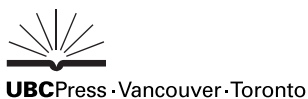# FEMINIST COMMUNITY RESEARCH
Case Studies and Methodologies

Edited by Gillian Creese and Wendy Frisby

UBCPress · Vancouver · Toronto

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments

This collection of essays on feminist community research marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of Women's and Gender Studies (WAGS) at the University of British Columbia.* Although UBC is a research-intensive university that is internationally renowned for more traditional approaches to research, our community of feminist scholars receive much less attention and are often isolated in their own departments and by disciplinary boundaries. Feminist community research (FCR) remains, quite simply, under-profiled and under-supported at many academic institutions, even though much of it is on the cutting edge of interdisciplinary, collaborative, and policy-oriented research that is increasingly being called for by numerous constituents, including post-secondary educational institutions that are seeking to strengthen relationships between universities and various communities.

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* Women's and Gender Studies at the University of British Columbia is made up of two administratively separate but functionally interlinked units. An undergraduate program in the Faculty of Arts administers a major and minor in women's and gender studies. The Centre for Women's and Gender Studies (CWAGS), located in the College for Interdisciplinary Studies, administers graduate programs and has more than ninety affiliated faculty associates and research associates. The first undergraduate courses were offered in 1973, thirty-five years before we began this book in 2008. An undergraduate major in women's and gender studies was launched in 1991, the same year the centre was founded. Graduate programs followed, with an MA in 2000 and a PhD in 2001.

This book provides an opportunity to highlight a variety of feminist community research conducted by researchers associated with Women's and Gender Studies at UBC and their colleagues and community members. Authors who conduct feminist community research were invited to contribute original essays to the present volume. At least one author of each chapter is connected to Women's and Gender Studies at UBC through a formal affiliation as a faculty member, current or former graduate student, or a faculty or research associate. Some chapters' authors are also members of various communities engaged in FCR, including formerly incarcerated women, Aboriginal women, peer outreach sex workers, women from rural communities, and recent immigrants. Other authors represent partner community organizations such as the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, Sex Workers United Against Violence Society, Umoja Operation Compassion Society/African Family Services, Whitevalley Community Resource Centre, and WISH Drop-In Centre Society. Within the University of British Columbia, authors are located in diverse disciplines and interdisciplinary units, including the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, the School of Community and Regional Planning, the Department of Educational Studies, the Human Early Learning Partnership, the School of Human Kinetics, the Faculty of Medicine, the School of Nursing, the Department of Sociology, and the undergraduate program in Women's and Gender Studies. There is also one author each from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Faculty of Science at Simon Fraser University; as well as one each from the Department of Nursing at Trinity Western University, Child, Family and Community Studies at Douglas College; the Department of Social Work at Northern Lights College; and the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. Collectively, this diversity in authors represents a range and breadth that contributes, we hope, to the advancement of understanding what feminist community research can and should be.

This book is a collaborative enterprise that brings together a collection of FCR projects in dialogue with each other, rather than a simple collection of discreet solicited chapters. In keeping with the collaborative aims of feminist community research, the authors worked together for over a year in an effort to ensure that the chapters would "talk to one another" in a variety of ways. We are providing details about our writing process in this preface because we found it to be much more stimulating and rewarding than the traditional approach of writing independent chapters without ever having discussions with other authors. Our collaboration, which was geographically facilitated by the fact that at least one author of each chapter is affiliated

with UBC, included an initial meeting at which authors talked about their visions for the book and for their own chapters, developed guidelines for working together, and established timelines. Authors then drew on a set of common questions, developed collectively, that were intended to help orient our thinking and writing, while providing common threads throughout the collection. These questions were:

1 What feminist methodological and/or ethical issues are addressed in the FCR project?
2 What challenges were involved in doing FCR?
3 What research strategies (both successful and unsuccessful) are documented for readers?
4 What do *community* and *reflexivity* mean in the context of the FCR project?
5 In what ways are issues of social justice, policy, and/or social change embedded in the research?

Chapter drafts were subsequently uploaded onto a website so we could read each other's work.

In the spring of 2009, we held a one-day symposium where authors presented their chapter drafts and received feedback from each other. We challenged each other, asked thought-provoking questions, and encouraged each other to explore creative ways of presenting our ideas (e.g., by drawing on autobiographical narratives, conducting comparisons across more than one FCR project, and conducting research across geographical borders). Revised chapters were then submitted and another round of feedback was provided through an author peer review process before chapters were submitted to UBC Press for external review.

We gratefully acknowledge the feedback provided by authors and reviewers that helped us sharpen and deepen our arguments, while creating synergies across chapters. The collegial and collaborative chapter-writing process is helping to create a stronger community among this group of FCR researchers at, or connected to, UBC, and we feel privileged to be a part of it. Although many of us have links to the same university, we seldom have had the chance to talk to and learn from each other in this way. It is hoped that the supportive and stimulating opportunity for mutual learning that resulted from writing this book will foster additional productive collaborative efforts in the future, while contributing to the feminist methodology literature with a social justice agenda.

We also very gratefully acknowledge the contributions made by various community members whose voices are heard throughout this collection, the funders who supported the various feminist community research projects reported upon, the research assistants who helped us conduct the research, the organizations that partnered in the research, and the significant others in our lives who support our humble efforts at trying to make a difference. We owe thanks to the Women's and Gender Studies program for providing seed money for this publication, and to the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies for funding the conference. We also owe a great debt to the team at UBC Press, especially to our editor, Darcy Cullen, to Emily Andrew, Anna Friedlander, members of the Publications Board, and the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful advice. Finally, we want to thank Wynn Archibald and Jane Charles, our administrative support team at Women's and Gender Studies, whose efforts routinely go above and beyond anything we have a right to expect. We both feel incredibly privileged to be part of a collegial and supportive environment at Women's and Gender Studies that provides a welcome oasis in a broader institutional environment that too often undervalues the kind of feminist community research profiled in this volume.

Gillian Creese and Wendy Frisby
Vancouver, British Columbia
11 August 2010

FEMINIST COMMUNITY RESEARCH

1

Unpacking Relationships in Feminist Community Research
Crosscutting Themes

WENDY FRISBY AND GILLIAN CREESE

Feminist community research (FCR) uses innovative methodological approaches to tackle complex social problems faced by those who are rarely included in knowledge production and policy making. This approach, and the present collection, is timely because it comes at a moment when there are calls for increased collaboration between universities and communities to generate knowledge that is widely distributed and that contributes to improved social policies. All research, not just FCR, is socially embedded knowledge generated from "somewhere," located in specific institutional arrangements and relations of power and privilege that structure the social world. The authors in this book intentionally set out to problematize the social embeddedness of processes of knowledge production. They do so by critically reflecting on their own feminist community research, while simultaneously searching for new ways to develop better collaborative research relationships across diverse communities, all with the aim of producing knowledge that will contribute in some way to creating a more just society.

Negotiating Contested Relationships

The key underlying theme woven through all the chapters in this volume is the multiple and ongoing ways that contested relationships must be negotiated as part of feminist community research processes. The nature of relationships with other researchers, community collaborators, community

organizations, research assistants, funders, and others involved in the research influences whether particular research even takes place, affects how the research unfolds and what gets accomplished, and ultimately determines who benefits from the research (and who does not). Yet, academics and the partners and communities they work with receive little if any training on how to build trusting and mutually productive relationships that avoid, or at least minimize, the numerous and serious potential pitfalls that can arise when insufficient resources and skill are devoted to building and sustaining diverse feminist community research relationships.

We have yet to uncover a book dedicated to the topic of *negotiating contested relationships in feminist community research,* and this is where the fundamental contribution of the book lies: in ferreting out the many tensions involved in research relationships; in analyzing rather than glossing over what went well, as well as what did not; in sharing the lessons learned so that others might benefit from our successes and our mistakes; and in considering the consequences of negotiating contested relationships for all those involved. Hence, one aim of this book is to share new strategies that emerged in the ongoing and never-ending search for more respectful and ethical approaches to conducting feminist community research.

All of the chapters in this volume examine research that falls under the broad heading of feminist community research. However, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that the authors depart from varying theoretical perspectives and name their approaches in a variety of ways that speak to the different emphases in their work. For example, different authors call their work participatory action research, community-based research, community health research, capacity-building research, or post-colonial research. At the same time, regardless of the specific methodological terms the authors use, every piece in this collection is informed by debates in feminist methodologies. Gender figures prominently in each analysis, but as the different chapters demonstrate, gender is inextricably tied to other axes of power and privilege, including race, social class, colonial histories, sexuality, age, and other forms of oppression that have a profound influence on the knowledge claims made (Collins 2005; Razack 2002; Reid and Frisby 2008). The authors are also all engaged in research with communities of various kinds and are committed, in one way or another, to research oriented towards social change. The definitions of *community* and the methodological strategies used vary considerably across the chapters, spanning local, diasporic, and global contexts, while simultaneously problematizing related methodological dilemmas.

There is a long tradition of feminist methodological writings that draws our attention to the important but contentious issues of negotiating research relationships. The unequal power relations, contested notions of truth and knowledge, building knowledge based on lived experience, ethical issues involved in working with funders and partners while representing the "Other," and the politics of voice and representation in meaning making are particularly relevant to research in this collection (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Brooks and Hesse-Biber 2007; Fonow and Cook 2005; Harding 2004). As politically engaged feminist researchers, we all struggle to some degree with Donna Haraway's (1991) "greasy pole" – the dilemma of simultaneously critiquing notions of objectivity and knowledge claims that silence the communities we engage with, while maintaining a focus on social change that requires convincing "real world" accounts that will influence policy makers and others to take up the research findings in relevant ways.

The starting point for feminist community research is acknowledging that our own knowledge claims are historically situated, socially embodied, and mediated through multiple and shifting relations of power and privilege. Engaging in reflexivity that opens up negotiations over what knowledge claims can be made, by whom, for what purpose, and within what frames of reference is difficult and often uncomfortable (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) points out, research is never "innocent," and learning to share in processes of knowledge creation is a precondition to decolonizing research methodologies. Most feminist researchers (ourselves included) still have much to learn about what more equitable "sharing" in knowledge creation might mean, while acknowledging our "epistemic responsibility" (Skeggs 1997) as critical scholars. To varying degrees, the authors in this collection also grapple with the tensions between critical and poststructuralist approaches that fundamentally challenge the limits of our quests to tell fuller or less partial feminist truths (Houle 2009; Visweswaran 1994).

Feminist community research takes up these issues and attempts to do research differently to disrupt dominant frameworks, disciplinary silos, and taken-for-granted assumptions that maintain the status quo. Those engaged in FCR attempt, however partially, to transcend colonizing research relations, bring to the surface voices that are often excluded from knowledge production and policy making, and critically reflect upon how it can all be done better (Frisby, Maguire, and Reid 2009). Above all, FCR questions what is at the centre and what is at the margins of knowledge making by illuminating the tensions and considering the alternatives. Therefore we hope

this book will represent one contribution to a larger discussion on the role of feminist research "with" (rather than "on" or "for") different communities (Ristock and Pennell 1996).

As is true in most qualitative research, the research process is embedded in developing relationships of various kinds. FCR involves the complicated negotiation of relationships with community – individual community members and/or community-based organizations – as well as with funders, university research ethics boards, and often government-based policy makers. The dynamic nature of how relationships evolve across very different social locations is a central theme in the chapters in this book. Some of the benefits, limitations, and tensions that arose are explored in discussions of different types of relationships. These include relationships between, for example, clinical researchers and inmate participants, university-based researchers and immigrant service organizations, white (male and female) feminist researchers and racialized researchers and community members, middle-class researchers and women living in poverty, and sex workers as peer researchers. The complicated web of relationships necessary to conduct this type of research becomes even more apparent when one considers the negotiations that must occur within and between researchers, community members, community partners, funders, institutions, and government officials who may be involved in the research. Every layer of these relationships is saturated with differences in power, access to resources, and control over meaning making. The negotiations that take place sometimes produce constructive tensions leading to new insights, but they may also threaten to undermine the very enterprise of transformative knowledge production.

Collectively, in the chapters that follow, we strive to unpack central methodological dilemmas encountered in our own attempts to negotiate relationships in feminist community research. We do this not to undermine the value of this work, but rather to share lessons learned with others interested in engaging in FCR as one way of fostering transformative action and social change, both large and small, intended and unintended (Reid, Tom, and Frisby 2006). We want to foster hope in both the relevance of and the possibilities for this type of research, while at the same time signalling the serious pitfalls that need to be carefully negotiated in order to avoid naive or even harmful research, no matter how well intentioned. Hope becomes evident when all parties involved in FCR talk about the positive impact that it has had on their lives, even for a moment, despite the ongoing struggles involved in doing the research and the persistent and pervasive material and structural conditions that oppress people's lives on a daily basis. In the

absence of such hope, we may remain content either to let the academy conduct unethical research that damages relationships or forgo doing research altogether. Neither of these alternatives is inspiring. Those breaking new paths in feminist community research, such as the authors of this book, are harbingers for hope in both the academy and the broader social world. As a result, our imperfect achievements in this area merit celebration.

Crosscutting Themes

There are a number of crosscutting themes related to negotiating contested relationships that link this collection together. The FCR projects examined here grapple with a range of different substantive topics such as community capacity building, health care, international development, caregiving, poverty, and immigration. Running through these substantive topics are a number of methodological themes related to negotiating relationships. These themes include deconstructing concepts and categories, reflexivity, voice and representation, the importance of time and place, the political economy of FCR, ethics, emotions, and efforts at fostering social change. Below, we draw your attention to how we see the crosscutting themes providing the threads that link the chapters together. The aim here it not to (re)create an FCR orthodoxy; rather, it is to raise critical questions that should be carefully negotiated with community members and partners to develop projects that are responsive to the diverse people who take part in them.

Deconstructing Concepts and Categories

The chapters that follow go some way in unpacking a wide variety of concepts, including *community*, *giving voice*, and *postcolonialism*, and raise questions about multiple meanings and the consequences of using static and sometimes binary terms. Meanings of community in this book are wide-ranging. For some, community means a specific group of women at a certain time and place, even though it is acknowledged that these groups are never homogeneous. For others, community means working with organizations like immigration services or connecting communities based on geography (e.g., rural and urban) or similar experiences (e.g., living on social assistance). And for others, it means creating community for women who are often isolated from one another (e.g., sex workers or former prison inmates).

Other terms, like *reciprocity*, *transparency*, *reflexivity*, and *agency*, are common in FCR, but we need to ask what these terms really mean for the different people involved. What are the limitations, tensions, and (un)intended consequences in trying to live up to the ideals associated

with these terms, and how do understandings and practices of these concepts shift over time, especially when community membership in FCR changes because of attrition or the addition of new members? To illustrate, Joan Anderson asked in one of our author meetings what using terms like *marginalization* and *vulnerable people* does to the agency of those with whom we engage? It is by deconstructing and reconstructing categories and approaches collectively that new possibilities for doing FCR emerge.

In many different ways, the importance of locating women's experiences in colonial histories and the ongoing impact of colonial relations is raised, as in the chapter by Joan Anderson, Koushambhi Basu Khan, and Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham. This leads to questions about the concept of *post-colonialism,* given the continuing weight of colonial systems of oppression. Several of the chapters highlight the different ways in which colonialism provides a context for understanding findings in feminist community research with Aboriginal women and with immigrants from various locales around the world.

Reflexivity

The goal of reflexivity is a central element of feminist qualitative research methodologies (Ramazanoglu and Holand 2002; Smith 1999), one that is embraced by all the authors in this book. Reflexivity involves interrogating how differences in power and privilege shape research relationships in diverse contexts. In many chapters, unconventional means of sharing power and resources were successfully pursued, such as when Paul Kershaw was able to reroute research funding directly into the hands of a community organization. In another example, Jill Chettiar, Mark Tyndall, Katharine Chan, Devi Parsad, Kate Gibson, and Kate Shannon worked with survival sex trade workers to interview others in similar situations to better understand the issues around the prevention of HIV infection. Yet, power sharing is often stymied by the rules of funders, partnering organizations, research ethics boards, and the privileges that many researchers carry with them – even as they try to unpack those privileges. This was particularly evident in Tara Gibb and Evelyn Hamdon's chapter, where they interrogate how the organization that commissioned their study exerted control over the research questions that differed from the questions that immigrant women themselves thought were important. Several authors engaged in discussions with community members about who gets to define *knowledge* and for what purpose, leading to new ways of thinking about what research questions should

be asked and what constitutes adequate answers. It is, in part, by engaging in collective reflexivity that capacity can be built for future projects.

Voice and Representation

Many of the chapters in this collection grapple in different ways with related questions of whose voices get heard and who speaks for whom in feminist community research. For example, at our authors' symposium, we learned that women in prison were not allowed to be named as co-authors on one of Ruth Martin's previous publications, thereby preventing the voices of women inmates from being heard. In another example, Gillian Creese, Xin Huang, Wendy Frisby, and Edith Ngene Kambere discuss how translation can imperil voice and how participants with stronger English-language skills can have their voices privileged over others in FCR.

Place and Time

Feminist community research draws attention to the importance of time in relationship building by raising questions about how the research is tied to past histories as well as to future actions that may or may not occur as a result. Connecting with people over time illustrates the fluidity of relationships and interpretations of one's circumstances and points to the limitations of one-time cross-sectional methodologies in illuminating complex social issues. Penny Gurstein, Jane Pulkingham, and Silvia Vilches specifically ask how we account for the silences connected to attrition in FCR over time through multiple interviews. Time and place also figure into who gets recruited to participate and who does not, as the most isolated members of a community are the least likely to take part.

The politics of place are also apparent. Some Aboriginal community members in the capacity-building project with Colleen Varcoe, Helen Brown, Betty Calam, Marla Buchanan, and Vera Newman wanted to talk with researchers in the natural environment, in connection with which an Aboriginal woman talked about the tensions of speaking about the research in a fancy hotel in downtown Vancouver. Others, like Leonora Angeles in her chapter, point to the conflicts inherent in conducting FCR in a university setting, and conversely, the challenges of travelling repeatedly to places inhabited by community members who are in remote locations around the world. Conducting research with immigrants who are now living in geographies new to them becomes complicated when other members of FCR research teams have not been to the countries from which the immigrants

have come, raising questions about how such researchers can interpret and make sense of stories of relocation.

The Political Economy of FCR

Several authors in this volume address the tensions and politics involved in managing budgets, when the requirements of funders do not match up well with the funding needs for FCR. At our authors' symposium, which was described in the preface, Jane Pulkingham framed this tension as the "political economy of FCR," which entails negotiating the competing demands of funders, university financial officers, and diverse communities, as well. Unequal power relations are imbued in the allocation of FCR budgets: it is often university-based researchers who use their privilege to leverage funding, while within the confines of funder regulations, having power over disbursements. For example, some funders will not allow child care expenses to be covered, even though having adequate child care is often a prerequisite for parents to take part in FCR. Another important consideration is that community partners and university-based researchers are on salary with their employers while conducting the research, but community members are sometimes expected to volunteer their time or receive small honoraria, thus exacerbating unequal power relations. This can result in a mentality of "cash for quotes," as Colleen Varcoe aptly pointed out at our authors' symposium, raising questions about just how voluntary participation really is (or is not) in some FCR projects. It is important to consider how honoraria and other forms of payment can be coercive and exploitative, even when designed to lessen power imbalances by compensating participants for their time and contributions to the knowledge-production process.

Ethics

Ethical research is at the heart of searching for better ways to conduct feminist community research to minimize potentially exploitatative research processes or outcomes that could be harmful in some way. Many of the chapters in this volume address ethics in terms of being responsible to participants and community partners by developing processes and relationships that are collaborative and more transparent. Some chapters illustrate the disjuncture between ethical review standards required by funders and universities and how this can create significant barriers to FCR. Colleen Reid, Pamela Ponic, Louise Hara, Robin LeDrew, Connie Kaweesi, and Kashmir Besla relay an account of a community that wished to be named in publications, and an ethics board's refusal to permit that to happen, thereby

undermining the agency of research participants and the likelihood that the research would contribute to social change in ways that they had envisioned.

Emotions

Those engaged in feminist community research are not concerned with maintaining objectivity and distant relationships with study participants. In fact, friendships are often forged, and sometimes broken, over the course of the research, as expectations shift and can or cannot be met. A whole range of emotions are felt over time by research participants (including researchers), ranging from elation to despair, happiness, anger, hope, and disappointment. Shauna Butterwick's autobiographical account fleshes out the emotions tied to research relationships with women living in poverty and how her own position of privilege at times both assisted and hindered the actions taken. Another example appears in the dialogue between Ruth Martin and Kelly Murphy, in the chapter they co-authored with Marla Buchanan, as they chart their changing responses to each other over the course of their relationship, first as physician and prison inmate, and later as co-researchers. Both of these chapters document how emotional responses, judgment, and personal pain can lead to new insights and/or create barriers to meaning making.

Policy and Social Change

Conducting research that contributes to progressive social change concerns all the authors in this book, and many chapters contribute to a rethinking of specific social policies – such as social assistance regulations, prison reform, public recreation policies, literacy programs, development initiatives, health care delivery, and settlement services. If social change is the goal of feminist community research, an important question to ask is how do we get policy makers to listen to this type of research in an appropriate way, especially when we engage in the type of self-critique that can serve to undermine it? We contend that by continually deconstructing categories and approaches, possibilities for reconstructing them become apparent.

Collectively, this volume raises important implications in terms of the politics of knowledge production, policy making, and social justice. Although the main focus is on methodology and the micro-politics of doing FCR, the analyses point to significant gaps between community members' lives and the assumptions underlying public policy. Rather than positioning policy makers as the villains whose rules negatively affect women's lives, we

recommend considering forming strategic alliances with "policy champions," where appropriate, by incorporating them into FCR from the outset. An example of this is outlined in the chapter by Gillian Creese, Xin Huang, Wendy Frisby, and Edith Ngene Kambere, where the authors describe a workshop that brought recent immigrant Chinese women together with forty policy makers from different levels of government as part of the FCR study design. It was clear that some of the policy makers were very committed to making change but had few opportunities to engage directly with those for whom they were supposed to be developing policy, and they encountered considerable constraints that are important to identify and try to work around when advocating for policy change.

One suggestion for future research could include policy-mapping projects that illustrate the intersecting consequences that multiple policies have on people over time, how this can further their marginalization, and how different policies could lead to more equitable outcomes. It is by paying attention to all of these crosscutting themes that are crucial to negotiating relationships in feminist community research that the potential for having a positive policy influence is enhanced. At the same time, while this book covers a wide range of topics and types of communities, many other groups, issues, and contexts could not be covered. As a result, this volume represents a starting point that needs to be built upon by further research and policy development.

Organization of the Book

Following this introduction, the book begins with two chapters that raise broad questions about postcolonial feminist research and capacity building in international contexts. The focus then turns to a series of distinct local case studies that take up various dimensions of these issues. The book ends with two chapters that grapple with the thorny issues of ethics and knowledge production, followed by brief reflections by the editors.

In Chapter 2, "Community Research from a Post-Colonial Feminist Perspective: Exemplars from Health Research in Canada and India," Joan Anderson, Koushambhi Basu Khan, and Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham compare how social relations are organized through different histories of colonization in different geographical areas. Drawing upon examples from their independent FCR with women who are Aboriginal; women who have immigrated to Canada from India, Hong Kong, and China; women who are Canadian-born of European descent; and women who live in the slums of

Delhi, India, they compare the relevance of post-colonial feminist theory in community health research. While acknowledging some of its limitations, their analysis demonstrates how post-colonial feminist theory provides a lens for identifying structural and historical forces that sustain gendered power relations that are reflected in inequitable access to health care.

In Chapter 3, "Feminist Demands, Dilemmas, and Dreams in Introducing Participatory Action Research in a Canada-Vietnam Capacity-Building Project," Leonora Angeles picks up on the complexities of conducting international FCR involving globalized university-community partnerships. Capacity-building projects provide one foundation for realizing the dreams of FCR in terms of transforming communities. Angeles's project on Localized Poverty Reduction in Vietnam, however, demonstrates the ways in which research relationships are constrained by institutional and bureaucratic practices that are embedded in gendered hierarchies and lines of authority, constraints that are compounded by international partnerships.

In Chapter 4, "Travels with Feminist Community-Based Research: Reflections on Social Location, Class Relations, and Negotiating Reciprocity," Shauna Butterwick provides an autobiographical account of her research relationships with a group of local women living on low incomes. In particular, she explores the unexpected ways that reciprocity can occur in FCR. As she aptly points out, "there is welcome recognition of the responsibility of universities *to* non-academic communities, but little commentary on social class and other forms of difference such as gender and race that profoundly shape social relations."

In a novel approach to FCR, Chapter 5 documents how a team of women who are survival sex workers were hired and trained to play an active role in guiding and developing a research project designed to indentify and fill gaps in information on the prevention of HIV infection and harm reduction services for women. In "Voices from the Street: Sex Workers' Experiences in Community-Based HIV Research," Jill Chettiar, Mark Tyndall, Katharine Chan, Devi Parsad, Kate Gibson, and Kate Shannon problematize the strategy of using "peer researchers" and contemplate the impact that their project has had on community members who live in an area with high concentrations of drug use and survival sex work.

A comparative analysis of how research relationships are further complicated appears in the account by Gillian Creese, Xin Huang, Wendy Frisby, and Edith Ngene Kambere of conducting FCR with immigrants. In Chapter 6, "Working across Race, Language, and Culture with African and Chinese

Immigrant Communities," they compare and contrast what *community* meant in two different research projects, and they document the strategies used and struggles encountered in working across difference. They also reflect on how the relationships that evolved in their respective FCR projects affected the interpretation of the data, given the politics of meaning making.

In Chapter 7, "Tangled Nets and Gentle Nettles: Negotiating Research Questions with Immigrant Service Organizations," Tara Gibb and Evelyn Hamdon consider the impact of relationships with partnering organizations in FCR. Their analysis details the problems that arise when university-based researchers and immigrant service organizations tackle research questions related to employment but that "miss the mark" because they are not tackling issues identified as being of central importance by new immigrants themselves.

Penny Gurstein, Jane Pulkingham, and Silvia Vilches provide an analysis of how longitudinal interviewing with lone mothers poses implications for neo-liberal welfare policy reform. In Chapter 8, "Challenging Policies for Lone Mothers: Reflections on, and Insights from, Longitudinal Qualitative Interviewing," they examine the strengths, limitations, and dilemmas of doing critical policy-relevant research on poverty based on the lived experiences of lone mothers.

In provocatively titled Chapter 9, "White Cow*boy*, Black Feminism, Indian Stories," Paul Kershaw tells his story about the methodological tensions involved in collaborating with women of colour and Aboriginal women in an FCR caregiving project that placed their expertise at the centre of theory building. He details the collaborative grant-writing process that was undertaken with a partnering organization, the journal writing and interviews that took place, and the challenges encountered given his privileged social location.

Chapter 10, by Ruth Elwood Martin, Kelly Murphy, and Marla Buchanan, titled "Inside and Outside of the Gates: Transforming Relationships through Research," provides yet another important slant on negotiating contested relationships in FCR. The key question they ask is: "How are research relationships reconstituted from the traditional dichotomy of researcher/subject within a prison research project that values collaborative participation, authentic relationships, community, reflexivity, transparency, and transformation?" Undertaking FCR in the largely inflexible environment of a women's prison produced particular tensions that ultimately led to shifting the research focus outside the prison gates.

Ethical issues are front and centre in Chapter 11, "Living an Ethical Agreement: Negotiating Confidentiality and Harm in Feminist Participatory Action Research," by Colleen Reid, Pamela Ponic, Louise Hara, Robin LeDrew, Connie Kaweesi, and Kashmir Besla. The authors outline how their relationships with women living in rural and remote communities were compromised because of the ethical agreement required by the funder of their project. Thus, they add yet another layer to relationship complexity in feminist community research.

Chapter 12 returns to processes of capacity building and ethics, but this time FCR is positioned as a site for mutual learning and decolonizing practices when working with Aboriginal communities. In "Capacity Building Is a Two-Way Street: Learning from Doing Research within Aboriginal Communities," Colleen Varcoe, Helen Brown, Betty Calam, Marla Buchanan, and Vera Newman show how capacity building in conventional research implies that non-academics are somehow deficient. Based on their project, they advocate for new conceptualizations that decolonize research relationships within Western research frameworks.

Finally, in the last chapter, "Reflections: Promises and Limits of Feminist Community Research," we consider some of the lessons learned through these various examples of FCR, highlighting the diversity of feminist approaches, the multiplicity of strategies pursued, and the limits of reflexivity and mediation of power relations that suggests the quest to "get it (at least partially) right" will always be a work in progress.

Concluding Thoughts

This book has several audiences in mind. We hope to speak to other practitioners and students of FCR, or those who are interested in pursuing this type of research in the future, as part of an ongoing conversation on how to create more productive forms of feminist community research. Learning how to work across university-community boundaries in more egalitarian ways is not always easy, especially when FCR involves work with hard-to-reach groups, as many of the chapters in this book illustrate.

The difficulties of developing respectful, responsive, and ethical research relationships are profoundly shaped by the institutional structures in which research occurs. A second audience, then, involves funders, peer reviewers of grants, and university research ethics boards, who may not be familiar with community research or with feminist methodologies more generally. While attempting to protect the rights and integrity of research "subjects,"

ethical guidelines are too often imposed in a paternalistic and positivistic fashion that undermines the agency of study participants and, hence, the ability to develop more equitable collaborations that reject hierarchical "researcher-subject" relationships.

Although current models of research ethics at play in funding bodies and universities can make more equitable collaborative research difficult, it is precisely this type of collaboration with communities and socially relevant knowledge dissemination that these bodies are increasingly calling for. Thus, it is our hope that sharing our candid stories of the problems, tensions, strategies, and (at least partial) successes that we have encountered in negotiating relationships in FCR will encourage others to engage in more effective FCR projects, contribute to progressive social change, and at the same time, foster a rethinking of ethical and funding guidelines to facilitate more flexible and relevant ways of doing feminist community research.

NOTE
Although we are the authors of this introductory chapter, we acknowledge that many of the points raised here originated in conversations with other authors in this book, as we participated in the collaborative chapter-writing process described in the preface.

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