liberal view of the provision of housing would oppose all forms of social housing on these grounds, and combines the moralizing and stigmatization of the Conservative model with the discipline of the market as seen in the Residual model.

It is within the context of the oil crisis of the early 1970s, high inflation in the 1980s, and the emergent monetarist neo-liberal focus in the 1990s on debt and deficit

reduction, which was often achieved through shrinking monies for social spending and even shrinking governments (see Shields and Evans 1998), that the re-thinking of social housing must be placed. The sociological criticisms of housing projects, as noted previously in the 1969 Task Force Report, may have played a role, but it may have been a rather minor one. An avoidance of large public housing estates would not explain why governments are still resistant even to spending on smaller-scale, mixed housing initiatives, which may avoid some of the problems and concerns over concentration mentioned earlier. The NLHC was conceived in 1967 as primarily an agency devoted to constructing major housing initiatives and land development (NLHC 2002: 1). By September of 1998, the NLHC announced that it was going to withdraw itself from all residential land development. The reasons given by the minister responsible for the NLHC at the time, Art Reid, clearly indicate a substantial move towards a neo-liberal or residual free-market model of housing, as well as a concern for economic land development rather than housing the needy. He stated in a NLHC release,

> This decision is a result of extensive consultations with a wide range of industry stakeholders...NLHC's continued involvement in land development could pose competition for the private sector, and government feels strongly that it should avoid entering into any such activities (NLHC 1998: 1).

Perhaps due to my own naiveté, I was somewhat perplexed by this statement at first. I could not understand why the state should at all be concerned with competing with the private market, until I considered the concerns of economic liberalism over state interference in the market. Of course Polanyi has pointed out that a true laissez-faire economy has never existed and probably will never exist. The infrastructure of all

capitalist nation-states consist of large bureaucracies creating and enforcing antitrust and antimonopoly legislation, combined with an array of protective tariffs (Polanyi 1957: 139). However, publicly funded housing and land development would clash with housing and land as freely traded commodities. I raised this issue of competing with the private market with the NLHC Tenant Relations Officer for the Froude area. Her penetrating reply reminded me that I had been paying far too much attention to abstract economic models and theories, when I should have been paying attention to more anthropological concerns such as the politics of patronage. She replied to my query,

> We cannot be seen as competing with the private market…then we are also running the risk of stepping outside our mandate of social housing…We are a government agency. We are governed by politicians. Politicians are then governed by the people that vote for them….if not, big business. So you are looking at the contractors, big money. You're also looking at the people who have all the real estate, big money…Who's doing the backing for these parties?...If you could sever that relationship, that would be a different story. But we are accountable to our government and the governments are then accountable to the people that it services…and unfortunately….who are the voice of the people are the people that are making the money.

This view has also been put forth by some housing policy analysts who have argued that housing policy is often designed more with the concerns of promoting the construction and real estate industries in mind, rather than housing the poor (Donnison and Ungerson 1982: 64).

I think, however, that it would be irresponsible and inaccurate to portray the NLHC or any other housing agency as either negligent or uncaring towards the well being of its tenants. While Godfrey had pointed out earlier that the SJHC did little to

promote the social well being of the tenants of the Ebsary Estates (see p.30), in the years that followed the release of the *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* the amelioration of the conditions of the existing housing projects was made a priority, even if the construction of further units was grinding to a halt. Housing turned its attention in the early 1980s to ways in which the existing housing estates could be improved. One of the ways it was decided to do this was through the community centre program, as well as the encouragement and funding of local tenants organizations. I now turn to the history of the Centre itself, describing the decisions and processes behind its creation and funding, as well as its intended purpose and the evolution of its scope and programs. This next chapter will provide the rest of the needed background context before moving on to my analysis of the role that the Centre plays in the area in the present.

# Endnotes to Chapter Two

[1] For a more detailed look at the political wrangling around this issue within the city politics of the time, see Sharpe (2000).

[2] The Westmount/Froude project inherited the epithet of 'The Blocks' since the original Blocks were torn down in the late 1960s.

[3] The Grand Concourse Authority is an organization which began in 1989 in St. John's. Funded by the Johnson Family Foundation, the GCA's goal is to establish a series of interconnected parks and walkways throughout the city. http://www.neia.org/memberprofiles/gca.htm

[4] This synthetic overview of social welfare typologies derives from readings from Boychuk (1998), with additional insights from Polanyi (1957); McQuaig (1995); and Guest (1997).

[5] CAP has since been replaced with the CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer) in 1995, an eviscerated version of CAP in which the provinces have more freedom to decide what to do, and not to do, with the federal monies they receive. For a more detailed look at the nature of the CHST see Blake and Bryden (1997) and Scott et al. (1998).

[6] Maynard Keynes was a prominent British economist whose views held sway with the governments in Western Europe and North America from around the time of the Second World War up until perhaps the mid 1970s. Very simplistically, Keynes argued for governments to spend during times of recession and save during times of plenty. Most significantly, Keynes dismissed concerns over the need for a balanced budget during a recession and argued that raising taxes or cutting spending during a recession would only aggravate the situation. For a further look as Keynesian economics see Buchholz (1999).

**Chapter Three**

# The Centre

This chapter, focusing on the Centre, staff and core programs, provides the necessary background from which I can move on to the analysis of the Centre's role in the Froude project in the final four chapters of this thesis. I also examine some of the issues faced by the area, in the past as well as today, which prompted the NLHC to initiate the community centre program in the Froude project. I will also introduce the key senior staff in more detail as well as the programs which are under their charge. Unlike for the rest of the staff I have included a section that focuses specifically on John, the manager of the Froude Centre. This is not meant as a slight to the other staff members who also play their own critically important roles at the Centre. However, given John's length of time at the Centre, his role as manager, and his stature in the area I felt that this decision was warranted. This chapter will conclude with an introductory discussion of the Centre's Board of Directors, which will play a key role in the discussion in Chapter Five.

## 3.1 – The NLHC Tenant Relations Program and the Centre

The Froude Avenue Community Centre opened its doors on August 26, 1985, with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by the provincial MHA[1] for the riding, the Minister responsible for the NLHC, the Minister of Social Services, the mayor of St. John's, as well as some representatives from the NLHC and the local tenants association which had recently formed (NLHC 1985b: 1). The opening of the Centre was the result of a series of consultations with the area residents, as part of the NLHC's

Tenant Relations Program that was initiated in July of 1983. John has been the manager of the Centre for almost the entirety of its existence, and was hired in December of 1986 by Isabel, a social worker and the first manager of the Tenant Relations Program. John offered to arrange an interview with Isabel for me and I eagerly accepted.

Isabel has since moved on from her position at the NLHC, so I met her at her office near City Hall to discuss, among other things, the Centre and the Tenant Relations Program. She told me that the first goal of the program was to go door-to-door to listen to the tenants' concerns about their social housing areas. As Froude was the oldest project in the province it was the natural starting point for their efforts. She told me that the tenants were generally receptive and responsive when they were asked to voice their concerns, but that maintenance issues were usually at the forefront.

However maintenance was something that had been ongoing in the area for some time, even before the NLHC was in charge of the project. A major physical renovation and modernization project was undertaken in the late 1960s, which included re-roofing, exterior repairs, and new water heating systems (*Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing* 1972: 8). I noticed various maintenance activities and renovations going on almost continually during the time of my research in the summer of 2001. But I also heard numerous complaints from residents pertaining to maintenance, so I suspected that maintenance has long been an issue for area residents and would probably continue to be so for some time. However, from an NLHC news release, it is clear that that after their tenant consultations, Housing became concerned with issues beyond that of unit maintenance.

> One of the purposes of our visits is to get the tenants more INVOLVED in what is happening within their own housing communities and to accept responsibility for working towards and maintaining a positive image in the community. Newscasts and the newspapers often only report on the negative aspects of our housing areas and we feel it is time to project a POSITIVE IMAGE to the community at large (NLHC 1985a: 1 emphasis in original).

The message above contrasts with the more 'hands-off' approach to housing management characteristic of the early days of social housing in the province. Housing clearly advocates the participation of the tenants in at least the amelioration of the image of social housing by giving them a role to play and a stake in the betterment of the projects.

I was told that in the early years of the Tenant Relations Program that the purse strings for spending on both the physical and social improvement of the city's housing projects were fairly wide open. As Tenant Relations manager in the early 1980s, Isabel described to me the situation at Housing during this period.

> They never really had social workers at the Housing Corporation prior to 1983, so we had like a *carte blanche*… It was a really nice time there from '83 until about '89…it was just like a 'boom'…whatever you wanted you could have. If we made a suggestion in Tenant Relations, well, [it] was like, 'Ok…we'll do that.'

With the physical improvements to the area underway, the NLHC began to turn their attention towards addressing the social concerns of the area, such as increasing tenant participation in the improvement of the projects, developing local leadership, and fostering a sense of belonging and ownership. One method the NLHC felt would achieve this was through the community centre program as well as the creation and funding of local tenants organizations.

Before discussing the Centre and the programs, I feel that a divergence here is necessary. I have previously discussed some negative characteristics that have been ascribed to social housing projects in general, such as vandalism and crime, but I have not said anything so far in this regards to the Froude project in specific. I was curious as to what the state of the project was that had concerned the NLHC and prompted them to invest resources in the Tenant Relations Program, and later the Centre. I wondered whether there was anything more substantive at Froude behind the typical stereotypes that one hears about all social housing projects. This is the focus of the following section.

## 3.2 – "It's not that bad anymore."

Before my fieldwork began someone familiar with the Froude project cautioned me that the area had a reputation for being, "a little rough." I disregarded this claim as being rooted in the general stereotypes of public housing areas and thought no more of it. Some of the junior staff members told me that they were initially apprehensive about accepting a job at the Centre because of the reputation of the area. One summer counsellor told me that her family and friends thought she was "nuts" for taking the position there. Another junior staff member told me essentially the same thing. However they both qualified this by saying that, based on their experiences, there was a disparity between this reputation and what they experienced, with one of them saying, "its not that bad anymore." Some of the residents themselves admitted that they were initially uncomfortable about moving into the area. Nancy, who originally lived on a neighbouring street as a child, said that she was a bit "hesitant" in regards to Housing's

suggestion that she take a vacancy in the Froude Avenue project. A resident of the private housing on Froude Avenue, from 1981 until recently, told me that he was "nervous" about moving into the area in general given that the project had a "bad name." However, I found it to be quite common for the residents and senior staff to admit that the area had been really problematic in the past but, as one staff member put it, the Froude project today is, "an entirely different community."

I was uncertain exactly as to when 'past' was in this regards and what it was that gave the project a 'bad name.' The stigma attached to the area seems to have extended back to at least the early 1960s. In one study of the surrounding area (House 1964), which covered parts of Campbell, Blackmarsh, and all of Connors and Pierce Avenues,[2] reference was made to the "recent public rental housing development" (House 1964: 8) which seemed to have been a cause for concern for the surrounding area residents. It comes out clearly in House's work that the surrounding private housing residents felt strongly about living in close proximity to the Froude area projects, as the Widows' Mansions were also still in existence at this time. He writes, "The older residents of the area complain of the destruction and theft of property by these newcomers. [They] also fear the influence which 'these juvenile delinquents' might have on their children" (House 1964: 23). House also documents levels of "resentment" felt by the private housing residents and details that they cited the influx of social housing tenants into the area as the cause of their, "current feelings of dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood" (ibid: 8). According to Hilda Murray (2002), much of the land above LeMarchant Road, including the Mundy Pond Road area (the area in question) until the 1950s was farmland

(Murray 2002: 250). Combined with the fact that there have been social housing tenants in the area since December of 1947, I find the characterization of these residents as 'newcomers' in 1964 something of a misnomer.[3]

I find myself also somewhat dubious as to the actual claimed extent of the vandalism that was associated with the project residents, though there is no doubt in my mind that these area residents felt this way. To be certain, some youths from the Froude project were indeed involved in acts of vandalism during the time of my fieldwork both inside, and as I learned of later, outside of the project. However, I suspect what House's research participants were articulating was perhaps part reality, but also a discourse that is partly coloured by stereotypes as well as identity politics. Anthony Cohen points out that boundaries are often relational and oppositional (Cohen 1985: 12), so that one community, neighbourhood, or group of some kind may play up the perceived negative characteristics of the 'other,' in order to reinforce their own sense of identity or belonging through this contrast. The boundary between the private housing area and that of the project was, and perhaps still as, as much symbolic as it is visual and economic, which is a point I will return to in the next chapter.

I have noticed a discourse from some of the residents, as well some of the staff and other outsiders connected to the project, which also uses a process of 'othering' in order to ameliorate the projected image of the area, except in this case it is temporal in nature. The 'past' is often used as a foil from which to suggest that the project has since in some ways qualitatively improved and bears little resemblance to the Froude project of years past. One of the issues that were often utilized in this discourse was that of tales of

extreme vandalism, most notably stories of cars having been burned on the centre field of the project. I had never witnessed anything of the sort during the time of my research and had never seen any evidence of it. I heard this story through interviews, during a Resource Group meeting and in general conversations, particularly when outsiders such as myself or others were present and the past was being discussed. The basic rudiments of the anecdote were that in the past, rowdier elements of the project would commonly set cars ablaze on the centre field to the extent that emergency vehicles were a common sight. The story always concluded with it having happened in the past, but not anymore. No specific reasons were given for the halt of this practice, except I heard one prominent local person mention at a Resource Group meeting that it was a result of the gradual "maturing" of the community. At this meeting as well, one Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC)[4] officer, who was a member of the Resource Group, pointed out that in the past a secondary unit would always back up the primary when responding to calls in the Froude project, but that this was no longer the practice given the changes in the area.

However, I noticed that the particulars of these stories seemed to shift depending upon the teller and the context. To begin with, the degree of frequency of these fires seemed to be disputed. Mike, a resident of the project since its construction in 1951, told me that these kinds of fires were a rare occurrence. According to him, they did happen but their occurrence was related more to the general nuisance fires that plague St. John's around Halloween. This seemed plausible to me, as I remember having been perplexed at the sight of some teenagers burning a couch in a ravine across from where I lived the first

Halloween I spent in St. John's. However, I raised the issue with another local who insisted that cars, furniture and all manner of things were burned on the field on quite a regular basis, though it happened in the 'past.'

What exactly the 'past' was with regards to these fires is also problematic. As noted earlier, the Widows' Mansions were torn down by 1970 so the centre field where these fires were said to have occurred was only in existence since that time. I found a newspaper article about the Froude project from 1991, which touched on this and several other important themes.

> 'When the wild bunch was over there, sirens on fire trucks and police cars would be going every night up here,' he said. 'They put all the bad apples in one barrel and that's what caused the trouble'...But these days, things have taken a turn for the better and Mr. Nelder said he doesn't see the kind of 'trouble' he did in past years (Gullage 1991: 17).

The fact that it is suggested that this "trouble" and activity was argued to have subsided by 1991 narrows the window for these car fires on the field even further to the period between 1970 and 1990. What is even more intriguing is that reference is made to a turning point "for the better," which in this case appears to be the early 1990s, though no particular reference is made to what the specific circumstances were.

When I talked to Mike, however, a very different picture of the past emerges. He argued that in the 1950s the area was different from today in a positive, not a negative, way. Mike spoke fondly of the "camaraderie" shared among the residents of the project in its early days, many of whom were the former residents of the central slums. Mike also spoke of the great care that the residents used to take of their lawns and flower

gardens. From his tone I suspected that he was implying that this camaraderie and sense of ownership or civic pride has since dissipated. From my observations of the area I could see that many people did in fact seem to take great care of their exteriors. During the summer I would often see Nancy on her hands and knees working on her flower gardens, and I always marvelled at one home on Cashin that I passed by to and from the area, with its extensive exterior decor. However, I could also see that some residents appeared to care less about their exteriors.

At this point in my research a rather contradictory image emerges in which a positive view of the project in the 1950s contrasts with the negative perceptions articulated by surrounding area residents in the 1960s, as seen in House's work. The newspaper account above suggests that the 'past' before the 1990s was a time of trouble, but that the early 1990s was a positive turning point. Yet with my discussions with the residents and the Centre's staff in the summer of 2001, it was the summer of 2000 which was the critical turning point for the project as the result of a series of high profile drug busts. I think that these arrests have made a substantial positive physical and symbolic impact on the area and this turning point of 2000 may be of a different order than that of the more ambiguous comparisons people drew between the present and the more distant past. However, even this more recent series of events seems to carry with it a measure of ambiguity as well.

On the first day of my research in late April of 2001, I was sitting in the kitchen of the Centre having a coffee with Bill the educational coordinator. I had just been introduced to him and he was pleased that I was interested in documenting the impact

that the Centre was having on the area, especially given the negative reputation of Froude Avenue that the Centre and tenants organization, the Neighbourhood Enhancement Association (NEA), were trying to combat. While we sat in the kitchen and talked about the area, Bill gestured out of the kitchen window to say that up until very recently there was a very openly practiced and thriving drug trade around the Centre itself. All of the residents I spoke to were adamant that the area had improved dramatically since the arrests. They described an aura of intimidation that had existed: the dealers would fight with customers and amongst themselves; windows would be broken; the dealers would often urinate around the exterior of area homes; and the increased vehicle traffic was both a nuisance and a hazard to the children. Not the least of which, the drug trade would certainly not provide a positive example for the area youth, given the enticement of the trade as the dealers apparently had the propensity for displaying large wads of cash.

The staff at the Centre also concurred that the elimination of the visible trade around the cul-de-sac area of the Centre made for a far more positive environment. The manager John, despite admitting to having been assaulted on occasion, described a general truce he had worked out between the Centre and the dealers. A former summer program coordinator told me that she wished that I could have been here last summer to be able to see the difference the arrests had made. She pointed to some kids who were playing in the cul-de-sac in front of the Centre and said that "this time last year" that would not have happened, and that these activities would have had to be moved to the centre field, away from the dealers and the traffic.

The arrests that took place in July of 2000 were the result of the coordination by the Centre's management of various agencies such as the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC), the provincial Department of Health and Community Services (HCS), the NLHC, and the NEA. In a news conference, the RNC were careful to state that of the 21 dealers arrested, "none of the accused actually live in the area" (Westcott 2000: 40). There is no question that a great deal of the customers were from outside of the area, as an area as small as Froude could not possibly support a trade of that scale internally. However, the RNC statement made above clashes not only with what the staff and residents have told me, but with previous statements by RNC sources as well. A 1991 newspaper article clearly implicates the involvement in the trade at the time by some locals.

> One source who is close to the neighbourhood said drugs help put food on the table of some homes in the Blocks… 'For some of them, it's a living for their kids and their families and if they go most of the years and don't get caught, then they're up. If they do get caught, then it just means a couple of months off the road and they're at it again' (Gullage 1991: 17).

An RNC sergeant pointed out that for some households, involvement in the trade had taken on an intergenerational dynamic. In a few instances, "younger members of a family have followed in the footsteps of their older dealing relatives" (ibid). What I was told by some of the residents I spoke to was that it was simply not true that all of the dealers who were arrested were outsiders, though many were. If there were intergenerational aspects to the drug trade in 1991, as per the above mentioned article, then it would seem to me to be highly unlikely that by 2000 the trade would be entirely dominated by outsiders.

I personally did not see any visible signs of a drug trade during the course of my fieldwork. During the occasional community clean-ups organized by the Centre, I would take the opportunity, with latex gloves and garbage bag in hand, to scour the ground for any signs of the trade. While I found plenty of broken glass and cigarette butts, I did not find any drug-related paraphernalia. While the high profile busts, especially in mass media reports, suggested that there had been an elimination of the drug trade in the area, during my research I found out that this was not entirely accurate. I have been careful to use the term 'visible trade,' as what appeared to have happened after these arrests was the development of a smaller scale and localized underground trade. By the end of my research I had heard talk of who was dealing what to whom, though I had no way to verify this. I tagged along one day with Keith and the summer program coordinator while they supervised some local teens, who agreed to paint over the graffiti they had caused during a spray painting binge they went on several months previously. A local adult male came outside to taunt the teens, joking they should come by and paint his place next. He then said, in a mocking tone, "How does it feel fixing things instead of going around destroying things?" I grew angry at his mocking and condescending tone, as I felt the teens were doing something laudable and I did not see the point of this. I felt like retorting, "Its 11 a.m. on a weekday, at least *they* are working," but I thought the better of it and held my tongue. I complained about this to Keith and he agreed, shaking his head. He then told me that this man was no pillar of the community either, but was said to be a main supplier of illicit pharmaceuticals to the area teens, mainly in the form of Percodan[5] pills which are often crushed and snorted.

Aside from incidents such as that above, or a staff member expressing concern about the substance abuse by a specific individual, drugs were rarely discussed during my fieldwork. In 'public' discourse, such as the Board or Resource Group meetings or the housing conference I attended, when the officials from governmental or aid agencies were present, drugs were raised as a problem by the staff, NEA or local residents who were present, along with other issues such as teen drinking and the sale of cigarettes to minors by some locals. But this was often qualified with statements as to how the area had improved since the high profile busts. John would often point out that drugs were just as much an issue for teens in wealthier areas of the city, which I agree with. However, in these kinds of contexts the continued existence of the local trade, as well as the struggles of some residents both young and old with substance abuse, appeared to be glossed over. It almost seemed to act like Michael Taussig's notion of the 'public secret'; that which is known, that everyone knows is known, but is not publicly articulated (Taussig 1999: 5-6). Early on in my fieldwork I heard a lot about these high profile busts and assumed that the drug problem, in terms of dealing, had almost vanished. It was not until later that I started to hear otherwise. One staff member admitted that substance abuse by local teens and young people, especially of harder and more powerful narcotics, if anything is becoming more extreme. John and Bill told me that the Resource Group was originally formed prior to these busts to help to coordinate the efforts of various governmental agencies with the Centre and the local tenants association to deal with the problem. However, Bill told me that he feels that the Resource Group has lost some of its impetus and direction since achieving the goal of the elimination of the visible drug trade. This victory appears to be

an important factor in the amelioration of the negative image of the project, yet its continued articulation may eclipse some ongoing important local issues when it seems that the continued efforts of external governmental and aid agencies still appears to be needed. Kate, a local resident and volunteer at the Centre, told me that she fears that the large-scale drug trade would return if the Centre were ever to close, so they appear to have a continued role to play with this issue.

It would be inaccurate to say that the area did not have its share of problems. House's research (1964) indicated that there was a measure of petty crime and vandalism occurring in the area in the past though, as I noted on page 51, I take exception to the heightened attention in the past (and today) on the Froude area project as the exclusive source of these problems. During my research in 2001 there were acts of vandalism ranging from spray painting and graffiti to area homes, as well as some incidents of vandalism to the Centre and the park. The Centre itself was broken into and robbed just as my fieldwork was starting which resulted in the theft, among other things, of the Centre's VCR. The Centre was broken into again in late August as my fieldwork was coming to a close. This was a little more serious, as some computers were stolen and the frames of some office doorways were smashed to breach the locked doors. When I returned for a visit in March of 2002 I found out that the Centre had yet again suffered another break-in. All the indications, from staff as well as residents, suggested that these three break-ins were committed by local perpetrators.

However, overall I think that there is no question that the elimination of the visible trade has resulted in a dramatic improvement in the area and it is an important

achievement. These arrests appeared to have conveyed to some of the residents that getting involved in local concerns may make a tangible difference. During a warm and sunny day in late August, I stopped to talk to Nancy while she was doing some gardening. As a prominent local citizen and President of the NEA, she had pushed for the removal of the dealers and had to deal with a measure of harassment until the task was completed. She told me that she had her windows broken, but shrugged it off saying that it was really a minor nuisance and that Housing would replace them anyways. She concluded our conversation on the arrests by adding somewhat triumphantly, "I was here before them, and I'm still here today." It was this kind a participation in the Centre and the local tenants organization that the NLHC hoped for, and it was certainly beyond their original expectations in the early days of the Tenants Relations Programs. I will now return from this divergence to the present-day Centre, the staff and their programs.

### 3.3 – The Early Days of the Centre

The proposal for the Froude Avenue Community Centre  (Handrigan 1984), written after the tenant consultation phase, aimed at getting tenants involved through the programs at the Centre, but it also envisioned the Centre as acting as a liaison between the residents and Housing. The original conception of the Centre was as a multi-purpose facility, with a heavy emphasis on recreational programs and the needs of children and single mothers. The importance of providing a local meeting place was also emphasized.

> The purpose of these facilities would be to get the tenants
> in our housing projects involved in certain programs,
> thereby giving them an opportunity to meet their

neighbours and creating a positive atmosphere in the community (Handrigan 1984: 2).

The site of the Froude Avenue Centre at number 89 was chosen for the fact that it was one of the few four-unit buildings that is separate from an adjoining building (see Appendix C). The existing occupants at the time were also either in the process of moving or willing to relocate. The CMHC gave permission for the conversion of the units in question in 1984 (Handrigan 1984: 4). Isabel, the Tenant Relations manager at the time, told me that the final location for the Centre was based more on convenience than design, as she said, "it just sort of fell into place."

The funding of the Centre was originally problematic and it was uneven and sporadic during the first five or six years of its existence. John told me that there was a point during this time when he and Helen, the preschool teacher, had to take turns being laid off and volunteering their time in order to keep the Centre and preschool open. Isabel said that in the early stages, "we didn't know if we were going to have enough money to keep a person on staff." Funding came primarily in the way of grants from the NLHC and Social Services. Originally it was hoped that the St. John's Boys and Girls' Club would be able to play a prominent role in terms of programming. By the time of my research, the Centre had long been a quasi-independent entity. John still looks beyond the NLHC to secure funding from a variety of sources. I have prepared a table of the Centre's finances from data that John provided to me (Appendix D). As per his request I have kept the specific dollar values confidential, but I have included the table to illustrate the diversity of the Centre's funding. In March of 2002 I had breakfast with the senior staff and they had been closely following news on the just-released provincial budget, as any

cuts in funding to the NLHC would directly impinge on the Centre. John has turned to other sources of funding partly for a measure of autonomy, but also to ensure the Centre's future should there be a decline in funding from the NLHC.

From the beginning it was decided that the Centre needed a manager (originally termed in the proposal as a 'coordinator') to oversee the daily operations of the Centre and, when funding was more secure, hire some more staff. The Tenant Relations Officer for the area told me that it was desired that the manager was to be someone "at arm's length" rather than someone who was seen as a direct employee of the NLHC. Originally the plan was to hire some local residents as the staff, as well as management, in order to provide some employment for low-income earners (Handrigan 1984: 6). For a variety of reasons, that the original Tenant Relations manager Isabel did not seem to want to discuss, the choice of having a local manager did not prove to be successful at the time, so the search began for a capable outsider to fill the role; this turned out to be John.

### 3.4 - The Centre's Manager: John

John was hired as the Centre's manager in December of 1986. He had been volunteering since the age of fifteen and has worked for a number of social organizations, holding such positions as the program coordinator of the East End Boys and Girls' Club. Isabel had approached him about the position, though he told me that at first he was a little hesitant. When I had first asked him about his qualifications as manager he appeared a little uneasy, assuming that I was referring to strict paper credentials. This was not the intent of my question, as I had come to realize that the skills needed to be an effective

manager of a centre in this context are better learned in frontline social agencies rather than the halls of academia. John once said to me that, "there's a lot of other things to running a community centre than what people see…running a community centre is really tough." The position requires a certain immersion into the lives of the people of the area, and it is a social context that can become quite emotionally charged at times. John told me that some other managers prefer a more distanced approach, but he feels that such an approach leaves the manager out of touch with the local issues. The desire to have a manager 'at arm's length' from the NLHC may be beneficial, but it is not something John would suggest in terms of the residents themselves.

The role of the manager includes basic duties, such as overseeing daily operations, finances, reports, staff management as well as making sure that the Centre meets the requirements of its mandate (see Appendix A). The more complex aspects of the position are not immediately apparent. Given that John has had the position since 1986, my four months of observation were only able to note the proverbial tip of the iceberg in terms of his position. John described his role to me as essentially a "fence sitter," inhabiting the precarious position of managing the operation of the Centre, but also balancing the relationships amongst the staff, between the Centre and various governmental agencies and the Centre's Board of Directors, between the Centre and the residents, and sometimes amongst the residents themselves.

Early in my fieldwork John admitted to me that his relationships with the local residents has not been, and still is not always, problem free. Even after all these years he says that some residents still do not trust him while some dislike him.

> Somebody likes me, somebody dislikes me. Some thinks
> I'm doing the right thing, some thinks I'm not. It takes me
> hours to sit down and talk with people one at a time, to
> show them I'm not their enemy…but I've been doing it for
> 15 years…and there's still people out there saying, 'Don't
> trust him.' But the thing is I have to win them over one at a
> time.

Once I was having a conversation with John in his office and we were interrupted by a local young man who came to fix John's chair for him. I was never able to have a conversation or interview with John in his office without the inevitable knock on the door from a staff member, resident or official of some kind. When John left the room for a moment, this young man turned to me and said, "You can't get any better than that man there. He's there for everybody."

However, not all of the residents would agree with this assessment and some told me that there are those in the project who actively dislike John. I asked John what it was in his opinion that caused some residents to dislike him. John replied that he feels that his honesty is threatening to some of the residents. This theme of 'honesty' has figured prominently in many of our conversations. He described what he felt to be the strategies needed for survival in this context which also clash with his view of honest behaviour. He told me,

> The thing is about survival in this type of community is that
> you have to survive for yourself first…and because
> everybody is thrifty in what they do to try and get ahead,
> they don't realize that this is a community thing.

John's views of honesty in this context seem to have also been informed by his experiences in other social agencies. He told me of his disgust as a youth at seeing how some of the older volunteers at the East End Boys and Girl's Club utilized the resources

such as the pool or ping-pong table for their own purposes. When it comes to the programs at the Centre, John has little patience for this kind of "dishonesty." Normally an easy going and laid back individual, I witnessed first hand his anger at practices in the programs at the Centre that he regarded to be dishonest.

Early in my research I had noted that there was a measure of concern as to the upcoming summer program, which is offered every year and is geared towards children and youths. The planned construction on the centre field was going to remove a vital area for games and activities, and a very capable summer coordinator was not available this year. Over the summer some of the local parents, as well as the children, were unhappy with the performance of some of the summer staff and other issues that had arisen during the course of the program, which seemed to deteriorate further when John went on vacation. At one point Bill, the educational coordinator, and myself mused that there seemed to be more counsellors around now than children.

When John returned in early August he did not seem to me to be his usual self. He seemed somewhat distant and cold and I was not sure what to make of it. During this time there was a boil water advisory on for some parts of St. John's, so one morning he asked me to come along with him when he went to pick up some bottled water for the Centre. I was worried that I had done something wrong but it seemed that he needed to talk to someone connected to the Centre, and someone who was still objective and as a researcher I seemed to fill that role. With his return he had been bombarded with complaints by the parents, staff and even the children themselves. The primary grievances which John relayed to me did not come as much of a surprise: counsellors

smoking in the presence of the children, a general lack of initiative and creativity, and preferential treatment of the children. Some of the counsellors did an outstanding job, but the negative instances seem to colour the entire program, at least in the perceptions of the parents. John pointed out that the greatest critics are the children themselves, demonstrated by the dwindling attendance numbers. He told me that he had enough, and he was going to hold a meeting about it the next day.

The meeting was held in the large upstairs room of the Centre. I sat at the back with Keith the fulltime coordinator and Helen the preschool teacher, who had taken it upon herself to try to help resuscitate the program. The summer coordinator was trying to call the meeting to order with little success. As soon as John entered the room with a grim expression on his face, the room fell silent. He did not yell or even raise his voice. He simply sat there for a second, with his gaze making eye contact with everyone in the room. He then articulated the reasons for his displeasure at the state of the program and how he felt the staff had let him down. He did not name any names, but with regards to some incidents I felt that everyone knew who was being discussed. I was not even a staff member, but I found myself gazing at my shoes rather than make eye contact. Keith told me afterwards that he felt the same way, and that he had forgotten what a powerful and commanding presence John can be when he needs to.

John would almost always use an anecdote either to illustrate a point, or he would use a story to convey the point itself. I felt that an anecdote would be an appropriate way to illustrate his style of management and discourse. Schwartzman (1993) has pointed out the importance of the 'organizational storytelling.' She argues that these stories do more

than illustrate an example. They are utilized for the socialization of new members into the organization, they document success as well as failures, they highlight the individual's specific role within the organization, and they also convey information about sensitive issues (Schwartzman 1993: 44). A few days after the meeting, John asked me what I had thought of it. I said that I felt like I was twelve years old again sitting in the principal's office. He laughed, and said that his intention was not to berate the staff, but to make them take "ownership" of the situation and to learn to be self-critical of their own failings.

Being such a strong presence, and after fifteen years in the job, I wondered about the extent to which John had come to personify the Centre. I had found little mention of such a situation in the literature I had encountered in regards to the ethnography of organizations. Myerhoff (1978), in her ethnography of a Jewish senior's centre in California, describes the centre's director as playing a pivotal role and as being very protective and well informed about the area and the residents. When I asked some residents about John's role at the Centre, they generally cited the length of time he spends there on a daily basis, his dedication to the children, and simply being there to help. One stated that he is the "backbone of the Centre." Another simply said that, "John is the Centre." I replied, knowing John's emphasis on 'ownership' and his overall humility, that he would not concur with that statement. This resident agreed, "He would not….no he would not."

## 3.5 - Programs and Staff

I have discussed the role of the manager and have touched on the summer program at the Centre. In this section I will discuss the core staff and the roles that they play, as well as examine the key programs offered at the Centre. Schwartzman (1993), following Gregory (1984), points out that within organizations such as companies the 'project' is an important 'cultural unit,' and one that is a crucial concept for understanding the experience of working in a particular profession (Schwartzman 1993: 36). For example, meetings would be held about the 'project' and discussions of it would figure prominently in daily discourses at work, to the point that the project comes to play a central organizing role in the daily experience of working within an organization. By extension, the 'program' at the Centre is similarly a crucial 'cultural unit' to be examined in order to understand the daily workings of the Centre. The programs were a significant focal point of the staff's attention, whether formally at staff meetings or informally during the course of the working day. The discussions commonly revolved around how to change or improve a program, what was working and what was not, what to drop, what to add, what the Centre can afford to offer, what the residents want, what the attendance figures were in the programs, and so forth.

The Centre was originally conceived of as essentially a meeting hall for the local tenants association, office space for an NLHC liaison officer, and the location for some recreational programs. Since that time, the role and scope of the Centre have broadened significantly. The local tenants association, the Neighbourhood Enhancement Association (NEA), do use the Centre for meetings and share some office space with the program

coordinator, but they now run Wednesday evening and Sunday bingo for fundraising. Health and Community Services maintains a nursing station at the Centre which serves the general area, and is separately funded and managed. During the time of my research an organization known as SPAN (Single Parents' Association of Newfoundland) operated out of the basement and ran a clothing and food bank. On Sunday evenings a narcotics anonymous group, NA (Never Alone) also operates out of the Centre. The focus of my research, however, was the core programs offered by the Centre and their objectives.

### 3.5.1 - The Preschool

The licensed preschool, now in its twelfth year, is one of the longest running core programs at the Centre. The school is taught by Helen, one of the first graduates of the early childhood education program in the province. In many ways Helen appears to have a similar stature in the area as John. Many of her early students are now teenagers and she has been involved with some of them and their parents, to varying degrees, in their transition from childhood to young adults. She has acquired what I would term the honorific of 'Miss Helen,' a title often used for teachers that I have even heard some local adults use. From what I have seen, most of the local children and youth generally refer to the local adults by their first name. The only other time I could recall an honorific being used was for Nancy, the President of the NEA, and this was 'Miss' followed by her last name. Occasionally I did hear Mr. John, but nothing as pervasive as 'Miss Helen.' It is an infectious discourse and by the end of my research I found that I had adopted the practice as well. Sometimes it was in jest, as once at camp I jokingly mimicked the children and

raised my voice an octave and whined to her, "Miss Helen, I'm hungry." However, most of the time I did it unconsciously despite my best efforts.

The preschool generally services the local area, but some outsiders also enrol their children there. The parents whom I talked to all cited the preschool and the Centre's good reputation, and specifically Miss Helen, as the reasons why they chose to do so. One parent I spoke to enrolled his youngest daughter even though they have since moved out of the area. The fees are geared towards low-income families, six dollars per session or eighteen for the standard three half-day sessions a week. The rest of the costs are funded by the Centre's general operating budget. Helen, who has worked in other preschools, told me that this fee was about half that of the average preschool fees throughout the city. The preschool is licensed to a maximum capacity of 8, but the numbers must be reduced should any two year olds attend. The session that I was involved with consisted normally of four or five students ranging from three to five years of age, which included Helen's own daughter.

As part of my fieldwork and my volunteer contributions, I attended the Friday sessions throughout May and June, plus the preschool graduation ceremony which was held in the gymnasium at an area school. These preschool sessions were perhaps the most memorable aspect of my fieldwork. Not having had any previous experience with children, I was continually in awe at both Helen's skills in dealing with young children and the astute observations and insights of which three and four year olds are capable. I was particularly impressed with her 'tricks of the trade,' such as mixing liquid soap in with the water of the finger paints to make the inevitable cleanup process much easier.

As Helen slowly began to trust me, and as my apparent skills with young children that I had not previously known I possessed became evident, my role gradually shifted from that of observer to participant. By June I was reading stories to them, helping to wash little hands and holding the end of the 'magic rope' as we took the children to the park at nearby Mundy Pond one day. This seemed to carry over to the summer program. One day I was sitting at a table in the Centre with a six year-old whose nose was running. Without thinking I grabbed a tissue and wiped it. When I thought about the incident afterwards I realized that I probably would not have done that before my time in the preschool. The experience demonstrated to me that fieldwork can be personally transformative, something that I had not given much thought beforehand.

The activities that Helen had the children engaged in, whether it was the story circle, snack time or free play, all had an educational component, whether academic, social, or a mixture of both. Many of the games and toys had an educational slant. She even added a clever twist to the 'Old Macdonald Had A Farm' song. When Helen got to the part of the song where the animal's noise is mimicked she would often substitute that of another animal, perhaps to test the children's alertness or to make the song more interactive. One little boy was constantly on guard for this, and when Helen would make the wrong sound for an animal he would jump up, with a mischievous grin, and grab her arm and laugh, "No, No!", following which she would quiz the group as to the proper sound.

A major component of the preschool also seemed to be corrective behaviour modification. The children's behaviour was constantly monitored for everything from

aggression to the use of courtesies. However, I never saw Helen lose her patience or raise her voice. She would usually correct her charges' behaviour with a discussion of their actions, and mildly admonish them to use their 'listening ears' or their 'talking voices,' and not to use their 'pinching fingers.' One major component of Helen's efforts totally eluded my notice for these months, for reasons that will be discussed in the latter half of this thesis: the censoring of the use of offensive language by the children was enforced in the preschool and the Centre in general. I will explore this issue further in a subsequent chapter.

There was also an incident towards the end of summer which reinforced for me the very special regard the children of the area seem to hold Miss Helen in. One day in late August there was not much going on at the Centre. I was sitting in the Centre talking to nine year-old Ann, to whom I had grown close to over the last few weeks, and five year-old Mary. We were bored so we decided to go to the park at the end of the centre field. I was pushing Mary on the swing, and somehow Ann and I got on to the topic of smoking. She insisted that everyone smokes and proceeded to rhyme off the names of the summer counsellors who smoked. She asked me if I smoked, which I denied. She frowned and looked up at me doubtfully, with a sly grin spreading across her face and said, "You swear?" "I swear," I responded. "Swear on your mother's life" she challenged me. "I swear," I answered, "I quit when I was eighteen." She laughed triumphantly but then said very seriously, "Then your mother is gonna die, because [a counsellor] told me you smoked," naming one of the summer counsellors. I protested that smoking cigars in the woods to keep bugs away did not count, but she was unconvinced. Mary had been

listening closely to the conversation and dismissively added that, "Everybody smokes." I argued that this was not true, and as evidence proceeded to rhyme off the names of all the senior staff at the Centre who do not smoke. She frowned in thought as I said that John does not smoke, Bill and Keith do not smoke. When I got to Miss Helen, Ann looked up at me with an almost outraged expression on her face, and put her hands on her hips and said very slowly with emphasis, "Miss Helen would *never* smoke!"

### 3.5.2 - The Breakfast Program

Another core program is the breakfast program, which runs from 7:30 in the morning until 8:30, generally coinciding with the hour before school. Bill, the educational coordinator, was also involved in it during the time of my research, but the program was run primarily by two local volunteers, Kate, the secretary for the NEA, and her sister Doreen, NEA vice-president. John may have the run of the Centre, but I very much got the sense that the breakfast program belonged to Kate, to the point that John admitted that he has some difficulties in implementing changes to it.

The children and some young teens would arrive around 7:30 in the morning. Generally they would come in, state what they wanted by the windowed ledge that looked out into the dining room, and take a seat at one of the tables. Usually breakfast consisted of cereal, toast and juice, served in yellow Mel-Mac plates, bowls and mugs. The children would then eat, talk and leave the dishes on the ledge which the volunteers and staff would put in the dishwasher. In the late spring of 2001, Bill was concerned with falling attendance, so he asked Kate to keep track of attendance, which she would

dutifully note on a sheet on the bulletin board in the kitchen. When I was there, attendance hovered between six to ten; however Bill informed me in late June that the average was in fact four. I have heard various reasons for this. There had been a change in the local school system, which John said had altered the children's route to school, taking them away from the Centre. I have also heard that some of the kids, particularly the older ones, express a desire to sleep in.

Admittedly, I had stereotypically assumed the breakfast program was about hunger, as it was operated within the context of a low-income area. I asked Kate if the program was oriented towards addressing hunger one morning while she was loading the dishes into the dishwasher. She paused for a second and inwardly I winced, realizing the error I may have made. She did not respond negatively, but replied, "I don't think of it that way, it's more like that the kids like to talk together before school." I raised the issue with John later, and he responded to my question with a story. He said that he had attended a conference on social issues at the Confederation Building[6] and presented a talk on the breakfast program at the Centre. He opened his presentation to the mainly middle-class, professional audience with a question, by asking, "How many people have had their breakfast this morning?" When he asked the majority who did not raise their hands as to why they had not had breakfast that morning, the answers usually revolved around time factors. Even for those who had stopped for a coffee and a donut for a chat or to read the paper, John pointed out that it was more of a social activity than one related to 'hunger.' John argued that the breakfast program is partly related to nutrition in that he wants to ensure that the children have had something to eat before school, but it is

primarily social. This relates to some ongoing research in the U.S. on the importance of a leisurely and social lunch hour, and which seeks to link poor academic performance with an environment in the lunchroom that is not conducive to social interaction either among students or between students and teachers (Goldman 2002: 15).

Bill agreed with John's assessment, arguing that the breakfast program is a means to bolster participation and to make the Centre part of a daily routine. He told me that he finds that it is a way to be able to become more involved in the children's lives and to hear their concerns while sharing breakfast. He discussed one particular youth whom he was able to reach out to and, as a result of getting to know him, got him involved in the homework program as well.

> When he used to come to breakfast last year....he was a royal pain in the hole. But over a period of time, sitting with him two mornings a week and having breakfast, and chatting with him, or arguing with him over hockey, or saying…'How much homework do you have? Can I give you a hand?'

There were a few teens and children who were regular fixtures at the breakfast program, one of whom I was also helping with a novel study. During the homework session, I took the opportunity to ask him if in fact he would not be able to get a breakfast were it not for the program. He said that it was not the case at all, as he could easily get breakfast at home, but that he liked to talk to his friends at the Centre before school. John sighed that poverty and hunger are the common stereotypes associated with breakfast programs in all low income areas, but he cautioned me that it may be counterproductive in terms of funding and support to push the argument too far and deny their existence altogether. But it is a stereotype that he loathes, "Oh, the poor people of Froude Avenue. I hate it."

### 3.5.3 - The Homework Program

Another key program offered by the Centre is the homework program, which runs in the large upstairs room of the Centre, as well as some smaller offices for one-on-one tutoring. It operates during the school year from 3:00 p.m. until 4:45 p.m. from Monday through to Thursday. However it is not unusual for Bill, the educational coordinator, to stay late or to commit on weekends to help students, which include children, youth and adults. The times I was there, attendance seemed to hover around seven or eight, ranging in ages from six or seven to twelve or thirteen. Bill said that it is not unusual for attendance to fluctuate depending on the weather or time of year. The program is dependent on volunteers, which seemed to consist of a mixture of local and outsider high school and university students, either as part of a for-credit program or of their own volition.

Bill is a key figure not only in the homework program but also in the Centre in general. He started teaching when he was eighteen, and has since received his Master's degree in Education and Administration. He was principal at a number of regional and area schools until retiring in 1999. Bill has been affiliated with the Centre for a number of years prior to his position as a staff member, either as a member or Chair of the Centre's Board of Directors. When the position of educational coordinator became vacant, John offered him the position, as he was aware of his educational credentials from his time on the Board.

Bill's approach to teaching and education is best described as holistic. The basic academic fundamentals are stressed, but the particular circumstances of the individual's

disposition, family situation and school experiences are all taken into account when deciding how best to deal with a student or approach a situation. Bill's role goes beyond the hours of the program or the Centre itself. He gives his time freely to any child, youth or adult who is in need of academic support. Sometimes parents will seek his advice or help when one of his students has social or emotional issues or problems at school, and he will sometimes intervene on the parent's behalf. The Centre also provides a level of intimacy that the institutional education system cannot match. Bill has the luxury of dealing with students in the more familiar context of their own neighbourhood, as well a greater level of involvement with the parents and the students themselves. He has been able to pick up on visual or learning disability issues with some of the students and was able to alert the school on these occasions, though in his experience it seems that the system's ability to act upon the information has been uneven at best.

The program is important in terms of the tutoring, but it is also serves to provide a physical space and supportive environment in which to do homework. Perhaps most importantly, the regular homework program provides a routine. One criticism Bill has of the education system is its seeming failure to provide steady homework on a regular basis, in order to inculcate in students the pattern of doing homework to develop the self-discipline necessary to succeed. He points out that generalizations are also made about the students that often do not reflect the reality of the situation. Bill told me that, "there's an assumption on teachers' parts that all children have parents at home who will sit with them, every night, and do homework." Bill and I both share an academic interest in the nature of education. This has extended beyond the time of my research as we still meet

once in a while for breakfast at a downtown restaurant and talk about the Centre and other issues. Given the context of the Centre, many of our discussions have revolved around the perceived links between low socio-economic status and poor academic performance. As I grew more interested in the issue, he cautioned me that there is a vast literature on the subject and that I may want to consider whether or not I wanted to wade into it.

One of the key issues, which emerged during our conversations in regards to the homework program, was parental involvement. As he puts it, one of his "dilemmas" is that he desires more parental involvement in the homework program, yet not all of the local parents have the educational backgrounds themselves to do so. He said that one parent, for example, whose daughter was going into grade five approached him and said, "You know, I can't help her anymore." Some of the children also desire time away from the parents and look to the Centre as a sort of refuge. In April of 2001, the staff conducted a series of interviews with twenty-six registered users of the Centre between the ages of twelve and eighteen. John allowed me access to these interviews on the condition of the maintained confidentiality of the respondents. In response to a question as to whether parents should play a greater role in the programs, the clear majority of respondents said that they wanted to only have increased parental involvement for special occasions, while one quarter did not want parental involvement under any circumstances. Some cited "embarrassment" while others indicated a needed time away from parents. Bill reminded me that a lack of attention from parents may not always be the problem, sometimes the attention is there but it can be overwhelmingly negative.

Bill has sought ways to broaden the Centre's role, partly to address a problem he sees with the Centre being essentially vacant in between the breakfast program and the homework program. During the time of my research he initiated a lunch program at an area junior high school. Bill and Keith helped to organize a recreation program in the gymnasium while another staff member supervised the library. This particular staff member was placed at the Centre through a program called Linkages, which helps those out of high school, but not in a post-secondary institution, to gain some work experience. On our way to the lunch program she would point out who was "from the Centre." Once she noticed one teen on the sidewalk smoking and commented, "What are you doing with that cigarette dangling out of your mouth?" in a friendly manner. It seemed that the program served to extend the role of the Centre and its staff into the lives of the local youths after-hours and outside of the project itself. During the library hour, I also noticed this staff member console a teen from the Centre who had just broken up with her boyfriend. On our way back to the Centre, Keith noticed some older teens he knew walking across the centre field and called over to them, "School is that way you know!" John's main issue with this program was that he hoped that local volunteers would become more involved and perhaps take over this program altogether, something which has not materialized up until this point in time.

### 3.5.4 - The 'Rec' Program

The recreation program, or the 'rec' or after-school program as I have heard it referred to, operates from three until five in the afternoon, and then again from six until eight in the evening. The evening program is geared towards those aged twelve to eighteen. However, I found the age groupings to be somewhat fluid, and I cannot recall seeing any teen much older than thirteen or fourteen participating in the program. One evening's activity was a trip to a local bowling alley. A group of children and youths were milling about the footsteps of the Centre, complaining that the age restriction was unfair. Others did not have the two dollar fee. Keith quietly allowed some of the under-twelves to come and a few to bowl for free.

The program coordinator, Keith, is the youngest of the core staff. His sense of humour and outgoing nature seems to have made him popular around the Centre, with children, youth and adults alike. Like the rest of the staff, his position at the Centre extends beyond the rec program, which is his main responsibility. I have seen him participate in almost all aspects of the Centre. The rec program itself generally consists of pickup sports or games, with some afternoons or evenings set aside for special activities such a movie night, time at a local recreation centre, or cook-offs in the kitchen in the Centre.

However, the rec program seemed to be a cause of tension at the Centre in terms of programming. During one staff meeting, Bill brought up his displeasure with the fact that the three to five rec program coincides with the homework program, creating not only a distraction for those trying to study but also an alternative to study within the

Centre itself. John, who was a noted provincial ball hockey player, expressed to me from time to time his displeasure at the lack of more organized sports in the programming, which was also voiced by some of the local youth. Bill simply wanted the children outside if the weather was favourable, rather than hanging about in the Centre. Simply a mention of the Nintendo, or the dreaded colouring sheets, would be enough to cause Bill and John to roll their eyes or to mutter a curse.

I participated less in the rec program than the others, as during the day I sometimes had difficulty finding out what was on the go for the evening. However, a lack of specific activities at times did not mean that there was no activity at the Centre. The Centre would normally close on Friday afternoons, once the preschool was closed and the cleaning was done. Afterwards, some of the staff would go to a local pub after work before going home. Every Friday it seemed, even though the Centre was closed, children would still come by when we were trying to get ready to leave. Sometimes it was to ask for sports equipment, to use the computers, or some other Centre resource. One Friday, just as I locked the front door, a little girl started banging on the door relentlessly. I opened the door and she peered up at me through her thick glasses and asked, "Is Keith there?" I went to get him, and he grumbled to himself as he got up to see what she wanted. She wanted some more road chalk for the game going on in the street in front of the centre. After he locked the door again, he said good naturedly, "It's 24-7 around here. It's almost like they are our kids. They are our kids."

### 3.6 - Staff Meetings

Studies of organizations or institutions often make distinctions between 'formal' and 'informal' practices.

> The formal system is the map of the organizational structure, job descriptions, the hierarchy of decision making, the goals, rules and policies. The informal system is the way individuals and groups in the organization relate to each other, which might influence the formal system and achievement of the organization's aims (Wright 1994: 17).

Essentially there are the formal "explicit tasks" or goals of the organization, and the "ways members continually negotiate with one another in the interpretation and carrying out of such tasks" (Van Maanen et al 1993: vii). In this sense the staff meetings, staff hierarchy and the Centre's mission statement (Appendix A) are part of the 'formal' aspects of the Centre. However, while the staff meetings were structurally a weekly adjunct to the day-to-day operations at the Centre and had a formal agenda, I did not find the staff meetings to be a formal tool for decision-making or for the creation of policy. Simply noting the formal aspects of an organization, such as the hierarchy and official practice, reveals very little about the informal negotiations and dynamics of practice.

The staff meetings were held on a regular basis on Tuesday mornings during the time of my research. They did not always happen, and I found that they gradually disappeared during the few weeks leading up to the end of the school year, and stopped altogether during the summer program. I attended the staff meetings religiously, yet I would find that many decisions seemed to be made during the regular course of the day. Sometimes I heard of decisions after they were made, even though I knew the subject was

not raised at that week's meeting. What struck me about the meetings was how they differed qualitatively depending upon who was present. The meetings were designed to be information sharing sessions, and representatives from Health and Community Services attended, as their nursing station shared a part of the building. Either the head nurse would attend or a local HCS manager. The nurse in particular would complain to John if the weekly meetings were not held.

During one meeting I was initially perplexed with something that I overheard. At this particular meeting both a nurse and the HCS manager were present. John was discussing manipulation and dishonesty in terms of abuse of the Centre and its staff and resources. The first day we met John had cautioned me about how the children will cleverly "manipulate things" in an attempt to see what they can get out of the staff or the Centre, whether it is food, access to sports equipment, the computers or other resources. He wanted me to be aware of this, as I was to become a quasi staff member during my research. At the meeting John was relaying something similar to this HCS manager and used a story about a recent incident. Keith had been closing up the Centre at the end of the day. After locking up the building he was on his way home and was eating a banana. Some children who were present asked him to share, as they claimed that no one was home and they had nothing to eat for supper. What surprised me was not the story itself, but that John appeared to be asking the HCS manger for advice in regards to whether he should follow this incident up with the proper authorities as a case of neglect. I was quite surprised as I never thought John would solicit the advice of an outsider for a matter like this. To me the story seemed no different than the flurry of requests to share I would get

from the children if they ever saw me with food or gum. I did not think it was particularly worthy of investigation, and I was perplexed as to why John seemed to. During an interview sometime later, I raised this incident with John as to whether it was a case of manipulation. He laughed and asked whether I meant manipulation on the part of the children or manipulation on his part. I was further confused, until he explained that as a manager he has to feed negative stories on occasion to outside resource people to keep their interests "piqued." He pointed out that if resource people no longer see a role or need for their organization at the Centre or in the area, then when you really do need them they would not be there for you.

Schwartzman argues that meetings should not be seen as external to the patterns and perceptions of everyday life, "when, in fact…they are partly responsible for creating it" (Schwartzman 1993: 39). At the Centre, as elsewhere, their importance went beyond the agenda which was photocopied and passed out at the beginning of each meeting. For outsiders, a particular vision of the Centre and the area and their respective needs was presented. This does not mean that this vision is 'false,' perhaps 'selective' would be a more appropriate term. I also do not want to convey the impression that John was deceiving officials. Quite the contrary, as in some cases the need is very real. For a manager of an organization such as the Centre the selective presentation of information to outside agencies appears to be a needed strategy to help to ensure that the residents have these resources at their disposal. A discourse of overwhelming negativity would most likely convey a message of hopelessness, whereas a discourse that is constantly positive would suggest that the help of social aid organizations was not needed.

I have also noticed that the meetings' dynamics, and perhaps purpose, seemed to differ when only the core staff were present. One meeting in particular differed from the rest in that it was only the core staff members who attended, and John decided to hold it at a downtown restaurant. It was a more relaxed and intimate environment, and without the presence of any outsiders more personal issues and specific individuals were discussed. I did not find that this would happen when the HCS representatives were present. Even though I may have been a quasi-insider at the time, there is a good possibility that even more intimate issues would have been discussed had I not been there. Sometimes these kinds of meetings became what I termed in my fieldnotes 'venting sessions,' the first of which I experienced in late May at this restaurant. At this point I was used to a general positive discourse around the Centre and at the meetings, and I was unprepared for the veritable torrent of negativity at this particular meeting. To list a few of the issues which were discussed: John was concerned with some gossiping that was going on, the behaviour of some local teens at an inter-community centre ball hockey game, vandalism, and what some of the staff perceived to be the abuse of the clothing and food bank in the basement. Helen described her concerns with young children playing unattended early in the morning and late at night and some of her experiences of local parents taking advantage of the preschool, the Centre, or the staff in particular.

These 'venting sessions' also occurred outside of planned meetings. Sometimes it was at the Centre during a lull, sometimes it was at a local pub. Towards the end of the summer I noticed that these sessions would be even more intimate, especially if John was

not present. John did not seem to intentionally conceal anything from me, and he would honestly answer any direct question that I posed to him, but I found he was guarded at times about what he may have taken to be sensitive information. A lot of what the staff told me is not included in this thesis out of respect for them and John, and out of respect for the confidentiality of the area residents. However, a lot of these issues directly impacted on the staff and an outlet of stress was needed. Once, the nurses joined us at the pub and I got a sense that they engaged in a similar ongoing 'venting process.' They were very guarded about this, but the senior nurse alluded to the stress of dealing with cases of child abuse on a repetitive basis. One common theme that came up for the staff during these sessions was a particular mother of two young children. I was aware of some of the issues, however, I was unprepared for the larger picture and I gradually slumped in my seat as two staff members filled me in.

However, even the negative aspects of these sessions had the potential for being positive in the view of the staff. I asked John specifically about these meetings.

> Its very important for staff to sit down for the staff meeting, not just for me to give direction....but [for] them to vent what their issues are...to tell their frustrations, for them also to tell their successes...to tell their stories of who achieved something, and how they had a relationship building with somebody...they need to tell that so we can all build on that...even when something is negative and we have to deal with it, we still try to put a positive spin on it.

Many of the venting sessions only make sense and are useful among people who are close to the context and the issues. Helen pointed out to me that, "the only ones that you can talk to are the ones that you work with. Anybody else...they don't know the

situation…or exactly what's going on." Helen also agreed that the intentions of these impromptu sessions are not negative.

> I don't think its 'all' negative…I think that there is some positive in there too…we need to throw out all the negative [to see] what's the part in there that is going to open up my eyes, that's going to make me feel better so that I can continue on.

## 3.7 - The Board of Directors and Resource Group

As per the NLHC conditions, each community centre that they provide core finding for has to have a Board of Directors, which usually meets once a month but adjourns for the summer. These Boards are ideally comprised of two-thirds local residents and one-third 'resource people,' as I have heard them referred to. The resource people include the Tenant Relations Officer from Housing, and also representatives from Health and Community Services, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the Neighbourhood Enhancement Association and other social organizations. The Resource Group comprises mainly of outside resource people, the staff from the Centre and representatives from the NEA. It was originally formed just prior to the major busts in 2000 to combat the drug issue and was used to co-ordinate the efforts of various governmental and local agencies. Now John maintains the group for their help with other issues as they may arise. My sense in the summer of 2001 was that the Group was a scaled down version of what had existed just prior the series of drug-related arrests. Nancy, the President of the NEA told me that without the resource people the Board

would not be effective, and the Resource Group of course would be nonexistent. She argued that they are the basis for networking, as "they latch on to other resource people."

As the manager of the Centre, John does not have a vote on the Board, but he represents the Centre and supplies the Board with reports and other information as to the its state of affairs. The NLHC also has a representative, usually the area TRO, who also sits on the Board without a vote. When I inquired as to the purpose of the Board, the usual answer I received was that it makes the Centre accountable to both the residents as well as the NLHC. The TRO explained Housing's involvement to me further.

> We sit on the Board as *ex officios* in that we did not want to impose, to be seen as imposing, our decision making into the community. We wanted the community itself to make its own decisions as to the direction of things. We are there to ensure, I guess, that they don't digress from the original mandates.

The original mandates are generally the Centre's mission statement. By way of example, she also suggested that if the Centre decided to charge admission, that this would be contrary to NLHC policy and they would have "a problem with it."

I sat in on two Board meetings to observe the proceedings, and I also interviewed two former chairpersons, a current and former TRO, and some NEA members who also sit on the Board. From what I could see, the Board seemed to consist of an even split between resource people and local residents. A former Chair of the Board told me that he was concerned about what he perceived as the lack of input by most of the residents. He said that he tried to make a point of soliciting input from all who were in attendance. The most vocal participants seemed to be the Chair and Secretary (resource people), John, and

Nancy (resident and President of the NEA). Most of the other residents appeared to sit in silence during the duration of most of the meeting.

I was not entirely clear as to how representative the local Board members were of the area residents, as the NEA members were perhaps the most vocal and active residents in the area. My impression is that while seats on the Board are open to all residents, this fact is not well known. The NEA Vice-President told me that John had contacted her and invited her to join, adding, "a lot of people here don't have the information. They don't know that they can join." To be fair to the Centre and the Board, when I read through a stack of newsletters that the Centre puts out on a regular basis, there is often a greeting message from John, sometimes from the MHA for the area, and often one from the Chair of the Board. I know that these letters are distributed throughout the Froude area, as well as other adjacent NLHC housing areas, so the existence of the Board itself is publicized, but perhaps the possibility of having a seat on it is not. For some residents who may not have extensive education, the Board, with its assortment of outside professionals, may be a foreign and intimidating entity. I will revisit this issue in a subsequent chapter.

During the time of my research I rarely saw any of the outside resource people except for formal meetings, or sometimes for meetings with John. Similar to the situation I described in regards to the staff meetings, the majority of the outside resource people appeared to receive a filtered and attenuated vision of the issues around the Centre, given their limited participation in the area in daily life. The Secretary of the Board admitted that "We sort of trust that things are fine unless we hear otherwise." I interviewed the current Secretary not only because she had been the Chair for two years, but also because

she had come to this position after having participated as a volunteer in the homework program and was familiar with the area. She agreed with my assessment that outsiders only receive a partial picture, and that even with her knowledge of the area she is still an outsider. She told me, "I don't live here, and haven't lived here, and I never want to lose sight of that."

In her research on the low-income area of East End Cincinnati, Halperin (1998) noted a similar process of insider and outsider knowledge at the numerous meetings, conferences and symposiums she attended. Her concern was more focused on how the opinions of outside 'experts' seemed to be more valued and weighed in policy making than the knowledge of area residents, many of whom had several generations of knowledge of the area from which to draw. Self-critically conscious of her own status as an outside researcher, as I have attempted to be, she commented that as her research and her direct involvement with the people of the area progressed, she noted "how little concrete understanding they [outsider experts] have of people and communities like the East End" (Halperin 1998: 109).

I doubt very much that any of the resource people see themselves as experts on the area, and their trust in John for knowledge of the Centre's operation is reasonable. Aside from undertaking a participant-observation style research project as I have, working at the Centre or living in the area, it is very difficult to see the minutiae of daily life or to be able to have a good grasp of the local issues. My own knowledge after four months of research is paltry compared to that of the residents or the staff's knowledge, but it has provided me with some insights that more distanced observers would not see.

A critical dimension to local knowledge is that of gossip. While gossip was an almost constant source of irritation and friction for John and the rest of the staff, he would be quick to point out that if a manager was not connected to the local gossip networks in some way, he or she would know very little of what was going on in the area and would not be able to adequately perform the requirements of the position. These information networks are critical for the staff to be able to do their jobs, as they were for my research. During one Resource Group meeting it became apparent that outside professionals might not always be privy to these information networks, if at all. I had assumed the TRO to be very knowledgeable about the issues of the area, which I have no doubt she is, given her professional connection to the residents' personal issues, and her connection to the Centre, staff, Board, NEA and Resource Group. She is only hampered by her short time as TRO for the area, but talking with some residents who know her, she appears to be well liked and trusted. However as well connected as she is, she appears not to always be 'part of the loop.' During this Resource Group meeting she pointed out that she finds these meetings useful in that they enable her to be in touch with the "front-line" and "what's real" in terms of local issues, and admitted that many Housing officials are quite disconnected from the daily realities of the residents' lives. As the meeting progressed, John dismissed the suggestion from another Group member that the minutes of the meetings should be printed and made available to the local residents, citing that the gossip networks would carry the information at a speed which would render the documents, "not worth the paper they are printed on." I felt that this was a very pointed comment, as the only ones present who would be a source of this gossip would be the

NEA members. I felt he also made this comment as a subtle criticism that the onus was on prominent residents to correct false gossip. I had heard a rumour going around that there was going to be mass evictions for non-compliance of NLHC regulations. It seemed to me that someone was always in the process of being evicted. One resident was in the state of being evicted for poor housekeeping the entire time of my research. I had no idea as to the validity of these particular claims and it seemed that John wanted the rumour clarified at this meeting. The TRO was visibly startled at hearing this and exclaimed, "Who's doing the evicting?" John lightly slapped her on the shoulder and joked, "You are."

During the course of my research, several key analytical themes have emerged from my interview and fieldnote material. Some of these issues relate to the stated goals of the NLHC through their Tenant Relations and community centre programs, such as encouraging tenant participation, and the amelioration of the negative image of social housing. Through media reports, meetings, interviews with Housing officials, the staff and residents, and general daily discourse around the Centre I have heard discussions of 'empowering community,' 'community ownership.' and 'enhancing community capacity.' Before examining how a community may be empowered, its capacity enhanced or its sense of ownership developed through the Centre and the NEA, I will first turn to an examination of community within the context of a large urban centre and its implications for the centre's mandates and goals. The central focus of the next chapter will be an analysis of the underlying tension of the NLHC's attempts at strengthening

'community' which can be seen as partly running counter to the original mandate of transitional housing.

# Endnotes to Chapter Three

[1] MHA, Member of the House of Assembly, is the riding's representative in the provincial legislature.

[2] While the Ebsary Estates were excluded from this research, all of Froude Avenue was included. At least half of Froude Avenue consists of the Westmount project and has since its construction in 1951, a fact that was curiously omitted in this paper.

[3] I saw a photocopy of an aerial photograph of the Mundy Pond area taken shortly after the construction of the Ebsary Estates, but before the construction of Westmount, which dates the photograph to between 1948 and 1950. There were some homes, industry and roads already in existence in the area and around Mundy Pond. Though there was a significant amount of fields between the Estates and the private housing, and the area was not as developed as it appears today, there does appear to have been some private housing in place before the construction of the Ebsary Estates. However, I still hold that the characterization of the social housing tenants as 'newcomers' by the private housing residents by 1964 seems a little thin.

[4] The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary is a municipal police force in the province responsible for the urban areas of St. John's, Mount Pearl and the surrounding area of the North-East Avalon, Corner Brook on the West Coast of Newfoundland, and Labrador City, Wabush, Churchill Falls, and their surrounding areas on the mainland of Labrador. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have jurisdiction for the rest of the province. http://www.gov.nf.ca/rnc/default.htm

[5] "Percodan is a combination of oxycodone and aspirin. Oxycodone is a semisynthetic narcotic with strong analgesic properties. Like any narcotic, it is potentially addicting and is chemically different from heroin and opium only in structure and duration" http://www.druginfonet.com/faq/faqperco.htm.

[6] The Confederation Building in St. John's houses the provincial legislature, department offices, and other governmental boards.

**Chapter Four**

# Community: Metaphor, Theory & Practice

My focus in this chapter on the role of the Froude Avenue Community Centre in the Froude housing project will consist of an examination of the concept of 'community' itself. In the previous chapters of this thesis, I have intentionally avoided using the term 'community'; I have instead alternated between 'project,' 'estate,' or simply 'area.' In contrast, the staff would often use the expression in their daily discourse in terms of talking about a resident having 'left the community,' or talking about the 'problems of the community.' When I spoke to both a current and a former NLHC Tenant Relations Officer for the area, they would often speak of 'empowering the community,' or helping the residents to take 'ownership of the community.' A social housing conference that I attended in the fall of 2001 was entitled, *Enhancing Community Capacity*. Before talking about empowerment or ownership, all practices that the Centre tries to encourage, I think that my analysis should not proceed without some consideration of the common link which unites all these themes – community.

In this chapter I will argue that the term 'community' is problematic because its meaning shifts depending upon the context in which the term is invoked, by whom and for what purpose. At one level it is simply a term of convenience or brevity often used interchangeably, in common practice or by the mass media, with 'neighbourhood,' or 'area'; sometimes the term will be used to denote a specific locale, or other times it will pertain to a general notion of community. Rhoda Halperin notes,

> Community is a common, ordinary word. We think we
> know what it is. We take it for granted. We assume its
> presence or we lament its absence. We know why we need
> it; yet we question it at the same time – where is it, what is
> it? (Halperin 1998: xii).

As Raymond Apthorpe cautions, it is the very commonality of its usage that should cause one to be suspicious of a concept, "which is agreed among so many people, which everybody likes, and which everybody is in favour of" (Apthorpe 1997: 53). Upon closer inspection, the problems with the term begin to emerge. The term 'community' suggests a social group, living within a specific locale and acting in unison in terms of mutual support or working towards mutual goals or aims. Within the context of a large urban centre, where boundaries may be difficult to define, residency can be quite transitory, and dependency upon immediate neighbours may be minimal or non–existent, 'community' as a term of convenience may often fail to correspond with community as a sociological entity. When one considers terms like 'global village,' or 'international community,' which are commonly invoked in the mass media, then the concept has been stretched almost beyond practical meaning.

I am proposing that when we hear the term 'community,' attention should be paid to the context in which it is invoked. The use of the term in the discourse of 'enhancing community capacity,' for example, is best seen as a "mobilizing metaphor" (Shore and Wright 1997: 20), where the expression is used to promote a political agenda. When the Froude Avenue project is referred to as a 'community' in terms of a sociological entity pertaining to a specific locale, then 'community' here is best tackled with the theoretical tools of the social sciences in terms of urban research. However, instead of viewing

'community' as a demarcated entity, it may be more useful to view community as a 'practice.' Rhoda Halperin contends that, "Community is not just a place, although place is very important, but a series of day-to-day, ongoing, often invisible practices" (Halperin 1998: 5). It is as a practice, observable in the daily interactions among the residents and between the members of the staff, that I am framing my analysis of the role of the Centre. It is with a view of the practice of community 'on the ground,' so to speak, that I am also engaging with the concept of community as a mobilizing metaphor and as a theoretical concept.

## 4.1 – Community as Metaphor

I became particularly interested in the metaphorical use of the term 'community' when I was doing some background reading for my thesis research. In 1998, the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador released their *Strategic Social Plan* (SSP) (Newfoundland 1998). The Regional Planner for the SSP, for the North-East Avalon Region (essentially the greater St. John's area), told me that the SSP seeks to link economic and social development in the province.

What intrigued me about the document was the language as it pertains to community. There are four goals stated in the SSP, the first of which is to promote, "Vibrant communities and regions in which people actively participate in their collective well-being" (Newfoundland 1998: iii). The third goal is, "Self-reliant, healthy, educated individuals and families living in safe, nurturing communities" (ibid). At a glance this would appear to be unproblematic, as few people would not want these things. However,

there appears to me to be an underlying contradiction with the goal of achieving 'collective well-being' with 'self-reliant individuals.' The discourse of 'self-reliance' in Newfoundland, however, has a history which far predates the SSP. Linda Cullum (1995) points out that voluntary organizations in pre-Confederation Newfoundland, such as the Jubilee Guilds,[1] were antagonistic towards charity and promoted subsistence-based self-reliance as the way in which the social conditions of rural Newfoundland could be 'rehabilitated' (Cullum 1995: 97). As such, Cullum argues that by promoting the message of self-reliance these voluntary organizations helped to serve the state's aim of minimizing the costs inherent with relief programs for rural areas (ibid: 107). The discourse of self-reliance, in its contemporary guise, appears to promote the state's desire for individuals to be dependent on the wage-labour market for their subsistence, rather than on the government, but this message is often couched in collectivist terms. In contrast to 'community,' the term 'self-reliant' is a very individualizing discourse, suggestive of the *homo economicus* of neo-liberal folklore, which Wilk defines as "the rational human being of economic theory" (Wilk 1996: 14). Yet, as I will argue below, the discourse of community may not be incompatible with that of individualism and self-reliance when one considers that the discourse of 'community' can itself be used as a mobilizing metaphor to encourage the lessening of dependency upon the state and to justify weakening the infrastructure of the social welfare system.

Shore and Wright (1997) argue that the terms 'nation,' or 'democracy' (and 'community' may be added to this list) are "mobilizing metaphors." They write,

> Their mobilizing effect lies in their capacity to connect
> with, and appropriate, the positive meanings and legitimacy

derived from other key symbols of government (Shore and Wright 1997: 20).

Eva Mackey (1997) points out that 'community,' like the 'nation,' "is always deemed to be something natural, good and authentic" (Mackey 1997: 144). 'Community,' and particularly 'community capacity,' appear to be terms that have taken on similar connotations as those metaphors noted above, and they are increasingly invoked in the discourses of social aid agencies, governmental bureaucracies and even some of the residents of social housing areas.

I first encountered the term 'community capacity' during my initial research for my thesis proposal. The Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC)[2] defines the term as, "the combined influence of people's commitment and skills which can be used to build on strengths and to address common problems and opportunities" (CSC 1998: n.p.). In their report, the result of a roundtable conference on the issue (CSC 1998), the CSC advocates the strengthening of the volunteer sector, or 'third sector' as it is sometimes referred to, to help bridge the gap in the provision of services which was left after government cuts and down-loading (ibid: ii). Volunteers are held to play a key role in helping to enhance community capacity. In many ways this is quite laudable, however there are some disturbing implications which arise from this discourse. The most critical is the view that it is a lack of 'capacity' that is the cause of negative social conditions. The CSC cites at length an excerpt from a document entitled *Measuring Community Capacity Building* (Aspen Institute 1997). I will reproduce a passage below to illustrate this kind of logic.

> Without capacity, communities are merely collections of
> individuals acting without concern for the common good;
> they are without the necessary ingredients required to
> develop a healthier community. Communities without
> capacity really are not communities in any meaningful
> sense, but have given way to negative conditions like
> apathy, poverty or ineptitude (CSC 1998: 25).

I find this argument disturbing on one front and, as a generalization, merely weak

on the other. It is disturbing in the sense that it is unfortunately far too common to hear

words like 'apathy' or 'ineptitude' mentioned in conjunction with 'poverty.' A residential

community brimming with capacity and mutual goodwill is often quite powerless in the

face of structural conditions such as the collapse of the fisheries, the closing of a plant or

the reduction of government services, events that many people in Newfoundland and

Labrador, particularly those connected to the fisheries, have experienced in the last

decade. Furthermore, to ignore structural factors while implying that a lack of civic

involvement is the result of being poor (and of course being apathetic and inept), to my

mind is little more than what Jean Swanson (2001) refers to as "poor bashing."

The argument is also thin because it draws upon a rather narrow view of

community and denotes a lack of understanding of the issues underlying the concept as it

exists in practice, especially in the context of a large urban centre. It suggests that

individuals acting without concern for the 'common good' erode capacity and therefore

'give way' to these 'negative conditions.' The argument is weak because it draws upon

community as a metaphor and attempts to impose it upon community as a practice. In his

analysis of neighbourhoods in nineteenth century New York City, Scherzer draws

attention to the fact that the "communal functions that many believed neighbourhoods

were supposed to perform often proved illusory given high rates of turnover and change" (Scherzer 1992: xvi). I have personally lived in high-density apartment buildings that were extremely isolating and lacked any kind of the 'capacity' mentioned above, but in my impression there were no social problems or 'negative conditions' that I was aware of as the result of a lack of 'community.' I think it is erroneous to posit that these negative conditions are therefore directly the result of a lack of 'community' or 'community capacity,' as the argument assumes that the normative state of an urban area is as a cohesive, integrated unit. One has to wonder if such concerns about a lack of 'capacity' are equally applied to very wealthy 'communities.'

It is a little disappointing that the CSC used these kinds of sources to build their arguments as they appear to be quite good at pointing out the structural limitations of volunteerism and capacity, and they place a large burden for the causes of poverty on the shoulders of governments as the result of service cutbacks and downloading. They point out that there are very real limits to volunteerism in Atlantic Canada as the result of out-migration and an aging population, which often leads to volunteer "burn out" (CSC 1998: 15). However, by drawing upon these kinds of arguments, policy critics are placed in an uncomfortable position of challenging the use of such 'commonsense' notions as 'community' while attempting simultaneously to challenge positions or policies that are couched in this discourse. No one would want to be seen as 'anti-community' or as exhorting apathy, but the metaphorical use of community needs to be critiqued.

I can vividly recall, shortly after the election of the Ontario Conservative provincial government in 1995, the mobilizing metaphor of community being put to

work. I was quite stunned watching the news one evening upon hearing the government's position that an increase in daycare spending was not needed, as the 'community' should be able take charge of the childcare needs of working parents. Reflecting upon the high-density, ethnically diverse and mobile area of Toronto in which I lived, I could not imagine where this community entity was located. Fiona Williams points out that there are also gendered implications to these kinds of arguments, as it is assumed that "women are available and ready to care" (Williams 1993: 29). Janet Finch, in a quite vehement argument, denounces the gendered power relations underlying some conceptions of community.

> The "community" is an ideological portmanteau word for a reactionary conservative ideology that oppresses women by silently confirming them to the private sphere without so much as ever mentioning them (Finch, in Williams 1993: 176).

I also frequently encountered the mobilizing metaphor of community in my field research. This discourse appears to have coloured the language of the NLHC as well as some of the residents involved with the NEA. One afternoon I was talking to the President of the NEA, Nancy, and she expressed to me that she was quite looking forward to the upcoming housing conference, for which her group had been preparing over the summer. She said that even a short while ago some of the residents would not have heard the term 'community capacity,' much less have used it. I think that it is quite laudable and important that social housing residents take part in advocacy training and participate in organizations such as the local tenants association. I also think that it is wrong to view mobilizing metaphors as always negative or as invoked solely by the

powerful, as the discourse of community may be invoked strategically to empower the relatively powerless and as a tool for advocacy. I have included in Appendix E an example of a letter the NEA sent to the MHA for the area, in which the pride for their housing units and "community" is invoked in order to press for their demands.

However, I find the metaphorical use of community troublesome when it serves as the basis for policy, rather than 'community' as an appraisal of what exists in practice with a recognition of what its limitations are. The Regional Planner for the SSP, whom I spoke to as part of my research, pointed out that organizations such as the Centre are of value in terms of implementing aspects of the *Strategic Social Plan*. When I asked what was specifically involved and what the Centre could do, that they were not already doing, she replied that they are in the process of working that out and admitted that the SSP was constructed more with small rural outports in mind rather than an urban centre like St. John's. Several months previously I interviewed a senior organizer with the Newfoundland and Labrador Food Security Association. I have found that workers in front-line social agencies are quite good at separating rhetoric from reality. We spoke of the metaphorical use of community and we appeared to share many similar views in this regard. When the interview was over, I asked her how might my research be of the most use for her. She paused for a moment as she was getting into her car and replied, "Establishing the limits of community capacity." While I admit to having been intrigued by her challenge, I hope that a critique of community as a metaphor may help in some way, so that the metaphorical use of community and that of community as a practice are

seen as distinct and not so easily conflated. I will now turn to an overview of some ways in which community has been used in the social sciences as a theoretical concept.

## 4.2 – Community as Theory

In this section, I will present a brief overview of some of the earlier sociological and anthropological work on urban community. I will highlight some of the importance, as well as some of the weaknesses, of these theoretical contributions and then move on to other approaches, such as network analysis. Following this I will suggest other important aspects to consider when theorizing urban community, drawing more explicitly from my field research, such as the importance of design and 'space' as well as key communal nodes, like the Centre. Other key aspects of urban community I will explore are the significance of boundaries and the commonality of experience, which are often related to the stigmatization of social housing projects and the impact of housing policy.

## 4.2.1 – Early Work on Urban Community

Early theories of community developed in the late nineteenth century often focused on idealized models of polarized typologies for different types of social relationships. Most notable among these early works were the theoretical contributions of Emile Durkheim's 'Mechanical and Organic Solidarities,'[3] Ferdinand Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* (1957 [1887]), and Max Weber's 'Community' and 'Society.'[4] The first half of each polarity or continuum can generally be said to denote small-scale, rural, close-knit social relations based on sentiment, kinship, economic

cooperation, shared values, norms and history, with a strong moral consensus reinforced by custom and ritual. The second half of each dichotomy was described as having a high degree of individualism or individuation, self-interest, bureaucratic or rational relationships (especially in the relationship between the individual and the forces of the political economy), economic rational maximization, and an almost anomic sense of isolation and social atomization of the individual.[5] Many of these earlier thinkers were living in a time of great social upheaval and were essentially grappling with conceptualizations of capitalism, industrialization and especially rapid urbanization (Gusfield 1975: 3; Wolf 1982: 11). As such, they were not explicitly attempting to deal with the notion of community in an urban context. Being largely theorists, it was not until the work of ethnographers such as those of the Chicago School, from the turn of the century until the 1930s, that these notions were applied to urban fieldwork situations. A notable contribution in this area was the work of Robert Redfield, who further produced another influential dichotomous model, the Folk-Urban Continuum, which was in many ways similar to the earlier models described above (Hannerz 1980: 64).

Most of the early theorists mentioned above were sociologists who were motivated by concerns over the effects of rapid urbanization which was occurring in their own nations, but, with the exception of the Chicago School, by and large they were not theories derived from field research. By contrast, early twentieth century anthropologists had traditionally dealt with small-scale, rural and pre-industrial populations, so theories of urbanization and urban communities were largely not explored in the discipline at the time. Hannerz argues that it was not until the beginning of the 1960s that anthropologists

began doing extensive research in large urban areas (Hannerz 1980: 1), though there had been some research done in urban areas of Africa in the 1950s, of which Epstein's (1964 [1957]) work is an example. The earlier Chicago School often sought out 'urban tribes' in terms of marked or marginalized populations characterized by ethnic minority status, poverty or 'deviance,' which is still somewhat characteristic of urban anthropologists today. Hannerz points out that this is not that surprising as this practice is akin to seeking out, borrowing a term from Gans (1962), an "urban village," which after all is little different from the "traditional anthropological research site" (Hannerz 1980: 5).

Another reason for searching out marked urban communities as a focus of research was that it appeared to have been tacitly assumed that middle and privileged class neighbourhoods did not sufficiently exhibit the characteristics of a community to be amenable to a 'community study,' or to be of much theoretical interest. Robert Park, a key figure of the Chicago School, had in fact drawn a distinction between 'descript' and 'non-descript' communities.[6] The former, he argued, possessed some kind of unique characteristics or unity that qualified an area as a community (Hannerz 1980: 44). According to Hannerz the actual processes that created 'descript' or 'non-descript' communities were not explored in any great depth.

Improvements to theories and field methods for dealing with urban populations were needed. Barrett argues that older structural-functional models were inadequate in dealing not only with issues of the political economy, conflict and change, but also with micro-processes of actual behaviour and interpersonal relations. What was needed were developments in theoretical models that could attempt to deal with the ambiguous

complexity of lived life, rather than idealized models of how people should behave (Barrett 1996: 101). The weaknesses in structural-functional theories that Barrett describes are by no means limited to urban research, but became noted in the social sciences in general beginning in the 1960s. Part of the problem is also methodologically and theoretically dealing with large urban centres that are, "by definition, full of strangers" (Jacobs 1992 [1961]: 30). One important attempt to do so was with network analysis.

## 4.2.2 – Network Analysis

One early notable attempt to grapple with urban populations was the network analysis of Elizabeth Bott (1971 [1957]).[7] Dealing with the social networks of families and not explicitly looking at 'community,' Bott's work is important for critiquing the notion of households, neighbourhoods or cities as sociological 'wholes.' These should not be seen as reified or essentialized entities, but rather as fluid and dynamic networks that do or do not interact, and to varying degrees, with other individuals and networks. The limitations of network analysis, however, became apparent in anthropological research in the 1970s, as network analysis gradually became more fixated on quantitative statistical analyses and consequently rather sparse in providing new insights into socio-cultural processes. Barrett notes that this kind of network analysis, "conveys the unfortunate implication that methodological rigour equals theoretical insight" (Barrett 1996: 102). In a critique of Bott's work, Hannerz (1980) contends that Bott's concepts of

'loose-knit' and 'close-knit' social networks failed to adequately analyze the conditions and processes that gave rise to these qualitative distinctions (Hannerz 1980: 167).

Network analysis has illustrated some of the errors of viewing neighbourhoods, towns or cities as sociological 'wholes,' given the qualitative variability of the social networks themselves. Moreover, networks still provide a useful framework for thinking about the practice of community, as well an important reminder not to conceptualize the community as a cohesive unit. The work of Carol Stack (1997 [1974]) and Rhoda Halperin (1990; 1998) points to the importance of localized networks of material and social support among kin and friends. Many of these networks are indeed local, and in some cases highly visible. Halperin notes one interesting example of a local support network, or 'provisioning,' among immediate neighbours in the East End of Cincinnati. She writes, "When an extension cord is run from one household to another when the latter's electricity has been cut off, the link between households is very tangible" (Halperin 1998: 128). However some of these networks may not be so readily apparent, as in both Stack and Halperin's work these linkages sometimes extend across the city, or to other counties or even other states. In an age of rapid transnational migration, transportation and communication, these networks may even extend across continents. The work of Pnina Werbner (1995) on Pakistani migrants in the UK has shown that social networks do not need to be localized and may in fact extend and endure across the globe. It is important to remember that networks, which may appear to be 'communal' in nature, cannot always be assumed to be necessarily long lasting. In Stack's work, continued participation in networks of material support was dependent upon the

maintenance of reciprocal obligations; failure to reciprocate in turn meant exclusion from the 'swapping' of these goods. Vincent Walsh, in his analysis of boarding house life in St. John's, points out that relationships among the residents were often quite transitory, and were "usually organized around the meeting of immediate needs" (Walsh 1985: 61).

However an inordinate focus on the geographical extent of networks, or their sometimes utilitarian and transitory nature, taken to the extreme could render the general concept of community as quite tenuous at best or entirely meaningless. But networks are key in forcing a theory of urban community to look at the practices of community rather than the assumptions or ideals of community. It may be more productive, as Hannerz suggested above, to focus on the factors that do develop and maintain localized close-knit networks and thus urban community, in specific cases and under particular conditions. One key factor for fostering local social ties, which I noticed during my research, was that of the importance of design and communal 'space.'

### 4.2.3 – The 'Space' of Community

The importance of space to community relates primarily to the design and arrangement of buildings, the existence of local services or 'nodes' of social interaction, and how this space is utilized in daily practice. Margaret Rodman asks the question, "How well do buildings actually work to foster or discourage residential community?" (Rodman 1993: 123). In large urban areas it seems that the latter may be more often the case. Jane Jacobs (1992 [1961]), in her analysis of the architectural failings of large U.S. cities, is scathingly critical of planners who seem to forget about people. Her concerns are

not primarily about the visual aesthetics of the buildings themselves, but the seeming lack of 'space' designed to encourage social interaction. This social interaction, or "sidewalk life" as she puts it, "arises out of no mysterious qualities or talents for it in this or that type of population. It arises only when the concrete, tangible facilities it requires are present" (Jacobs 1992: 70). Nigel Rapport concurs that a shared space is, "necessary for socio-cultural process" (Rapport 2000: 88). Anyone who has lived in a large apartment complex may relate to the feeling of anonymity which results when the only contact with neighbours may be fleeting, chance encounters in elevators or hallways. By contrast, the space of rural towns (or some cities) may be more productive in terms of fostering social ties. Gerald Pocius' work in a rural Newfoundland town pays particular attention to how space is utilized in terms of function, gender and kinship, resulting in the continuation of community 'linkages' through daily interaction (Pocius 1991: 272).

A central feature of the design of the Froude project is the arrangement of the row houses essentially into a large square looking onto a central field, which on the western end is bisected by the Cashin Avenue Extension (see Appendix C). When I first saw this I was reminded of the military barracks I had encountered in my own past. Due to this design, whether I was traversing the field on my way to the Centre or playing with the children in the park, I always had the sensation of being observed. Occasionally I could see people watching out of windows or from doorways and porches. These experiences reminded me of some of Michel Foucault's work. Foucault (1995 [1977]) writes that surveillance, particularly an internalized form of surveillance, is one of the key modern

techniques of power. One of the most effective in terms of architectural design is that of a revised form of the military camp. He writes,

> The camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility. For a long time this model of the camp or at least its underlying principle was found in urban development, in the construction of working-class housing estates, hospitals, asylums, prisons, schools: the spatial 'nesting' of hierarchized surveillance (Foucault 1995: 172).

Patrick Smith offers an interesting example from Japan whereby urban (as well as rural village) planning and neighbourly surveillance were made explicit. In Japan, under the Tokugawa Shogunate rule (1603-1867), villages were arranged into a spying network of five households, whereby each household was responsible for monitoring the behaviour of the four neighbouring households (Smith 1997: 53). Smith reports that in contemporary Japan there exists an "ersatz nostalgia," for this historical period, as the oppressive nature of this surveillance network appears to have been forgotten. In its place a discourse of 'community' has emerged in which the saying, "Three houses in front, one on either side" is invoked "as a measure of community spirit" (ibid: 55), but which glosses over its insidious history.

I have no information about whether the original planners' intent at Froude was the reduction of crime or to enforce control through the mutual surveillance by residents. After all, when the Westmount/Froude project was first built, the original Widows' Mansions in the centre of the now existing central field area would have blocked a great deal of the view. Perhaps the decision to build around the Widows Mansions was simply the most economical way to fit in as many units as possible on that parcel of land. Furthermore, the kind of surveillance of daily activities that the space of the area affords

actually seems to be surprisingly ineffective in preventing vandalism or crime. The drug dealing persisted for years in plain view of the residents, and this surveillance did not seem to prevent a spray painting binge that some of the local teens went on just prior to my research beginning, or an incident of vandalism to the park towards the end of the summer. I spent one Monday morning with Bill picking up rocks this same group had strewn all over the road in front of the Centre. We also had to pick up pieces of shattered black vinyl records that these young teens had broken against the Centre. A resident passed by while we were doing this and commented that she had witnessed the entire incident, but again this observation and common knowledge as to who was responsible failed to act as a deterrent.

However, the design of the project also appears to contribute a great deal to a sense of intimacy and a network of localized social ties. The centre field and the park were key public spaces of the estate. Despite the fact that the park was sometimes vandalized, the sand littered with debris, and that the young teens had an annoying predilection for wrapping the swings around the upper bars and out of the reach of younger children, the park appeared to be heavily used by parents and their children and the staff of the summer program. There was also small asphalt basketball court with a net-less hoop that was used quite extensively, though it was torn up during the last week of my fieldwork as part of the ongoing concourse project. One mother told me that she valued her location in that it afforded her a great view of the park from which she could keep an eye on her young son, which was a sentiment that I heard echoed on numerous occasions.

The arrangement of the project into a square of inward facing rows of houses, rather than in a vertical line along a street, also appears to be conducive to neighbourly interaction. During an interview in May, Nancy commented on this to me, also touching on a key point I will follow up later with regard to isolation.

> Starting pretty soon now, with the warm weather, you will see people sitting on their doorsteps, people going around, neighbours to neighbours sitting around, talking. You won't see that if you got infill housing….you're living by yourself.

During the summer months I did find her description to be generally accurate. Neighbours chatting in doorways or groups of men working on cars were a common sight. On occasion, the area would also appear oddly vacant and I was never certain why. One very nice day in late August, Keith and myself were standing on the porch of the Centre and talking. At almost the same time we exclaimed, "Where is everybody?", as there was not a soul to be seen. However this was an anomaly as some residents were almost always constant fixtures on their porches. One older resident was almost without fail sitting on a chair on his porch in the summer afternoons. Whenever I would pass by on my way home he would greet me with a nod of his head, but with the unique sideways twitch for a nod that I have only seen in Newfoundland.

All of my interviews were conducted with residents who lived on Froude, Vimy or Vickers Avenues but no one from Cashin. It was as common to hear assertions that they really did not know anyone on Cashin, as it was common to hear assertions that they knew everyone in the community. This row of houses was separated from the rest of the project by a busy road. I was not sure if this separated these residents from active

participation in neighbourhood life, as I knew of a few children and adults who participated at the Centre who lived there. However, what was generally true in these interviews was the stressed importance of immediate neighbours, especially in terms of safety and support. Some analysts of networks refer to these as 'multiplex relationships' in that interaction goes beyond mere courtesies but, over time and with protracted socialization, develop into relationships that offer reciprocal emotional or material support (Sokolovsky and Cohen 1978: 326; Rogers and Vertovec 1995: 17). Laura, a local resident, illustrated this to me in an interview though an anecdote.

> We do look out for one another. I'll tell ya, I had an incident, you can use this now, I had an incident where the window had broken and I had sliced up my hand. In a matter of me getting a scream out, and my back door was open, I had five neighbours in my house, in my kitchen, checking my hand, you know for glass still in the cut, running it under cold water, wrapping it, phoning Housing and letting them know the window had broken, getting them in, getting the glass repaired. I didn't have to do a thing. I didn't have to turn my hand. And I had neighbours taking me down to the hospital to get my hand stitched. So like I said they were there [*slaps her hands together*] like that. They look out for you.

The design of the project contributes to the fostering of a local sense of intimacy through neighbourly interaction, as it appears to be conducive to social interaction among the residents. However the 'surveillance,' which the structural design of the estate seems to allow, also appears to contribute to an inordinate level of gossiping and knowledge about one's neighbours. During one interview I asked Kate what she disliked the most about the area and she quickly replied, "nosy neighbours." She explained that she found the gossip almost suffocating at times and admitted, "I'm honestly thinking about

moving…moving out of the area altogether." Earlier in the summer, another resident, Jane, had alluded to this sense of stifling observation, so I made a note to follow up on this theme in further interviews. She also made reference to something else which piqued my interest. Jane described a scenario in order to articulate the extent to which gossiping and observation can become inordinately intrusive. She said if one were to come home with an excessive number of grocery bags that this in itself would become a subject of speculation and gossip. Given the high percentage of households with fixed incomes in the area, any excessive purchases may arouse notice. She also added that if she were to buy a large ticket item, such as a TV, she would only return with it at night to try to avoid attracting attention.

Without identifying the original teller, I saved the 'grocery bag' and 'TV' anecdotes so I could repeat them to other residents in interviews in order to see whether or not they shared Jane's views about the monitoring of purchases. When I described the scenario of the grocery bags to Nancy I noted a slight glimmer of recognition in her eyes. Without pausing I then moved on to the story about the TV, to which she frowned and waved a dismissive hand saying that she never heard tell of such thing. I later tried the grocery bag story with Kate. Her eyes also lit up with recognition and amusement and before I could finish she cut me off saying, "They'd know…what you got and how much you spent. They know who goes in and who goes out and what time they left." Her use of the term 'They' could have been the community at large, but in the same interview she had also mentioned a specific block of homes in the project around one parking lot which was perceived to be an endemic source for gossip. She also agreed with the TV story,

115

responding with a TV anecdote of her own. When she bought a TV, she had it delivered to her home. Before the delivery person had a chance to knock on her door, her sister telephoned to tell her that her TV had arrived. John agreed that gossip can be a problem, as it can be a hazard for his position as the Centre's manager, but he also cautioned me that some of the residents who were the biggest critics of the local gossiping are sometimes also the most involved in the practice.

I was intrigued with the earlier passing reference that one resident had made to a specific block that was associated with excessive gossip. This suggested to me that the project was spatially subdivided, at least by some residents, and that there were communal spaces that were particularly conducive to social interaction. Tessa Cubitt contends that in order to understand the development of intimate or close-knit social networks, one should examine how nodes or "knots" (Cubitt 1973: 68) of social networks tend to cluster around specific community spaces. These nuclei of social interaction can be well-designed streets, community centres, markets, religious institutions, and other local organizations and spaces. One prominent site of social interaction at the Froude project was the Centre.

However a community 'centre' does not have to be a building specifically constructed or designed for that purpose, and the lack of such a building does not seem to preclude the development of a community centre in the less strict sense of the term. Jillian Gould, in her analysis of the role of candy stores in Jewish communities in New York City, argues that they did play the role of community centre in the past.

> If today most people consider candy stores to be nowhere
> other than places to buy candy, sixty years ago they were

> an important element in the social fabric of many neighborhoods. These establishments were gathering places, meeting spaces, centers of the community. The store was the local communication center, offering telephone service, the newsstand, and a meeting place (Gould 2002: 204).

Rhoda Halperin points out that a local gas station fulfilled the role of community centre in an East Cincinnati community. This gas station, through its locally prominent owner, "provided everything from [car] parts to gossip to psychotherapy" (Halperin 1998: 30). Karen Szala notes that a local restaurant was an important "rendezvous" point, especially for purposes of courtship, in the outport village in Newfoundland in which she worked (Szala 1978: 74). A space that fosters the development and continuation of social ties does not even have to be a building. Barbara Myerhoff points out that the benches near a boardwalk served as a sort of a, "village plaza, a focus of protracted intense sociability" (Myerhoff 1978: 5) for the urban Jewish seniors with whom she worked.

Even if the Centre had no staff or programs organized by them, in a sense was nothing but a hall, it would still perform an important local function. The NEA had seventeen members at the time of my research, and it would have been exceedingly difficult for them to function without a meeting place, not to speak of the thirty or forty plus they can attract to their fundraising bingo night. The bingo, held on Wednesday evenings and Sundays, itself appears to be an important local institution, as most people I spoke to told me that if they were not otherwise involved in the NEA or even with the Centre, that the bingo was the only thing they participated in. This also attracts some seniors from a nearby retirement home. As well, in a back room at the Centre some of the local women will play cards during the bingo sessions and, as one told me, it was an

important time to "let their hair down." The local women have a self-admitted reputation for being loud and boisterous when they get together and I sorely wanted to participate at least in one card game. I was almost certain that the core NEA members would have granted my request, but I had a sense that my presence would have impinged on an important personal time for them, so I decided not to. When I asked Kate at the beginning of the research if I could attend a bingo game she seemed to be ambivalent about my request, so I did not raise the subject again. However I was able to play bingo with them at an off-site lodge near Bay Roberts, as part of an NEA organized weekend retreat. Combining the freedom away from home and children, and the addition of alcohol[8] to the mix, it was a memorable event and hair was certainly let down. The Centre is also available for rent at a reasonable cost for functions after hours. One morning when I arrived at the Centre, I noticed Kate taking down the decorations from a baby shower which was held the night before.

The Centre also acts as a nucleus of social interaction through its programming. Many of the programs, as discussed earlier, are geared towards promoting social interaction. Indirectly many of the programs also promoted socializing among the local parents even if the core programs themselves are aimed at children and youth. For example, after the preschool sessions I attended, the parents waited in the front room to collect their children and they would talk amongst themselves about various issues. Some parents became actively involved in special events such as the preschool graduation and the summer junior softball league. Two local men were involved in coaching the team and the large turn out of parents and supporters for the local games played at Mundy

Pond was impressive. Without these kinds of events this additional socializing and cooperation may not occur. This was perhaps most prominent in the events hosted by the NEA and the Centre, such as community clean-ups, the annual block party, and various barbeques held outside of the Centre.

The cul-de-sac outside of the Centre seemed to be an important communal space for local social interaction. Traffic is minimal enabling the children and youth to use the road area outside of the Centre as an impromptu playground, especially for ball hockey and for drawing with road chalk. It is also an ideal space for communal barbeques, such as the one organized by the NEA after a community cleanup. There was a significant turnout for this event and across the road one of the residents put stereo speakers up to a window to provide music. I commented on the turnout to one of the NEA members, as I saw some faces I had never seen before and there were far more at the barbeque than at the cleanup. She scoffed that a lot of them did avoid the cleanup, but when they see food being offered, "they come a runnin."

From my vantage point on the porch of the Centre I could see a great majority make their way from their homes to the barbeque. They all seemed to be from the project itself. Despite the presence of food and a crowd, as well as loud music, there almost seemed to be an invisible barrier between the private and public housing area, as I did not notice any of the residents of the nearby private housing join in, even though some were watching. However this barrier was crossed at one point during the barbeque. Froude Avenue stops at a dead end in front of the Centre, so other than one private home's driveway, there is no reason for traffic aside from Centre business. During the barbeque a

carload of teens pulled up. I did not recognize any of them and they sat in the car for a few moments without moving. I thought that maybe they were lost. The driver of the car reversed with a wry grin and drove away. Suddenly I realized that they might have been looking for drugs and, unaware of the busts, perhaps were not expecting to see a community barbecue. Keith and a few other residents noticed and I heard some mutter to one another, but I could not hear what was said. I quietly asked Keith when I had the chance, "Is that what I think it was?" Without asking for clarification he nodded.

The Centre, especially when co-hosting special events such as the barbeque with the NEA, is effective in acting as a node of social interaction. However, I do not want to give the impression that it was a 'community' event in terms of full or near full participation. Given that there are over three hundred residents, approximately no more than one quarter appeared to turn out for these kinds of events, at least when I was present. During the barbeques I attended I noticed some residents across the street, ranging from children to seniors, peering out of their windows on occasion, but they never took part. I also do not want to give the impression that the Centre was a constant hub of social activity. After the breakfast program, and before the end of the school day, the Centre was often very quiet. This was a concern that Bill voiced to me on several occasions, including during one interview.

> Let's look at the reality…we're open for an hour for breakfast from 7:30 until 8:30, so basically then we're closed. The community centre, this block that we call the community centre, is closed, except for the portion right here, which is the preschool…and upstairs I'm in my office, and [John] is in his office, and [Keith] is in the office downstairs…but it in terms of programming activity,

> from 8:30 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon there is
> nothing. When Friday comes, there is nothing.

Bill is quite right that in terms of programming not much really goes on during the day, but I feel that it is inaccurate in terms of assessing the Centre as a node of social interaction. This assessment also ignores other peripheral activities. Rarely could I talk to John without being interrupted by a phone call or a knock on his door. During one interview, John's mediation was sought in helping to resolve a local dispute, another time it was to help an elderly resident track down a phone number. These are not examples of programming, but they are examples of the minutiae of daily minor activities at the Centre which are easy to miss. The material resources at the Centre are also important. Often I would find people stopping by to use the computer, ask to use the fax machine or to check the job board. When the Centre's computers were stolen, Nancy told me that the loss was compounded by the fact that there were many resumés on the hard drives made by the local residents.

Space is a critical aspect of 'community' in terms of whether the design or layout of the buildings contribute to or detract from protracted social interaction, and hence the development and maintenance of local ties. Of particular importance are community centres, in the broader sense of the term, as local nodes of social life. However, as I mentioned above in regards to the barbeque outside of the Centre, this site of social interaction did not appear to extend to the nearby residents of the private housing area. I wondered if this was the result if the stigmatization of public housing and whether this acted to exclude the Froude project from the surrounding area. During one Board

meeting, Nancy referred to the project as a "community within a community," so I became curious as to what this demarcation was based upon.

### 4.2.4 – Community, Boundaries and Stigma

Anthony Cohen (1985) argues that community is a relational concept, that boundaries play a crucial role. The very notion of a 'group' is dependent upon the ability to distinguish itself from the 'Other,' which requires a boundary of sorts. Cohen writes that these boundaries are largely symbolic, "existing in the minds of their beholders" (Cohen 1985: 12) and that this, "consciousness of community is, then, encapsulated in perception of its boundaries" (ibid: 13). Fredrik Barth (1969), whose work Cohen had drawn from, makes the important point (referring explicitly to ethnic groups) that not only are social boundaries permeable, but that "boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them" (Barth 1969: 9). These boundaries, in terms of urban community, are not always easy for outsiders to distinguish, especially in large urban centres. Theodore Bestor, in his analysis of neighbourhoods in Tokyo, comments that even though some of these neighbourhoods he encountered were, "well organized and cohesive," they were also "almost invisible to the casual observer" (Bestor 1989: 1). In regards to the Froude Avenue project, the symbolic boundary between itself and the surrounding private housing has a material basis and is etched into the physical nature of the buildings themselves.

Based on my sense of the physical appearance of the Froude area it is clear that, as with other housing estates built in post World War Two Canadian cities, the original

planners did not seem to place a primary concern on the integration of the project in to the local private housing. I had first visited the area to meet with John at the Centre in March of 2001. I consulted a map of St. John's for directions, and no sooner had I rounded the corner on to the Cashin Avenue Extension then I exclaimed to myself, "That's a housing project." I have since asked myself why I had thought this and realized that the estate seemed to match almost all of the stereotypical images I had of social housing.

The first noticeable attribute is the collection of uniform row houses with little individual variability. Upon closer inspection I realized that this was not entirely accurate, as some of the exteriors of the homes and lawns were individualized with flower gardens or other ornamentation. However the buildings are almost structurally identical, with few minor variations, whereas the surrounding private housing generally consists of detached or semi-detached houses with a high degree of structural variability. As discussed earlier, both the Widows' Mansions and Westmount were designed as transitional housing, so the individualistic attributes that private home owners cherish may not have been an overriding concern for the planners. Another element which contributes to the look of the area as being something distinct from the surrounding private housing is the colour scheme for the exteriors. The units are painted alternately in an array of yellows, peaches, oranges, and a green which I can only describe as institutional. The colour scheme was a common complaint that I heard from some residents when we talked of the area. I had pondered the choice of colours, musing that it was perhaps motivated by cost or an attempt to make the project appear 'festive' and

break up the visual homogeneity with a variety of colours.[9] Though the colour scheme of the project may not be an extremely significant factor, it does seem to contribute to further marking the project as distinct.

There is also a certain starkness to the visual appearance of the project that was not lost on a newspaper reporter writing a story on the area. Though the term 'The Blocks' may have originally pertained to the (since torn down) Widows' Mansions, he seemed to feel that it was still a fitting epithet when applied to the Froude project. He commented, "There are no smooth curves in this neighbourhood. No wonder it's called The Blocks" (Gullage 1991: 17). Judging by older photographs of the area I have seen, the harshness of the project today is somewhat softened by the replacement of the older flat roofs with sloping roofs in the past decade, though the term 'The Blocks' still remains in use, both in the media and by some residents. The criticisms of the uniformity of social housing projects and their potential exclusionary nature, as well as other issues such as those raised in the *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* (see p. 32), were not lost on the NLHC. In a 1985 issue of the *Housing News* two photographs of what were then recent infill units were displayed on the front page. Both are unique and to my eye indistinguishable from private housing. The caption reads,

> As can be seen from the photographs shown here, these units represent a new initiative by both this Corporation and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation of integrating low-density public housing into existing built-up areas. (NLHC: 1985a).

124

In a later 1990 news release, the NLHC indicated that it wanted to leave the old designs like that of Froude Avenue in the past, concerned with issues of isolation and stigmatization. The NLHC chair at the time commented, "People remember old row housing of years gone by and base their impressions on that" (NLHC 1990: 4).

Even though the visual appearance of the Froude project may mark it as distinct from the surrounding private housing, I do not think that this alone is the major cause for its reputation or stigmatization. I reflected upon the negative reactions by some friends and families of some summer counsellors, as they were relayed to me, when the counsellors informed them that they intended to take a position at the Centre. I also thought of the disparaging comments made towards the project's residents by some surrounding locals, which were described in House's work (1964). I became convinced that this stigmatization of social housing in general plays a significant role in reinforcing the project's boundaries.

All of the residents I spoke to said that they had no dealings with any of the immediate surrounding private housing residents. Several staff members also told me that the children of the project tend to socialize amongst themselves and do not often stray from the area. I could appreciate the staff's assertion to an extent that the area was somewhat insular, but the estate's social isolation does not appear to be complete. One resident from the private housing on Froude Avenue told me that he got to know some of the people from the project and, before he moved out of the area, used to play some local pickup sports with some of them. I knew that not all of the children and youths who were registered for the summer program at the Centre were from the project itself so, with the

permission of the staff, I decided to check the registration records. I checked the addresses that were given for each child and found that 41 of the total of 62 registered (as of July 18, 2001) had an address which was within the estate. Moreover, 49 of 62 cited someone within the project as someone to contact in case of emergency. Most of the addresses that were not in the Froude project appeared to be fairly close by, many within walking distance. Keith pointed out that almost all of the ones who were registered, but did not have an address in the project, were either related to someone who did, or were former residents themselves.

I was a little surprised that the overwhelming majority of children who were involved in the summer program either lived in the project or were connected to it in someway. The staff told me that the fees for the Centre's summer program are significantly less than those charged by other organizations, such as the St. John's Boys and Girls' Club, and some outsiders, who were connected to the Centre, told me that the Centre and its programs have a good reputation. Given these factors, I would have thought that more children from the general area would be involved. A former summer coordinator told me that the drug issue played a major role in terms of outside parents' unwillingness to enrol their children, but admitted that the stereotypes of the area and the stigma revolving around public housing compounded the issue of outsider non-participation. This seems to create a symbolic boundary for the project that many outsiders do not want to breach. However, the issue of the stigma of social housing and income support runs far deeper than the issue of drugs or the reputation of the Froude

project in specific. I will now examine the historical background of this stigma in order to help to understand the nature of this symbolic boundary.

The stigmatization of those dependent on social assistance in many industrialized nations is partly related to the perceived voluntary non-participation by the poor in the labour market. This arises in part from a long history of concern over separating the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, and in pre-Confederation Newfoundland (and in many ways still today) a concern over 'dependency' and 'self-reliance' (see Cullum 1995). Generally speaking there is a tolerance for those who are perceived to be unable to provide for themselves, such as the physically and mentally challenged, but this tolerance ends with 'able-bodied adults.' The stated fear was the creation of an underclass of professional paupers (Polanyi 1957: 88) in that 'generous' benefits would present an alternative to employment, thus undercutting the incentive to work.[10] The workhouse test was one means to prevent this. The workhouse was a common feature of eighteenth, nineteenth and even early twentieth century Western European and North American societies. They were designed partly as a disincentive for relief seekers, partly as punishment, and partly as a form of re-education, whereby the poor would supposedly learn the values of thrift and self-discipline (Guest 1997: 5). These workhouses were intentionally made into a "place of horror" (Polanyi 1957: 102) and they often indiscriminately housed all the segments of society which were stigmatized and deemed to be a problem (Guest 1997: 13).

The shift towards interventionist state policies, and the recognition of the structural rather than moral factors behind unemployment after the Depression in the

1930s, led towards the development of a more comprehensive social welfare infrastructure. The workhouses were now a thing of the past, but other means were already in place to dissuade dependency on the state. The stigmatization of the relief process itself was one means to accomplish this. Guest argues that even when the rudiments of the social welfare state were being constructed in the early twentieth century, the stigma of applying remained.

> "Applying for relief," as it was commonly referred to, was a demeaning and stigmatizing experience because it was widely regarded as clear evidence of personal incompetence and failure. Any help given was of a gratuitous nature, there being no thought of a right to assistance (Guest 1997: 3).

However to avoid portraying this stigmatization of social welfare recipients solely as a tool constructed by policy makers to dissuade relief seekers, I feel that it may be more the case that this stigma is either intertwined with, or supported by, previously existing cultural values. Sheldon Garon contends that the writings of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus and others of their ilk were popular with the elites of the late nineteenth century Japan, "because they squared with indigenous beliefs that praised self-reliance and criticized official relief for fostering indolence" (Garon 1997: 36). In a similar way, the *homo economicus* (Wilk 1996: 14) of liberal and neo-liberal myth in European and North American societies also did not arise in a cultural vacuum. Much of the classic economic literature was informed by Protestant moralizing about the sources of poverty in which success was, "evidence of godly living and of God's grace" (Guest 1997: 17).

Given that Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest levels of unemployment among the Canadian provinces, I had expected that there would not be

quite the same level of stigmatization around the issues of social assistance that I had previously encountered in Ontario. I quickly found the opposite to be true based on research, media sources and general discussions with Newfoundlanders. I am still uncertain as to whether this heightened stigma is the result of the broad historical forces noted above, or unique cultural forms particular to Newfoundland and rooted in its history, or a mixture of both.

The stigmatization of those dependent on social assistance in Newfoundland and Labrador appears to be quite significant, often resulting in a segment of society which is marginalized and isolated. This appears to be particularly prevalent in rural, outport Newfoundland in which dependency clashes with the cultural ideal of self-reliance. Peter Neary describes this outport ideal.

> The outport ideal was the self-sustaining, independent (though in reality, highly dependent) commodity producer...where a tradition of self-help was deeply ingrained (Neary 1993: 14).

Many fishers in outports in pre-Confederation Newfoundland engaged in an essentially cashless 'truck' or 'merchant' system, in which catches were exchanged with merchants for the previous season's supplies. They were dependent on the merchants for their subsistence and this system also had the effect of preventing the accumulation of capital in the hands of fishers (Sider 1986: 23). In contemporary times, Maura Hanrahan argues that for seasonal fishers unemployment insurance[11] was used as seasonal "income supplementation" (Hanrahan 1993: 258) and its necessity for that particular industry was recognized. However Cato Wadel (1985), in his ethnographic account of unemployment and stigma in an outport community in the late 1960s, contends that a distinction was

drawn between seasonal unemployment benefits and welfare. Those who were dependent on year-round assistance were harshly judged and socially ostracized. Wadel notes that there seemed to be a fear among the employed that the welfare recipients would somehow 'sway' others to their way of life, resulting in a generational cycle of dependency endemic to specific families and even whole neighbourhoods (Wadel 1985: 90).

The stigma towards social assistance recipients does not seem to be restricted to rural Newfoundland. Annette Clarke (1986), in her report on unemployment in St. John's, notes some similar experiences of isolation and stigmatization faced by the unemployed in St. John's. One research participant described to her a state of almost immobilization that he felt in regards to his perceived negative assessment by neighbours.

> I got to the stage that for me to go outside, I had the feeling that everyone was staring at me. Especially people in the neighbourhood. You feel they're saying, 'Jesus, he hasn't done a god damn thing all year, he must be on welfare'. That gets to you. It got to me. I didn't want to go out of the house (Clarke 1986: 82).

The residents of demarcated social housing often suffer the same kind of stigmatization, as such housing is seen by many as a form of dependency itself. Clarke argues that private home ownership is, "something approaching a cultural imperative in Newfoundland" (Clarke 1986: 7); therefore, dependency on the state for a means of living and for housing do not appear to be significantly distinguished. Indeed, residing in housing and being dependent on social assistance are often equated, as a low income is one of the requirements for Housing residency. The majority of the residents in the Froude project were in fact receiving some form of social assistance (see Appendix B);

130

however, it became clear to me during the course of my research that the personal circumstances of the residents of the Froude project varied greatly. For some of these individuals the dependency was based on age or physical liabilities, while for others full employment was precluded by a lack of training or simple availability of employment, while some did have permanent, stable employment. I was made aware of a few cases where certain individuals may have been manipulating the system to their own advantage, however I did not get the sense that this was as endemic as some outsiders might be led to believe.

Despite the variety of circumstances and differences among the residents of the Froude project, in the media, and perhaps in the public at large, the stigma and essentializing discourse of 'public housing' appears to remain pervasive. Helen Porter refers to this as the, "eternal stereotype" (Porter 1987: 7), alluding to the deeply entrenched view that poverty is the result of incompetence and moral deficiency. Writing specifically of public housing residents in Newfoundland she explains that,

> Many of them…feel keenly the stigma of living in "housing." I'd like to believe that this is a self-imposed stigma, but I've seen so much lip-curling and nose-turning-up when housing tenants are mentioned that I have to conclude otherwise (ibid).

I was hesitant to raise the topic of social assistance and this stigma with the Froude residents that I talked to, fearing that it was a sensitive issue. I felt it was an important one and when dealing with social housing it is an unavoidable issue. Over three quarters of the residents are dependent on some form of social assistance, even though this figure collapses a variety of forms of assistance, such as disability, employment

insurance, pensions and welfare. It was so prevalent that within the context of the project it felt very much like a non-issue, despite the fact that in some way it touched the lives of many of the residents. I suspect very much that the almost paranoid individual afraid to leave his home in Clarke's work cited above lived in a mixed housing area. The kind of harsh judgement of dependency articulated by Clarke's informant would not make very much sense within the context of the Froude project. I very rarely heard the issue discussed, except for some allusions to a difficulty someone was having with Housing or some other bureaucracy.

One of the few times in which stigma was explicitly discussed in my presence was with regard to the issue of resumés. The scenario is said to be that a resumé with the address given of one of the streets within the Froude project is almost an automatic guarantee that the resumé would be rejected. I first heard this at the Centre from Keith. He did not know to what extent this was true, but it was something that he heard from some of the local residents over the time he spent at the Centre. I raised this issue with some of the senior NEA members during a group interview, and it was soundly rejected.

> Nancy : I don't buy it for a minute because I know…my
> daughter lived right there on [*street number*]
> Froude Avenue…and she's always got a fairly
> good job…and she uses my address all the time.
> Doreen : …and the same with my son.
> Laura : …and the same with my son. He just put down
> where he was from…there's been times when
> people have said, "Oh, you're from The Blocks?"
> and [*her son*] has said, "Yes, and I'm proud of
> it…I'm proud of where I'm from and where I lives
> to now."[12]

132

As well, since there are residents of the area who do work, I suspect the rejection of resumés by local applicants has been exaggerated. However, the women cited above were aware of these stereotypes and combating them is one of the NEA's goals. In a way, these kinds of negative stereotypes may have some positive implications in terms of serving as a rallying point for the participation by some of the residents in a local advocacy organization such as the NEA. Living in a marked neighbourhood and dealing with stigmatization may be seen, in a sense, as a shared experience or perhaps even a component of communal identity, even if it is externally ascribed and internally challenged by the residents themselves. Another key aspect of community in terms of the commonality of experience, which is particular to public housing, is the impact of housing policy; in this case the polices and conditions as set forth by the NLHC.

### 4.2.5 – Kinship Networks and the Placement Procedure

Unlike other urban neighbourhoods whose demographic characteristics may be influenced by a host of factors, who lives in the Froude Avenue social housing area is determined by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation policy, administered on a case-by-case basis by Housing Administration Officers and TROs (Tenant Relations Officers).[13] All of the residents of the Froude Avenue project are dependent on the NLHC for their housing and they share the same agency as their landlord. Combined with the shared experiences of dealing with various Housing and social assistance bureaucracies, and the stigma of living in a social housing project, this creates a marked level of commonality of experience, circumstances and issues among the residents.

One of the common complaints that I first encountered in my research was the bitter feelings of some of the residents towards the bureaucrats of Housing and other social agencies. Generally the TRO for the area, as a warm and in my opinion caring individual, was exempt from this criticism. One key research participant told me, which others echoed, that the TRO herself was "ok" but that in general Housing was "a pain." The criticisms were often directed towards the maintenance staff, who have a reputation for being lazy and hostile towards the residents, or the 'faceless' bureaucrats at Housing that they have to deal with on the phone. During one Board meeting Nancy described the typical scenario that a resident has to go through, presumably for the TRO's benefit. Should a resident call for a request or a complaint, the Housing official will often ask "Who did you talk to?" The difficulty which arises is that oftentimes when a resident asks for a name they will be rebuffed with, "We don't give out that information," thus placing the resident in a contradictory bind. When I first heard these complaints I was reminded of Herzfeld's analysis of bureaucracies in which the strategy of both bureaucrats and clients, "is to reify bureaucracy as "the system". It thus becomes an impersonal force on which all manner of individual and collective misfortunes may be blamed" (Herzfeld 1992: 145). However real or exaggerated this 'red tape' is, all of the residents share in dealing with the same agency and its rules, regulations or procedures. The pivotal process in terms of residential patterns is the NLHC's placement procedure.

The TRO for the area described the placement process to me in an interview. There is a point system used by the NLHC to initially assess whether the individual or family qualifies for social housing in general. The basic criterion is whether the potential

'client' is paying in excess of thirty percent of their income towards housing. Other factors include being under or over housed,[14] location to amenities, condition of existing housing, and health issues. Once the basic conditions for eligibility for social housing have been met, then the placement procedure may begin.

I wondered whether kinship played a role in the placement process. It was quite early in my fieldwork that I came to appreciate the extensive kin networks in the area. However, I was surprised to find that one key research participant was one of five sisters living in the project and that her eldest daughter also lived there with her own two daughters. I knew two of the sisters quite well, a third on sight, the fourth seemed to be somewhat reclusive and I never met her, and the fifth I never encountered or if I did I was not introduced. Other residents I talked to did not have as extensive a local kin network within the project, however, it was still generally confusing for me to sort out who was related to whom, particularly in terms of cousins and nieces and nephews. In some cases, the use of kinship terms seemed to be rare; for example, Kate was often simply referred to as "Kate" by her young nieces and nephews, which made these relationships less immediately apparent to me. In terms of social and material support, I think it would appear to be a mistake to assume that local kinship ties are necessarily more close-knit than that between friends and neighbours who are not related. David Spangler, in his work on a public housing project in Memphis, noted that it is more illuminating to focus on localized networks of aid and support rather than on strict biological kinship. He contends that these networks of "fictive kin" (Spangler 2000: 118), though somewhat more unstable and mutable than genealogical networks, still play an important role in the

community he studied. However, I take some exception with the implications evoked by the term 'fictive kin' as it suggests a relationship that is somehow less real, tangible or important than biological kinship. I prefer the distinction that Pierre Bourdieu (1997 [1977]) draws between 'official' and 'practical' kin whereby the kinship charts that anthropologists are fond of constructing merely state official genealogies, whereas the observations of the minutiae of everyday life may trace kinship in practice (Bourdieu 1997: 33-38). Rhoda Halperin points out that these critical networks of localized aid, which she terms 'householding' or 'provisioning,'[15] operated, to varying degrees, beyond that of immediate kin to encompass un-related neighbours in the immediate vicinity (Halperin 1998: 128). Similar to Stack's (1997) concept of 'swapping,' these relationships of 'fictive,' or 'practical' kin are dependent upon the continued material reciprocity of the involved parties for their continuance, but they have the ability to exhibit very kin-like qualities.

During my research I commented on the existence of extensive kinship networks in the area to Nancy, President of the NEA, and she agreed saying, "all social housing is like that." I had initially surmised that Housing attempted to place kin with kin, but this did not turn out to be the case. I asked Kate, the key local volunteer at the Centre, early in the research why she chose the Froude Avenue project. She smirked at my naiveté and told me that you do not "choose," one can merely state a preference and the final decision rests with the NLHC. Either you "take what you can get" in terms of availability or your name is returned to the waiting list. The TRO for the area confirmed for me that it is not NLHC policy to explicitly strive to place kin with kin. However, this can be a factor that

influences a client's preference for an area. She indicated to me that there is also a general preference, if one is seeking social housing in the city, for placement near where one was raised. She relayed to me,

> In St. John's…I've noticed more so than in other areas…is that families tend to want to stay in their own communities…so if you are from the Froude area, and were raised in that area, you want to stay in that community…so we have a number of housing concentrations that individuals would align themselves to because they have family there.

As I came to learn more of some of the residents' histories and circumstances I did not find the above generalization to be entirely accurate. Two research participants told me that they were raised in other social housing concentrations in the city. I knew of another family, whose daughter participated at the Centre, who were trying to relocate to Froude. Their 'alignment' to their previous communities for these individuals seemed tenuous as they requested to move to Froude, generally citing its positive reputation and proximity to amenities. A resident who had grown up in another Housing concentration told me that she actually had to "fight" to get relocated to Froude. For others who lived in outlying areas of the city, they told me that they had never heard of Froude before and they simply took whatever came available. If Froude in specific was not cited as a primary choice, then the requirement of a location in central or west St. John's was. Overall, the residency in the area seemed to be less primarily due to design and more dependent upon the availability of vacant units at a given time, though one cannot rule out the previous existence of kin or the location to services as influencing choices.

The extensive concentrations of kin and friends appeared to be intertwined with the Centre and some of its programs. I was impressed with the intimate environment that I observed during the breakfast program. Sometimes a successful test or school project would be praised or passed around by Kate or Doreen, sometimes Bill would be there to encourage the children and youth, or they would just talk amongst themselves. A few intimacies that caught my eye were Kate combing a little girl's wet hair and retying her ponytail and Doreen knowing who did and did not like crusts on their toast and other intricate details of their preferences. However there was one key detail that I did not know at the time. As I previously noted in Chapter Three, Bill was concerned in May as to the falling attendance at the breakfast program. He had Kate keep track of attendance by people's names, which she would dutifully mark on a sheet on the kitchen bulletin board. In May, my knowledge of names and circumstances was limited. By the start of the new school year the attendance at the breakfast program was up significantly and I had gained familiarity with the identity of many residents. I glanced at the attendance sheet and I was pleased that almost without exception I could place a name with a face and identify relationships. As I read through the names I suddenly realized that the stable core of the attendance at the breakfast program was largely Doreen and Kate's children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews and close friends. Cynically, one could view the situation as one where these two ladies were using the Centre to feed their own; yet, they were also volunteering their time to cook breakfast for others who participated and I never got the sense that anyone was not welcome. Aside from the Centre, these networks of kin and friends also seem to have become intertwined with other local institutions,

such as the NEA and the Board. Some implications which arise from this situation will be discussed in the next chapter.

In this chapter I have discussed the concept of 'community' as a mobilizing metaphor and a theoretical construct. To invoke community as a metaphor is quite different from using the term as a theory pertaining to the analysis of social life in an urban residential area. Intertwined throughout this discussion I have used examples from my fieldwork to highlight 'community' as a practice. Approaching community as a 'practice' is important in order to challenge cases in which the metaphor of community is used as a basis for policy decisions. However, mobilizing metaphors and other essentialist discourses of 'community,' do not solely belong to the domain of the powerful and they may be invoked as a tool of advocacy. A discussion of the 'empowerment' of the tenants of the Froude project, through their participation in the NEA, the Centre, and programs designed to teach the skills of advocacy, will be the focus of the next chapter.

## Endnotes to Chapter Four

[1] The Jubilee Guilds of Newfoundland and Labrador formed in 1935 and were comprised primarily of upper-class women whose mandate was to 'improve' the conditions of rural, outport life in the province through the teaching of domestic skills geared towards subsistence rather than economic profit. For further insights on the implications of these organizations see Cullum (1995).

[2] The CSC is a non-profit, voluntary organization. The CSC's mission statement is, "to encourage citizen engagement, to promote the integration of social and economic development and to provide leadership in shaping public policies." http://envision.ca/templates/aboutcsc.asp?ID=61

[3] Durkheim characterized the social relations of rural societies as exhibiting a 'mechanical solidarity,' which was a tendency towards group interaction, cohesion and the "absence of individual choice" (Barrett 1996: 63). Durkheim argued that more advanced, industrialized societies exhibit an 'organic solidarity.' The term evokes the metaphor of society as a biological organism which is comprised of a set of interdependent organs (ibid: 60). In an introduction to a collection of Durkheim's work, Anthony Giddens points out that even though organic societies were held to be more individualistic in nature than the mechanical societies, cooperation in organic societies was still accomplished through, "their occupational interdependence within the differentiated division of labour" (Giddens 1972: 8). Durkheim held that the transition from mechanical to organic societies was evolutionary in nature or a "historical law" (Durkheim 1972: 141), as once societies began to modernize there would be a concomitant change in the social structure, with mechanical solidarity giving way to the organic (ibid).

[4] Weber's concepts of 'communal relationships' (*vergemeinschaftung*) and 'social' or 'associative relationships' (*vergesellschaftung*), which he outlined in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947), are concepts which were directly adapted from Tönnies (Gusfield 1975: 10; Albrow 1990: 249).

[5] This synopsis was gathered from: Barrett (1996); Cohen (1985); Durkheim (1972); Giddens (1972); Gusfield (1975); Hannerz (1980); Tönnies (1957); Wilk (1996); and Wolf (1982).

[6] According to Hannerz, Park drew this distinction in the introduction to Harvey W. Zorbaugh's (1929) *The Gold Coast and the Slum* (Hannerz 1980: 44).

[7] Though Bott's name is almost synonymous with network analysis, it was the earlier work of John Barnes (1954) on a Norwegian village from which Bott drew inspiration to apply this theory and method to a large urban centre (Hannerz 1980: 165).

[8] The Centre has a strict no alcohol and no smoking policy on the premises which I never saw breached. I never heard the staff complain that the residents had ever broken these conditions to their knowledge.

[9] In some parts of the older, downtown areas of St. John's, some of the clapboard row houses are individually painted a variety of bright colours. I have wondered if the colour scheme of the Froude project was meant to mimic this. However, the case with the downtown is that the individual homes are distinct, not only in colour but to differing degrees in design, and unlike Froude, one would not often find an entire row painted in the same colour.

[10] An important concept in the history of social welfare policy is that of *less-eligibility*, which holds that, "no one should be better off on assistance than working at the lowest market wage." (Boychuk 1998: 9). Boychuk continues that this is a fundamental distinction between a comprehensive social welfare program which sets a minimum standard of living based on needs, and that of a stigmatizing and stratifying system influenced by laissez-faire philosophies. Historically, one can see this shift in England between the brief

flirtation with a universalistic welfare system based on need (Speenhamland 1795 - 1834) and the New Poor Laws of 1834 which sought to remove state influence from the wage labour market and essentially left the able-bodied poor to their own devices (Boychuk 1998: p. 8-9).

[11] In the mid-1990s the federal government of Canada changed the name of Unemployment Insurance (U.I.) to Employment Insurance (E.I.), presumably for reasons of semantic sleight-of-hand.

[12] Ending a clause with the preposition "to," as well as the occasional adding of an additional "s" to verbs are forms which can be found in some forms of Newfoundland colloquial English. For example, I have heard the phrase, "Where are you to?" in place of "Where are you going/Where are you?"

[13] A TRO told me that Housing Administration Officers deal with the general caseload, but 'special needs' tenants are usually referred to the TRO's who are trained social workers.

[14] Under housed is essentially a condition of crowding and over housed is the opposite. A typical scenario would be the 'empty nesters' whereby grown children have moved out, leaving the parent(s) with more than needed space.

[15] Halperin borrowed the term 'householding' from Karl Polanyi (Halperin 1998: 124).

## Chapter Five

## The Discourse of 'Empowerment'

I encountered the discourse of 'empowerment' numerous times during the course of my fieldwork. I did not find that the term was used during daily, informal conversations, but it would usually be invoked by the residents, the staff and NLHC officials in formal contexts, such as Board meetings, the housing conference I attended, or during interviews for my research. The term was notably used during an interview I conducted with the NLHC TRO for the Froude area. She told me, "Our goal as Tenant Relations Officers is to empower these communities to take back control and to make decisions and to speak for themselves." In many ways the discourse of 'empowerment' runs parallel to the discourse of 'community,' and I do not feel that it was a coincidence that both terms were employed in conjunction in this interview. Like community, empowerment can be seen as a practice, here in terms of the residents' participation in tenants associations, learning the skills of advocacy through training courses and participating on the Centre's Board of Directors, and a sense of personal satisfaction and pride through these accomplishments. They are, as I will discuss in Chapter Seven, developing the 'cultural capital' required to act as advocates in their own behalf. However, empowerment can also be seen as a mobilizing metaphor whereby the term is employed to promote a political agenda, which can be seen in its milder form as a way to ameliorate the social conditions of a housing project, or in its more extreme form, as a way to cut government expenditures through 'empowering' tenants to manage the estates

themselves (Hyatt 1997). As with the discourse of community, the project to 'empower' the relatively powerless has its own history.

Ristock and Pennell contend that the discourse of empowerment grew out of the consciousness-raising endeavours of the political left in North America in the 1960s and 1970s. This discourse gained wide currency in the civil rights movement, particularly in feminist scholarship (Ristock and Pennell 1996: 3), as well as with the push for adult literacy among disenfranchised populations (Freire 1970). Within anthropology, the concerns with the disempowering dimensions of scholarship are often associated with the 'crisis of representation' and the collected work *Writing Culture* (1986). A critique of scholarship emerged whereby the ability, and right, of essentially white, 'Western,' and privileged males to represent the 'Other' was challenged. A further development from this was the emergence of a whole range of critiques which put some of the basic concepts of the social sciences under the microscope, such as a challenge to the commonly invoked dichotomies of 'East/West – Orient/Occident' (Said 1978). The core 'object' of anthropological inquiry did not escape notice either, as it was suggested that anthropologists should 'write against culture' (Abu-Lughod 1993: 6-15).

Where the 'Orient' or the 'nation' stood as obvious targets for critique and deconstruction, other 'masterwords' (Spivak 1989: 127) like 'community' or 'empowerment' did not. Perhaps such a 'commonsense' term as empowerment did not appear to warrant such a treatment. Similar to the concept of community, empowerment needs to be seen as a practice as well as a mobilizing metaphor in order to confront the structural limitations of the empowerment projects and expose how the term has been

appropriated by governments at times in order to serve a policy agenda. Furthermore, it would only be a partial analysis if the focus remained on 'empowerment' as a discourse and not as a practice, a process which, as will be discussed below, carries with it its own set of issues and difficulties at the local level.

The first basic question which can be posed is to ask what exactly is meant by empowerment. Below I quote at length an excerpt from Ristock and Pennell (1996) as I feel that they have nicely laid out the various conceptual levels from which to consider this issue.

> On an individual level [empowerment] can mean drawing on inner-strength to take control of a situation and assert oneself. Interpersonally, it can mean sharing resources for mutual benefit, or working together co-operatively. In professional relations, it often means facilitating and collaborating rather than prescribing and treating. Organizationally, empowerment can mean working democratically, participating equally, and sharing in decision-making and policy development in the work environment. Finally, on a societal level, empowerment is a political activity...aimed at changing the nature and distribution of power in our society (Ristock and Pennell 1996: 2).

Starting at the level of individual empowerment, I think that the participation by the residents of the Froude Avenue project in the local tenants association, the Neighbourhood Enhancement Association (NEA), as well as the Centre's Board of Directors, are empowering practices in terms of enhancing self-confidence and fostering the feeling of being able to make a difference. Glynis George (1995), in her analysis of the Bay St. George Women's Centre in Stephenville, contends that through their role at the Centre these women can engage with and debate officials from various governmental

and social aid agencies. As such, the Women's Council, "reshapes women's traditional arena of power to confront the diverse inequalities that shape the life experience of women in this region of Western Newfoundland" (George 1995: 315). A similar situation appears to hold in the Froude project for some of the women in the NEA. I was particularly impressed when I read a pair of newspaper articles in which Nancy, the President of the NEA, publicly challenged the assertions made by a Progressive Conservative candidate for the provincial riding that the Froude project is located in.

In October of 1998, *The Telegram* ran an article about the poor conditions of some of the units of the Froude Avenue project. A Progressive Conservative candidate for the riding decried the state of the homes he inspected, saying that he was "appalled" at the condition of this "substandard housing" and that, "People who live in these units are being treated as second-class citizens" (Jackson 1998a: 1). Two days later something of a retraction appeared in the same paper, written by the same journalist (Jackson 1998b). In this article, he paraphrased Nancy speaking on behalf of the NEA and the estate in general, who responded to the earlier article and criticized the negative implications inherent in the "second-class citizen" comment by arguing that the people of Froude are not being treated as second-class citizens, and that the article only serves to further perpetuate the negative stereotypes of social housing residents, one of which is that of apathetic non-participation in community institutions and affairs.

Nancy still sounded bitter about the article when I conducted my research some two years after it was printed, and understandably so. Granted there are some complaints about maintenance issues in the area, but none of the homes I visited struck me as

145

substandard. They were actually quite nice. More importantly, she thought that the article implied that the Froude residents were wallowing in substandard housing and were either too lazy, incapable or unwilling to do anything about it. On the contrary, Nancy and the NEA had long been involved in pressuring the NLHC to address some maintenance concerns, as the article corrected.

> [Nancy], who has been association chairwoman since 1993, said she and others have worked tirelessly over the past several years to get Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corp. (NLHC) to address their concerns…Now she fears the ministers and NLHC officials may think the association spoke anonymously to The Telegram this week, and that could jeopardize discussions on their concerns (Jackson 1998b: 1).

The article concluded with Nancy taking both the opportunity to promote the NEA as well as, in my opinion, cautioning the other residents about the dangers of wading into these kinds of situations unprepared. The article reported that she said that "residents who have concerns should raise them with the association so that they can be properly addressed" (Jackson 1998b: 1).

The two articles display the disparity between the stereotype of social housing residents as being uninvolved and apathetic, with the reality that there are some committed tenant-activists. It also highlights the importance of strong leadership and local organizations for tenants to be able to have the ability and confidence to deal not only with large bureaucratic organizations, but also to be able to challenge these stereotypes and air their concerns in public forums such as a newspapers.[1] I could detect a tone of pride in some of the residents who participated in the NEA or sat on the Board of Directors as the result of these kinds of activities.

146

One afternoon up at the summer camp, I was helping to prepare lunch in the cookhouse and overheard a conversation between a summer counsellor and a teenage daughter of an NEA and Board member. She was telling the counsellor that she could enlist the aid of her mother, Cathy, with whatever problem this counsellor was having, as her mother is "important" and that she, "pays John his cheques." I said nothing, but I assumed that she was referring to her mother's position on the Board. While the Board is technically John's 'boss,' Cathy certainly does not have that kind of authority. Despite the reality of the situation, the perception or even the projected perception of empowerment may have positive implications for some of the residents. I have noticed Cathy wear the bright yellow Froude Avenue Community Centre T-shirt on numerous occasions. I do not think this was a random occurrence, as I have noticed other NEA members wear these T-shirts and sweaters at various Centre related functions, but she seemed to wear it extensively, especially during high profile events. When the bus returned back to the Centre from the summer camp, and she arrived to meet her children, a local youth noticed this as well and asked me if Cathy was a staff member. I decided to ask her for an interview towards the end of my research. When I asked, I detected what I felt to be a note of pride as she told me that she was a member of the NEA and sat on the Board. I recalled earlier in May that Cathy was one of the more vocal residents at that Board meeting, and she had pressed for the hiring of more local counsellors rather than outsiders for the summer program. When I asked her for the interview in late August I felt that this mention was additionally significant, as I had attended a number of functions

at which she was present so I was already aware of her position in the NEA and the Board.

Hyatt concurs that some of the tenants from the housing estates[2] she researched in the UK also articulated a personal sense of empowerment and an enhanced sense of self-worth as the result of participating in community institutions. One resident told Hyatt,

> When I'm at home, I'm just another woman stuck in a council house...But, once I leave that house, I'm a different person...When I come out of my house and go to the tenants' group, that's the perfect part of my life. That's what makes me just as good as anybody else (Hyatt 1997: 229).

During a group interview, all of the NEA members I spoke to said that they could not imagine life without the Centre or the NEA. Laura, one of the core members of the NEA and prominent resident, said, "I would be lost without it...I wouldn't know what to do with my time." Nancy recognized that they are not receiving any financial compensation for their efforts, but countered that rewards can take other forms.

> You are getting satisfaction, seeing stuff being done, and you're helping to get things done...you're not getting [any] pay, but you're getting rewarded because you hear someone say, 'My god, this is a great job the NEA done last night,' or just a thank you is all we need.

As Nancy suggested above, empowerment appears to apply to the group as well as to the individual, which in this case was the NEA. However, I do not think that simply belonging to the group is as empowering as much as is participating in the group. It is participation which may be the critical component of empowerment as a practice.

John Gaventa points out that silence, non-participation, or 'quiescence' as he terms it, is sometimes found to exist on the part of dominated or oppressed peoples. He

asks, "Why, in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, quiescence?" (Gaventa 1982: 3). Gaventa worked in an area of Appalachia near the intersection of Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia in the 1970s, with a population who was notably impoverished and exploited by the coal mining industry. He argues that the 'silence' of the oppressed was not the result of apathy but a silence enforced by the mining corporation with the complicity of local, state and federal authorities. He writes, "power serves for the development and maintenance of the quiescence of the non-élite" (ibid: 4). As one of Hyatt's research participants in the UK put it, housing officials "didn't like people to wake up – they liked people to be passive and just live with their problems" (Hyatt 1997: 230). George (1995) highlights the gender implications of power in terms of silence in that some women, who may come from disempowering domestic environments, may be unused to voicing their opinions or even having them solicited in the first place (George 1995: 324). Gaventa continues that the 'first face of power' is the ability to control the actions of another; in its most visible form this would be armed force or the judicial system. The 'second face of power' is somewhat subtler, as it relies on the compliance, silence and non-participation of the governed, so that a small minority have a monopoly on the decision making process. If this is achieved, then a range of issues may be precluded from even having the possibility of being discussed. Stephen Lukes writes that, "the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place" (Lukes, in Gaventa 1982: 11).

I am not arguing that the residents of the Froude project are oppressed or victims in the sense of the people with whom Gaventa worked. What I am taking from his work is the idea that 'apathy' is far too simplistic an explanation as to why more disempowered and disenfranchised people tend not to vote or take on activist roles in some contexts. It may be more illuminating to look at the underlying reasons why some people feel that they cannot make a difference or feel helpless in the face of the machinations of power, rather than assuming that it is an inherent aspect of being poor. Gaventa's work is important in showing that this 'quiescence' is never total and that the disempowered do get involved. Henry Giroux (1985), in an introduction to a work by Paulo Freire (1985), points out that domination is never complete; there are always cracks, fissures and contradictions in the edifice of governmental policy which allows for challenges to be voiced (Giroux 1985: xix). Gaventa argues that it is 'participation' in voicing these concerns that is the key for empowerment. Following in the tradition of the classical democratic theorists, he contends that, "it is participation itself which increases political consciousness" (Gaventa 1982: 17). The small newspaper skirmish between the PC candidate and Nancy is most definitely an example of this kind of raised political consciousness linked to participation. Institutions such as the NEA are community organizations, but they are also political organizations. The media protest against the assertions made by a political candidate may not have occurred if the tenants were not already involved and experienced with the mechanisms of formal power, such as the Board and the bureaucracies of the NLHC. Furthermore, I suspect that Nancy's motivations were overtly political in another regard, as John told me that she actively

campaigns for the incumbent Liberal MHA for that riding. However, empowerment may not always be immediately apparent.

I was initially somewhat sceptical about the effectiveness of the Board meetings that I attended. I did not really observe a concrete decision being made, other than passing the minutes of the last meeting, and most of the members who were residents were very quiet. I was also not expecting the level of formalism that I encountered, which I stereotypically expected of a bureaucratic organization rather than what I initially perceived as a grass roots community organization. In retrospect I realized that I had missed the value and importance of these meetings. The tenants were 'learning the ropes' so to speak, of the mechanisms of the formal structures of power. Carol Stack (1996) noticed that some of her women research participants in the rural U.S. South, who were involved in a grassroots aid organization, faced stonewalling by various governmental bureaucracies. However, they eventually developed the skills to be able not only to work with or around these bureaucrats, but these women also had an effect on changing the existing bureaucratic procedures to their benefit. One could argue that by taking part in these rituals of power, such as formal Board meetings, the Froude area tenants were developing, to adapt a concept from Bourdieu (1997 [1977]), the 'cultural capital'[3] which would be required to effectively deal with formal governmental agencies on their own terms. As I will discuss in the Chapter Seven, the staff were, in their own way, also attempting to develop the cultural capital of the children and youth who participated at the Centre.

During the time of my research, three of the NEA members were taking part in a forty-two week program of half-day sessions entitled *Enhancing Community Capacity*, which was directly aimed at developing this kind of cultural capital among social housing residents. A group known as the Extension Co-Op offered this program,[4] which included three representatives from each of the major NLHC housing concentrations in the city. They would rotate their sessions among the community centres that had adequate space to hold meetings of this size. John introduced me to the director of the program during a break in one of their sessions. The director told me that the purpose of this program was to educate low-income residents in how to effectively lobby and organize on their own behalf. The program was aimed at teaching them how to write position papers, methods of effective lobbying and advocacy, research methodology, and finally to be able to organize and run a conference on their own. He noted that it is a participatory model which was based on developments made in the field of adult education.

I surmised that Hyatt noticed similar programs being offered in Britain in her research. Her cynical attitude toward them seemed to be based on the perception that governments may be promoting them to convince public housing tenants to undertake positions and responsibilities without pay.

> While one 'class of experts', employees of the welfare state bureaucracy – such as housing officers, rent collectors and social workers – are being discredited and gradually eliminated in the move toward 'advanced liberalism', a whole new group of *paid* professionals has been created to work alongside the mostly volunteer tenant-activists. These new professionals are experts in the arts of empowerment and self-help, whose job it is to inculcate within tenants a sense of their own autonomy and agency by encouraging

them to take on challenges such as self-management (Hyatt 1997: 233, emphasis in original).

Hyatt's critique is important and somewhat disturbing. I may have also have downplayed the significance of these empowerment courses had I not followed the progress of the local NEA participants over the summer, which culminated in a very professional and impressive conference in the fall.

I was impressed with the scope of the Co-Op program. Reading though the handbook for the course I found the section on interview methodology to be on par with the readings I have done for my own methods courses. When I arrived at the Centre one morning to conduct an interview with some NEA members, I found them transcribing a recorded focus group they had organized the previous evening. Never having conducted a group interview myself, and especially nothing like a focus group, I was the neophyte at the interview session I was about to conduct. I do believe participation in these kinds of activities is one place where empowerment is to be found. I could see their excitement at being involved in this course and an increasing sense of confidence as a result. One of the participants told me that this course was, "the best thing that I've done in years." One afternoon at the Centre I overheard a key NEA member, Laura, telling Keith how nervous she was about the upcoming community focus group. At a housing conference a few months later, she was speaking at a podium in a large auditorium with a calmness and self-confidence that I admired and perhaps envied. Afterwards there was a wine and cheese reception which included residents and members of tenants organizations, the staff of the St. John's area community centres and some of their Board members, academics, educators, and representatives from municipal and provincial government departments

and agencies including the provincial Minister of Finance. Watching the discussions and beginnings of potential networking I could see the value of such a conference even if nothing specifically concrete were to come from the content of the conference itself. For a social housing resident to be able to formally address such an audience and then to be able to chat with a provincial minister is undeniably an empowering experience itself.

There are some positive and substantive aspects to the empowerment discourse, but I feel that some cautions need to be outlined. The first of which is that it has to be remembered that there are very real limits to the kinds of decisions and authority that social housing residents may have. As the TRO for the area told me, one of the aims of the Tenant Relations Program is to empower the residents to "take back control," make decisions on their own and to "speak for themselves." It is clear that the residents do speak for themselves publicly through Nancy and the NEA, but, as I will discuss below, how inclusive or representative this voice is, is another matter. I am also uncertain as to what 'taking back control' means in practice. The NLHC controls the tenants' homes and the property, sets the conditions for residency, and has the power to evict if need be. The NLHC also controls the purse strings of a large portion of the Centre's operating budget, and also supplies the NEA with an operating grant. Housing also implemented the Board of Directors system for the centres, sets the mandate by which the centres operate, and controls the physical buildings where the centres are located. One of Hyatt's research participants in Britain found the discourse of empowerment to be somewhat hollow.

> It's still very much the [City] Council in control. They want your views, they want you to get involved but at the end of the day they want to be the ones to determine the outcome (Hyatt 1997: 231).

The reality is that there are limits to the kinds of power and control that social housing tenants may wield. I believe that the NLHC wants the tenants to have some measure of control and to be, or feel to be, involved, but there was no indication that I could see that they were moving towards a model of tenant management. Again, I find Taussig's (1999) notion of the 'public secret' very useful here, as I do not think that either the NLHC, the staff, or the residents fully believed that the 'empowerment' discourse meant that the residents would substantively share power with Housing, yet this was not articulated when I was present. Even if it was not publicly acknowledged, I suspect that it was tacitly understood. Empowerment taken to its logical conclusion would be a model of active management of the social housing estate by the tenants themselves which, as Hyatt points out below, may not even be a desirable scenario.

In her analysis of the policies regarding social housing in Britain, Hyatt notes the emergence of the discourse of tenant empowerment after the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in 1979. It was argued that the projects, or council estates as they are referred to in Britain, should be managed by the tenants themselves, as they would be more knowledgeable about local issues then the 'experts' (Hyatt 1997: 217). It was posited that the tenants would become 'empowered' once they became actively involved in the management of their own affairs.

There is a certain logic to this argument, as it is difficult to initially see why it would be problematic that tenants' views and decisions are not only sought out but elevated above those of outside experts. Yet the notion of 'self-management' can be seen to emerge from the same discourses invoked by the neo-liberal desire to trim government

expenditures, the size of the civil service, and to foster 'self-reliance' among the populace, which I have discussed in previous chapters. Hyatt has no difficulty with privileging the views of the tenants; the problem she sees is with tenant management. What seems to be forgotten is that many of the residents of council estates are there by virtue of a number of structural or personal circumstances which preclude, either temporarily or permanently, their participation in the wage labour market. Furthermore, aside from a possible lack of skills and training, the residents are also expected to manage the estates without remuneration. Hyatt continues,

> In the current climate of advanced liberalism, poverty is represented not as a social problem but as a new possibility for poor individuals to experience 'empowerment' through the actualization of self-management…however, from the point of view of the tenants, what they are being asked to do is not only to take on the sizable chore of *managing* their own communities; they are also being put in the somewhat more precarious position of being asked to *police* them (Hyatt 1997: 220, emphasis in original).

Managing a housing project requires not only the collection of rent and attention to maintenance concerns but, among other things, ensuring that certain tenant codes of conduct are monitored and enforced. One resident told me that during the placement process a housing officer asked her bluntly, in her words, "Are you the type to have people hanging around?" Admittedly, I am still somewhat uncertain about what this officer may have been trying to establish, but it seems clear that at least efforts are made to ascertain the behavioural characteristics of prospective tenants. One stipulation that seemed to draw the ire of many residents at a housing conference I attended was the regulation that forbade major auto repairs on NLHC property. I could not understand

why, until a TRO rose up from the audience to explain that in the past there had been a problem with some tenants operating small auto repair businesses in their driveways which sullied the area, as well as probably avoiding contributing to governmental tax coffers. During this same conference another tenant articulated the frustrations felt by many other residents with the fact that troublesome tenants seemed to be bounced back and forth from one project to another. The root of the issue seemed to be that many of the residents felt powerless to prevent the residency of tenants in their areas who may be problematic. The TRO rose again to counter that social housing is available for all, and that they do not have a right to deny housing. She also added that the "community" needed to get more involved in dealing with these cases, though I am not certain what the residents were expected to do. I was also suspicious of this argument, in that I was told that people were evicted from time to time for various infractions. As mentioned previously in Chapter Three, in the Froude project I knew of one resident who was repeatedly threatened with eviction for poor housekeeping, at least according to the gossip network.[5]

What Hyatt appears to be suggesting is that it is one thing for a distanced bureaucracy to monitor behaviour and to evict if needed; it is another thing for a tenant-manager who may be a neighbour, friend or even kin to participate in the enforcement of rules and perhaps in evictions. Writing specifically of the housing estate that she researched, Hyatt concluded that tenant-managers proved to be impractical in this regard.

> In being asked to monitor one another's behaviour, the
> tenants of Lower Grange quickly discovered that their
> participation in such schemes for 'empowerment' could
> foster an even greater breakdown of the social order in their

157

communities than that which was already being fomented
by the crisis of structural unemployment and increasing
impoverishment (Hyatt 1997: 228).

There was no indication, from what I could see, that the NLHC was attempting anything
along the lines of what Hyatt documented in Britain. The large scale and capital-intensive
ventures such as major renovations would also prove to be logistically impossible for the
tenants to deal with. However, the discourse of empowerment sometimes obfuscates the
internal politics of tenant leadership, in that one has to ask whether the 'empowered'
local leadership are representative of the project, and are in fact 'empowering' the other
residents through their activities.

Ristock and Pennell point out that organizational empowerment generally refers
to equal and democratic involvement in the local decision-making process (Ristock and
Pennell 1996: 2). But with a population over roughly 300 individuals, some kind of
representative leadership would be needed in order for organized advocacy efforts to be
effective. However, questions may be raised as to how representative the Board and NEA
are. I have noticed that a specific group of friends and kin did appear to hold the key
positions in the local institutions within the project during the time of my research.
Nancy, who was the President of the NEA, also sat on the Centre's Board of Directors,
the Resource Group, and was a key participant in all related programs, activities and
conferences. Her friends, the NEA Vice-President Doreen and Secretary Kate are sisters
and they both operated the breakfast program at the Centre. Doreen also sat on the Board
and Kate was the key volunteer at the Centre. Another one of their sisters had previously
served as Secretary of the NEA. They are all friends with Laura, another key NEA

member who also participated in the Co-Op program the various housing conferences. Laura's husband had also served at one time as Vice-President of the NEA.

In my fieldnotes I tended to refer to this group of sisters and friends as the 'core NEA group' and I began to wonder if this group somewhat monopolized the prominent positions in the local organizations. This situation did not go unnoticed by the TRO for the area, who told me that she could see both a benefit and a liability to the situation.

> What I have found and what I have seen, while in some areas you get a change, a turnover in membership as to their executive, this is a long standing executive that have taken ownership of the community…and while that may be healthy in that they are easily identified with the issues and they speak very articulately on the issues of the community…I'd also like to see…'new blood' obviously coming in, in the sense of new persons coming in, with new perspectives, with new families that would be a part of the voice of the neighbourhood.

John was aware of the situation but he defended it nonetheless, arguing that it was more a case of inclusiveness rather than of exclusiveness. Speaking about the NEA, John argued that,

> They go to [an election] meeting every year. Everybody has the option to vote her [Nancy] out. Everybody sits down at a table …and they vote her back in each and every year…[Nancy] is no dictator…the option to go to the Gander conference is thrown on the table in a meeting…'Who wants to go?' And they say [to Nancy] 'You go on…you represent us.'

During a group interview session I had with these core members, they joked about Nancy's long term as President, perhaps conscious of these perceptions. Nancy added, "Since 1993 I've been the President…of course every time I go to step down there's nobody to run against me."

It may be coincidental that these residents, who happen to be friends and kin, may also happen to be the most vocal tenant-activists in the area. In terms of the possibility of exclusion, one fact, which caught my eye, was that all of the seventeen members of the NEA at the time of my fieldwork were females. An outside Board member had also reiterated this fact at a meeting, to which Nancy replied that the men were simply "not interested." I know that the initial Froude Avenue Tenants Association had three male members (NLHC 1985b: 1) and that Laura's husband had a senior position on the NEA at one point, but I rarely heard mention of males being involved so I raised the issue with John. He replied that one cannot rule out coincidence, as all the managers of the St. John's public housing estate centres during the time of our interview were males, but that did not mean that they always were or would be. Another factor, which may affect the gendered pattern of the NEA membership, is NLHC policy. John relayed the following information to me in an interview, but he was careful to avoid mentioning any specific details to protect the local residents.

> There are men in the community, no doubt about it, but…because of their circumstances they probably don't want people to know that they are in the community… right?…people paying single-parent rent, but dual families…they can't come out and join…I get as much support from men in the community as women, but they may not be able to do things.

Carol Stack pointed out that the welfare system, as it existed in the U.S. during her research, tended to weaken the position of males in family life. Women dependent on social assistance, especially with children, were conscious of the fact that they could lose their benefits should they marry or co-habitate (Stack 1997 [1974]: 113).

I discussed the situation of exclusion with a staff member who agreed that there was a problem with the same core group consistently taking the spots that were made available in these organizations, housing conferences or courses such as that offered by the Extension Co-Op. I could see the importance of Nancy, as the President and overall articulate speaker and competent leader attending. But I could also see the value of including other residents, if, as Gaventa has argued, participation is linked to an increase in political consciousness. I agree that this does appear to be the case, particularly so in terms of the development of increased personal self-confidence.

While I was thinking about the metaphorical uses of 'community' and 'empowerment,' I was struck by how the members of the NEA did not appear to overtly challenge the assumptions inherent in these terms. They would often use these terms in formal and informal settings as well. I certainly do not think that they need me to point out that the project is not a cohesive entity, or that the discourse of empowerment tended to hide the structural limitations to the kinds of power and authority they could expect to wield. Nancy was very astute and politically aware and she agreed that the Froude project, like other urban areas, does not match 'community' as the commonly invoked ideal. She conceded, "No, [the Froude project] is not a big family. Some people don't participate. Some people like to stay behind closed doors." My sense was that they were aware of these issues, but in terms of advocacy they may not be critiques that need to be raised all the time. If anything, it may be counterproductive for the NEA or even the staff from the Centre to challenge the essentializing discourse of community or empowerment.

Michael Herzfeld points out that, "The agents of powerful state entities and the humblest of local social actors engage in the strategy of essentialism to an equal degree, if not always with the same visibility or impact" (Herzfeld 1997: 31). The utilization of the metaphorical discourse of 'empowerment' or 'community' by the NEA members or the staff when lobbying for funding or pressing their concerns does not mean that these terms are accepted uncritically. They may be engaging in what Gayatri Spivak refers to as 'strategic essentialism': "the strategic use of an essence as a mobilizing slogan or masterword" (Spivak 1989: 127). I have always been somewhat dubious of the one-sided analysis of the use of mobilizing metaphors as a sort of 'con-trick,' perpetuated by the powerful and accepted by the populace at face value. I think that such an analysis robs people of their perceptiveness and agency. It may be more productive to focus on how the disempowered adopt these kinds of discourses to further their own goals.

There is, however, another underlying contradiction to the empowerment project. As the TRO told me in an interview the mandate of the NLHC through its Tenant Relations Program, as well as its boards, tenant conferences and community centres, is to empower the residents and to have them involved in the decision-making process. I feel that these policies are effective in that some residents are eager to participate and many, such as the NEA members, give their time freely to these voluntary positions. Housing is, in effect, helping to create local leadership and the mobilization to work towards accomplishing mutual goals. In short, they are helping to foster communal relations. Yet, it must be remembered that another mandate of the NLHC is that of transitional housing. This mandate is not as readily apparent as the discourses of community or empowerment

when talking to representatives from the NLHC, but it is there. I posed a question to the TRO for the area about rental policies. I have long felt that it was counterproductive to raise the rents of the tenants of social housing if there happens to be an increase in their incomes. Partly because, in my understanding, the point is to help the tenants to make the transition to private housing, especially given the strong cultural emphasis on home ownership in Newfoundland (Clarke 1986: 7). So I think that simply raising the rents serves only to erode potential savings which may serve as a future down payment on a modest dwelling, which makes this transition more difficult. Contrary to the rest of the interview, I felt a sudden shift in the tone of the conversation. She moved from the use of the first person and into the third plural, and reiterated what seemed to be more of a policy position than personal insight. She argued, that by "allowing them to theoretically to save funds for that down payment…then we are also running the risk of stepping outside our mandate of social housing." She continued simply to say that, "social housing provides accommodations to families [with] low income." Once this status of low income is no longer met, then the case for continued residency in public housing can no longer be made. She recognized the quandary I was suggesting, which is familiar to anyone who deals with social housing issues. However my sense from the interview was that it was not a subject which was open for debate, and she reminded me that policy decisions are not simply based on logic, but are often complex political decisions. This felt very much to be Gaventa's 'second face of power' at work, which I cite above, in terms of deeming what issues are open for debate and precluding debate on others.

The tension between the state and concept of transitional housing, which I see as temporary residency marked with subtle, and sometimes overt, pressures to leave, and that of 'community,' will figure prominently in the next chapter as well. The NLHC is in somewhat of a contradictory bind: residents without a vested interest in, or a feeling of responsibility for, the amelioration of their neighbourhood has led in the past to less than ideal social conditions within public housing estates, which I have discussed in Chapters Two and Three, but rectifying this through empowerment may run counter to the aims of transitional housing. The response to social problems in the housing projects has been to develop and fund community centres and tenants associations in an attempt to improve these conditions. These are laudable efforts in my opinion which have been, to varying degrees, effective. I can see this when I talk to the NEA members, I could see their pride in winning an award from the City of St. John's for Volunteer Group of the Year for 2001, and I could hear in their words the importance of the NEA and the Centre to them. Yet this runs counter to goals of transitional housing. Some of the residents have an enhanced stake in improving their homes and neighbourhood and access to local institutions which are important to them. In a sense they have been empowered in their role; but this role may not exist for them outside of the estate. In my estimation these may be strong disincentives for some to leave. One member of the NEA told me, "I'm here 18 years like I said...and I love it, and I'd never move out of here." Another told me, "Right now, it would take an atomic bomb to get me out of here...I'm content, my family is content. We're involved with the school; we're involved with the Centre. I like where I'm to and I like the people around." The signal being sent on the one hand is that the

164

residents should take responsibility for their homes and they should be empowered to take on leadership roles to improve their community, and to feel a sense of 'ownership.' On the other hand conditions are set for residency, income is monitored for adjustments in rent, and the power to evict lingers behind the scenes. A similar tension exists within the philosophy of the staff in terms of their programming and what the Centre is all about. The Centre is promoted as a site of involvement, or the building of communal relations. But the staff are also attempting to develop the academic, social skills, and cultural capital of the residents, characteristics that are ultimately geared towards helping individuals make the transition to the job market and eventually private housing. I will explore these tensions within the Centre's activities in the final two chapters of this thesis before its conclusion.

# Endnotes to Chapter Five

[1] For an example of some of the NEA's maintenance concerns, see Appendix E.

[2] Social housing projects or estates are also known as council houses in the UK.

[3] Bourdieu writes that, "Without entering into detailed analysis, it must suffice to point out that academic qualifications are to cultural capital what money is to economic capital" (Bourdieu 1997: 187). Bourdieu is suggesting that the supposedly standardized value of an academic qualification enables two individuals with the same degree to be able to do a specific task interchangeably, as "Academic qualifications, like money, have a conventional, fixed value" (ibid). Stretching Bourdieu's point somewhat, I am suggesting that the cultural capital being acquired at these meetings is useful beyond the confines of the Centre and the NEA and could be applied to dealing with other formal agencies, such as the NLHC, social welfare agencies or even the media as we saw with the newspaper skirmish in this chapter. Cultural capital will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

[4] The Extension Co-Op was formally known as the MUN (Memorial University of Newfoundland) Extension Co-Op, but it is now an independent agency.

[5] When the TRO argued that the NLHC cannot deny housing, I noticed that there was an apparent contradiction, as people were most definitely evicted from time to time. I cannot say with certainty what happens to these evicted individuals, but given the complaint voiced at this conference I started to suspect that these problem cases were bounced from one housing concentration to another, if indeed the assertion that the TRO made of the illegality of denying housing is true.

# Chapter Six

# Ownership

I found the discourse of 'ownership,' during the course of my research, to be as pervasive as those of community and empowerment, except the major difference was that the term was primarily invoked by the staff, particularly John, and to a lesser extent by the NLHC TRO for the area. Although it was used frequently in their presence by staff, I never heard any of the residents use the term; however, that does not mean that a form of ownership with regards to their homes, the area, the Centre and its material resources was not practiced. As such, this chapter is about the clash between differing interpretations, conceptualizations, and practices of 'ownership.'

John often used the term ownership as a synonym for "responsibility," such as when he criticized the summer staff for letting him down (see p. 67), telling me afterwards that he wanted them to take "ownership" for their actions and their positions at the Centre. John also felt that the residents should take ownership of the area, in terms of getting involved in the tenants association or with some of the issues the area was facing, or take ownership of the Centre in terms of volunteering and helping out. In many ways the residents did take or assert ownership, but sometimes this assertion clashed with what the staff viewed as an appropriate practice of ownership. Before moving on to discuss 'ownership' as an assertion of identity in terms of youth culture, and ownership in terms of residents laying claims to the resources of the Centre, I will open this chapter with a discussion of ownership as a discursive practice, which was most visible in the struggle over the reference to the accommodations of the project as 'units' versus 'homes.'

## 6.1 – 'Who wants to live in a unit?'

The clash over the use of the term 'units,' often used by the NLHC, versus 'homes,' the term preferred by the residents, to denote the living spaces of the Froude project may at first seem like a minor semantic squabble, but it is an issue which some of the residents felt strongly about. This issue may also apply to public housing in Newfoundland and Labrador in general (and possibly beyond) as Helen Porter, writing on the stigma of living in public housing in St. John's, pointed out that it was sad that "they are usually called units rather than houses. Who wants to live in a unit?" (Porter 1987: 7). The way this discourse relates to ownership is whether the residents are led to feel that they are living in 'homes' as something that is 'theirs,' or whether they are merely (and temporarily) inhabiting 'units' as property owned by the NLHC. As mentioned earlier (see p. 32), criticisms were raised that many of the problems of vandalism, neglect and a lack of civic involvement in housing projects were the result of the tenants not having a sense of 'ownership' or a stake in the area. This discourse also relates to community, as it is challenging to foster a sense of 'community' if the residents are made to feel that they are residing in units in transitional housing rather than in their own homes.

When I asked some of the residents how they felt about the term 'units,' some became quite animated in voicing their responses. Nancy told me that it is something that members of the NEA feel quite strongly about.

> We are starting to feel ticked off about that now. Because they are supposed to be our houses, our homes, right?…and even our TRO now, she doesn't call them 'units' anymore, she calls them 'family homes' and that's the way it should be…It's your 'home' as long as you maintain it, and it

should be called 'our homes.' We're paying rent for it same
as if we're paying a house off.

Doreen added, "They [Housing] don't even use that word anymore do they? Units...only
when you are going in for repairs." It is true that the TRO for the area makes a concerted
effort to avoid using the term but I have heard her, as well as the staff and even some of
the residents, use it on occasion. It is a difficult discursive practice to break, as I have
found myself using it as well. It is part of the housing 'lingo' so to speak, similar to the
term 'housing stock' that is commonly invoked in the housing literature.

From what I have been told by some of the residents, the staff from the NLHC
maintenance department are the worst offenders for using the 'unit' discourse. The TRO
for the area admitted to me that its use is pervasive within the NLHC as a whole.

> I had sent a letter to the families of James Place inviting
> them to a meeting. And the comment at the meeting [from
> the residents] was, 'I was so happy that you called us
> families,' as opposed to 'tenants' in 'units.' Oftentimes
> NLHC personnel get caught up in our jargon...because
> that's the jargon we'd use in our communications
> internally. But oftentimes we need to be sensitized as to
> how that jargon is perceived. And I try to be careful in that
> I'm not referring to you as a 'tenant' as opposed to an
> 'individual' or a 'family.' And I'm not referring to your
> 'unit' as opposed to your 'home.'

Admittedly, I am equally as guilty of using essentializing and reifying terms such as
'tenants,' 'project,' and 'estate,' for the sake of brevity. The use of the term 'unit' does
not fit well with the discourses of 'empowerment' and 'community,' which I feel is why
the NLHC staff such as the TRO I cited above are attempting to curb its usage. The
continued use of 'units' acts as a reminder to the tenants of the actual disparity between
the frequent metaphorical uses of terms such as 'empowerment' and everyday practices. I

think it is important to remember the Froude area is a social housing project, whether it is called a 'housing concentration' or simply a neighbourhood. I agree with Nancy that these 'units' are their homes. However, I disagree with Nancy when she asserted above that paying rent is the "same" as paying a mortgage. As a renter my entire adult life I have never lost sight of the fact that the house or apartment was not 'mine.' Renters cannot do renovations or sometimes even paint without the approval of the landlord. I suspect that the people of Froude tacitly, or explicitly, recognize this same fact, regardless of the terminology that is employed. Further, renting in social housing is qualitatively different from renting in the private market. I think that with regards to public housing this difference is reinforced by the placement procedure, the monitoring of income, and in some ways the monitoring of the residents' personal lives. The less powerful sectors of society, such as those receiving social assistance, often have to put up with an inordinate level of scrutiny of their personal lives. The "faceless gaze" (Foucault 1995: 214) of government bureaucracies, in the form of Housing officials, social workers, the police, and various other agents, is often focused upon them, where they live, and the conditions they must abide by to an extent that the term 'homes' must at times appear a little hollow. The alternating use of the 'unit/home' pair of terms, combined with the NLHC regulations, simultaneously asserts as well as questions the tenants' 'ownership' of the buildings. However, I found it interesting that the tenants sometimes adopt the 'units' discourse when pressing for demands from the NLHC, perhaps to add a tone of authority to their arguments (see Appendix E).

The authority of the NLHC to evict is perhaps the most important reminder of the residents' status as Housing tenants. The issue of eviction emerged several times during my research, usually in the form of gossip, speculation and rumours as to who was going to be evicted and why. The threat of eviction reveals the true limits to ownership and makes plain ultimately who the buildings belong to.

## 6.2 – The Ownership of Common Space

The discourse of 'units' versus 'homes' is one part of the sometimes clashing and contested practices and conceptualizations of ownership between the staff and the residents. Admittedly, for the first two months of my fieldwork I was exposed to the issue of ownership in terms of how the staff perceived it. I more or less accepted their views of what they deemed to be 'ownership,' as well as what were in their views 'dishonest' or 'manipulative' practices. Once the summer program started and I began to spend more time with the residents, I could see ways in which 'manipulative' practices could also be construed as the residents laying claim to the Centre, its resources and, in some ways, the time of the staff as well. Furthermore, I could also see some of the weaknesses in the staff's assertions of ownership, which sometimes did not bear up under scrutiny to their projected image.

I first heard the term 'ownership' voiced by John the very first day I met him back in March of 2001. He described to me a scenario by which ownership is both discouraged as well as encouraged. John said that, at one point not too long ago, Housing had planted some small saplings around the area. Within a short period of time the local youths had

destroyed them. He countered this by pointing out that the residents' flower gardens, even if they were flowers which were given to them by Housing, would normally remain undisturbed. The point he was making was that once the residents had planted the flowers, they were seen as the work and property of specific individuals; they were 'owned' by someone in the area. In contrast, the saplings were seen as the work and property of the NLHC. John also pointed out that that the fence around the back of the preschool was built by a local resident on behalf of the Centre and not by Housing, and therefore was not subject to vandalism.

When I first heard the story about the flower gardens, I envisioned the area in bloom come the spring. While some did have flower gardens, it was not to the scale that I expected. I do not know the extent to which the flowers avoided being vandalized, but I did notice Nancy putting some small fences around hers one day, which she told me was to prevent the children from driving over them with their bikes. The preschool fence did seem to avoid major damage and spray painting, but the hinged doors have since been damaged, one of which was removed and chained to the Centre.[1] Since I first heard the flower garden story, I have heard it invoked a few more times, most notably at the housing conference I attended. I turned to grin at Bill, as he was always quick to point out the disparity between the projected image and the reality of these kinds of issues. He rolled his eyes at the repeated mention of this story at the conference, and I chuckled.

The community clean-ups were another aspect of ownership which the Centre promoted, but these activities did not seem to include, in terms of participation, the entire population or even the majority of the project's residents. I participated in community

clean-ups three times during my fieldwork. The first was cancelled due to inclement weather and a mix-up regarding the dumpsters, the second proceeded with a notable (but not complete) turnout, and the third was a much smaller affair as it was an attempt by the Centre to encourage the participation of some older teens. I do not think there is any question that some of the residents, particularly the NEA members, felt a sense of responsibility for the area, as they showed up early on two Saturday mornings to volunteer their time. Housing did provide some flowers for them to plant to reward their participation, but I felt that this was only a minor incentive. However, in no way did the turnout come close to the full participation of the residents from the entire project. By my estimation between thirty and forty residents actively participated when the clean-up went ahead. Some did so to take advantage of the opportunity to get rid of heavy and bulky items. An older male with a disabled wife approached Keith for his help in getting rid of some garbage from his basement. I offered to help and it turned out that he had at least two-dozen Teletype machines from perhaps the 1940s or 1950s, which he was going to sell for scrap but never got around to. I also helped Keith as we hauled out another resident's old washing machine from one home and an old fridge from another.

The residents who were getting rid of their own garbage from their basements were not exhibiting ownership in terms of responsibility for the area in general; I saw ownership with the perhaps half dozen NEA members and assorted children with latex gloves on and garbage bags in hand scouring the field and other common areas for debris. A few other key residents did help out with other activities, particularly one resident who also acted as the coach for the local softball team. But these residents who regularly

volunteered their own time towards communal activities, from what I could see, appeared to be the exception rather than the norm. Only a few teens participated in these clean-ups, but I am not sure how significant that was. A few days before this time, I was sitting outside of the Centre and some of the teens were mocking the planned clean-up. One was sitting on his bike and exclaimed, "I'm not getting out of bed early to pick up garbage. Are you mad?" There were a lot of elderly residents and, judging by the number of homes with ramps, a fairly large number of disabled residents as well, so I can understand why they would not have participated. I found it interesting that the man with the Teletypes had come to the Centre for help rather than turning to neighbours. I asked Bill and Keith sometime later if they thought that the Centre was in a way fostering dependency and inhibiting community by providing an alternative to neighbourly mutual aid. Keith admitted that there was some validity to what I was asking, as he said that during the previous winter he helped to clear some residents' ramps of snow and was disappointed at finding able-bodied males at one of the homes at the time after he had completed the job. John envisioned the Centre as being a nucleus of communal interaction, but in my estimation it appeared that some residents viewed the Centre as a resource, put in place and funded by the NLHC, for them to draw upon. This does not mean that the residents may have any less of a view of its importance, but rather that conceptualizations of 'ownership' appear to differ.

I also wondered if the constant presence of NLHC maintenance crews also worked against the development of a sense of ownership of the area by the residents, particularly with regards to the common areas such as the field. I recognize the fact that it

would be unrealistic for the residents to take charge of capital-intensive and complicated maintenance duties. But at times I watched some of the NLHC maintenance crews simply picking up debris by hand and leaving them in strange little cairn-like piles of glass and cigarette butts, presumably to be picked up later. I asked the TRO if these kinds of activities were sending mixed-signals about ownership and she responded in the following way.

> What you need to know is that, maybe twenty years ago, the crew that you saw there last week would be thirty people. You may have seen a crew of five? *Something like that* [my response]. We had a workforce where it was thirty individuals into the community on a regular basis, picking up glass, doing the grass, picking up garbage…so when you talk about ownership, you've got to look back to where they've been and how they've grown…there's [always] going to be a presence because you are not [going to have] a hundred percent ownership…while you'll see that eighty percent of the families take care of their homes, you've got twenty percent of the families not caring about the unit. Because its not theirs and they haven't taken ownership of where they live.

I noticed that she distinguished between 'homes' and 'units,' but by highlighting differences among residents her views also challenge the notion of communal ownership. She is right in that there will always be a presence of NLHC maintenance crews. I think, however, that this is due not just to the fact that there is that 'twenty percent' who have not taken ownership but, even amongst the majority that she asserts who have done so, it would still be difficult to allocate who has to take care of cleaning the common areas without dispute and resentment. The main community clean-up I attended was a significant, but rare, event. This was not an ongoing activity. I am also reminded of Hyatt's (1997) work, whereby she cautioned against tenant-management in that duties

and responsibilities sometimes fall to tenants who become essentially a free-labour force for the housing authorities, so they may trim their budgets under the rubric of 'empowerment' or 'ownership.'

The issue of ownership often materialized in other interesting ways. Sometimes I did not immediately see aspects of 'ownership' being asserted until I further reflected on particular incidents, as in the staff's view ownership often could be seen to take the form of volunteering and participating in Centre and communal activities. However 'ownership,' when extended to a broader definition, can also extend to issues of identity. One way in which I have analyzed some of the acts of vandalism by the local youths, as well as the struggles between the staff and the youths over issues of their identity, is in terms of 'ownership.' What they staff may see as an act of simple vandalism or defiance, may also be seen to be an assertion of ownership, even if it is not in a form that the staff approves of or sees as 'positive.' I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of how the strategies of some of the residents to lay claim to the Centre and its resources are seen by the staff as 'manipulation,' but may also be interpreted as 'ownership' from another perspective.

## 6.3 – Ownership and Youth Culture

One of the immediate things that I noticed when I paid my first visit to the area was some spray painted graffiti in bold blue letters on some of the homes in the project. Some of it read "The Blocks," but I had also noticed a large "F.T.W,"[2] as well as a number of the names of various African-American rap artists such as "2Pac" (Tupac

Shakur). This kind of graffiti appeared to be dismissed by the staff as merely 'vandalism,' but I think that graffiti often conveys significant cultural messages. Philippe Bourgois points out that although much of the graffiti he saw in East Harlem in New York City was gang turf markers, much of it was also quite beautiful art, usually political statements or tributes to deceased friends. He writes, "It is as if the miracle of human creativity and aesthetic genius has to assert itself in the face of despair and oppression" (Bourgois 1995: 187). I am not sure if the simply spray painted blue words in the Froude project would qualify as art in these kinds of aesthetic terms, but I think it would be a mistake to dismiss it out of hand without considering what messages are being conveyed.

Many of the youths of the project were passionate about rap music and, from what I could see, a particular form which focuses on (and in some cases perhaps glorifies) a depiction of the experience of African-American youth living in the inner cities of the United States. The staff from the Centre assured me that the many of the teens from the Froude project have not travelled or have even been far from the project itself,[3] so I assumed that this view of life in U.S. housing projects has been informed by music videos and film. One night previous to my fieldwork beginning, a group of local teens had been on a spray painting binge, the results of which I have described above. I also noticed that when any of these teens got access to art supplies of any kind, whether it was road chalk or paint during one of the few times they participated in the art program at the Centre, the motifs were always the same: a parade of their favourite rap artists and associated motifs such as 2Pac, N.W.A.,[4] and Thug Life (2Pac's earlier group). I have reproduced in Appendix F an example of one of the teen's drawings, which he gave me at

177

the summer camp, which illustrates some of the motifs of the genre. What also caught my eye in terms of the spray painting were also what I interpreted to be turf markers, one of which, "The Blocks," was repeated on the area homes. I felt that this conveyed the message of 'ownership,' though perhaps not the kind of ownership that John was trying to instil. I felt that it was significant that they appropriated and used a somewhat derogatory term for the area as their message of ownership. They did not spray paint "Froude Avenue," or "Westmount," they used, "The Blocks." The most obvious message of ownership was "The Blocks," written in bold blue letters across the asphalt of the basketball/ball hockey court that was shared with the neighbouring private housing. I also noticed in their art and graffiti the tag "Westside," which was written sometimes as:

W
E
S I D E
T

I assumed that this was in reference to their location in west St. John's, perhaps in mimicry of the turfism of large U.S. cities. Keith told me that they had also designed a hand sign, such as those used by U.S. street gangs. I did not see them invoke this sign until they posed for a group picture at the end of summer camp. The thumb was hidden, the back of the hand was faced towards the camera, and all of the fingers were forced apart as far as possible except for the pinkie and ring finger, which were held together. The end result was a hand sign which mimicked the letter, "W" for Westside, which they did with both hands, most crossing them over the chest.

I am not advocating that the spray painting of the area homes should be defended, as I am sure that most of the residents do not want a large "2Pac" on their exteriors, but I

think that a message of ownership is being conveyed, even in the kind of act that can be seen as destructive. To use the language of Derrida (1991), this vandalism can be seen as a 'sign,' with an unstable and de-centred meaning that may be interpreted in different ways by different people. Even if the staff agreed that there was a message of ownership here, in my estimation they would say that it was an inappropriate medium through which to convey these feelings. Pushing my focus on the differing notions of ownership further, however, I think that the struggles between the staff and the teens over music and language can be interpreted within the framework of 'ownership' as a struggle over the assertion of identity. I will examine the issue of language in more detail in the next chapter, but here I will examine the staff's efforts to censor the music of the teens when they were at the Centre or participating in Centre-related activities. The teens' occasional defiance of these rules appeared to me to be a form of taking 'ownership' and asserting messages of identity.

The staff enforced a ban on music with obscene lyrics or 'negative' content around the Centre, or during off-site Centre related activities. Most of the teens were into African-American hip-hop culture in terms of music and clothing. However, they were into a more aggressive rather than mainstream form of rap, which tended to glorify violence, life in U.S. city projects and drugs. Much of it was admittedly expletive-laden and was not allowed to be played at the Centre. This was not much of an issue around the Centre itself, but it did become one up at the summer camp. I asked Keith what the reasoning was for this policy, though I felt I knew what the answer would be. Interestingly, it was not just the language itself, but the content in terms of the

179

glorification of violence and crime that was also objected to. At the summer camp he added, "They [local youth] hear enough negativity at home, they don't need to hear it up here." The following is an excerpt from one of the compact discs they had brought with them up to camp.

> …word to mother
> Look at it from a thug point of view
> When the kids need clothes what's a thug gonna do?
> Hit the streets and huscel [hustle]
> Pick up the heat and buss you
> …its murder motherfucker
> We don't beg or borrow, we take shit
> Fuck you and your fake bitch
> …kill a nigger for the fuck of it
> I get you touched for chips
> Fuck that shit, and fuck the wimps
> Fuck you bitch, you could just suck my dick
> (Ja Rule 1999b: *The Murderers*).

I looked through the CDs they brought and noted that they were all of the same nature, being somewhat familiar with the genre myself. Some of them had brought small portable CD players with headphones, so there was little the staff could do about what individuals were listening to privately. The teens would also openly play this music on a larger CD player whenever the staff were not around. Given the extreme nature of some of the lyrics I could understand why the Centre staff would have to prohibit this kind of music, as it would simply be incompatible with the existing language policy that also forbids offensive language. Furthermore, Keith was uncomfortable with the lyrics that glorified drugs, violence and misogyny. Yet this genre of music obviously held a great deal of sway over the area youths.

It seemed that the teens were almost unfamiliar with any other form of music. At the summer camp one of the counsellors lead a séance back at the bunkhouse, after the telling of ghost stories around the campfire. When asked who they would like to contact in the séance, one yelled out, "2Pac," which prompted an argument that 2Pac was not gunned down but that he had faked his own death. Another suggested Eazy-E from N.W.A., while another yelled out, "Notorious B.I.G." None of the outsider counsellors listened to that kind of music[5], so one had suggested Jimi Hendrix, to which one of the teens asked, "Who's Jimi Hendrix?" Another counsellor suggested Kurt Cobain from Nirvana, which only elicited a round of mostly blank stares. These counsellors felt this lack of knowledge of earlier pop music was "pathetic." In my estimation these teens were born in the mid to late 1980s so I could understand why they may not be familiar with Jimi Hendrix. It was a little more curious, however, that they have not heard of Nirvana, given the mass popularity of this group's one particular hit and that Kurt Cobain died around the same time as Eazy-E from N.W.A. From the smirks on a few of the teen's faces I suspected that a few did know of the band but had conformed and did not admit to this knowledge in front of their peers, who appeared to be generally dismissive of any other forms of music other than rap.

I had no doubts that the teens were sincere fans of the rap genre though, as it must be pointed out, only as consumers as I never heard any of the teens rap themselves or even attempt to do so. The teens, primarily males, also adopted the genre's style of dress, which was mainly basketball shoes, baseball caps and other sportswear. They have also adopted the blatant glorification of the drug culture, which is as predominant in some

forms of rock as it is in rap. During an arts and crafts session at the summer camp I watched them make bracelets out of letter beads. I sat at the table with them and helped to cut the string and to tie the final products. I was not surprised at the predictable "THUG LIFE" being created by one, and I was somewhat amused that another could not find the "D" for his nickname of "Pudge" and settled for "PUGE." However I was a little uncomfortable with the "COKE" and "SMOKEY WEED" bracelets, as I was after all helping to make them and I did not think that the staff would approve.

I was also curious as to the extent to which they may have identified with some of the issues faced by inner city African-Americans, as articulated in the music. They were all white Newfoundlanders and I could not see how they could have experienced the systemic racism which formed a major theme of the rap and hip-hop genre. One night at the summer camp I was in the front room with some of the teens. There was a portable CD player in the corner and one teen went over to put a disc on. I grew concerned as I was the only adult in the room and no counsellors were present. If they were to play censored music I risked alienating them by asking for it to be turned off, or conversely allowing it and angering the staff. Inwardly I groaned as they put on *Venni Vetti Vecci* by Ja Rule, as this is the album from where the above excerpt was taken. I was also confronted with my own hypocrisy if I asked them to turn it off, as I not only had the policy of not interfering but I had the very same album at home. But this was the first time that I had the opportunity to watch them listen to music, so I decided to risk it and said nothing. The opening track is not rapped, but is sung in what I could only describe as influenced by or mimicking African-American spirituals.

Yea…been a slave too long
Oh my murderers! Let's march my niggers.

Lord can we get a break?
  Lord can we get a break?
We ain't really happy here
  We ain't really happy here
Take a look into our eyes
  Take a look into our eyes
And see pain without fear
  And see pain without fear

Lord!…Oh Lord…can we get a break?

(Ja Rule 1999: *The March Prelude*).

Some of the kids rocked back and forth on the couches to the song, others tapped their feet, while a few sang along quietly or hummed. In my interpretation the song is about the lingering cultural anguish over the American slavery experience and its linkages with contemporary America. In a sense, I think these white Newfoundlander teens have appropriated or taken ownership of these cultural forms and redefined them for their own experiences in the Froude project in St. John's.

For some of the teens it may have simply been music that they liked and perhaps nothing more than a teenage passing fancy. But for others, the repeated way the imagery of the rap genre emerged in their art, their graffiti, and their style of dress caused me to think otherwise. I think that important cultural messages are being appropriated, reinterpreted, and conveyed through music. Peter Wade (1999), in his analysis of urban Afro-Colombian music, argues that rap and reggae are more than merely music forms, they are vehicles for protest and consciousness-raising. He writes,

> Its [rap] identification – and that of reggae – with black
> autonomy and protest and with youth fitted their ideals

about the injustice and inequality they lived (Wade 1999: 457).

Keith told me that some of the youths felt that the street life of the projects of inner city America mirrored their own existence. Keith's father is African-American, and when I got to know him well enough I asked Keith if being black and working in the context of an urban Newfoundland housing project played any role in terms of his position. He replied that if anything it helped and that given the youths' affinity for African-American street culture, as mediated through music and film, it built rapport and that they asserted that "he knew what it was like." He laughed as he told me this, as he had to tell them, "Sorry b'ys[6], I'm from Corner Brook," and knew as much about life in U.S. inner cities as they did.

I think that the youth from Froude's connection with the messages being conveyed by this form of rap are related to other issues than racism. Some of the other themes that I have noticed in the music may relate to their own experiences: poverty, violence, drugs, social assistance and public housing. I do not think that their 'ethnicity' bears directly on whether or not the art form speaks to them. Philippe Bourgois (1995) points out that the New York born Puerto Ricans he worked with were openly hostile to African-Americans, even though they embraced their style of music, clothes and 'street culture' (Bourgois 1995: 45). When some of the teens were accused of being "whiggers" (white niggers) in the poolroom of the Centre by another youth[7] I could see that some were genuinely mystified, while others were angry.

I sympathised with the youths' frustration and resentment at having their music censored by the Centre staff, particularly as it appeared to be an integral component of

some of their identities. This issue proved to be problematic for the counsellors at the summer camp, as it drove a wedge between the outsider and insider counsellors. Most of the summer staff were from other areas of St. John's, but two lived in the Froude project and one was a close friend of one of these counsellors and she lived nearby. The 'insider' counsellors appeared to share the same tastes in music as the area teens, whereas the outsiders did not. One afternoon at camp I was sitting in a chair in the front room and was surprised to see one of the insider counsellors play one of the censored discs and proceed to dance. I could see that one of the outsiders was visibly annoyed at her, but the insider continued to dance and ignored her protestations. The summer staff were instructed to keep daily logs to note what they did and to keep track of problems and issues which they could later raise with the senior staff. Helen told me that one outsider in particular kept very detailed notes with keen observations. At the end of summer I asked this counsellor for permission to photocopy her log and quote from it in my thesis. She agreed and I promised to omit her name as well as any others in the text. The following is an excerpt from her log on this incident at camp, with the names deleted.

> They [local youths] also listened to music. I found it difficult to enforce the 'only censored music' rule when _____ was telling them to turn it up louder. This was difficult because I was standing there asking them to turn it off, as was _____, _____ and _____, but our authority was undermined when _____ got angry w/ us for making them turn it off, and then proceeded to tell them to turn it back on, and to turn it up. If our level of authority is lost through something so trivial, it shows the kids that they really don't have to listen to us.

When I read this entry in early September I was struck by how closely it matched my own fieldnotes, however I did not feel that the censoring of music was a minor issue.

I completely agree with her assessment as to the politics of authority, but what I witnessed was not a 'trivial' argument over music, but related to the assertion or 'ownership' of identity. I was also sympathetic to the staff's efforts to promote what they viewed as 'positive' in terms of participation at the Centre and in its programs, in contrast to something they perceived as 'negative.' However, I am pointing out that there are messages of ownership being conveyed here as well. I found it intriguing that John was able to convince the teens to paint over their graffiti one day with some paint that he acquired from Housing. I heard him explain to a Health and Community Services manager at a staff meeting that by doing so he was hoping to instil a sense of "ownership" in the teens for their actions. Admittedly, I would probably do the same thing in his position and the spray painting of the residents' homes should not be tolerated. However, I found it somewhat ironic to watch the teens paint over "The Blocks" and "Westside" in the name of 'ownership,' when, in their own way, that is what the graffiti was all about. Another contested aspect of 'ownership' pertains to the redistribution of the donated goods which came into the Centre and the ways in which some of the residents, both young and old, laid claims of ownership of the Centre and its resources.

### 6.4 – Ownership and 'Manipulation'

When I first started my fieldwork, most of the senior staff cautioned me that, "there is a lot of manipulation going on here." In general they were referring to the children, as it was a warning not to let them take advantage of me. The local kids know

that the Centre and the staff are there for them, in terms of providing both personal attention and material resources, but these kids will attempt to cleverly "manipulate" things to their own advantage. As I spent more time at the Centre I could see that the staff's concept of manipulation extended to some of the adults as well, which, in some of the more extreme cases, caused a great deal of duress and resentment on the part of the staff. Conversely, once I started to learn more about the situation, I came to view some of these practices by the residents as a form of asserting 'ownership' over these resources. The term 'manipulation' suggests a devious and selfish exploitation of the situation. Admittedly, some of the residents did at times take advantage of the staff and the Centre. Sometimes it did appear to be devious, and sometimes it was quite thoughtless. A similar situation of a contested view of 'ownership' held for the issue of the donations which would come into the Centre from time to time. The strategies used by some of the residents to acquire and redistribute these goods were branded at times by the staff as 'manipulation.' An alternate interpretation is that some of these residents were laying claims to these goods; they were, in a sense, asserting ownership of them and the space of the Centre.

The children were keenly aware that the Centre and staff were there for them, so it is understandable that they would work this situation to their advantage when and where they could. At times, there was an almost constant stream of children coming to the Centre to ask for a drink, something to eat, to use the washroom, to use the computers, for art supplies as well as sports equipment or just simply for attention. This was on the whole not unusual, as the Centre was there partly for these reasons. It became

problematic in part during the times when the staff were trying to close the Centre, either for the mid-day dinner hour, the evenings or Friday afternoons. The requests made of the Centre staff by local children appeared to be habitual for some to the extent they would turn to the Centre even for a drink of water. Once a child rode by on a bike and called over asking if she could have a drink, when her house was only a few doors down from the Centre.

John's major concern about this type of behaviour was that there was too much 'take' on the part of the children and not enough 'give' back to the Centre, as this was merely teaching them a form of negative reciprocity. Marshall Sahlins defines negative reciprocity as, "the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity" (Sahlins 1972: 195). He continues that, as a mode of economic exchange, it is the "most impersonal sort of exchange" (ibid). I think that, in the view of the staff, the children were attempting to get something for nothing, but I do not think it was impersonal. The children would sometimes play one staff member against the other and were keenly aware of the weaknesses of certain staff members. One five year old knew that I found it hard not to give her gum, to the point where she would help herself by reaching into my left shirt pocket or the small pocket in my backpack where she knew I kept it. This could be construed as blatant manipulation, though another possible interpretation is that it is a sign of intimacy and acceptance. One day in the fall, after my fieldwork had concluded, Bill asked me to help out in the homework program as he was going out of town. This little five year old not only remembered who I was, but without saying a word she reached into my shirt pocket looking for gum. Given the context of the area, I think that

underlying the staff's disapproval of such behaviour was also a view that the practice was a microcosm of the social welfare system, and that this 'dependency' would not serve the children well in terms of their making the transition to the adult job market and private housing. Ironically, the self-interested model of the 'economic man' (Wilk 1996: 36), so beloved of microeconomics and praised as a fundamental driving force behind market capitalism, is derided here as 'manipulation' when practiced by the less privileged sectors of society. One Friday afternoon as we were closing the Centre and I noticed little Ann, the same girl from the 'smoking' anecdote (see p. 72), sitting rather forlornly on the curb directly across from the Centre. She was holding her head in her hands and looking down at the ground. Keith had noticed this as well and pointed out that it was all less than coincidental. Before we drove away John pulled over to see what was wrong. As he was about to roll down the window Keith said that she probably needed money for the NEA block party, which was being held that night. This did turn out to be what she wanted, which was qualified with the 'no one is home/the house is locked,' statement that I also had heard previously on numerous occasions. I knew that one of the staff's policies was not to play favourites among the children, but little Ann was one of mine, so I fished in my pocket for a few dollars in change to give her. Before I could give the money to her Keith stopped me. John turned to her and asked, "Will you do something for the Centre on Monday?" She agreed, and John added, "Say thank you Jim," which she echoed. As we pulled away Keith joked, "You are going to have a friend for life now," and we chuckled at how gleefully Ann skipped away. I did not learn if in fact she did do

something for the Centre that Monday, but this was typical of how favours from the staff were made contingent on either courtesies, such as 'thank yous' or reciprocal chores.

It was difficult for me to sort out the cases of real need from those that the staff deemed 'manipulation.' On the occasion that I just cited, Keith felt that Ann did have money for herself but that she wanted some for her friends. I have no idea how he knew this, but all the senior staff appeared to have an almost unerring instinct as to what the kids were up to and how they thought. I heard, 'no one is home' from the children on many occasions when they wanted something to drink or to use the washroom. One other Friday, Helen and I were sitting on the porch waiting for the rest of the staff. One girl came over and asked to use the washroom to which Helen replied, "The Centre is closed honey" and suggested that she go home. She said that her grandparents were not home and the door was locked. Another girl piped up that no one was home at her house either. The staff seemed to know when these scenarios were true. One mother in particular was given to leaving her two young children alone for hours at a time. When either of these two girls would come to use the washroom at the Centre after-hours, exceptions seemed to be made. Mary, the five year-old from this family, did show up that afternoon and Helen let her in to use the washroom. Somehow Mary managed to get a bag of ketchup chips and she sat down next to me on the porch, offered me a few, and we sat there in silence enjoying the a fine summer afternoon. When the rest of the staff were ready to go, I felt a little distraught as we drove away and I looked back at Mary sitting all by herself on the steps of the Centre. I knew her grandmother was around and she would be okay,

but I also realized that if the staff stayed to attend to the needs of all of the area children before leaving, they might as well move in.

The children seemed to know that they could not expect favours and material resources from the Centre on demand, so they would sometimes devise, in the staff's view, these little 'manipulations' to acquire them. The staff did not appear to take offence to them, as they were coming from children. Adults, on the other hand, were a different scenario. I first noticed this issue early in my research at a staff meeting. Some of the parents of the preschoolers were negligent in terms of picking up their children late, as they knew that Helen would look after them. A HCS manager who was present at one staff meeting pointed out that aside from being a nuisance, there were also legal issues considering that the preschool is licensed and if a child were to injure him or herself during this time there might be legal complications for the Centre. I discovered later that this was not an isolated incident but tied into a larger history of some residents clearly taking advantage of the Centre, the preschool and Helen in particular.

After Helen had returned to the Centre after the birth of her daughter, she noticed an increasing number of children coincidently showing up before and after the preschool hours when she was feeding her daughter. She described the scenario to me in an interview.

> Everybody knew that I was going to feed [her daughter]. So then before dinner was over I would have four other children sitting on the doorstep [of the Centre] because they know that I'm feeding [her daughter], they know that I'm not going to let them starve…so I'm feeding five youngsters plus myself…and that continued for a whole year, only because it's 'Miss [Helen]'…because I've never turned anybody away…and I think it might have gotten to

the point where some parents said, 'Well, Miss Helen is up
there...go spend a few hours with her.' Now if somebody
came and asked me, 'Could you watch my child for an hour
or so?,' I'd be more than happy to do so...but not just to
assume.

I think it was the implied assumption that the Centre and the staff were merely a glorified

babysitting service which irked the staff. Aside from the core volunteers such as Kate and

some members of the NEA, I think it was also the case that the staff perceived that the

Centre was becoming less of a 'community' centre and more of a free child care

organization staffed by outsiders to cater to the needs of adult residents. John pointed this

out to me as well.

You try to open up the doors for kids to have the
opportunity to grow, for themselves, within themselves
...and you try to support parents, but...sometimes it
becomes an abuse...the parents look at it and says,
'Ah...drop 'em off [at the Centre], they'll take care of
them.' We never opened up for that reason. We opened up
to help them, to bring their kids along with them, but they
don't do that. All the time.

There seemed to be a clash between how some of the local residents and the staff

conceptualized ownership of the Centre; for the staff it was a service that was intended to

operate mutually in tandem with the residents, while for some of the residents it was a

service, funded by Housing and other governmental and social agencies, whose explicit

purpose was catering to the needs of their children. I do not think that the NEA or core

volunteers thought of the Centre in this way, but I think for some of the residents it was a

child and youth agency that had little to do with adults. One long-time resident told me

that he had nothing to do with the Centre as it was for "kids." His wife did play bingo and

cards there on occasion, but since the NEA operated these games I think they were conceived of as being activities ran by separate entity that happened to use the Centre.

I could see this issue from both points of view in terms of how the strategic use of resources by some residents could be seen negatively as 'manipulation' rather than as a positive display of taking 'ownership.' However, sometimes I had to agree with the staff and could see how this line could be crossed. For example, Helen had organized a preschool sleepover at the Centre for her class, and an issue arose out of this which she raised at a staff meeting. I could tell that she was a little upset as she told us how some of the preschool parents offered her some extra money to take some of their older children as well. Helen explained to them that it was a preschool sleepover intended for her class, not an open house event for the area children and youth in general. A few other parents had asked if they could pick the children up around noon instead of the stated nine a.m., as they would need time to recover from the previous night's excesses. Helen was understandably annoyed at this request in particular. John rubbed his eyes and sat back in the couch, asking Helen to repeat what she just said, as if he could not believe what he had just heard. She repeated the story and said that she explained to these parents why their request was inappropriate, adding that she was taking her own time to do the sleepover and had business to attend to the next day.

The most blatant example of manipulation I was told about was one parent who totally abused Helen and the Centre and it was an issue which noticeably caused the most internal friction amongst the staff. This woman came up in almost every interview and casual conversation I had with the staff. Even leafing through the log notes of one outside

summer staff member I could see that she created problems for them as well. This woman had two daughters who had both been through Helen's preschool, seemingly without paying the fees. Some of the staff had urged for the children's immediate expulsion, but it was also conversely argued it would merely be punishing the children to punish the mother. John was placed in an awkward situation in that he wanted to do what was best for the children, but since their grandmother was also involved in Centre activities he did not want to antagonize her either. Legal recourses were seemingly out of the question, as my sense was that turning to outside agencies would alienate the Centre from a lot of the residents and it was something that John tried to avoid. Furthermore, this woman had an uncanny ability to extricate herself from legal difficulties and could probably teach a course on the manipulation of the social welfare system. By the end of August, she owed hundreds of dollars to the Centre in back preschool fees and from my knowledge of the situation, I doubt that they would ever see this money.

This was the only issue that I saw which significantly divided the staff. Bill was concerned over the lesson that indecision over this issue would teach:

> The issue was that [Helen] felt totally abused by _____.
> [Her daughter] was allowed to come to the preschool, none
> of the other kids could come if they didn't pay…And then
> it got to the point where she wasn't even coming in, she
> was dropping [her daughter] off at the door…The lesson
> you learn about that…you can abuse…and nothing will
> happen.

I could sympathise with all of the staff's views on this issue. However I have included this incident to explain that blatant manipulation did occur which went beyond a strategic use and ownership of Centre resources, and that these rare but significant cases may have

somewhat jaded some of the staff's outlooks and coloured other issues of a less severe nature.

One of the younger staff members articulated his unease to me about what he perceived to be the constant attempts to "manipulate" the staff and Centre's resources. He explained that he would get somewhat despondent over this at times, finding it difficult to "treat people with a smile" when he was aware what they were up to. He added that the adults were in many ways like children in this regard, which immediately raised an intellectual red flag for me, so to speak. I have seen these kinds of arguments before, mainly from older sociological works which draw upon developmental psychology in order to explain behavioural differences in terms such as class. It is an infantilising discourse that makes me very uncomfortable, as it commonly misinterprets the strategies of those in conditions of need as the result of being socially and emotionally stunted due to poverty. It also bothers me because what is often valued as a ruthless and clever strategy in the business world is denigrated as childlike manipulation if practiced by the poor. I read one work in this tradition during the course of my research, entitled *The Incomplete Adult* (Lundberg 1974), not because I could not find more examples but because one was all that I could stand to read. Lundberg explicitly stated that she was positing a, "functional relationship between social class and personality development" (Lundberg 1974: 4), and that because the behaviour of the poor was not held to match that of the more privileged sectors of society that they had not fully developed as adults and were also, "culturally deprived" (ibid: 42). She continues,

> The social class value systems function to limit or facilitate
> the development of personality much as nutritional habits
> function to affect physical development (ibid: 26).

Poverty and the social sciences have had, in my opinion, an uneasy relationship. Far too often, theories as to the nature of poverty and socialization have held that poverty is the result of cultural or personal deficiencies or failings, while ignoring or downplaying the structural factors that are behind poverty and many of its associated problems. Within anthropology, one notable work on this issue was that of Oscar Lewis who argued that a 'culture of poverty' was a cultural adaptation to conditions of need. He argued that there was a link between poverty and worldview.

> The culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction
> of the poor to their marginal position in a class-stratified,
> highly individuated, capitalistic society. It represents an
> effort to cope with feelings of hopelessness and despair
> which develop from the realization of the improbability of
> achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the
> larger society (Lewis 1970: 69).

Criticisms were soon to follow the publication of his work. Carol Stack (1997 [1974]) notes that a key weakness with this theory was that, "many of the features alleged to characterize the culture of poverty – unemployment, low wages, crowded living quarters – are simply definitions of poverty itself, not that of a distinct 'culture'" (Stack 1997: 23). Stack is correct to note that a 'culture of poverty' presupposes some kind of uniform adaptation to conditions of need. From what I could see of the Froude project there was far too much diversity to argue for the existence of a culture of poverty. Some people were fully employed or successful in educational endeavours and were probably on their way to making the transition to private housing, some families have lived in the project

for three generations and were perhaps in a sense 'adapted,' but not in the negative, defeated manner suggested by Lewis, though some did not seem to be doing well at all and perhaps fit his model in some ways.

In my estimation, the staff member whom I discussed above conflated what he perceived as 'manipulation' by the children and their parents to be qualitatively the same. I feel that they are similar in the sense of the perception that the Centre and its resources are there for their needs but, as I will discuss below, I feel that the strategies employed over the redistribution of the donated goods were of another order and much more complex. I have no doubt that not paying preschool fees is blatant manipulation, especially when the party in question knows that she could get away with it; but she was an anomaly. From what I could see, the residents of Froude have a deeply entrenched sense of fair play. John was always trying to maintain consistency in the programs, as he was keenly aware that the residents would notice a lacking in this area. One of the major issues for some of the residents with regards to the summer program was the inconsistency in terms of the punishment of the children and charges of favouritism on the part of the counsellors. But the staff also have their own conceptions as to what is fair. A particularly contentious issue which emerged between some of the residents and the staff was the treatment of the donations which came into the Centre, especially with regards to a branch of the province-wide organization called SPAN (Single Parents' Association of Newfoundland), which operated out of the Centre's basement.

### 6.4.1 - Donations and SPAN

One morning I was sitting in the front room of the Centre with Bill and chatting over a cup of coffee. Nancy came over and asked Bill if he could pick up some donuts from Tim Horton's.[8] Bill answered that he did not have any money on him, but Nancy replied, "They're freebies. Donated to the Froude Avenue Community Centre." I was a little perplexed over this, as I did not think that the Froude area residents were in such dire straits that they were dependent upon donated goods from a coffee shop to survive. I noticed that donations would come in from a number of sources. Sometimes extras were passed from one community centre to another, or sometimes private citizens would drop off donations of food and clothing for SPAN. One afternoon a representative from a movie production agency dropped off some leftovers from their caterer. A major source of donations appeared to be the Kiwanis, whereby individual members would drop off donated goods when they appeared to be moving or cleaning out their homes.

One issue, which emerged from my observations of these donations coming in, were the discussions I had with the staff about poverty in the area. Patrick Burman (1996) argues that poverty can have 'monetized' and 'non-monetized' aspects. Income is an important statistical referent from which to construct evaluations or gradients of poverty. Statistics Canada uses ratios such as LICO (Low-Income Cut-Offs) to make these kinds of evaluations, where what is measured is the percentage of family income that is spent on the basic costs of living such as shelter, food and clothing. Burman contends that in such a statistical evaluation, "the main concern is where to place the income line which distinguishes the poor from the non-poor and how to measure it" (Burman 1996: 20).

However, the qualitative aspects of poverty may be more difficult to measure, and the subjective impact on individuals may defy quantitative evaluations. With regard to the non-monetized aspects of poverty, "Here poverty is seen as falling behind the standards and dimensions of well-being of society, as experiencing a relative deprivation" (Burman 1996: 21).

Sometimes the staff were not convinced that extreme poverty was particularly endemic to the Froude estate. John was particularly displeased with poverty being used an excuse or a crutch, and was especially irritated with the 'poor people of Froude Avenue' discourse that one could find articulated internally as well as externally. Drawing on his own background, Bill challenged the notion of 'poverty' as it related to the project, which he described as,

> ...the sense that this is a very down-trodden, academically poor, socially poor, financially poor neighbourhood. It's not. There are poor people here. I grew up poor, I understand poor...I don't see a lot of poverty around here. I see a lot of cars. I see a lot of fine clothing. I see a lot of people going on trips...

This is an argument that I have heard a number of times, in my own experience one that was made particularly by immigrants from the developing world I have met who dismissed North American conceptions of poverty. However, a critical aspect of poverty is one of immediate disparity, as Lewis pointed out, "success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society" (Lewis 1970: 69). There appears to be a notable disparity in terms of income between the residents of the Froude project and St. John's in general. According to Statistics Canada, the average annual individual income in St. John's in

1995 was $23,145. By contrast, the average annual income in the Froude project in 2001 by individual earner was $7980 (Appendix B).

Material indicators of poverty, or non-poverty as the case may be, can be quite deceptive. I did see some fine clothing and cars in the area. But I also saw a lot of empty parking spaces, as I saw old and worn clothing interspersed with the fine. Keith cautioned me that if one were to see expensive running shoes or shirts that one cannot jump to conclusions. Sometimes it may be stolen merchandise purchased at a reduced rate or sometimes it may have been donated. One day in the pool room in the basement of the Centre I noticed one teen wearing very new looking basketball shoes and an expensive rugby shirt, but the younger teen next to me on the bench was wearing a faded old grey sweatshirt and old running shoes that were literally held together by threads. A very different conclusion about poverty could be drawn if one were to visit the Centre on the first few days of the school year. During these days most of the teens were decked out with new running shoes and sports wear, but for many this may be the only significant new clothes, or objects of conspicuous consumption, for the year. During the repainting of the graffiti one of the participating teens wore a very new and expensive looking shirt, for some inexplicable reason. This shirt was ruined during the course of an ensuing paint fight and his mother was understandably upset. It was intended to be his new shirt for the coming school year; it was not part of some extensive wardrobe full of clothes, it was a shirt.

Returning to the donated donuts, I am certain that they were not a necessity in an immediate material sense, but the continued projection of need is important to ensure the

continued material and financial support of the Centre, and to ensure that some of the parents in the area who need these goods and services can continue to receive them. It would not be in the Centre's best interests to turn down the offers of aid in whatever form they come. However, it was even more difficult for John as the manager of the Centre to deal with the very real possibility of having to force an aid agency off of the Centre's premises.

As SPAN was located in the basement of the Centre and the rest of the programs generally took place on the floors above, I never did get much of an opportunity to learn about it extensively. A key member of SPAN, from a neighbouring social housing area, appeared to be friends with Kate and some of the other NEA women. One afternoon when I was around a member of the Kiwanis showed up with a carload full of goods in garbage bags to donate to the Centre. He insisted that I verify the number of bags that he dropped off. I was unsure as to why this verification was necessary so I asked Bill, as I knew he was a member of the Kiwanis. He looked a little embarrassed and said that members will keep track of how much they donate, but he did not really pay attention as to why. I helped to unload the car and I then helped Kate to sort through the bags in the basement. The SPAN room appeared to be like a small version of a Goodwill store, with sorted clothes on racks by size and type. On the wall was a sign which read, "Single Parent?…On Social Assistance?…Ineligible for E.I.?…contact SPAN." We sorted through the bags in another room, with the toys to be saved by the Centre for a nickel-day fundraising sale and with the clothes going to SPAN.

I was a little insulted at some of the goods that I noticed were donated from time to time. I kept quiet about it, as I did not see any of the residents complain so I never raised the issue. I watched Kate hold up and inspect an old shower mat from one bag, complete with a healthy colony of mildew around the suction cups. She merely shrugged and said, "Well, that's for the garbage." Keith had also noticed some of what is literally garbage coming in with the needed and appreciated food and clothes, but he said that there is little that you can say so as not to appear ungrateful. I had to tell John that the Commodore 64 computer which came in one day was probably only useful by today's standards of technology as either a paperweight or a museum piece.

After about a month into my research period, all of the senior staff had separately pointed out to me that there were what they regarded to be some problems with SPAN. Generally, what would happen is that when a fresh load of donations would appear, a particular clique of local women would have initial access to the goods before they were made available to the area and the public at large through SPAN. There is apparently a complex system in place whereby goods would be set aside to repay past favours or simply set aside for people who were associated with this network. I was unaware of these activities partly because SPAN was located in the basement and was a separate entity from the other Centre programs, though John had a final say as to whether or not their organization could use the Centre. Another reason it initially escaped my notice was due to the fact that the women who came to pick up these goods would tend to come and go though the back firedoors, perhaps to avoid attention. During the summer months I was able to observe donations being dropped off, followed a little while later by some of

these women who would leave with garbage bags of primarily what looked to be clothes. Several times over the summer I played some pickup sports at the back of the Centre with a partially disabled boy who did not want to take part in the group activities. From this vantage point I was coincidentally able to observe much of the comings and goings from SPAN that I had missed during the spring.

As the summer wore on, I began to hear rumours that John wanted SPAN gone. This was largely due to the fact that the way it was set up represented a significant fire hazard for which the Centre would be liable. I felt that SPAN was a significant adjunct to the Centre, as it drew in people in need from the larger surrounding area as well as the Froude estate. Several times during my research, people would show up at the Centre asking where SPAN or the clothing or food bank was. I was a little perplexed with what I took to be John's animosity towards the organization, so I asked him directly in an interview why he wanted SPAN out of the building.

> No, I don't want them out…[but] it's not the consistent program that the Froude Avenue Community Centre is offering in all other areas…because it's not consistent, and because it's being abused…it is giving us a negative name…and the whole neighbourhood is saying, 'That prick over there is allowing this to go on,'…what do I do?

I could see his point of view with this, and I could see how the practice would also clash with the residents' sense of fair play. However, what might seem to be a clear case of manipulation upon closer inspection may also appear to be a strategic use of resources and of ownership.

When I was helping Kate to sort out the donations in the basement she told me up front that if there was anything that I wanted to help myself. I was touched by her offer,

203

but I felt that the intention of the donors was that these goods were to go to the 'community' and not to some outsider researcher. I was sorely tempted at the offer of a pair of very new looking black hiking boots, but I made the excuse that they were too small for me. I also did not want to refuse outright and appear as though I thought I was 'too good' for donated clothing, considering that half of my wardrobe was acquired from the Salvation Army stores. However, something occurred as the result of this occasion sometime later with which I did not make the connection until I was coding my fieldnotes in September. I had to move in late August and had no need of the king-size bed that I had. The first person I thought of asking was Kate. She offered to take it and another single bed I wanted to get rid of, so I instructed the movers to drop them off at her place. I have no idea if she wanted them for herself or for someone else in her network, but I wondered afterwards if it was due to a sense of reciprocity that I immediately thought of Kate, when I could have easily had any charity organization come by and pick up these items or offered them to someone else I knew.

Thinking about the reciprocal networks of material aid connected to the distribution of the donations which came into the Centre, I was reminded of Carol Stack's (1997 [1974]) work with regard to 'swapping.' These networks of material aid among the poor with whom she worked in a U.S. city were often based partly around kin and friends, but also upon the reciprocal movement of goods. A favour such as the provision of food or clothing would be repaid sometime in the future, but continued standing in this network depended upon active reciprocity. Stack noted that individuals would, "enlarge their web of social relations through repetitive and seemingly habitual instances of

swapping" (Stack 1997: 34). Swapping appears to be the same, or very close to, Polanyi's notion of householding. The economic historian Karl Polanyi (1957) points out that the practice of 'householding,' the production or the redistribution of goods within a closed group, "has nothing in common either with the motive of gain or with the institution of markets" (Polanyi 1957: 53). This can be seen as 'multiple livelihood strategies' (Halperin 1990) or as an adjunct to the larger market system, and appears to be widely used as a coping mechanism by those in conditions of material need. Rhoda Halperin noted the same practice in the poor urban area of East End Cincinnati where she worked.

> The dominant economic pattern in the East End and, I dare say, in most working-class communities in the United States and in other urban parts of the world…is one I refer to, after Polanyi, as "householding" – very simply a mixed, predominantly noncapitalist pattern that focuses on the provisioning of the group…and the maintenance of kin and neighborhood groups, loosely defined. Provisioning is carried out as a series of circular flows of goods and resources (Halperin 1998: 126).

I think the problem that the Centre staff had with the practice is that the network which was benefiting from having the 'first dibs' at the donations did not match their conception of what the 'community' should have been. In other words, these donations were supposed to being going to the broad 'community' of the project, but were largely going to a select network of kin, friends and neighbours. Almost everyone whom I talked to about this issue, who were not connected to the research, agreed with the Centre's position that it was dishonest because people who were not connected to this particular network did not benefit. However, it is my contention that this stems partly from a misunderstanding of the nature of urban 'community,' as well as a narrow view of

'ownership.' As I argued earlier, urban 'community' should be seen as a series of social networks rather than a cohesive whole or unit, so I find it totally unsurprising to find networks connected to these donations through a few key individuals, who are distributing these goods as they see fit. It is also my contention that these networks are certainly being reinforced through the flow of these goods through the Centre and may act as an incentive for further local networks to be mobilized and to participate. I agree that some individuals are thereby being excluded; yet I would be surprised if 'first dibs' of donated goods were not set-aside in other formal charitable organizations. I also think of the nepotism found in the job market, even at the highest strata, to be a related phenomenon.

By March of 2002, I learned that the struggle over the fate of SPAN had become intensified. According to John, SPAN had sought legal advice and were prepared to fight to maintain their space at the Centre. The position John was taking was that they were a significant fire hazard, which I would have to agree with. But I wondered whether the struggle between the competing notions of 'manipulation' and 'dishonesty' versus 'ownership' played a role. In their own way, SPAN also appears to have taken ownership over their space at the Centre. In this instance, I interpret the struggle over SPAN and others that I have discussed in this chapter to be contestations over the ownership of the Centre and its resources. In many ways I felt that the Centre was John's by virtue of his position as manager, but I could also see how the core volunteers, such as Kate, laid claim to ownership of the Centre by volunteering their time. Kate took on the majority of the maintenance duties within the Centre, as well as operating the breakfast program.

Once I saw her flag down a Housing maintenance manager who was driving by to inquire about new screen windows for the Centre. This is the kind of ownership that the staff were hoping to see develop, and with some individuals, particularly the NEA members, it has. However, 'ownership' is a useful framework through which to note the contested ways in which these claims are made over the Centre and its resources, as well as to see the varying ways in which local identities are asserted.

Ownership is a somewhat problematic concept in terms of the tensions between what the NLHC and the Centre are trying to foster in the tenants and what is practiced, between the metaphoric talk of ownership and its structural limits, and between the staff's attempts to counter what they perceive to be 'negative' or 'manipulative' behaviour and forms of ownership practiced by the residents. It must be pointed out that John admitted that he also 'manipulated things' from time to time as part of his job of maintaining interest in the Centre by aid organizations (see p. 84). In many ways, the Centre's attempts at developing the 'cultural capital' of the children and youth of the project through their programs is similarly fraught with tensions and contradictions. These attempts to develop the residents' 'cultural capital' ties into the tensions that exist between the Centre's goal of equipping people with the tools and skills they are perceived to need for their educational and employment endeavours. A seemingly contradictory goal emerges whereby the efforts of the Centre can be seen as designed to both help the residents ultimately make the transition to private housing, and all the efforts described up to this point to strengthen the residents ties to their homes and 'community.' I will

now explore the issue of 'cultural capital' and the Centre in the final chapter of this thesis.

## Endnotes to Chapter Six

---

[1] I learned from a staff member in May of 2002 that one section of the preschool fence has now been damaged.

[2] None of the staff I talked to knew what 'F.T.W.' meant. I have encountered this acronym through my familiarity with the medium of tattooing and in my understanding it originated in biker 'lingo' and stands for 'Fuck The World.' I cannot say for certain if this is what it meant in the context of the Froude project, but that would be my interpretation.

[3] On the bus up to the summer camp I heard a few of the teens talking about the upcoming Regatta Day, a significant event in the city of St. John's. A few did not know what it was or what it was about. Whenever I relayed this to other Newfoundlanders from St. John's I knew through the university they generally responded with shock. Considering this and what the staff have told me, it would not appear to be an exaggeration to suggest that some of the children and youth of the project have limited experiences outside of their housing area.

[4] N.W.A., acronym for Niggas With Attitude, are perhaps the progenitor of the genre known as 'gangsta rap.' The brief history that I have quoted below from *Rolling Stone* also provides a good description of the genre for those who may be unfamiliar with it.

> The group debuted in 1987 with *N.W.A. and the Posse*, a loose collection of jams and tracks by N.W.A. members as well as other Ruthless signees. The album was generally ignored, so the following year Eazy added MC Ren (b. Lorenzo Patterson) to the lineup and the group approached recording with a harder edge. They released *Straight Outta Compton*, what many consider to be their first true record, in late 1988. Backed with brilliantly textured production by Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Ren and Eazy laid down some of the most brutal lyrics in hip-hop history on tracks like "Gangsta Gangsta", "Dopeman" and the title track. Detailing life in the slums of Southern California with a focus on gangs, violence and drugs, the words of N.W.A. struck fear in the hearts of many a suburban parent and found a large audience nationwide, particularly among white teenage boys, with virtually no radio or MTV support. The group also caught the attention of the authorities, in particular the FBI, who issued Ruthless and their distributor, Priority Records, a warning regarding the single "Fuck tha Police." http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/bio.asp?oid=5445&cf=544

[5] One night up at the camp, I was alone with a few of the outside counsellors in the cookhouse where they told me how much they despised that kind of music. The general consensus was that the messages and content were 'negative,' while one counsellor in particular went so far as to question rap's legitimacy as music and as an art form. I did not hear any of these counsellors say anything of this nature to the local teens, but I suspected that the more vocal one who asserted rap's status as "noise" might have. I attempted to maintain my 'neutral' status as researcher and did not take a position on music to either the teens or the staff.

[6] According to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (1999 [1982]) the term b'y is used to refer to "A male of any age; a freq term of address; a marker of informality or intimacy" (60).

[7] The person who taunted the teens was a newcomer to the project and was perhaps about ten or eleven years old. He was not part of the 'group' and he seemed to delight in antagonizing the area children and teens, which occasionally erupted in violence. At one point he was jumped by three or four children and young teens (including a six year old) after the Centre had closed. Keith happened to return to the Centre for something he forgot and was able to break it up. In the pool room that day the newcomer was making fun of the way the teens wore their visors upside down.

[8] Tim Horton's is a Canadian coffee and donut shop chain.

## Chapter Seven

## Cultural Capital

As discussed in Chapter Three, when the Froude Avenue Community Centre first opened its doors in 1985 its mandate was to provide recreational programs for the residents, as well as a site for local social interaction. The hope appeared to be that the residents would take charge of the facility, which would strengthen communal relations and involvement in local issues. The first manager of the Tenant Relations Program told me that initially a heavy emphasis was placed on the recreational aspects of the Centre, and in the early day of the Centre's existence they did not know how the Centre was going to "evolve."

The mandate of the Centre has changed since that time. Under John's management, since December of 1986, the Centre's role has expanded to encompass not only recreational programming, but also programs in the areas of education, health and skills development (see Appendix A). John described his approach to programming to me as being "holistic," in the sense that each program will integrate educational, social and recreational dimensions. In my estimation, the staff, through their daily interactions with the tenants, are attempting to instil particular forms of cultural capital, such as visions of success and modes of linguistic practice.

The key senior staff bring with them their own talents and knowledge, but also their own views on what constitutes 'appropriate' pedagogical techniques, child rearing practices, and communicative skills, which are informed by their own training and

positionalities. John used the analogy to me once that he was attempting to equip the residents with a "full toolbox" in terms of linguistic, social, educational and vocational skills. Borrowing a term from Bourdieu (1997 [1977]), I think that these 'tools' may be analytically placed under the rubric of 'cultural capital.' In keeping with the previous chapters on 'community,' 'empowerment,' and 'ownership,' I am exploring the tensions which underlie these efforts whereby the staff are attempting to instil particular forms of 'cultural capital' in the users of their programs and the Centre. In my estimation, based on extensive conversations with the staff, this form of cultural capital is intended to provide the children and youths of the project with the necessary knowledge, skills and social conventions that are required for them to perform well in the institutional education system and the job market. The ultimate intention is to aid the residents in making the transition from public to private housing. I will now turn to a discussion of the analytical concept of 'cultural capital.'

## 7.1 – Cultural Capital

The analytical term 'cultural capital' comes out of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1997 [1977]). Throughout his body of work Bourdieu distinguishes between many forms of 'capital,' such as economic, social, cultural and symbolic (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119), but for the purposes of this thesis I will draw upon an adapted notion of cultural capital. Whereas other thinkers such as Marx have focused on the role that economic capital plays in terms of domination and the concomitantly produced and reproduced inequality, Bourdieu points out that cultural

capital also plays a significant role in domination and the unequal access to resources. As such, there is usually, but not always, an important linkage between economic and cultural capital. Cultural capital can be seen as the knowledge that one possesses in order to be able to successfully navigate a given socio-cultural milieu. This can entail, for example, knowledge of the normative or 'appropriate' linguistic practices, styles of dress, mannerisms, or etiquette for a given social context. Bourdieu suggests that cultural capital is based to such an extent upon cultural knowledge that 'informational capital' may be a more fitting term (ibid).

There is also an important relationship between how both economic and cultural capital are distributed. Bourdieu contends that there is an "institutionalized mechanism" (Bourdieu 1997: 184) which produces and guarantees "the distribution of 'titles'"; the examples of which he gives are "titles of nobility, deeds of possession," as well as "academic degrees" (ibid). The reproduction of the systemic exclusivity of economic capital lies partly in its relationship to a particular restricted form of cultural capital, as access to, or maintaining a hold on, economic capital often requires possessing and displaying a particular form of cultural capital. But this exclusion based on cultural capital does not always have to relate to that of the elites; it can relate to almost every aspect of daily life on all socio-economic levels. The value of the analytical concept of cultural capital relates as well to the recognition that there are multiple variants appropriate to different circumstances and contexts.

Philippe Bourgois (1995) points out that there are often 'barriers' based on cultural capital. He cites the example of Ray, a respected leader of a crack dealing

operation in East Harlem. Even though Ray was fully adept at negotiating his way through the demands of his world, he had enormous difficulty dealing with relatively simple matters in the 'legitimate' world. Bourgois writes,

> In his private conversations with me over his aspirations for the future, [Ray] often seemed naïve or even learning-disabled. He was completely incapable of fathoming the intricate rules and regulations of legal society despite his brilliant success at directing a retail network for crack distribution…Ray lacked the 'cultural capital' necessary to succeed in the middle-class – or even the working-class – world (Bourgois 1995: 28).

Bourdieu likens the politics of cultural capital to a 'game,' but a game which has very conservative rules. He uses the analogy of a game in terms of players having tokens of economic and cultural capital and notes that, "players can play to increase or to conserve their capital, their number of tokens, in conformity with the tacit rules of the game and the prerequisites of the reproduction of the game and its stakes" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 99). The successful negotiation of any socio-cultural context depends upon having the right tokens and knowing when to use, display or hide them.

'Playing by the rules' does not mean that there is only one set of rules for all contexts. On the contrary, there are innumerable different sets of rules for a variety of socio-cultural contexts. More importantly, one may be fluent in the conventions of multiple contexts, which relates directly to the upcoming discussion on 'codeswitching.' But first I will turn to a discussion of cultural capital as it relates to the educational programming at the Centre, which goes beyond the teaching of core academic skills to that of encouraging academic discipline, developing social skills and more broadly to expanding the horizons, so to speak, of the local children and youth. In short, eroding

barriers through developing the cultural capital of the residents needed for the education system and the job market.

## 7.2 – Cultural Capital and Education

The formal aspects of education offered at the Centre are concentrated primarily in the homework program and the preschool. As I have described earlier (see Chapter Three), these programs focus not only on the core academic concerns but also broader aspects of cultural capital which, in the staff's view, are helpful tools over the entire course of the lives of the young people of the project. When I watched Bill at work and interacting with the children and youths at the Centre, terms such as 'non-paternalistic' and 'positive reinforcement' cropped up in my fieldnotes. As an educator, Bill is in an advantageous position which would be difficult to match in the formal education system, as he has his many years of experience as a teacher and a principal behind him, but he can also interact with the children in the more comfortable environment of the Centre in their own neighbourhood. He also aware of many of their individual needs and circumstances, and interacts with some of the parents quite frequently, sometimes intervening on their behalf with the school administrators and teachers. Watching him help the children with their homework, I came to describe his style as 'non-paternalistic' in the sense that he never forces or coerces academic discipline. In one session I watched a young teen come into room in the upstairs of the Centre and loudly proclaim that he was not going to do any work. As long as he did not create a disturbance, Bill just left him alone. The young man soon grew bored and came to Bill for help. Within the span of

ten minutes after entering the room, they were both working together on a language sheet. Bill would say aloud words like "judge" and "nation" and the young man would write them out on paper. With a bit of patience, Bill was able to work towards instilling the self-discipline needed for academic achievement, as well as creating a positive environment that the children will return to of their own volition.

'Positive reinforcement' is a term which has entered the popular lexicon through behavioural psychology. As it is used in psychology, Pierce and Epling (1999) define positive reinforcement as: "The presentation of a reinforcing stimulus contingent on behavior is called positive reinforcement, and it has the effect of increasing operant behavior" (Pierce and Epling 1999: 397). Generally, the meaning is that behaviour that results in positive consequences is more likely to occur again. While the staff at the Centre will admonish or sometimes discipline children if necessary for negative behaviour, they are always quick to encourage and try to create an atmosphere at the Centre that is conducive to learning and socializing. Even terms such as 'rules' are discouraged in favour of 'conditions' or policies.

Bill did not frame his views of pedagogy in terms of either positive reinforcement or cultural capital, but he described to me what he was doing as trying to develop the children's "self-esteem" or their "inner voice."

> Another thing I say to the kids too, is something that I think, for the most of them now, they are beginning to believe: they are smart children. And I don't think they've heard that enough before in their lives. But it's something they hear from me over and over and over: 'You're a smart child'...It revolves around the whole issue of self-esteem. Where do you get your self-esteem? For the most part smaller kids, and the teenagers too if they hadn't developed

it, they get their self-esteem from listening to what people tell them: 'You are smart, or you are a good hockey player'…If they don't hear these things, they don't have that inner voice.

Speaking of a particular young teen, Bill continued,

I keep saying to \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, 'I'm taking you home. You're such a good boy.' But, he's never heard that at home, because all the attention has always been negative. He hasn't done well in school. His sister doesn't have a good reputation around the neighbourhood. His father, for the most part is…[*pause*]…an alcoholic who wastes a lot of money on other stuff. His mother dropped out of school when she was in grade six…and he's probably not going to have this inner voice until he is twenty-five or thirty or maybe even fifty years old. That's really scary, to go through all your life without a sense of self-esteem or self-worth, or just a sense of self…because he just hears and sees negativity all around him.

One way the staff try to inculcate this 'inner voice' is to make sure that accomplishments are positively reinforced through praise and recognition. One teen made a dramatic turnaround in terms of his academic achievements and general behaviour, which I feel is partly related to the staff's efforts. One afternoon he showed up at the Centre simply glowing with a pass of sixty-six percent on a test from a summer school course. I congratulated him, as I knew how hard he had worked. In the spring I had marvelled at his self-discipline when he sat in Bill's office with me to work on a novel study, while directly outside his friends were playing basketball. Upon hearing this news Keith also came over and congratulated him. The only downside was that an outsider summer counsellor, who did not know the circumstances, said aloud, "Sixty-six….is that good?" I ground my teeth in frustration, but she came to learn the context and in the fall donated her own time to tutoring at the Centre. The teen ignored her and took his test to

Helen who congratulated him and gave him a hug. Helen took a special interest in this teen and I noticed that he was one of the few local teens who helped her with the preschool graduation. She described to me the difference between how the staff would respond to his academic achievements and his mother, perhaps in her frustration using the only expletive I can recall her ever uttering in my presence in this interview.

> He knew that when he brought his test marks to me – and
> he had seven tests there, two he failed and five he passed –
> I wasn't going to shit on him for the two that he failed. You
> know, 'It's great that you passed five'…and so now we
> have to figure out what we are going to work on for the
> other ones.

This model of pedagogy discussed above is informed by fairly recent developments in the discipline of education, and it is not the model in which either John or Bill themselves were educated in when they were in school. When we went to a local pub after the Centre closed on Fridays they would sometimes reminisce about the denominational education system in Newfoundland that they experienced, replete with tales of stern disciplinarians and strappings. They admitted that it was not a particularly pleasant experience, but they often came close to suggesting that the changes in this system of education may be a reason for the contemporary discipline problems in the current school system. Keith, who was in his late twenties and did not seem to have had as severe of an experience in school as Bill or John, argued that the current system is woefully short on discipline, even though this is the kind of 'negativity' they try to avoid at the Centre.

Notions of education are culturally and historically situated, and the kind of pedagogical techniques that the staff at the Centre employ would probably not match the

experiences of the children's parents or grandparents when they were at school. I never once saw Bill raise his voice and he would never strike a child. In her ethnography of a rural Irish village in the 1970s, Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2001 [1977]) points out that corporal punishment was encouraged in the home and in the school and that it was seen as a fundamental "right" of teachers (Scheper-Hughes 2001: 253). One priest told her that if children grew up without "fear" in their lives one would grow up with "a sense of being an island and a law unto himself" (ibid: 254). Scheper-Hughes took a stand on the issue as she argued that this kind of severe discipline at school led to a 'school phobia' in children which, in her thesis, contributed in part to a number of anti-social personality disorders that manifested in later adult life. However, it is one system of education which is historically and culturally situated, as is the student-centred model of positive reinforcement which the Centre adopted.

There is an additional reason to have adopted this model of positive reinforcement and self-esteem building in the Centre's programs in the context of the Froude project. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the residents may or may not have internalized the stereotypes and stigma of living in social housing. Nancy, President of the NEA, told me that she never felt inferior due to her own particular upbringing and home life. However, there were a few instances where I think that messages about this stigma were being conveyed by some of the residents. One fine day in August, Keith organized a community clean up which was targeted at involving the older teens. Rarely did any teens above the ages of fifteen or sixteen participate in the activities at the Centre, so this was an attempt to try to reach out to them. A group of three males and one female showed up.

They all appeared to be around eighteen. The males were quite large and muscular, with shaved heads and appeared to be heavily tattooed. I caught a glimpse of black gothic lettering running down one of their forearms but I could only make out the word, "Outlaw." We were joined by some younger teens and children for the clean up, as well as a worker from the Brighter Futures organization next door, which is a support service for mothers with children up to the age of six. As we started to clean around the Centre I could hear Kate mutter from a porch, "What next?" The older teens collected some garbage bags so they could clean the area near their homes. As they passed by us, one of the teens put a garbage bag over his head and called over to Keith saying, "Hey…I'm taking out the garbage." This was one of the pivotal moments of my field research, and upon hearing this I felt a wave of both humour and despair wash through me. In a sense he was joking, but I have never felt joking to be much more than a way in which to communicate sensitive information, leaving an exit to claim that one was, after all, only 'joking.' This incident troubled me, but I did not know much about the personal circumstances of this teen, other than some trouble with the law and substance abuse. John was later to tell me another incident which confirmed for me that there is a link between the stigma of social housing and conditions of relative poverty and that of a sense of personal inferiority.

I have borrowed and adopted a term from Michael Herzfeld which I think is an apt phrase to describe these kinds of displays of feelings, 'rueful self-recognition.' He writes, "Embarrassment, rueful self-recognition: these are the key markers of what cultural intimacy is all about" (Herzfeld 1997: 6). Herzfeld was referring to national

stereotypes that are decried at the same time they are used to build national identities, however I think the concept may be adapted here. I think that one specific anecdote which John relayed to me characterizes this sense of 'rueful self-recognition' very well. John and some relatives and friends, some of whom were former Froude residents, all went on a group vacation to a Caribbean sunspot that summer and when John returned we talked about the above incident of the garbage bag and issues of negativity and self-esteem, when he recounted a rather poignant incident to me. There was a mix-up with the travel agency during this vacation and they had to temporarily stay in a less than ideal resort. One of the former residents in their party had joked that this resort was the "Froude Avenue" of resorts. John was noticeably distraught as he told this to me, and I pondered that if this kind of internalized sense of inferiority could follow one out of the project and into adulthood, even where one is successful by the 'standards' of the larger society, then I could imagine the powerful impact it could have on some residents who are also coping with a variety of other issues and had few prospects for leaving.

This kind of rueful self-recognition obviously does not present an insurmountable barrier for those who may aspire to upward social mobility; but, in the staff's estimation, without the positive reinforcement and encouragement they are trying to provide through their programs, there is the possibility that the notion of upward social mobility for some may not even appear as a viable option. Paul Willis (1981 [1977]), in his analysis of English working class teens in the late 1970s, points out that for these teens upward mobility did not appear to be a realistic option. 'The lads' had a very cynical appraisal of the 'system,' so to speak, and did not accept the messages being conveyed by the teachers

as to the importance of good grades. In many ways 'the lads' were aware of their position within the capitalist labour system and what was expected of them once they left school, but their understanding was partial in the sense that, due to their rejection of the formal education system, they were partially complicit in the system which geared them towards working class jobs. To be certain there are other barriers to upward mobility, but the messages they received in the home and from peers reinforced their worldview whereby the "possibility of real upward mobility seems so remote as to be meaningless" (Willis 1981: 126).

I saw a few incidents during my fieldwork, usually connected to issues of education, which appeared to be similar to the process that Willis described. One afternoon I was in Keith's office with a young teen. He asked the teen what he was going to do for the weekend, and he responded by saying, "Eat, sleep, eat, sleep, eat, sleep." Keith then asked him if he was going to study for his upcoming exam. The teen shrugged and asked, "why?", as he could, "get the grade" with a minimal pass. Keith countered that he should go for the "A" instead, which only elicited another shrug. I heard the 'getting the grade' scenario on a few other occasions and it irritated Bill to no end that the education system continued to push students along with borderline grades. For some of these youths, it did not seem that the connection was made between education and employment opportunities. For some of the youths of the project it appeared that the inability for them to be 'successful,' in terms of the standards of the larger society, was a forgone conclusion. This emerged in some of their responses to a series of interviews of the local teens conducted by the staff in the spring of 2001.

The staff of the Centre conducted a series of interviews of twenty-six area youths ranging in age from twelve to eighteen. They were referred to as 'Participant Interviews' and the purpose was to ascertain how the Centre could be improved to meet their needs, as well as to find out what was on their minds. I felt that these interviews would be more valuable than any I could conduct at that point, given the rapport that the staff had already built up with these youths, so John allowed me to have access to the interviews provided that I kept the names of the participants confidential. One question in particular which caught my eye was number thirteen: *What would you like, but don't think you'll ever get?* I recognize that this is a leading question, but this question appeared to be tailor-made for my interest in these youths' expectations as it inquired, in plain and simple terms, as to the disparity between desire and the realm of possibility. Fourteen of the respondents answered that they did not think they would ever get "a car" and eight replied "a house." Some of the responses had multiple items, with "money" being the most common. I felt that these were quite 'standard' desires in the context of a North American city. However in answering this question, the youths of Froude Avenue indicated a desire for some of the things many take for granted, such as a house or a car, but which in their view appeared to be out of the question. What also bothered me was that for one "university," and for two others "finishing high school," were things they never felt they would accomplish. I was saddened to see that in response to *What would you like, but don't think you'll ever get?* two had replied, "a good job."

An important aspect of the cultural capital the staff were trying to instil was not only for the children and youths to develop their academic skills and to be 'good

students,' the staff were also trying to counter what they perceived to be socially imposed low expectations that were placed upon kids from housing projects. The staff were also trying to make explicit the link between education and success. Bill pointed out that in his experience there exists a low expectation of the performance of students from social housing on the part of teachers.

> I think it's a little systematic in the inner city because there is a wrong expectation that poor children are stunned[1] children. There's also an expectation that kids who live in subsidized housing are stunned children…[and that] children who come from subsidized housing have parents who really don't care about them…I've been in inner city schools so I know the difference in expectations.

In conjunction with Willis' (1981) work, the issue seems to be one of the differential expectations placed upon students in the school system based on class. The programs offered at the Centre are partly geared towards helping the area youths realize goals such as upward mobility, not only through the provision of certain academic or social skills, but also through the cultural capital needed to make upward mobility seem to be a goal which is realistically attainable.

As I noted previously, the staff were attempting to instil in the children and youth from the project the cultural capital they would need to successfully navigate the formal education system and, later in the life, the employment market. This cultural capital included not only the basic academic tools, but a personal belief that success was possible and a worldview which incorporated upward economic mobility as an attainable goal. But I do not believe that this would be impossible for all of these youths without the Centre and the staff's presence, but I believe it most definitely helps. I also think that it is

important to point out that assumptions are being made that the children are not being 'positively reinforced' at home. I have no knowledge of this aside from some of the specific cases that were brought to my attention by the staff, but they were also quick to point out that generalizations could not be made. However, it seems that the staff are also making an assumption that a lack of positive reinforcement in the home is necessarily an inferior model of child rearing practice and it seems that I was guilty of this thinking at times as well. During a junior softball match between the Froude team and another area team, I was surprised to hear a few expletive-laden outbursts from one of the parents who was there to support her son. Her son admittedly made a series of bad plays, but since it was a game that was supposed to be for fun I did not see the point of getting upset. Generally the audience of other parents, local children and youth would politely applaud even a poor performance for support, and the coach would usually say something encouraging. However, this one boy's mother would criticize his performance, shaking her head and saying quite loudly, "stupid, stupid play." His frustration grew and after his next fly out to centre he slammed his helmet and bat down at home plate, to which his mother chastised him as being a, "fuckin' suck." This woman was something of an anomaly from what I could see. Nancy walked over to her and said something to which she replied, "I guess I'd better keep my mouth shut." As I was within ear range I was not sure if this was due to my presence.

Afterwards I raised the matter with John as it bothered me. Part of the way through my retelling of the above incident he replied, "I know who you are talking about," but he did not disagree with my reaction. However, the issue of child rearing is a

225

difficult subject as it commonly leads to ethnocentric assumptions and value judgements. One does not have to look very far in the anthropological literature to find examples of differing models of child rearing practices. Scheper-Hughes (2001 [1977]), in her work in rural Ireland, noted that the villagers used physical punishment on even very young children (by one parent's account as young as six months) that would result in criminal proceedings against the parents in contemporary Canada. One mother told her, "You've got to slash them while they're still too young to remember it and hold it against you" (Scheper-Hughes 2001: 252). In her work in Brazil (1992), Scheper-Hughes notes how some mothers, living under conditions of extreme scarcity, would allow a child in some cases to die of neglect, children who were felt by the mothers to be "doomed" (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 342). From a particular socio-cultural context allowing children to die, beating them, or verbally abusing them may appear to be repugnant, but I think it is important to tread carefully when making these kinds of judgments. Similarly, certain pedagogical approaches are also cultural products and need to be seen as such. I do support the staff in their efforts, but I also felt it necessary to caution against generalizing about families in the area. As well, it is important to recognize that the project to provide the needed 'tools' or the cultural capital for young people by its very nature assumes that there is either a 'lack' of some kind, or existing cultural forms or practices, be it education or child rearing, are either inferior or 'wrong.' In the staff's view some of these children are not receiving what they perceive to be the necessary cultural capital in either the home or the formal school system, so they are there to bridge the gap, so to speak. I would also like to add that academics sometimes have the luxury of trying to remain

'objective' or neutral, but this is a luxury that many workers in front line social agencies do not have.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the staff attempted to instil particular forms of cultural capital in the children and youth of the project was through the active censoring of their linguistic practices. Beyond simply censoring certain discursive practices the staff were also trying to alter these practices through teaching the skill of 'codeswitching.'

## 7.3 – Codeswitching

The educational endeavours by the staff went beyond the teaching of the core academic disciplines of reading and writing. The staff also addressed what they perceived to be the barriers to the children's and youths' success in the formal education system, general social life and ultimately the job market. One barrier, in the staff's view, was that some of the children and youth lacked the self-confidence or cultural capital needed to realize these goals, or to believe that they were even attainable. Another important 'tool' of cultural capital the staff felt was important for the children to possess was linguistic competence, not only in terms of the ability to read and to be able to speak articulately, but also to 'codeswitch,' though the staff did not use that term.

I can recall quite vividly the first linguistics course that I took as an undergraduate. The instructor went to great lengths to instil the message that linguistics was a "descriptive" not a "prescriptive" discipline. Languages, dialects and registers cannot be ranked within the discipline in terms of inferiority or superiority; they are all

equally valid forms of communication. However, outside of the discipline linguistic forms are ranked and judged in the terms of a social hierarchy. Standards of speech are recognized and conformity to these standards is often demanded. Discursive practices often mark speakers in terms of ethnicity, region, class and other aspects of positionality including gender,[2] but failure to conform to certain standards in particular contexts can adversely affect one's access to resources. Bourdieu notes that oftentimes there is a link between linguistic inequality and social and economic inequality.

> Inequalities of linguistic competence constantly reveal themselves in the market of daily interactions, that is, in the chatter between two persons, in a public meeting, a seminar, a job interview, and on the radio or television. Competence effectively functions differentially, and there are monopolies on the market of linguistic goods, just as on the market of economic goods (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 147).

The staff's efforts to help to develop the practice of codeswitching in the children and youth of the project were, in my estimation, related to addressing the barriers of cultural capital in terms of linguistic competence.

I observed the staff's almost constant efforts to monitor and censor the children and youth's discursive practices, particularly during the summer program when they were in the more neutral settings away from the Centre. The use of obscenities was actively discouraged by the Centre's policies, and infractions of these 'conditions' were perhaps the major cause of temporary bans or the suspension of privileges during the summer program. It was only during this program, in a neutral area away from the Centre and the staff, that I was able to fully appreciate the extent of what I will describe as codeswitching. Carol Eastman describes codeswitching as a situation, "where people

invoke another language in an obvious way…codeswitching represents a *marked choice*" (Eastman 1992: 1 emphasis in original). Broadly, this 'marked choice' in terms of code switching does not have to be a 'language,' it could be colloquial forms, select vocabularies or other socio-linguistic variances. Sharon Roseman points out that codeswitching does not have to be strictly linguistic in nature, but it could also refer to context-based alterations in styles of dress, demeanour and mannerisms. In the rural area of Galicia where she worked, women "self-consciously 'code switch' between 'peasant' and nonpeasant demeanors as part of their negotiation of where they fit into a broader economic and social system" (Roseman 2002: 25). I am not arguing that the children of Froude are being taught by the Centre staff to use another language or dialect; perhaps register, discursive style, or restricted vocabulary would be a more appropriate term. The practice of codeswitching involves not eliminating a particular linguistic form, but learning the ability to know when to contextually invoke one form rather than another.

Early in my research I was more or less confined to the Centre itself and I never noticed language to be much of an issue, aside from some yelling by the preschoolers. The only other incident I could recall during this period was one morning at the breakfast program. Kate's teenage daughter had used the word "shit." I probably would not have noticed had Kate not scolded her by saying, "Don't you know another word for that?" Her daughter frowned and then with a wry grin said, "Ok…crap." I chuckled and dutifully entered the incident into my fieldnotes when I had a chance and thought no more of it for the time being.

During the preschool in May and June I never noticed any incident whereby the preschoolers used obscene language or any expletives at all. I just assumed they were not familiar with them. However, at one point in June a temporary staff member was distraught with regards to an incident with one of the preschoolers. As it was relayed to me, she was trying to coax the little girl down from a lowered roof area at the back of the Centre that children sometimes climbed up on. While she was doing this the girl, who was five years old, had called the staff member a "fucking idiot." Given my experiences in the preschool and around the Centre to that point I was surprised to hear this. I did not know this particular girl at the time, as she was in the preschool session I did not attend. As the summer progressed I would come to know this girl fairly well and I too would come to have the experience of being cursed at by a five year old.

During the preschool sessions I noticed that Helen would monitor and correct the children's speech mainly for volume. If they yelled or screamed, which they would do if they were upset or excited, she would admonish them gently to use their "talking voices." Various staff members told me repeatedly with regards to one boy that I should have "seen him last year." Apparently he could not talk at a volume under a yell and cursed to a rather extreme extent. I found this description difficult to correlate with the boy I met at the preschool graduation, as he was also in the session I did not attend. The graduation was held in the auditorium of a local school and it took almost a whole day to set up and weeks for Helen to prepare. I helped in the back room with costume changes and rounding up the preschoolers who decided to play the 'chase game' down the school's corridors. Aside from some predictable crankiness and hyperactivity I did not see any of

this cursing or yelling by this young boy. Helen insisted that what I was seeing in late June was the "final product" so to speak and not really indicative of the children's behaviour from the previous September. I took her word for it and did not think much again of the subject until early July.

During the summer program I found that I tended to spend time with children who did not want to participate in some of the day's offered activities. Some appeared to be introverts, while one, nine-year-old Allen, was partially handicapped and he avoided sports-related group activities. Generally I would have one-on-one sessions with him, playing basketball or kicking a soccer ball back and forth. He was quite bright and articulate, but he resented the requests of other children to join in. I felt I had to allow others to join for reasons of fairness and I also did not want to spend the entire summer's research with one child alone. During this time, I never noticed Allen act in an overtly hostile manner and he certainly was not aggressive in either mannerism or speech.

One day we were in the park and I was startled as a voice behind me began hurling a barrage of expletive-laden language at Allen, to which Allen replied in kind. I was shocked as I had never heard him use these words before, and I was equally shocked to turn and see that the instigator was six-year-old Chuck. Chuck was a popular and likable child with a disarming smile with his missing two front teeth, but he had a reputation for being somewhat aggressive and violent. I was not prepared to hear what transpired next which is now indelibly imprinted on my mind:

> Chuck : Fuck you, you stupid motherfucker!
> Allen : Fuck you!
> Chuck : Cocksucker!

> Allen : Why don't you go home and have sex with your
> mother!
> Chuck : Why don't you go home and have sex with your
> father, you homosexual!

Between his young age and his two missing front teeth, Chuck struggled to pronounce 'homosexual,' which came out as, "ho…mo…secks…yall." I almost would have laughed had I not been so horrified. Once I regained my composure I intervened and said, "What's with the language? Where did you learn language like that?" Grinning from ear to ear from the swing, Chuck simply replied, "Fuck you" to me, though I did not sense it was with malice. Allen piped up, "His dad taught him that, that's where he learned it." This resulted in another heated exchange between the two. I disgustedly threw my arms up and said, "That's it! If you're gonna use language like that I'm going back to the Centre!" I stormed off the field as Allen protested that Chuck started it, which resulted in a series of mutual blows. I returned to break it up as Allen cried out, "He hit me in my bad leg!" I had to separate them twice, so I suggested that Allen return to the Centre for his own safety. Allen tagged along with me arguing that Chuck always starts it and there was nothing else he could do.

I was startled by this incident, as up until this point, I had never heard language like that used in or around the Centre. I surmised that the park was sort of neutral territory, away from the restrictions of the Centre. Moreover, as a researcher I tried to avoid direct intervention in the modification or disciplining of behaviour, unless it was to break up fights or to prevent injury. My sense was that this incident would not have occurred if a staff member such as Helen or John was present. At the Centre, or under staff supervision off-site, infractions of the rigid language conditions would often result

in a range of actions, such as admonishment or in extreme cases, temporary bans from the Centre or the withholding of privileges. John told me that he disliked banning or even scolding, preferring instead open dialogue and communication. As per usual, John illustrated this to me with the use of an anecdote. He told me that recently a local youth referred to a bike as a "crappy bike." He replied that it was in fact a "poopy bike." After several attempts, the youth relented and agreed that it was a "poopy bike."

Admittedly these strategies to instil codeswitching in the children and youth in terms of a delimited vocabulary appeared to be quite effective, given the noticeable paucity of cursing around the Centre, and given that by this point I was also on alert for it. During a soccer-baseball game on the centre field I watched one youth repeatedly censor himself, even with his growing frustration at the incompetence of his team. He would cry out in annoyance and then catch himself as he began to articulate several of the more common expletives. A few days later in the Centre, someone was playing with a hand-held electronic game. Growing irritated with the sound a teen exclaimed, "What the f… is that beeping?", looking in my direction and catching himself as to only articulate the first sound of that expletive. This practice was so effective that Allen had in fact corrected me one day. I had taken him to the park on one unusually warm day, at which point he decided to take off his shoes and socks. Worried about the glass and other debris in the sand I begged him to put his shoes back on. For emphasis I added, "Look, there's dog crap all over the place," to which he admonished, "dog poop."

Outside of the contexts of the Centre and the staff and in a neutral environment this self-censoring did not seem to occur. As stated previously, I did not try to intervene

or to discipline the children and youth unless it was absolutely necessary. One drawback was that I realized that I had little authority if I ever did need to invoke it. A benefit was that I was able to observe at times, to an extent, how they may have acted without the presence of the staff. One warm summer afternoon the Centre arranged for some of the local teens, who went on the spray painting binge discussed earlier, to repaint over their handiwork. The supervisors from the Centre included Keith and the summer coordinator, while I tagged along as an observer. It soon became apparent to me that the staff forgot about my status as a researcher, as the summer coordinator and Keith soon drifted back to the Centre and did not return. I grew alarmed as I realized that I had no authority over these teens and they knew it as well. No sooner had Keith left us then did the expletive-laden language begin. He was literally a few feet out of hearing range when the teens reverted to what I took to be their normal style of speech amongst themselves. I was pleased in terms of being afforded a measure of naturalistic observation, but since the teens had realized that I was not there to discipline them I was powerless to prevent an ensuing paint fight. I had to return to the Centre to pull Keith out of a meeting. He looked a little disappointed with me, so I apologized later and reminded him of my status.

Aside from the Centre and school, where there were formal language policies in place, I assumed that the home was another context in which codeswitching was enacted. However, it appeared in at least a few cases that the home was where this kind of expletive-laden language was learned in the first place. Helen told me that this was the case with a few of the preschoolers, and in the incident between Allen and Chuck above Allen had asserted that it was the home where Chuck had acquired his colourful

vocabulary. After the Canada Day barbeque, a summer staff member and I returned the barbeque back to Nancy. As usual we were accompanied by a group of children, one of whom was on a bike and squirting the others with a water pistol. When five year old Mary was squirted she yelled, "Fuck you!" in anger. The staff member reprimanded her for the language, but her friend piped up, "Mary even says the f-word to her mother." I noted that this self-censoring might not always be effective in the presence of the staff. At the preschool graduation I did not notice any lapses on Mary's part, but at other times I noticed Kate scolding her for using swear words at the Centre on the seemingly rare occasions when she did. Once I was chasing Mary around the Centre when it was closed. It turned into a game for her and she was laughing and giggling as she deftly evaded capture. I finally caught her in the preschool and picked her up to cart her out of the Centre. Suddenly she began flailing her arms and legs and yelled, "Fuck ya b'y!" I could see the difficulty some of these children would have in their early years in the formal school system, which I feel would be of a greater magnitude were not for the efforts of the Centre staff.

Granted these strategies to change language use by the Centre staff appeared to be generally effective in terms of codeswitching in the context of Centre activities; however, I still had to ask the question as to why language restrictions were important to monitor and enforce. Most of the staff were puzzled as to why I would ask what they regarded to be such an obvious question. They would generally reply that cursing was simply "wrong" or "negative." John also answered that it was wrong, but I pressed him for a more in-depth explanation. He responded that this kind of language was not tolerated in

schools, work environments or in general society, so why should he tolerate it at the Centre. I agreed, but I pressed further for a more practical rather than moral reason. He pointed out that not learning when to self-censor would be a definite liability at school as well as when looking for work as an adult. One of the analogies he used was that he was trying to help to provide the area residents with a "full toolbox" in terms of educational and social skills, and one of these tools relates to the contextual moderation of discursive practice.

The monitoring of language in the Centre's programs is geared, in my opinion, towards providing the skills, knowledge, or cultural capital so that the residents may be able to successfully navigate their way through the larger society outside of the context of the project, and perhaps aid in the long run to making the transition to private housing. As Monica Heller argues, 'playing the game' means playing by the rules set by those in power.

> Specific groups set the rules of the game by which resources can be distributed. In other words, it is necessary to display appropriate linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to gain access to the game, and playing it well requires in turn mastery of the kinds of linguistic and cultural knowledge which constitute its roles (Heller 1992: 125).

Further, following Gumperz and Bourdieu, Heller points out that,

> An inability to bring to bear appropriate conventions of behavior on key situations in daily life where critical decisions about one's access to resources are decided…can result in the systematic exclusion of segments of the population from the resources distributed there (ibid).

The passages by Heller are useful as she leaves them contextually neutral so they may be applied to a variety of situations, wherever there exists a dominant and subordinate language, dialect, or discursive style. Paul Willis (1981 [1977]), in his analysis of an English working class high school, noted that the guidance counsellor, or 'careers teacher,' tried to impress upon 'the lads' the importance of proper speech, etiquette and dress for success in the job market. There is of course a long standing history in England of ranking accents by region, and later by class, in gradients of superiority and inferiority. Gerry Knowles (1997) notes that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain, "it was being alleged that the working classes were suffering from a serious language deficit" (Knowles 1997: 146). The relationship of language accents and styles to class also figure prominently in North American socio-linguistic research, such as William Labov's well known research on language and class in New York City (Finegan 1989: 426). In a survey of the linguistic diversity of the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland, Seary et al. (1968) drew a distinction between the "cultivated speech" of St. John's and that of the "casual citizens" (Seary et al. 1968: 73), highlighting the class distinctions displayed through discursive practices. Whether or not a case can be made which links accent or discursive practice explicitly to class, the point is that value judgments about language are made, standards are set, and prescriptive practices are sometimes enacted to address these language 'deficiencies.'

This 'standard' is of course the language of power, which in North America I hold to be the language of the elite, of government and of institutional bureaucracies, of which this thesis is an example. The mass media may also promote a certain standard and

language of power, as the Puerto Ricans of East Harlem with whom Philippe Bourgois worked used to comment on his "television advertisement voice" (Bourgois 1995: 32). It would be absurd to suggest, however, that these very same elites are unfamiliar with crude language or expletives, and that they never use them in specific or intimate contexts. The critical point is that language use for the upwardly mobile, or for the maintenance of those in power, depends partly upon having acquired the cultural capital to know when to codeswitch, to contextually adopt the expected linguistic and behavioural norms.

Monica Heller adds that while a great deal of socio-linguistic work on codeswitching has been done on the manipulation of marked linguistic choice to gain access to resources, work has also been done on how subordinate groups use language as a form of resistance (Heller 1992: 126). My sense was that the use of crude language or expletives by area residents in daily practice was not really a political statement. From my own observations, and from what the staff told me, for some it was merely the routine language of the home and neighbourhood socializing. Helen told me that some parents were perplexed by her requests that they not swear around their children at home. Of course the children would pick it up on their own as they got older, but in some specific cases this was causing difficulties for Helen in the preschool, as the expletive-laden language at home was interfering with Helen's attempt to correct it at the preschool. Some did make the attempt, but from what I could see not all did so.

However, the staff's efforts to inculcate cultural capital in terms of the ability to codeswitch sometimes went beyond the use of expletives and focused on the alteration of

other linguistic practices of the residents of the project which the staff deemed to be "negative." I noticed on many occasions that Kate would greet the children at the Centre, particularly her granddaughters, by calling them "maggots." One of the first mornings I spent at the breakfast program I heard the "hey maggots" greeting, but it must be emphasized that it was not said with any detectable note of malice or contempt. I thought it was a little odd, but just put it down as an individual idiosyncratic practice, as I did not hear any other residents call children by this term. However the practice troubled John, which placed him in the awkward situation of getting into a confrontation with his most important local volunteer over the issue. As he told me,

> She's using a negative word…[as] a term of endearment or encouragement. But it's not right. You know it's not right, I know it's not right. You tell her…[and she will say] 'Fuck yourself…that's the way I talk!'

Kate's use of the term "maggots" may indeed not be an overt political statement or an act of intentional resistance itself, but given her reaction to John's criticism of the practice I think that she clearly saw the power dimensions underlying the practice of language correction or censorship.

The more I thought about the issue of language, the more I could see why the Centre staff would try to discourage the use of expletives and other discourses they regard as being negative. It would probably be unrealistic to expect the children and youth to cease all use of the language in all contexts; however, the ability to codeswitch is an important social skill to possess. Yet one incident forced me to see another dimension to the issue, in that one could argue that the practices of the Centre could be undermining a sense of local intimacy which arises from this discursive style, and its

strategic use could be seen as a form of resistance in terms of the politics of inclusion and exclusion. Even if some forms of discursive practice, ranging from the use of expletives to insults, are interpreted by the staff as 'wrong' or negative,' it does not always mean that they are interpreted as such by the residents. I have noticed the use of insults and harsh language by the children and youth as a form of signalling inclusion and as a way to mark outsiders.

I noticed that many of the children and youth appeared to have a very caustic sense of humour. They freely traded insults amongst each other and were adept at verbal sparring, which usually involved the mocking of physical appearances or attributes. On a trip to the local Pepsi cannery during the summer program, one girl with whom I got along well called me "pumpkin teeth." I laughed at the cleverness of the dig, but was a little hurt in that I thought it was malicious and was unclear as to what I did to upset her. Over the next week I found myself looking in the mirror and questioning anyone I knew if anything was wrong with my teeth. Over time it became clear to me that many of these barbs were aimed at people they liked rather than disliked. The summer co-ordinator was very popular with the children and youths. During one staff meeting at the Centre some of the young teens outside were calling up to him and trying to get his attention, referring to him as "Flaps" in reference to his ears. I could not help laughing as I looked out of the window and one teen had two pieces of cardboard held up to ears and he was pretending to fly as he jumped off of a rock. I know "Flaps" was liked, so my own conclusion was that the teasing was done as a form of inclusion rather than malicious exclusion.

After observing them for a while, I noticed that the young people often used their worst insults amongst themselves, finding any fault, real or imagined, with which to mock each other. Paul Willis noticed similar verbal sparring in working class shopfloor culture in England. As he described it,

> Many verbal exchanges on the shopfloor are not serious or about work activities. They are jokes, or 'pisstakes', or 'kiddings' or 'windups.' There is a real skill in being able to use this language with fluency: to identify the points on which you are being 'kidded' and to have appropriate responses ready in order to avoid further baiting (Willis 1981: 55).

This kind of kidding can be quite devastating to someone who is either unfamiliar with it or not skilled in its use. One young teen, who was one of the few from outside the project who was enrolled in the summer program, was somewhat ostracized by the area youth. He was marginalized by virtue of his introverted nature and overall meekness, which do not seem to be personality traits that the local teens respect. Ironically, at the summer camp they may have been making an effort to include him, but with this kind of kidding it had the opposite effect in this case. In the cookhouse I was at the front table talking to some of the kids. At the back sat the outsider, alone as per usual. Some of the tougher and more popular members of a clique of teens were sitting across from him. I did not see what transpired, but a few moments later the outsider had his head down on the table and was in tears. He was consoled by a few of the counsellors, one of whom angrily berated one of the local teens by asking, "What did you say to him?" The teen look genuinely baffled, shrugged and said, "Nothing." Obviously something was said, but I believe that the teen was genuinely surprised by his reaction. I found out later that the outsider had

passed gas in the bunkhouse and was nicknamed "Eggy." I also found out from a counsellor that it was being called 'Eggy' which had caused the above incident. If he had shot back with something clever it may have endeared him to these teens. Putting his head down and crying was perhaps the worse thing to do.

I tried this out with some of the children and it seemed to work. The one who had first called me "pumpkin teeth," had settled on "big nose" instead. In the same breath as she insulted me she asked if she could wear my hat. Recognizing it for what it was, I said, "No way…I don't want your cooties." She burst out laughing, "Cooties?….cooties?" as if she could not believe that she was hearing such an arcane term. The rest of the children laughed and that was that. On my way home I passed by a house where three young girls I knew were playing on the porch. One yelled, "Hey big nose," to which I waved back. Another wanted to know where I was going and the third grinned widely and waved. If I had grown upset at these insults, in my estimation, they would have increased in intensity and I would have perhaps marginalized myself from these children, making the rest of my fieldwork difficult. But it was not always possible to tell if they liked or disliked someone with their jokes. One outsider male summer counsellor exuded what I took to be a class-based arrogance and condescension, which was commented on by nearly all of the full-time staff. Instead of mocking his physical appearance, the teens targeted aspects of him they disliked, such as the seriousness with which he played the game of pool. One teen mocked this counsellor's exasperated groans when he made poor shots, which I found highly amusing. Another would pretend to jostle his pool cue from behind, while another actually moved balls on the table when he was not looking. One particularly cruel

example was how they mocked how upset he was at the summer camp when he learned that this group of teens had killed a frog. One teen pretended to cry and 'boo hooed' in a high pitch voice. I could never decide if they liked him or not. Towards the end of summer they may have, but I think some of their joking may have been aimed at taking him 'down a notch' so to speak. Another summer counsellor told me that her attempts to spend time with the children and youth after-hours was initially met with cat-calls, insults and mild physical abuse, which generally included small rocks and crab apples being thrown at her. She told me,

> I myself, found that the kids didn't know how to express their feelings positively. At the time I was very insulted by the kids' reaction to me my first time there after hours....Now I go there and a lot of the kids know I smoke, they open up to me, especially the older kids about drinking, smoking, etc. They are at times disruptive but I understand them a lot more. Before I was super shocked and kind of hurt. Still, some of the kids are the same way, but I have a new understanding of the way their minds work.

Insults can clearly be used as a form of inclusiveness or intimacy, as the counsellor quoted above was clearly well liked, so I surmised that Kate was communicating this kind of intimacy to the children when she referred to them as 'maggots.' I also noticed that the use of expletive-laden language in some contexts appears to perform a similar function among the adults of the project. The NEA held an overnight party in mid-July at a lodge outside of the city on the other side of Conception Bay, funded in large part from their bingo proceeds. Its function was recreational, as it was probably one of the rare times that many of the local women have a chance to get away from their homes, partners and children to, "let their hair down," as I was told

several times. The only non-NEA members who were invited were the senior staff from the Centre, Nancy's daughter and husband who helped to organize the event, the NLHC Tenant Relations Officer for the area, a Health and Community Services nurse from the Centre's clinic, and myself. It proved to be the most enjoyable event of my research. No sooner had the bus pulled away from the Centre then did the drinking begin as did an almost constant stream of obscene language, jokes and sexual banter. Up at the lodge I had almost injured myself from laughing, as one middle-aged woman in particular would hurl out random obscenities and insults while John attempted to call the bingo numbers. John was particularly adept at codeswitching, as he was able to successfully communicate on the same levels with the residents, staff and bureaucratic officials. However, at this bingo game my laughter only seemed to egg the woman on further, so sensing that he was losing control of the situation John eventually gave up. The TRO seemed quite uncomfortable at times, and shocked at others, at the behaviour of these women. Of course not all of the women acted like this nor did all of them drink, but even some who normally seemed rather quiet and dignified let loose on this particular evening. However what caught my attention was the strategic use of sexual banter, which seemed to be aimed at the males.

As the youngest male present and unattached at the time, Keith bore the brunt of most of the sexual taunting and teasing. He took it all in stride; however, he started to appear quite uncomfortable as one woman was beginning to cross the line between jest and reality.[3] I decided to make myself scarce as well once she started to turn her attention towards me. In my interpretation of the night's proceedings, I felt that this was a situation

where a group of primarily middle-aged women, from one of the more disempowered sectors of urban Newfoundland society and away from the gendered power relations of the home and neighbourhood, were using language in the form of sexual banter and teasing as a temporary inversion of the status quo. The debasing sexual banter was primarily aimed at Keith as he represented what they were not: young, male and socially mobile.

Their use of excessively crude and vulgar language also appeared to mark distinctions between insiders and outsiders at this event. As their crudeness and vulgarity increased as the night wore on, I could notice that it tended to marginalize the TRO and the HCS nurse. Even the rest of the staff gradually retreated to their rooms. The only reason I stayed out with them as long as I did was that I was enjoying myself, I was quite drunk and I did not feel uncomfortable. I was touched that I was invited in the first place and I was never made to feel unwelcome. I was more uncomfortable with the TRO's evident embarrassment and open shock at the language being used by these women. She had attempted to make eye contact with me a few times, perhaps to seek out someone who also shared this feeling, though I tried to avoid it. This was their night and I certainly did not want it to appear that I was making judgements about the NEA women's conduct. I was not sure whether this was similar to their normal daily discourse, but I felt that it was exaggerated by alcohol and being away from home. They certainly did not act like this around the Centre from what I could see, but I could understand now one reason why Kate may not have been too eager for me to attend their bingo nights. Whatever the case

may be, this style of discourse may aid in creating a sense of intimacy among local residents by marking insiders and outsiders.

Whether it is through the teaching of academic skills or the ability to codeswitch, the staff at the Centre were attempting to provide the children, youth, and to an extent the adults, with the 'tools' or cultural capital which could allow them to be more successful in their educational, social and employment endeavours. In many ways the Co-Op program, which I discussed in Chapter Five, can also be seen as being geared towards providing some of the cultural capital the residents would need in terms of dealing with bureaucratic organizations and the ability to take on advocacy roles. However, it must also be remembered that the particular forms of cultural capital which the staff are trying to develop clashes in some ways with existing discursive and child rearing practices of some of the residents, and also runs counter in some ways to the Centre's other goals of developing 'community,' 'empowerment,' and 'ownership.' Some of the discursive practices which the staff attempt to censor or alter can in fact be very intimate in their usage and serve as a way to mark insiders and outsiders, which is a key aspect of 'community.' It is also difficult to make a case for 'empowerment' and 'ownership' in terms of the staff members challenging the residents' practices within the context of the Centre in their own neighbourhood. By the same token, I fully support the staff's efforts to develop the cultural capital needed in terms of upward mobility. As laudable as this action is, a further contradiction arises from these activities. The attempts to strengthen 'community' and 'ownership' involve promoting the message that the residents have a say in their area, and that they should become actively involved in the local issues and

have a stake in what is going on in their 'community.' Yet, the kind of cultural capital I have been discussing, in terms of education and codeswitching, is aimed at encouraging the young people to strive for the goals of the larger society and to be able to breach the barriers of cultural capital and ultimately, to leave.

# Endnotes to Chapter Seven

[1] During the interview I had to stop him to explain what he meant by 'stunned/stunneder.' He explained that it was a Newfoundland expression which meant "less intelligent." According to the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (1999), the term can also refer to being "naïve" (543).

[2] For an example of the complexities of the linguistic diversity of the Avalon Peninsula, as well as the 'standard' of St. John's English versus the outport areas, see Seary et al (1968). For a discussion of 'gendered' language see King (1991).

[3] For a cross-cultural example, Richard Lee (1985) recounts a similar experience he had during his fieldwork with a group of middle-aged !Kung women, though it is not clear whether this was in jest or somewhat serious advances. My sense from his work was that he was unsure as well.

## Chapter Eight

## Summary and Conclusions

This thesis has probed the role that the Froude Avenue Community plays in the practice of community in the Froude Avenue housing project. I have retained Halperin's (1998) concerns with the practice of community to include consideration not only of the micro-events as they unfold in daily life, but also the influences and constraints of the larger forces of the political economy and history. I have approached each of the key analytical themes of 'community,' 'empowerment,' 'ownership,' and 'cultural capital' with a focus on the contradictions and tensions between the residents and the staff (and among the staff at times) as they carried out their jobs and implemented the Centre's mission statement. I have treated these themes as both mobilizing metaphors and as practices to highlight the disparities between the way metaphors are used to promote a political agenda and how they are reflected as practices in terms of the nuances of daily life. Throughout the discussion of these themes, I have also kept an eye on the larger forces of the political economy and history in terms of how these factors impinge on the Centre's activities, the goals of the staff and the programs, and the lives of the residents. I will now summarize and conclude this thesis with a brief reiteration of my findings.

### 8.1 – Conflicts and Contradictions

The key tensions and struggles between the staff and the residents in terms of the Centre lie in the differing ways in which ownership and empowerment are conceptualized and practiced and cultural capital is developed. 'Ownership,' in the view of the staff and

the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, suggests the overt display of a sense of responsibility by the residents for their homes, the area in general, the Centre itself. 'Ownership,' in my interpretation of the practices of some of the residents, involved their approaches to claiming ownership over the Centre and its resources which did not, at times, match the conceptions of ownership promoted by the staff. For example, the spray painting around the project was seen by the staff as simple vandalism, and something that the local teen perpetrators should take 'ownership of' in terms of admitting their culpability and rectifying their actions, which they did by painting it over. My intention is not to defend these practices of creating graffiti, but to point out that messages of ownership are being conveyed through these actions. To borrow the language of Derrida (1991), the spray painted message of "The Blocks" can be seen as a 'sign,' but without one stable, centred meaning. For the staff, the message was of vandalism and of the teen's disregard for their community. Vandalism for 'kicks' probably played a role, as well as a statement of the teen's rejection of authority, but the message of ownership is unmistakable with the bold, blue words of "The Blocks" scrawled across the basketball court which is shared with an adjacent private housing area. Similarly, the numerous reference to rap artists in their graffiti can also be seen as a message of ownership; in this case an expression of identity and an allegiance to a medium which speaks to some of the issues which resonate in the teen's own lives – housing projects, thwarted desires, poverty, violence, drugs and resistance to authority. I also argue that the choice of signs was significant in terms of the appropriation of the negative epithet of "The Blocks" as their preferred message of ownership. Again, my

intention is not to condone property damage but to understand what is being communicated by these patterned actions.

Conflicts have also arisen between the staff and some of the residents over the donations which came into the Centre. The way in which these donations were redistributed struck the staff as 'dishonest' or 'manipulative.' However, following Stack (1997) and Halperin (1998), networks of social and material support through 'swapping' or 'householding' are common practices which can be found among those who are living under conditions of need in urban centres. The reciprocal aspects of these practices of redistributing goods reinforces the social ties among local kin, friends and neighbours, and strengthens the practice of community. This practice unfortunately entails that the 'best' goods are quickly claimed and that some residents of the project are being excluded. This places the staff into an uncomfortable position of allowing the practice to continue and maintain a good relationship with this network of residents, or to stop the practice in the name of 'fairness' and thus alienate them. As of March of 2002, the struggle over the ownership of these goods and of the space in which SPAN is located in the basement of the Centre had not been settled.

Contradictions and tensions also have arisen in regards to the Centre's language policy and the discursive practices of some of the residents. The staff's attempts to develop the cultural capital of the children and the youths of the area though the censoring of 'negative' language and the inculcation of codeswitching abilities can also be seen to clash with the 'positive' aspects of the linguistic practices of the residents in terms of promoting inclusion and communal intimacy. My intention is not to argue that

the staff should discontinue these activities, as I fully support the practice of providing the educational and social skills, in short the cultural capital, for these children and youth so they may be successful in their future educational and employment endeavours. My intention is to point out that these local practices, whether discursive among neighbours or in terms of child rearing in people's homes, are cultural forms which need to be understood in their own contexts, as are the staff's views of the cultural capital necessary for economic mobility.

## 8.2 – Metaphors and Practice

The concepts of 'community,' 'empowerment,' and 'ownership' were articulated during the course of my research by some of the residents, the staff and representatives from the NLHC. The metaphorical aspects of community are partly rooted in the fact that the term is a "common, ordinary word" (Halperin 1998: xii). So common that its meaning often remains unquestioned and its existence is assumed. As a 'mobilizing metaphor,' the discourse of community has been appropriated by governmental policy makers and advisors in order to justify the downloading of costs and responsibilities of social programs from the state, to the province, to the municipalities, and to the 'community.' The danger therein is that urban communities, as sociological entities, may not match the metaphor or social ideal. Kenneth Scherzer (1992) has pointed out that the communal functions of urban neighbourhoods are assumed to operate, more than they do in practice. However, the staff of the Centre at Froude and the residents of the local tenants association often invoked metaphors such as 'community' or 'empowerment,' in such

contexts as Board meetings, as a way in which to press for their own demands, as these metaphors are not always used in a 'top-down' manner.

However, community is more than just a metaphor; elements of community do exist in practice, though often in a more attenuated form than that in which it is projected in the media or for political purposes by governments or activist citizens. Community as a practice can be seen in the networks of material and social support that cluster around the Centre as a node or local "knot" (Cubitt 1973: 68) of dense social ties. Community as a practice can also be seen in the intimate space of the project due to its design, or with the mobilization by some members of the NEA to challenge the stereotypes of the area. I think it is important to highlight the difference between community as a metaphor and a practice not only to expose underlying agendas, but also to draw attention to the concrete efforts being made by the Centre and the residents to practice community.

As a metaphor, 'empowerment' rings somewhat hollow when one considers that there are very real structural limits to the kinds of power the tenants may wield and the decisions they may make. Ironically, social housing tenants may be convinced to become 'empowered' through taking on, without remuneration, the duties of managing their housing area, as Hyatt (1997) has shown in Britain. I saw nothing to indicate that the NLHC were moving towards this model, but it serves as a warning about the dangers that may underlie seemingly innocuous discourses. Empowerment also seems less than convincing considering that a small, intimate clique seemed to hold most of the important tenant positions in the NEA, the Centre, the Board of Directors and various related courses and conferences. Empowerment is usually invoked in tandem with 'community,'

but in this case it appears that it is a specific social network of residents that are 'empowered,' which concurs with my views that urban communities are composed of networks rather than as a cohesive 'whole.'

Another interpretation of the above scenario is that this network or clique are the core of a developing local leadership and represent the general interests of the area at these Board meetings or conferences. Following Gaventa, (1982), I came to realize that even though I did not see any concrete decisions being made at the Board meetings I attended, the tenants' participation itself in these meetings are what was significant, as Gaventa posits that it is participation which leads to political consciousness and overcoming powerlessness. The tenants' participation in these meetings and conferences are important for the residents in terms of gaining familiarity and fluency with the formal structures of power and self-confidence in doing so. In short, they are developing the cultural capital needed to take on advocacy roles for themselves.

The notion of ownership appears in its most metaphorical guise in the struggle over the definition of the buildings of the project as being either 'homes' or 'units.' There is no question in my mind that it is against the NLHC's best interest to continue to refer to these buildings as 'units.' John pointed out that it is often that which is perceived as belonging to Housing that suffers the greatest vandalism. This may also be what was behind the vandalism of social housing projects noted in the *Urban Task Force* (1969) report. However, there are limits to the extent to which the tenants' homes are 'owned.' I do not think that the residents are under any delusions that the buildings belong to the NLHC and not to themselves no matter what they are called. The same holds for the

Centre, which is staffed and managed by outsiders and funded primarily by the NLHC. The message of 'non-ownership' is reinforced every time a prospective tenant goes through the placement process, has their income or activities monitored, someone in the area is threatened with eviction, or calls are placed to maintenance. It appears that these buildings are practically and conceptually both 'homes' and 'units.' Many of the residents do feel strongly that these buildings are their homes, and it is in the struggle by these residents to have them defined and recognized as such where the true aspects of ownership may be found.

## 8.3 – History and the Political Economy

The Centre and the staff have to deal with a number of these tensions and contradictions on a daily basis while they are trying to realize the Centre's goals and to help the residents, but not all of these contradictions are of their own making. The Froude project was created at a time when collectivist philosophies in the Canadian government were in ascendancy. The Second World War had just ended, the North American economies were doing well and Keynesian economic principles were followed. The cornerstones of the Canadian social welfare state were being built upon and strengthened. Newfoundland had just entered the Canadian Confederation in 1949 and federal infrastructure funds were flowing into the province. The Froude project, known as Westmount FP 1/50, was completed in 1951 as one result of these shifts. The central slums of St. John's were cleared and it was thought that the residents of this new project would only be temporary tenants. Through a 'filtering-down' process (Godfrey 1985) it

was presumed that the tenants would move out once they could afford the down payment for a home, so a social support infrastructure for the residents was not deemed to be necessary, despite warnings from some members of the SJHC in the 1940s of the problems which would arise from concentrations of the poor.

The 1970s had witnessed soaring energy prices, and along with the elimination of the gold standard for currencies, the older economic order was changing and the received paradigms were being even more rigorously challenged. The inflation of the 1980s led to further rethinking of the Canadian social welfare state, as neo-liberal interests began increased calls for cuts to spending, the elimination of deficits and the reduction of the debt. The NLHC, after having formed in 1967 and amalgamating with the SJHC in 1981, took the criticisms of large social housing projects seriously. Spending on improving the social conditions of these estates in the early and mid 1980s was made a priority, even though the social welfare state in Canada was coming under increasing scrutiny by hostile and vested interests.

The Centre was opened in 1985, primarily as a meeting place and as a recreation centre. After John became the manager in late 1986, the scope and role of the Centre began to broaden and expand, even though support for social housing was soon to be on the decline. The recession in the early 1990s marked the firm ascendancy of neo-liberal influences upon government social and fiscal policies. Everything from the federal Canada Assistance Plan, to provincial and municipal programs were slashed and downsized. The construction of new housing estates ceased, soon to be followed by smaller infill units and eventually all land development itself in 1998 (NLHC 1998: 1).

In many ways, the NLHC's approach to the Centre and the area has been somewhat contradictory. The mandate of transitional housing is still maintained and asserted, even though some families in the area have lived there for three generations. There are subtle, and sometimes explicit, pressures on the residents to leave. Rent is geared to income, so once incomes increase they will reach a point where continued residency in the area makes little sense, even though jobs may be tenuous in terms of security. This also means that the pools of resources needed for a family to make a down payment are often eroded over time, lengthening the time it takes to make the transition to private housing. Strategies by some of the residents to cope under these difficult conditions are derided as 'dishonest,' even though in more powerful sectors of society 'dishonest manipulation' is praised as good business sense. I fail to see why an increase in a tenant's income could not be siphoned off and put into a trust fund and invested by the NLHC so the tenants could save for a down payment, if such a course is desired. When I raised the issue of almost 'forced dependency' with a TRO I could see that the issue was not open for debate and I was reminded of the NLHC's mandate of transitional housing.

Yet, if transitional housing is the mandate, and the official desire is that residents do not put down roots, then the discourses of community, empowerment and ownership seem even more contradictory. Local organizations, such as the Centre and the NEA, are supported by the NLHC and tenants are exhorted to get involved in their housing areas; yet, to actually strengthen community and to take ownership on the part of the residents runs counter to the mandate of transitional housing. That being said, eliminating support

for the Centre would not be a wise course of action, considering the problems and stigma faced by the area in the years before its existence, and how far the area has come.

The continued support of the staff and the Centre to develop the social capital of the young people of the area, through the provision of social, educational, vocational and recreational activities, would appear to be the best way to maintain the goal of transitional housing as well as to enhance the area for those who stay and for new arrivals. John said to me several times, perhaps alluding to these contradictions inherent in the Centre, that "Housing created a monster and didn't know what to feed it." I assumed that he was speaking of its early days, as this does not seem to be the case today. This thesis, as I reminded John throughout my research, was intended to contribute more to an anthropological understanding of the complex issues of urban communities, particularly housing projects, rather than an explicit assessment of the Centre in terms of a policy recommendation. John understood, as he pointed out that any input from objective outsiders would be useful. However, he caught me off guard during our last interview when he challenged me directly to take a stand, opposed to my usual academic waffling. The following is from my notes on the interview.

> After dealing with some of these issues, I was going over what I felt to be the positive aspects of the Centre in early September with John, when he cut me off and asked, "Is it worth _____ dollars a year?" I was taken off guard by the question and said, *"I think so."* "Ok," John replied, "that's what we need to know, because that's what its going to take to run the building every year. And I need to know if those pats on the back for _____ and dealing with _____ or having [Nancy] come over here and discipline other parents. I need to know if it's worth my _____ dollars a year I'm asking for. I know you do, but somebody needs to say that. Because this is what we do."

I am not certain what John, the staff or any of the residents will make of this thesis and for my own views of scholarly integrity I have tried to avoid taking a position on the Centre in those terms. I have also tried to be as honest and balanced as I could, making some sense of the messiness and contradictions of socio-cultural life as I encountered it at the Centre during my four months of fieldwork. But as a student of anthropology, and as a private citizen, I would have to answer 'yes' to John's question.

# References Cited

Abu-Lughod, Lila
    1993. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Albrow, Martin
    1990. *Max Weber's Construction of Social Theory*. London: Macmillan.

Allahar, Anton L. and James E. Cote
    1998. *Richer and Poorer: The Structure of Inequality in Canada*. Toronto: Lorimer.

Apthorpe, Raymond
    1997. Writing Development Policy and Policy Analysis Plain or Clear: On Language, Genre and Power. IN *Anthropology Of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. Cris Shore and Susan Wright, eds. Pp 43-58. London: Routledge.

Baker, Melvin
    1982a. *Aspects of Nineteenth Century St. John's Municipal History*. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications.

    1982b. Municipal Politics and Public Housing in St. John's: 1911-1921. IN *Workingmen's St. John's: Aspects of Social History in the early 1900's*. Melvin Baker, Robert Cuff and Bill Gillespie, eds. Pp 25-43. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications.

Barnes, J.A.
    1954. Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish. *Human Relations*. 7: 39-58.

Barrett, Stanley R.
    1996. *Anthropology: A Student's Guide to Theory and Method*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Barth, Fredrik
    1969. Introduction. IN *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Fredrik Barth, ed. Pp. 9-38. Boston: Little Brown and Company.

Bernard, H. Russell
    1994. *Research Methods In Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Bestor, Theodore C.
    1989. *Neighborhood Tokyo.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Blake, Raymond B. and Penny E. Bryden, eds.
    1997. *The Welfare State in Canada: Past, Present And Future.* Concord: Irwin Publishing.

Bott, Elizabeth
    1971 [1957]. *Family and Social Network: Rules, Norms, and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Bourdieu, Pierre
    1997 [1977]. *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* Richard Nice, trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc J.D. Wacquant
    1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bourgois, Philippe
    1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boychuck, Gerard William
    1998. *Patchworks Of Purpose: The Development of Provincial Social Assistance Regimes in Canada.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Buchholz, Todd G.
    1999 [1989]. *New Ideas from Dead Economists: An Introduction to Modern Economic Thought.* New York: Plume.

Burman, Patrick
    1996. *Poverty's Bonds: Power and Agency in the Social Relations of Welfare.* Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

Canada
    1969 January. *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development.* Ottawa: Government of Canada.

Canada. Statistics Canada
    2001. http://www.statcan.ca/start.html. 03/26/2002.

Clarke, Annette M.
    1986 September. Work and Unemployment in St. John's. *Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, Newfoundland and Labrador*.

Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, eds.
    1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University Of California Press.

Clifford, James
    1986. On Ethnographic Allegory. IN *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. Pp. 98-121. Berkeley: University Of California Press.

Cohen, Anthony P.
    1985. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Chichester: Ellis Arnold Limited.

Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador
    1998. *Fostering a Climate for Growth and Development: Final Report of the Roundtable on the Role of the Voluntary Community-based or Third Sector and the Social Economy in Regional Development in Atlantic Canada*. St. John's: Community Services Council.

Cubitt, Tessa
    1973. Network Density Among Urban Families. IN *Network Analysis: Studies In Human Interaction*. Jeremy Boissevain and J. Clyde Mitchell, eds. Pp. 67-82. The Hague: Mouton and Co.

Cullum, Linda
    1995. "A Woman's Place": The Work of Two Women's Voluntary Organizations in Newfoundland, 1934-1941. IN *Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, A Collage*. Carmelita McGrath, Barbara Neis and Marilyn Porter, eds. Pp. 93-108. St. John's: Killick Press.

Derrida, Jacques
    1991 [1966]. Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences. IN *Criticism: Major Statements*. Charles Kaplan and William Anderson, eds. Pp. 515-534. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Donnison, David and Clare Ungerson
    1982. *Housing Policy*. New York: Penguin.

Dunfield, Brian W.
    1945. Letter to Sir John C. Puddester. January 20. GN 38 S5-2-1 Box 1 File 9.

Durkheim, Emile
1972. *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*. Anthony Giddens, trans. and ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eastman, Carol. M.
1992. Codeswitching as an Urban Language-Contact Phenomenon. IN *Codeswitching*. Carol M. Eastman, ed. Pp. 1-17. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Epstein, A.L.
1964 [1957]. Urban Communities in Africa. IN *Closed Systems and Open Minds: The Limits of Naivety in Social Anthropology*. Max Gluckman, ed. Pp. 83-102. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Epstein, William M.
1997. *Welfare in America: How Social Science Fails the Poor*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Evening Telegram
1947. November 29. Houses for Distressed Persons Now Ready for Occupancy. Pp. 1 and 6.

Finegan, Edward
1994. *Language: Its Structure and Use*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace.

Foucault, Michel
1995 [1977]. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Alan Sheridan, trans. New York: Vintage Books.

Freire, Paulo
1970. *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review.

1985. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. Donaldo Macedo, trans. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey.

Gans, Herbert J.
1962. *The Urban Villagers*. New York: Free Press.

Garon, Sheldon
1997. *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gaventa, John
    1982. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

George, Glynis
    1995. Take Off Your Shoes!: The Culture of Feminist Practice in Bay St. George. IN *Their Lives and Times: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador, A Collage*. Carmelita McGrath, Barbara Neis and Marilyn Porter, eds. Pp. 314-326. St. John's: Killick Press.

Giddens, Anthony
    1972. Introduction: Durkheim's Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy. IN *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*. Anthony Giddens, trans. and ed. Pp. 1-50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giroux, Henry A.
    1985. Introduction. IN *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*. By Paulo Freire. Donaldo Macedo, trans. Pp. xi-xxv. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey.

Godfrey, Stuart R.
    1985. *Human Rights and Social Policy in Newfoundland: 1832-1982*. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications.

Goldman, Victoria
    2002. January 13. Q & A: Lunch, Not Just for Eating. *New York Times*. Education Life. 4A. P. 15.

Gould, Jillian
    2002. Candy Stores and Egg Creams. IN *Jews of Brooklyn*. Ilana Abramovitch and Seán Galvin, eds. Pp. 202-205. Hanover: Brandeis University Press.

Gregory, K.
    1983. *"Signing Up": The Culture and Careers of Silicon Valley Computer People*. Doctoral Dissertation. Evanston: Northwestern University.

Guest, Dennis
    1997. *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Gullage, Peter
    1991. June 9. The Blocks: As a neighborhood grapples with a drug dealing dark side, residents say its bad reputation is getting better. *Spectrum: Sunday Express*. Pp. 17-18.

Gusfield, Joseph R.
  1975. *Community: A Critical Response*. New York: Harper Colophon.

Halperin, Rhoda H.
  1990. *The Livelihood of Kin: Making Ends Meet "The Kentucky Way"*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

  1998. *Practicing Community: Class Culture and Power in an Urban Neighborhood*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Handrigan, Helen
  1984. *Proposal for Social/Community Centre: Froude Avenue Area*. Unpublished proposal submitted to the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. October 1.

Hannerz, Ulf
  1980. *Exploring The City: Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hanrahan, Maura
  1993. Living on the Dead: Fishermen's Licensing and Unemployment Insurance Programs in Newfoundland. IN *Through a Mirror Dimly: Essays on Newfoundland Society and Culture*. Maura Hanrahan, ed. Pp. 249-264. St. John's: Breakwater.

Heller, Monica
  1992. The Politics of Codeswitching and Language Choice. IN *Codeswitching*. Carol M. Eastman, ed. Pp. 123-142. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Herzfeld, Michael
  1992. *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

  1997. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. London: Routledge.

House, John Douglas
  1964. *Two Lower Class Areas in St. John's: A Comparative Study*. B.A. Submission. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

  1984. *Newfoundland Society and Culture: Book of Lectures for Anthropology, Folklore, Sociology 2230*. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Hurtig, Mel
    1999. *Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids: The Tragedy and Disgrace of Poverty in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc.

Hyatt, Susan Brin
    1997. Poverty in a 'Post-Welfare' Landscape: Tenant management policies, self-governance and the democratization of knowledge in Great Britain. IN *Anthropology Of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. Cris Shore and Susan Wright, eds. Pp. 217-238. London: Routledge.

Ja Rule
    1999a. The March Prelude. *Venni Vetti Vecci*. Compact Disc. Def Jam Records.

    1999b. The Murderers. *Venni Vetti Vecci*. Compact Disc. Def Jam Records.

Jackson, Craig
    1998a. October 14. Desperate Digs: Tory candidate appalled by NLHC public units. *The Telegram*. Pp. 1-2.

    1998b. October 16. Froude Avenue problems being addressed: Neighbourhood enhancement association brings concerns to attention of minister of health. *The Telegram*. P. 4.

Jacobs, Jane
    1992 [1961]. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage.

Kemeny, Jim
    1992. *Housing and Social Theory*. London: Routledge.

King, Ruth
    1991. *Talking Gender*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman.

Knowles, Gerry
    1997. *A Cultural History of the English Language*. London: Arnold.

Laxer, James
    1999. *The Undeclared War: Class Conflict in the Age of Cyber Capitalism*. Toronto: Penguin Books.

Lee, Richard B.
    1985. Work, Sexuality and Aging among !Kung Women. IN *In Her Prime: A New View of Middle-Aged Women*. Judith K. Brown et al. Pp. 23-35. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey.

Lewis, Oscar
1970. The Culture of Poverty. IN *Anthropological Essays*. Pp. 67-80. New York: Random House.

Lundberg, Margaret J.
1974. *The Incomplete Adult: Social Class Constraints on Personality Development*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Mackey, Eva
1997. The Cultural Politics of Populism: Celebrating Canadian National Identity. IN *Anthropology Of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. Cris Shore and Susan Wright, eds. Pp. 136-164. London: Routledge.

Mahoney, J.J.
1947. Letter to W.J. Carew. May 28. GN 2/5 Box 92 File 550.5.

McQuaig, Linda
1995. *Shooting The Hippo: Death By Deficit and other Canadian Myths*. Toronto: Penguin.

Murray, Hilda Chaulk
2002. *Cow's Don't Know It's Sunday: Agricultural Life in St. John's*. St. John's: ISER, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Myerhoff, Barbara
1978. *Number Our Days*. New York: Dutton.

Nader, Laura
1980. The Vertical Slice: Hierarchies and Children. IN *Hierarchy and Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Bureaucracy*. Gerald M. Britan and Ronald Cohen, eds. Pp. 31-43. Philadelphia: ISHI.

Neary, Peter
1993. Newfoundland in the Atlantic World, 1929-1949. IN *Through a Mirror Dimly: Essays on Newfoundland Society and Culture*. Maura Hanrahan, ed. Pp. 3-16. St. John's: Breakwater.

Newfoundland and Labrador
1998. *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Social Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*. St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation
    1985a. *Housing News*. 2.1 February.

    1985b. *Housing News*. 2.4 November.

    1990. *NLHC Today*. 1.2 December.

    1998. *Week In Review*. www.gov.nf.ca/releases. 10/05/98.

    2002. *General/Historical Information*.
    http://www.nlhc.nf.ca/history/history.htm. 03/26/2002.

Overton, James
    1988. Public Relief and Social Unrest in Newfoundland in the 1930s: An
    Evaluation of the Ideas of Piven and Cloward. IN *Class, Gender, and Region:*
    *Essays in Canadian Historical Sociology*. Gregory S. Kealey, ed. Pp. 143-169.
    St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History.

    2000. *Poverty, Dependence and Self-Reliance: Politics, Newfoundland*
    *History and the Amulree Report of 1933*. Presented to the Newfoundland
    Historical Society Symposium - *Amulree's Legacy: Truth, Lies and*
    *Consequences*. St. John's: March 24-25.

Pierce, W.D. and Epling, W.F.
    1999. *Behavior Analysis and Learning*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

Piven, Frances Fox
    1998. Welfare and the Transformation of Electoral Politics. IN *Social Policy and*
    *the Conservative Agenda*. Clarence Y.H. Lo and Michael Schwartz, eds. Pp. 21-
    36. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Pocius, Gerald L.
    1991. The Spaces Between Tradition and Modernity. IN *A Place to Belong:*
    *Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland*. Pp. 272-299.
    Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Polanyi, Karl
    1957. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our*
    *Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Porter, Helen
    1987 April 19. Public housing tenants branded with another unjust stigma.
    *Sunday Express*. P. 7.

Rapport, Nigel
    2000. The Narrative as Fieldwork Technique: Processual Ethnography for a
    World in Motion. IN *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the
    Contemporary World*. Vered Amit, ed. Pp.71-95. London: Routledge.

Ristock, Janice L. and Joan Pennell
    1996. *Community Research as Empowerment: Feminist Links, Postmodern
    Interruptions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rodman, Margaret
    1993. Beyond Built Form and Culture in the Anthropological Study of
    Residential Community Spaces. IN *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*.
    Robert Rotenberg and Gary McDonogh, eds. Pp. 123-138. Westport: Bergin and
    Garvey.

Rogers, Alisdair and Steven Vertovec
    1995. Introduction. IN *The Urban Context: Ethnicity, Social Networks and
    Situational Analysis*. Alisdair Rogers and Steven Vertovec, eds. Pp. 1-33. Oxford:
    Berg Publishers.

Roseman, Sharon R.
    2002. "Strong Women" and "Pretty Girls": Self-Provisioning, Gender and Class
    Identity in Rural Galicia (Spain). *American Anthropologist*. 104(1): 22-37.

Sahlins, Marshall
    1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine and Atherton.

Said, Edward W.
    1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy
    1992. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life In Brazil*.
    Berkeley: University of California Press.

    2001 [1977]. *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural
    Ireland*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Scherzer, Kenneth A.
    1992. *The Unbounded Community: Neighborhood Life and Social Structure in
    New York City, 1830-1875*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Schwartzman, Helen B.
    1993. *Ethnography in Organizations: Qualitative Research Methods Series 27*.
    Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Scott, Katherine et al.
    1998. *Women and the CHST: A Profile of Women Receiving Social Assistance in 1994*. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada.

Seary, E.R., G.M. Story and W.J. Kirwin
    1968. *The Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland: An Ethno-Linguistic Study*. Ottawa: Bulletin No. 219, National Museum of Canada.

Sharpe, Christopher
    2000. *Mr. Dunfield's Folly?: The Development of Churchill Park Garden Suburb in St. John's, Newfoundland*. Presented to the Newfoundland Historical Society. St. John's: September 28.

Shields, John and B. Mitchell Evans
    1998. *Shrinking the State: Globalization and Public Administration "Reform"*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Shore, Cris and Susan Wright
    1997. Policy: A New Field of Anthropology. IN *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. Cris Shore and Susan Wright, eds. Pp. 3-39. London: Routledge.

Sider, Gerald M.
    1986. *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Patrick
    1997. *Japan: A Reinterpretation*. Toronto: HarperCollins.

Sokolovsky, Jay and Carl Cohen
    1978. The Cultural Meaning of Personal Networks for the Inner-City Elderly. IN *Urban Anthropology*. 7(4): 323-342.

Spangler, David T.
    2000. The Periphery in the Center: The View from Public Housing in Memphis. IN *Communities and Capital: Local Struggles Against Corporate Power and Privatization*. Thomas W. Collins and John D. Wingard, eds. Pp. 114-128. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty
    1989. In a Word: Interview with Ellen Rooney. *Differences*. 1. Summer: 124-156.

St. John's Housing Corporation
    1945. *Notes of Ideas Discussed at Meeting Between Sir John Puddester and the Corporation*. January 4. GN 38 S5-2-1 Box 1 File 9.

St. John's Municipal Council
    1945. April 14. *Notes from minutes of St. John's Municipal Council.*

Stack, Carol
    1996 *Call to Home: African Americans Reclaim the Rural South*. New York: Basic Books. 1997 [1974].

    *All Our Kin*. New York: Basic Books.

Story, G.M., W.J. Kirwin and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds.
    1999 [1982]. *Dictionary of Newfoundland English: Second edition with supplement*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Swanson, Jean
    2001. *Poor Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion*. Toronto: Between The Lines.

Szala, Karen Victoria
    1978. *Clean Women and Quiet Men: Courtship and Marriage in a Newfoundland Fishing Village*. M.A. Thesis. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Taussig, Michael
    1999. *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Tönnies, Ferdinand
    1957 [1887]. *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Charles P. Loomis, trans. and ed. New York: Harper and Row.

Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing
    1972. Westmount, St. John's, Newfoundland: Oldest Federal-Provincial Low-Rental Housing Project Gets A Face-Lift. IN *Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing*. 8(2): 6-10.

Van Maanen, John et al.
    1993. Editors' Introduction. IN *Ethnography in Organizations*. By Helen B. Schwartzman. Pp. vii – viii. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Wade, Peter
    1999. Working Culture: Making Cultural Identities in Cali, Colombia. *Current Anthropology*. 40(4): 449-471.

Wadel, Cato
1985. *Now, Whose Fault Is That?: The Struggle for Self-Esteem in the Face of Chronic Unemployment*. St. John's: ISER No. 11, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Walsh, Vincent
1985. *The Underside of Boarding House Life*. M.A. Thesis. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Weber, Max
1947. *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, trans. and eds. London: W. Hodge.

Werbner, Pnina
1995. From Commodities to Gifts: Pakistani Migrant Workers in Manchester. IN *The Urban Context: Ethnicity, Social Networks and Situational Analysis*. Alisdair Rogers and Steven Vertovec, eds. Pp. 213-236. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Westcott, Craig
2000 July 12-18. Taking Back the Blocks: Froude Avenue residents say drug sting was part of larger bid to make life better in housing units. *The Express*. P. 40.

Wilk, Richard R.
1996. *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Williams, Fiona
1993. *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Willis, Paul
1981 [1977]. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wolf, Eric R.
1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wright, Susan
1994. 'Culture' in Anthropology and Organizational Studies. IN *Anthropology of Organizations*. Susan Wright, ed. Pp. 1-31. London: Routledge.

Zorbaugh, Harvey W.
1929. *The Gold Coast and the Slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Mission Statement**

**To enhance the quality of life of the residents of the Froude Avenue Community through the provision of educational, recreational, social, health and vocational programs**

# Appendix B

## Area Statistics[1]

**As of 2001:**

| Units[2] | Units Closed | Vacancies | Households | Individuals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 137 | 4 - oil spill<br>4 - Centre<br>1 - Brighter Futures | 9 | 128 | 308 |

**Comparison by percentage between 2001 and 1984:[3]**

|  | Single Parent Households | Income by Wages | Income by Income Support[4] |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2001** | 47.9 % | 13.6 % | 86.4 % |
| **1984** | 32.1 % | 28.4 % | 71.6 % |

**Other Data for 2001:**

| Female Singles | Male Singles | Average Occupancy in Years | Average Income per Individual per Annum | Average Income per Household per Annum | Average Rent per Household per Month |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50 | 3 | 12 | $7980.96 | $9789.12 | $287.54 |

---

[1] Sources: 2001 data provided by the NLHC TRO for the area and retrieved from NLHC databanks. 1984 data from (Handrigan 1984).

[2] *Urban Renewal and Low Income Housing* (1972) reports a total of 140 units and my own hand count from the map (Appendix C) notes 140 units. Two NLHC sources however report a total of 137 units. I am uncertain as to the cause of the discrepancy.

[3] The data from 1984 only surveyed 109 households.

[4] "Income Support" here collapses welfare, employment insurance benefits, and senior and disability pensions.
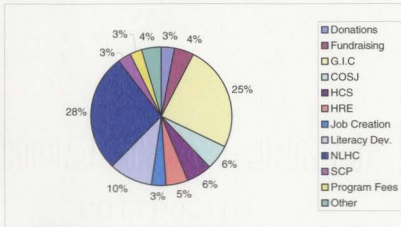
# Appendix C

# Froude Avenue Housing Project*
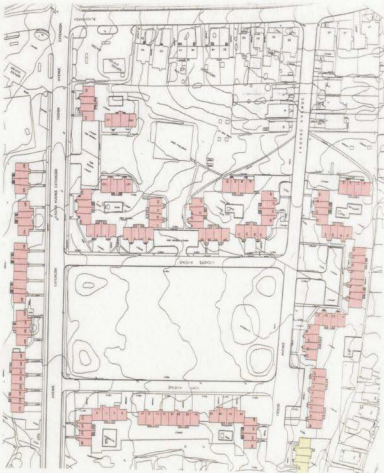


*The Froude Avenue Community Centre is coloured yellow, lower right of map.

# Appendix D

## Table of the F.A.C.C.'s Income Sources[5]



A pie chart with the following segments and legend:

Legend:
- Donations
- Fundraising
- G.I.C
- COSJ
- HCS
- HRE
- Job Creation
- Literacy Dev.
- NLHC
- SCP
- Program Fees
- Other

Pie chart percentages: 3%, 4%, 3%, 4%, 25%, 6%, 6%, 5%, 3%, 10%, 28%, 3%

---

[5] Some notes on the acronyms: G.I.C. income are the dividends the Centre receives from investments on a lump sum from the Kayak program. COSJ is the City of St. John's, HRE is Human Resources and Employment (Newfoundland and Labrador), SCP is the Summer Career Placement program for the hiring of summer counsellors (Canada).

# Appendix E[6]

Date: October 09, 1998
To: Joan Marie Aylward M.H.A., St. John's Centre
From: Neighbourhood Enhancement Association & Women's Club[7]

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Tenants Maintenance Concerns

1. Mailboxes/Deadbolt - When people leave their houses for shopping etc., access can be gain through the mailbox slot. Not a safe environment to live.

2. Installations of showers and vents in washrooms. Showers are energy saving and convenient for some of the older tenants in the community. Vents will stop the fire detectors from going off all the time. Taps that have the same handles confuse older and younger tenants.

3. Windows - Majority of all aluminium windows install approximately 15 years ago have been leaking for 15 years. Damage to gyproc, wallpaper, paint and some furniture have all been reported with no immediate attention.

4. Kitchens Cupboards/Range Hoods - Doors need to be install on cupboards, and some sort of ventilation for steam such as range hoods would be an asset. No ventilation has cause mildew on all windows and contribute to leaks.

5. Roofs - Flat top roofs in the community have been leaking for years. Maintenance on these roofs is started but the damage to units has to be repair also (painting & plastering).

6. Garbage Collection - Due to inappropriate storage space for garbage we need a new system to address this concern....

...Pride and respect for our housing units and community cannot be achieved to the fullest until these important issues are dealt with by NLHC.

---

[6] This letter is a reproduction which I typed, as the original was in too poor of a condition to photocopy or scan. Wording is exactly as it appeared in the original.
[7] I heard no reference to the Women's Club during my fieldwork, in any written sources or verbally. The Chairperson of the WC who signed this document is also a core NEA member.
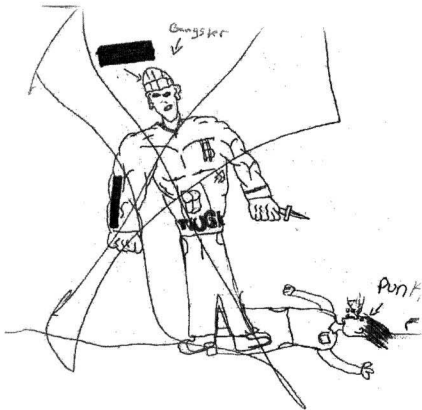
This picture was drawn by a local young teen. He had included his name pointing to the head of the figure as well as a tattoo on the arm, which I blanked out. It may be difficult to make out, but the main figured is labelled "Gangster," and the victim "Punk." He told me, when I asked, that coming out of the victim's mouth is blood and teeth. Across the aggressor's abdomen is "Thug."