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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Zero to One in Participatory Development

by

Marlene Wiens

A THESIS

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Abstract

Zero to One in Participatory Development

Participatory research methodology was utilized to integrate families with disabled children into the decision-making process of an organization working in an impoverished community in Colombia. The research delineates four spheres of activity: mothers of disabled children who participated in capacity building exercises; challenges faced by their children; organizational capacity building with Board members of the partner organization; and the researcher's role. Major themes discussed are participation, identity, relationships and leadership. Themes identified for further investigation were gender and development, play and learning, and home environment and learning. Implications of participation and transformation on individual and collective identities are studied. A process of organization from the ground up, the Zero to One Framework of Organizing, presents six stages from the unformed group to the stage of achieving organizational identity and sustainability. Documentation and analysis of process variables and participant's responses are provided to enhance understanding regarding complexity in participatory development.

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Prologue

I often characterize myself as a physiotherapist with over 20 years of experience in neurological rehabilitation and an interest in intercultural exchange. My first international experience took place from 1972 to 1974 in Nigeria where I worked under the auspices of Canadian University Services Overseas primarily in the area of spinal cord rehabilitation. This experience served to cement my life-long interest in this field. A community development component was added to this initial experience in 1994 when I supervised two six-week practicum sessions in a post degree diploma course in Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies being offered by the University of Calgary to 15 Palestinian students in the Gaza Strip. This experience demonstrated the effect of mobilizing human resources to achieve integration of people with disability even in difficult economic circumstances. A volunteer experience with 3-D Projects in Jamaica in 1995 exposed me to the Community Based Rehabilitation model and I saw the value of training local community members as rehabilitation workers.

Armed with these experiences, I entered into life in Colombia in 1996. That year found my husband and I in Bogotá where he was part of an international consortium working on an oil pipeline project and I accompanied him as his *wife*. I italicize the word, wife, because it was my first international experience as a spouse rather than a professional. It was uncomfortable for me to be just a wife when I was used to having my own identity as a physiotherapist. My determination to become involved led me to volunteer, initially with established volunteer groups engaged in charity, and later as a volunteer physiotherapist. These experiences gave me confidence in the language and the courage to bridge cultural gaps. I was enchanted by Colombia, our new home, and the people with whom I worked.

A move from our first home in Bogotá to Bucaramanga, a much smaller city, was initially distressing for me as it meant starting again “from scratch”. As my interest was working with people with disability, I began by searching out groups formed by this population. I literally “hung out” with an association dedicated to encouraging sport and competition for disabled adults in Bucaramanga.

As I got to know some of the club members better, relationships and confidence grew. One club member started to ask me questions regarding disability and how disabled children in his community could be helped. After several weeks of to-and-fro conversation we decided to meet with the children and their mothers to clarify the situation. Thus I took my first step on a very exciting journey that was partly responsible for my return to university.

The Overall Research Plan and Methods section of the thesis will introduce you to an organization called FANDIC, *Fundación Amigos de los Niños Discapacitados para su Integración a la Comunidad* or Foundation, Friends of Disabled Children for their Integration into the Community. This non-profit organization was the outcome of that initial step. In less than one year my Colombian colleague and I had established this organization dedicated to helping children with severe disabilities to attend school and to receive therapies. A small group of community volunteers had received basic training, we had a board of directors and we received donations from local pipeline companies. It was a good beginning. But there was something lacking – a more complete application of a key word in our title, integration. FANDIC began by connecting the families with other services and helping them utilize them by providing financial assistance. The families were happy with the service. But they were not an integral part of the decision-making process. Our mission of integration required further exploration.

The concept of integration broadened as the influences of family and community on the child's life were considered, for example nutrition, financial stability within the family, security in terms of housing, disability awareness in the community. We began to contemplate the question of how one could enhance organization within the family and community so that dependence on outside agencies could be reduced or eliminated. The emerging question was, "How *does* one teach a person to fish?" My previous training and experience did not give me the answers but they did give me the directive to go back and find out.

My thesis details that exploration. I returned to university to find the answers to complex questions in a concrete context. I was not comfortable with using quantitative research as I instinctively felt it would not advance us toward the goal of integration.

Participatory Research (PR), with its emphasis on full participation, equalization of power, and cross-fertilization of knowledge was chosen as a philosophical base because enhanced self-esteem was seen as essential to the goal of capacity building.

The effect of this study on the lives of the participants, on strategic direction of FANDIC and on my own life has been transformative. The experience has opened my world and offered me reward beyond measure. I see myself in a space in which obstacles are mere constructions; they can be gently pushed to give way. There is a wonderful interplay between theory and practice, knowledge and understanding, reflection and action. My hope is that you will get a sense of this interplay and be engaged by its potential.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis, “Zero to One in Participatory Development” was chosen after some deliberation. The term “zero” offers an amorphous image of random behaviors. It refers to the stage of “unformed” organization. It is the very beginning of something. “One” signifies the organization of random behaviors into purposeful movement. “One” suggests unity and collectivity; it suggests a degree of maturity in organizing. The word “one” holds emotional charge in phrases such as “we are one in the spirit”. When “one” has been reached, a group has already walked a fair distance together. Zero to One is a framework consisting of the phases of organizing, beginning with the engagement of people at the individual level, progressing through a process of change that challenges self-identity, and emerging as a sustainable group. The framework is based on the experience of this thesis.

Participation is a word I believed I knew and understood, only to find that there were qualities and degrees of which I knew little. I assumed that participation meant authentic involvement of participants in all aspects of the project. While this was the ideal, it was more likely to be found in a group at ‘one’ than at ‘zero’. Facilitating participation is part of the process of organizing. It may begin at a very low level and build by degrees to end with complete control. That is the ideal. The question is how to get there.

The word development carries a lot of historical baggage. Putting this baggage aside, development in the context of organizing refers to building ability, knowledge, and experience on both the personal and the group level. The word development was utilized in the title because it places one in the context of underdeveloped communities. ‘Underdeveloped’ is an apt descriptor for the community of this study in terms of limited

social programs for disadvantaged and isolated people. ‘Underdeveloped’ is also an apt descriptor for those not realizing their full potential.

In summary, the title “Zero to One in Participatory Development” refers to a process of organizing that encourages the participation of individuals with the aim of developing group capabilities. It is a framework that identifies elements in the growth of groups from unformed to sustainable. Zero to one is the story of this thesis.

In a way it could be said that the story of this thesis began in August 1997 in Colombia when a Colombian colleague and I first met four mothers and their disabled children. I entered the university the next year with the desire to learn something very practical and that was how to help the organization we created move beyond a service orientation to a development orientation. A service orientation encouraged the beneficiaries of that service to remain in a dependent role. The aim was to encourage a higher level of participation and the development of abilities, knowledge and experience in the beneficiaries. We desired a fuller integration of families of children with disability into the organization. The objectives of this study, broadly stated, were for the participants of the research to develop a greater understanding of the issues of disability and poverty, to develop skills in organizing and communicating, and to form a social network or support group that would identify issues of concern to them and take action to resolve them.

Participatory research (PR) was chosen as the research method most appropriate to the aim of raising self-esteem and developing capabilities in the participants. Due to my previous experience living in Colombia, I felt that theory developed in *my* world might not have much applicability in the world of the fieldwork. For this reason, I sought out authors who had developed methodology based on experience in low-income countries. I began by studying Orlando Fals Borda, the father of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in Colombia and Latin America, and the literature of his contemporaries. As time and the study progressed, I added literature on Popular Education (PE) from Latin America, and Community Development (CD) from the Southern Hemisphere. The last piece was literature on organizing, by authors with a variety of experiential

backgrounds in North America. The movement from one area to another followed my desire to read about collaborative experiences and for the answers to questions raised by my experience. It was an attempt to broaden my understanding by looking at an issue from several different viewpoints.

Looking back, I was poorly prepared at the beginning of the study and this caused me some anxiety regarding the process, the outcome, and the shortness of time. In retrospect, further theoretical study may have helped to prepare me but it also may have hindered. It could have helped by giving me more understanding of the issues. It would have hindered had it provided me with more material with which to form theoretical assumptions; assumptions that would later have to be broken when confronted with reality. In many ways, practice was my teacher and theory was a mentor whose concepts were woven into the practice.

In addition, I was unsure about my role in the research. Was I a researcher with practical skills or a practitioner with research skills? Upon reflection, I was a practitioner with research skills throughout the entire fieldwork experience. When it came to writing the thesis, this orientation presented difficulty in that it was hard to assume the expert role required for thesis writing. This difficulty challenged me to shift my self-image to that of a researcher, giving me the authority to present the lessons learned from the experience.

The observations made as a result of practice developed awareness on a broad range of issues. Many questions were raised. Some answers were forthcoming and some were not. Some of the issues that became important to me were:

- The quality of participation;**
- The process of transformation;**
- Organizing and the role of facilitation and leadership;**
- Self-identity and relationships**

These issues and others, addressed first within the Discussion of Literature, are later put into the context of the Experience. There is an attempt to draw thematic threads consistently throughout the thesis. With the dominant threads, I was more successful in

achieving coherence. The less dominant threads remain to be picked up again on another occasion.

The organization of this thesis did not lend itself to division into the neat categories of methods, investigation, results and discussion. Instead, these components have become meshed together. Part 1 of The Experience presents the Mother's Group, the group most central to this investigation. The documentation of their process and outcome is quite detailed combining elements of narration and analysis. Part 1 concludes with an examination of outcome, a discussion of lessons learned, identification of issues requiring a deeper understanding, and a review of the objectives of the study.

Part 2 addresses the children. The children, although central to the mission of the partner organization, were not central to the investigation. Yet, considerable activity on behalf of the children was carried out. This activity involved a variety of players from the family members to outside agencies. Part 2 provides an account of issues revolving around learning, home environment, and housing. Themes requiring further investigation are also identified in Part 2.

Part 3 briefly presents the second group in the study, the Board of the partner organization. Although the Board was not thought to be central to the study, it became evident later on that they formed a parallel group worthy of separate observation and analysis. The description of process in this section contains much less detail than Part 1 with the emphasis being on the outcome. Part 3 contains the Zero to One process of organizing, a collation of the experience of both the Mother's Group and the Board. This empirically derived framework could be considered a guide to the process of organizing in the community.

Part 4 completes the presentation of study participants with an examination of the role of the outsider. Reflections regarding the researcher's role as facilitator, leader and researcher are followed by contemplation of the influence of process on outcome. Part 4 addresses the issue of sustainability and introduces levels of complexity in reaching the goal. It ends with a contemplation of unexpected outcomes that, in the end, are viewed as part of the search for deeper understanding.

The remainder of the thesis surrounds and supports the Experience. Chapter Two, A Discussion of Literature, examines themes that were important in framing the Experience. It is an examination of the themes using literature from different disciplines. Chapter two begins with an examination of my initial theoretical orientation before moving to the themes of organization and attitudes toward gender and disability.

Chapter Three, Overall Research Plan and Methods, is a composite of methodological issues. It begins with a brief examination of qualitative research methods, followed by an introduction of the partner organization, and the goals and objectives of the study. The pre-research plan is presented followed by a general outline of the implementation of the research plan.

Chapter Four, The Country Context, is intended to immerse the reader in the cultural context that bathes the experience. This chapter was written with information from country profiles and newspaper accounts. It is an attempt to provide an idea of 'macro' conditions influencing the 'micro' environment or the community setting of the research.

Chapter Five, The Experience contains four parts as already described. It provides greater detail on the methods utilized and their outcome. Analysis and discussion are provided in a timely and relevant fashion. Disquiet with theoretical concepts that clash with reality is exposed for viewing and further discussion, whether in the context of this thesis or in other forums.

Chapter Six, the Conclusion, is a synthesis of the themes of the thesis. Using the metaphor of 'weaving', major themes are presented as dominant threads that provide strength and structure to the interpretation of the experience, and loose threads are themes that require further investigation. Process and product are interwoven as woof and weft. The design of the weaving is altered by the act of weaving. So it is in participatory development where the inter-play of relationships brings structure and design to each step of the process and clarity to that which will be the final result.

The Introduction has presented a sense of initial beginning as well as movement as time progressed. The actors in the investigation remain shrouded for the moment only.

Their faces will be glimpsed and their words heard once the preparations for staging have been completed. The first cornerstone to be laid is the Discussion of Literature.

CHAPTER TWO

A DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE

The literature presented in this chapter is a reflection on topics that became meaningful as a result of the research. Consistent with the qualitative research approach, the reading of books and articles was sustained throughout the entire process of fieldwork and thesis preparation. I came to the literature on a need-to-know basis and have included information found to be helpful from various disciplines. Rather than an extensive literature review on several pertinent topics, I have presented a discussion on themes relevant to the research. This dialogue with the literature frequently provided me with a sparkle of understanding or illumination towards a new direction.

The discussion begins with Orlando Fals Borda because he was my theoretical mentor. His status as a Colombian and father of Participatory Action Research in Latin America gave him authenticity and credibility in my eyes. My respect for his work has not diminished despite my effort to look for gaps in the methodology. His philosophy and that of his colleagues forms the foundation of this thesis.

An examination of terminology constitutes a major portion of this chapter as I found it necessary to deepen my understanding of concepts. Terms such as participation, knowledge, empowerment and transformation are explored not only from the viewpoint of those engaged in participatory research, but from authors with other orientations. This has been helpful in broadening the application of participatory research.

Two topics that receive inadequate attention in this chapter are self-identity and relationships. The relationship between these topics and development is one that I believe requires greater analysis still. I have made a start with an exploration of change and relationships within a group, in the home, and between groups and society. More work remains to be done in this area.

Participatory Research

Participatory Research (PR) fits under the umbrella of social action research or research of a participatory nature that is intended to facilitate social change. PR was begun largely by disenchanting academics who wanted to transform their world. There was rejection of the quantitative approaches to research and a move to holistic viewpoints and qualitative methods. Carl Marx and Antonio Gramsci were theoretical father figures up until 1977 (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). PR gradually took on a social action framework, as praxis became the ideological commitment. The first academic presentation of PR occurred in 1982 at the 10th World Congress of Sociology in Mexico City where it moved from peasant issues to complex urban, economic and regional issues. PR researchers began to use the comparative approach and to expand it to fields such as medicine, economics, history, and anthropology (Fals Borda & Rahman).

PR has been used extensively in developing countries and has many proponents (Chambers, 1998; De Konig & Martin, 1996; De Roux, 1998; Fals-Borda, 1985; Fals Borda & Kemmis, 1989; McTaggart, 1997; Rahman, 1993). These proponents have developed separate but related methodologies to address community participatory development in their local environments. Some of these methodologies are: participatory action research (PAR), participatory rural appraisal (PRA), rapid rural appraisal (RRA), participatory learning methods (PLM), and participatory learning and action (PLA). Proponents of PR meet at *Convergence*, a congress held every four years. The 1997 *Convergence* held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, signified the convergence of sister trends and the agreement to use the term ‘participatory research’ in the future, thus acknowledging the diversity of methodology and the context in which social action research is carried out (Fals Borda, 1998). In keeping with the decision made at *Convergence* 1997, the term PR will be utilized as the term of choice except in cases in which the use of the term PAR is more consistent with the author’s usage. In these cases the term PAR/PR will be used.

Fals Borda's Concept of PAR/PR

The writing and thinking of Orlando Fals Borda, a Colombian sociologist and important developer of PAR/PR in Latin America, will be given prominence in the following discussion as his writings formed my initial orientation to the philosophy and methodology of community participation and activation. Fals Borda defines PAR/PR as a combination of *vivencia* and authentic commitment. *Vivencia* refers to "inner life-experience" which helps us understand ourselves in a broader context. Authentic commitment refers to the melding of two types of knowledge: that from academia and technology, with that which resides in tradition and culture. Commitment is termed "authentic" when there is a leveling of the power relationship normally existing in empirical research and resulting in a true interchange of knowledge in which all the participants, researcher included, engage in the process of learning (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991).

Praxis, the never-ending cycle of reflection, investigation and action, forms the basis of the PAR/PR process. Praxis, which leads to the development of self-awareness, is a core tenant in the practice of PAR/PR for it links knowledge production with action as a means to transform reality. Techniques used in the development of self-awareness are: collective research, critical recovery of history, valuation of folk culture, and production and diffusion of new knowledge (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fals-Borda 1978, 1985).

Collective research is the gathering of group data. Group data achieves the objective of social validation of information and is collected in meetings and assemblies, and through drama etc. The critical recovery of history refers to the "remembering" of historical accounts and legends, which may have a bearing on the situation at hand. Common techniques used are storytelling and recall of legends and parables. Several elderly individuals may be used as principal informants and also serve to corroborate information.

The valuation and application of folk culture is a rediscovery of core cultural values or essential beliefs whose source lies in oral tradition. Three processes emerge:

feelings, imagination, and ludic tendencies (games and play). Affective logic, or feelings, permits us to understand the primal forces of people's culture and symbols. Imagination is expressed creatively, through painting, designing posters and banners, sculpture, theater, puppetry, pantomime, masquerades, dancing, the cinema, audio-visual aids, and other cultural expressions. Games and entertainment remind people how to have a good time. It is important to get people involved in a process where they can show their skill and suspend their "melancholy" of today in order to take action. Besides the techniques mentioned above, valuation and application of folk culture may be expressed through story-telling, tales, legends, parables, fables, anecdotes, riddles, and puns (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fals-Borda 1985).

Production and diffusion of new knowledge refers to the devolution or return of processed information to its rightful owners. New knowledge refers to the melding of expert or technical knowledge with common knowledge raising the knowledge of common people to a new, capacity-building level. It is an intrinsic part of participatory research as it leads to the goal of social change. The form taken in the diffusion of knowledge should be consistent with the literacy and education of the people for whom it is intended. The output should not be limited to books or pamphlets but may include other methods such as graphic maps, films produced by the communities themselves, and informal adult education techniques (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fals-Borda 1985).

The following account provides an example of the use of PAR/PR in a small Colombian community. This delightful story called, Together against the computer: PAR and the struggle of Afro-Colombians for public services by Gustavo I. De Roux (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991, pp. 37-53) is about a community who were being "scammed" by the regional electric company, took civil action, and reversed the course of electrification history in their region. The story is summarized briefly under headings.

Introduction: It was emphasized that research is not always about just the creation of knowledge, but can be stimulated by a practical problem. The process and the timetable were determined by the people, that is, they did not wait for the researchers to get there before starting.

History: The history of the black people, from the area around Cauca and more specifically from Villarrica, from colonial time onward, is presented. This lays the framework for the future action that is to be taken and was derived through a collective research process in which there was a critical recovery of history.

Statement of the Problem: The problem was multi-factoral, but came to a head when the electrification company faced a financial crisis, and started to “cook the books”. Individual complaints accomplished nothing, and even formation of a committee brought only the response, “The bills are generated from the computer, and computers don’t lie”.

Methodology: The Villarrica Users Committee (with outside help) began the process of generating knowledge for the purpose of discovering which course of action to take. They organized a March of Lights, children and adults walking down the street with candles, to sensitize the public to the topic. They organized cultural events in which songs, for example The Sound of Darkness, were written especially for the occasion, and plays and poems were presented. They held assemblies to encourage collection of personal histories. The following techniques were used:

1. **Mirror-like Narrative:** There were two aspects: the socialization of individual experiences in collective contexts, usually presented in the form of denunciations; and expanding knowledge of the electricity issue (in which bills were collected in a receptacle and graphs were made of electrical consumption, cost per kilowatt-hour and cost of monthly use).
2. **Strategic Codes:** Detecting and reworking the strategic codes for action had two parts: Collectively reviewing the history of the black population’s struggles in the region and earlier organizational experiences, and analyzing previous successes and failures; and evaluation of how the tasks were being implemented through periodical assemblies and meetings.
3. **Developing a Pensamiento Propio (or alternative ideology):** Represented a consolidation of knowledge, i.e., it developed through airing of complaints, discovery of common ground, and the union of those willing to take action.

Results:

1. The information gained and the publicity received throughout the process facilitated successful negotiation with the company.
2. There was a re-creation of civil society. It stimulated the rise and strengthening of popular organizations and the networking between them. This has been catalytic in terms of revitalizing community life.
3. An improved position for common people in local power relations. The new philosophy became, "go straight to the source if you want something to be done".
4. It contributed to people's ability to do research, to reflect, criticize, deliberate, negotiate and cooperate, that is, to participate.

This narrative was presented to provide an example of PAR/PR in practice, of the techniques used to gather information, and the outcome of the process. It also provided an example of the descriptive documentation style typical of PAR/PR.

Examining Key Concepts of PR

The previous section was intended to put the reader into the Colombian context both ideologically and practically. The concepts presented could be said to be applicable in other settings but they may not be well understood due to terminology and language. The intention of the following discussion is to view key concepts of PR in the light of literature from other PR sources and community development (CD).

Participation

Fals Borda & Rahman (1991) speak of participation as being from the bottom up, where the people define the objective and the process. An example of this level of participation was given in the story about the computers (de Roux, 1991) where the external agent was invited in by the community to help meld technological and practical knowledge. This model of participation is promoted by other authors of PR. Fernandes & Tandon (1981) state that a genuine participatory process "is a healthy combination of knowledge and action in which the people are the real actors" (p. 82). McTaggart (1991)

considers the methodological process in his statement that participation means that people set the agenda for the inquiry, they participate in the data collection and analysis, and they control the use of outcomes and the whole process (1996). A working definition of People's Participatory Process is,

“a just and empowering social process in which the poor and marginalized are democratically involved in collective action, strive to articulate and design the vision, goal, objectives, path, direction, content, magnitude and process of a holistic social transformation in their favor, recollecting and analyzing the past experiences, focusing on the present situation and projecting the future....” (Bloem, Biswas & Adhikari, 1996, p.143).

Thus, participation in PR is people driven with control of both the process and the outcome. The questions are, how likely is this level of participation to occur in reality and are all participants ready to participate at this high functioning level? D'Abreo (1981) addresses this question with statements regarding readiness, saying that people at the grassroots level are not prepared to think and control what and how they learn, and that they do not know how to analyze and evaluate. Fernandes and Tandon (1981) state that a “dominant characteristic of the underprivileged is their inability to and fear of participation” (p. 33). Fals Borda (1985) characterizes participants as passive stating that participation breaks up the asymmetrical relationship of submission and dependence implicit in the subject/object binomial. These statements, although in the minority in PR literature, demonstrate a crack in the theoretical utopia of total participation.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation has eight levels ranging from 'manipulation' at the bottom rung to 'citizen control' at the top. The first two rungs, manipulation and therapy, are levels of non-participation that enable power holders to “educate” or “cure” the participants. Rungs three, four and five are degrees of tokenism that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice. At the level of citizen power (rungs six to eight) participants have increasing power to make decisions and to manage the project. There is reference to the levels of participation in community development literature (Morrissey, 2000, Oakley & Marsden, 1984, Watt, Higgins & Kendrick, 2000),

but it receives little mention in PR literature. The community in de Roux's (1991) story appears to be at level eight. In order to gauge the occurrence of this level of participation in community projects, we turn to articles on community development.

Morrissey (2000) finds little agreement on the meaning of the term 'participation' and states that the issue of quality had been largely ignored in the literature. Participation from an instrumental perspective is seen as a means to an end; it focuses on project outcomes. Participation from a developmental perspective is seen as an end in itself and a means to self-development promoting new values, attitudes, skills and knowledge. Participation from the development perspective seems to be promoted by Buckland (1998) who views it as a contribution that involves the voluntary commitment by community members to an external agency. Watt, Higgins & Kendrick (2000) support the developmental perspective with the statement that people need to feel confident and skilled enough to participate, especially if they are to control and own the process. They go on to explain that the progression from disempowerment to empowerment is slow, reflective and action-oriented and may take years.

Oakley & Marsden (1984) in their study of approaches to participation also found these two contrasting interpretations: people are mobilized to implement activities decided by outsiders; and the empowering of people to play an effective role in development. They state that participation is equated with power and point out that joint organization between men and women often means that the interests of women are re-submerged. Divisiveness due to power is more prevalent in heterogeneous communities where "people are often less likely to participate due to divisions of language, tenure, income, gender, age or politics" (Botes & van Rensburg, 2000). Kamara & Kargbo (1999) refer to the perceived benefits of participation in that individuals have to be convinced that they will benefit personally in order to participate. Botes & van Rensburg (2000) look at the selectivity of participation stating that there is poor community penetration by organizations and a limited attempt to identify the less obvious partners. They maintain that "it remains one of the biggest challenges to ensure

that the people who neither have the capacity, nor the desire to participate, are involved in the development process” (p. 46).

These perspectives raise interesting points. Participation can be seen as a means to an end or as a process but is ideal if both aspects are considered (Oakley & Marsden, 1984). It can be manipulative or capacity building. Participation can be a mechanism of power in which a certain gender or group can be seen to benefit. The selection of participants, a key point that will determine both the process and the outcome, is frequently limited in scope and definition. The ‘participation’ in PR is not clearly defined in the literature and fails to adequately address key issues such as gender and selection. Not only is the composition of the target group or “community” unclear but also the relationship between the participants receives little commentary thus limiting the understanding of the process and the outcome of the methodology. Gender, selection, and level of participation are factors that affected the process and outcome of this project; they are factors that will be raised throughout.

Knowledge

The word ‘knowledge’ also conjures up different definitions depending on one’s context. In PAR/PR, the melding of technical and common sense knowledge results in a new knowledge that is liberating (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). The process of developing new knowledge is facilitated by the researcher leaving his/her “expert” role and by the other participants breaking their role of submission (Fals Borda, 1985). This melding of two types of knowledge leads to a transformation of the researcher/researched (subject/object) liaison and the conversion of common sense to “good” sense (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). Marino (1997) explains the difference between common and good sense:

What is called “common sense” is often oppression so deeply embedded in a culture that it is assumed to be natural and inevitable. “Common sense” tells us that social problems are utterly complex, that change is extremely difficult, that experts are the only ones who know, that ordinary people have no ability to

understand or no power to influence. So “good sense” often comes about when we look at these assumed interpretive habits and ask questions about power or disempowerment (p. 127).

Good sense appropriation of knowledge was demonstrated by Gaventa (1991) in his application of PR to North America. Citizens involved in the acquisition of knowledge regarding the influence of industry on their community developed a thrill by moving into a domain that was formerly in control of the expert. The result was a demystifying of knowledge, where they found that science was subject to fallibility and conflicting viewpoints. It also resulted in an examination of “popular knowledge” or the knowledge they held. The result was the owning of one’s own knowledge and a strengthening in the sense of its value. They became empowered not only by the acquisition of knowledge but also by their participation in the process of acquisition.

Knowledge is defined by Berger & Luckman (1966) as “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (p. 1). Knowledge is knowledge from a certain position and is related to the social context from which it arises, that is, knowledge is socially constructed. Since this is so, the study of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people “know” as “reality” in their everyday lives. In other words, commonsense knowledge must be the central focus for it is precisely this “knowledge” that constitutes the fabric of meanings within society (Berger & Luckman). The exhortation to concern oneself with the reality of everyday life is extremely relevant in community work as will be later demonstrated.

Knowledge is not static but a dynamic process that takes place through action and interaction (Cornwall, 1996) and it becomes progressively clearer with the accumulation of different perspectives on it (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Thus knowledge has the potential to be clarified, broadened, and altered depending on incoming information. New information has the potential to transform in the sense that a new apprehension of the world is adopted. It is adopted by reason of the world being perceived differently, and on the basis of this new perception it is

possible to acquire the disposition to change it (Freire, 1994). Therefore, knowledge has power - power to transform reality, to broaden perspectives, and to clarify concepts.

The impact of information on a person's perceptions of the world stimulates an examination of the 'location' of knowledge. According to Thompson (1988) there are two ways of knowing. There is received knowledge where one silently listens to an authority, and there is subjective knowledge or an inner knowledge that reflects multiple truths. Received knowledge does not always accord with subjective knowledge and therefore may be mistrusted. The language used plays an important role in whether or not received knowledge finds correspondence with subjective knowledge. Marino (1997) finds that the "production of knowledge is a many-layered process that includes the power to express and interpret accurately and coherently, as well as construct new ways of knowing and relating" (p. 107). The concept of expression and interpretation as important elements in the construction of knowledge is key in this definition. These two authors present a concept of knowing that speaks to the knowledge of the heart (Fals Borda & Kemmis, 1989) a type of knowledge that is in a different sphere than logic and rationalism. Wilber (1996) expands upon the ways of knowing with his presentation of the eye of the flesh or empiricism, the eye of the mind or rationalism, and the eye of contemplation or mysticism. Each way of knowing must be valued in PR for the process to be authentic. Marino speaks about layers, about expression and interpretation. Wilbur, Thompson and Fals Borda view the dimensions and scope of knowledge. Based on these contributions to our understanding of knowledge it is supposed that knowledge production must be multi-dimensional and multi-experiential in order to be holistic. This statement speaks to the methodology of knowledge production.

At this point in the discussion, it is useful to look back at the methods proposed by Fals Borda & Rahman (1991) as presented in the initial pages of this chapter. What do some of these terms mean and how do they produce knowledge? *Vivencia*, a Spanish term meaning inner life experience, speaks to the process of understanding ourselves in a broader context. This understanding begins with self-awareness or being "conscious of

one's character, feelings, motives" (Thompson, 1995, p. 1254). Self-awareness is developed as a part of praxis, which consists of the essential components of reflection, investigation, and action. Knowledge building in praxis, therefore, relies largely on empiricism and contemplation. Self-awareness is also developed as a result of the process of collective research in which a target group gathers to share information and their feelings about that information. Collective research is about giving public voice to information, listening to different interpretations and processing them together with the result that the information becomes amplified (Wheatley, 1992). Self-awareness is further generated by the examination of values, beliefs, and culture through the critical recovery of history and the valuation of folk culture. These three techniques release affective knowledge or knowledge of the heart, imagination and ludic tendencies. Ludic refers to games, play and celebration. Fals Borda & Rahman (1991) are the only authors encountered to date who have drawn attention to the importance of play and celebration in the "business" of community work. The value of play, especially in children, remains underrated in PR and CD literature. The last tenet of PAR/PR refers to the production of new knowledge and its diffusion. The knowledge produced as a result of praxis needs to be documented in some fashion whether it be through words, art or drama. It is the last piece that helps one understand and learn from praxis and appeals to the eye of the mind.

Max-Neef (1991) finds there is a propensity to describe and explain at the expense of understanding. He says,

While the language of one discipline may suffice to *describe* something, an interdisciplinary effort may be necessary to *explain* something. By the same token, to *understand* something requires a personal involvement that surpasses disciplinary frontiers, thus making it a transdisciplinary experience (p. 15).

Understanding is the beginning of self-knowledge. Elliott (1999) states that "we manufacture our understanding of the past and *change that understanding according to circumstances and needs of the moment*" (p. 34); that "we construct history not just out of remembered facts but also in response to where we are now" (p. 35). Thus knowledge is based on understanding that is constructed not only from the past but is also based on the

present. It is contextual, dynamic, and has many layers. Understanding is developed through intimacy with one's beliefs, with practice and by strong relationships (DePree, 1989). We grow in understanding, not by knowing all the answers, but by living with ambiguity (DePree). We give expression to knowledge based on interpretation and using particular language patterns. In all, we are exhorted to be passionately aware that we could be completely wrong (Marino, 1997). This speaks to humility and respect, to leaving behind the expert role to engage in the endeavor to understand, a basic premise of PAR/PR.

Language and Concepts

The methods described by Fals Borda & Rahman (1991) appear to be multi-dimensional and multi-experiential and should be successful in building knowledge if applied as intended. Where their methods fall short is in their failure to adequately address the issues of power and relationships. Although power is addressed, it is addressed from a Gramscian perspective of power and countervailing power, the oppressor and the oppressed. Although the language of empowerment is used, PR and CD literature do not provide an adequate understanding of the influence of power on relationships in the home, with neighbors, and between the researcher/facilitator and the research participants. It is the quality of relationships that gives power its positive or negative charge (Wheatley, 1992) and our identity that governs our actions and loyalties (Sen, 1998).

The tendency to group people together to refer to them as the base groups (Fals Borda, 1985), the oppressed (Freire, 1994), the common people (Esteva & Prakash, 1998), and the powerless (Sadan & Churchman, 1997) promotes the assumption that people within a community are not individuals with differing levels of knowledge and power. It is a denial of reality. Not only is a group affected by differential of power from within their community, they are also affected by the class structure of the larger society. Freire's (1994) words that race and gender cannot be adequately addressed without reference to the division between the classes was very true in my experience in

Colombia. One's social position was the key factor determining acceptance or marginalization. Race, gender and disability played a secondary role.

One reason for the failure to adequately address power and relationships from the individual perspective may be that authors became locked into a particular use of language. The use of an elaborated language pattern may facilitate the dissemination of information, but it also runs the risk of contradicting one's theoretical stance. To speak of a group as being powerless suggests a view that believes that 'macro' power structures are the most significant factors in the life of an individual as promoted by Dependency Theory (Harrison, 2000; Oakley & Marsden, 1984; Wade, 1997). This may or may not be true. The assumption that all poor people are powerless because they lack financial resources is to see the world from a singular perspective. It fails to address the social and political inequities existing within a country. Addressing communities as powerless is to subtly acknowledge one's personal power as an outsider, a contradiction with the ideal of leaving the expert role.

Empowerment

One is often confronted by words that are used frequently and sometimes interchangeably. Empowerment is one of these words. Closely related are the words self-reliant, capacity building and sustainable development. A brief examination of these words and their implication to development will follow in this section. The word, transformation, will be singled out for a separate analysis.

Empowerment simply means "to give power to or to make able" (Thompson, 1995). Empowerment reflects the change that has occurred as a result of effort to gain control over one's life, destiny or environment (Sadan & Churchman, 1997). In this sense, empowerment is very close to transformation. Empowerment is generally considered to occur as a result of a process such as the process of organizing (Fernandes & Tandon, 1981), through acting and implementing (Wheatley, 1992), and through development (Fussell, 1996). Organizing, acting and implementing are action words that conjure up the image of people coming together to achieve a common purpose.

Development, a word that carries with it years of historical baggage filled with positive and negative overtones, is linked with the words, sustainable, capacity building, and self-reliant.

Development is considered to be sustainable if there has been a transformation leading to self-reliance as explained in the following definition:

Sustainable development is seen as a process of holistic transformation of the society for self-reliance and the well being of all. This holistic transformation can take place by minimizing the gap between the existing level of knowledge and knowledge needed for appropriate sustainable society” (Bloem et al., 1996, p. 142).

Korten (1990) provides a definition that includes capacity building:

Development is a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in the quality of life consistent with their own aspirations” (p. 67).

Wheatley (1992) presents sustainability from a non-development point of view. Her view is that freedom from environmental pressures is dependent on a clear sense of identity, that is values, traditions, aspirations, competencies and culture. The reference of self to identity, of who we are and were, is the foundation for orderly change in a turbulent environment. This view is helpful because it could apply to both an individual and a group.

Self-reliance is “the possession of a sufficient combination of mental and material resources to be able to resist the dictates of others on one’s own course of action” (Rahman, 1993, p. 150). Self-reliant development is stimulated by two steps: the development of awareness about one’s reality; and development of confidence that one can change one’s reality (Tilakaratna, 1991). The process of self-reliance is more likely to become sustainable if there are local facilitators who can assist the other participants in broadening their contacts, if there is regular self-review, if there is growth beyond the initial small project, and if there is a move to a total development effort (Tilakaratna). But

self-reliance does not necessarily mean self-sufficiency in that funds may still be required in terms of assistance (Rahman). Self-reliance changes the way people perceive their own potential and capabilities. It permits a more complete satisfaction of fundamental human needs, fosters participation and creativity, reinforces cultural identity through self-confidence, gives people a better understanding of technologies when they are capable of self-management (Max Neef, 1991). In this sense, self-reliance encompasses empowerment and capacity building. Thus the terms seem to be interchangeable and are used according to personal preference.

Empowerment Indicators

There is a move to become more results oriented in CD and to have the target group lead the effort to define the results of a given intervention (Jackson, 1998). Projects will be increasingly viewed in terms of output, or the immediate, tangible results of an activity; outcome, or a medium-term result that is the logical consequence of the intervention; and impact, or the long-term result that achieves a combination of outcomes and outputs (Jackson). Definition of indicators is part of a results-oriented plan of development.

Empowerment indicators encompass both personal and organizational empowerment as indicated by these themes developed by CIDA (1995):

A personal change in consciousness involving a movement towards control, self-confidence and the right to make decisions and determine choices; and an organization aimed at social and political change” (Morrissey, 2000, p. 67).

Empowerment outcomes at the personal level have been reported to be (Ellis, 1998; Purdey, Adhikari, Robinson, & Cox, 1994):

- **Increased self-confidence.**
- **Development of local leadership skills**
- **Development of a self-sufficient attitude toward solving problems and mobilizing skills, knowledge, and resources**

- **Ability to express one's opinions without hesitation, and participate in decision-making.**
- **Improvement in the way people relate to each other**
- **Broadening of horizons and aspirations**
- **Change in male/female relations**
- **Greater motivation to pursue personal goals**
- **Increase in awareness and knowledge**
- **Change in quality of life**
- **Change in attitudes**

Empowerment outcomes at the community level have been reported to be (Ellis, 1998; Purdey et al., 1994):

- **A sense of ownership and control over their situation**
- **Transferability of skills for organizing, planning, problem solving, inclusion of marginalized groups, accessing resources**
- **Development of a positive attitude toward the practices of mutual assistance among community members**
- **Achievement of organizational and educational capabilities**
- **Greater community spirit**
- **More effective use of community resources**
- **Emergence of common goal**

Indicators and outcomes are useful tools that can be utilized during periods of reflection and analysis. They make perfect logical sense (the eye of the mind). The use of indicators, however, calls into question the process of their determination. Are they pre-determined by "developers" or are they determined by the target group as Jackson (1998) suggests. The former would tip a development project toward a product orientation. The latter, to a process orientation that would require a significant amount of experiential capacity building in novice groups unaccustomed to activities requiring analysis, interpretation and expression. Thus issues such as the level of participation and the degree of knowledge building desired, always important to the outcomes of

empowerment and sustainability, need to be carefully considered in the strategic planning stage of community projects.

Transformation

Strategic planning would be facilitated by a clearer concept of the ‘reality’ of process. Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation is useful in that it clarifies the variability existing in the levels of participation. A similar model for empowerment or its closely related cousin, transformation, would be useful. These words hold almost a mystical quality. It is clear that ‘change’ must have occurred for transformation to have taken place. However, neither the nature of that change nor its process is clear. Praxis, presented as an upward spiraling process (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Smith & Willms, 1997) could be considered a model of transformation in which “space” is provided for new learning and change in direction. This concept has been adapted by various authors to demonstrate process (Purdey et al., 1994; Robinson & Cox, 1998). And yet something is missing in that these spiral models deal with transformation from the perspective of the group or the organization and not that of the individual.

Change, if it is to occur, occurs first at the individual level – it begins with self. Gardner (1983) states that the sense of self is an emerging capacity; that this sense will be interpreted and possibly remade by an individual’s relation to others, knowledge of others, and by one’s interpretive schemes as supplied by the culture. Wheatley (1992) proposes that we are changed by relationships; that relationships reveal us and evoke more from us. Sharma (1998) says that awareness precedes change. Thus it appears that self is an identity that is formed by one’s relationships to others and can be remade by relationships. Change is preceded by awareness and awareness, according to our previous discussion, builds new knowledge. Transformation is linked to relationships and new knowledge, but what is the process?

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) has developed a model of image change that may be useful in this discussion. This model of seven phases (ICA, 1997) has been empirically derived but finds its theoretical basis in the writings of Kenneth Boulding

(1956). Boulding states that subjective knowledge is our image of the world; it is what we believe to be true. This image is built up by past experience and results in behavioral patterns. A new image will inevitably result in a change in behavior. Image change is initiated by incoming messages or information. However, information does not always result in a change in image. The image may remain unaffected or the incoming message may simply add to the knowledge already contained in the image. But information has the potential to radically change an image in a way that could be described as a conversion. This radical change results in a re-organization of the image and a change in behavior. The sudden nature of the re-organization may be due to the fact that image is generally resistant to change. When we receive information that is inconsistent with our image we have our doubts about the information, we seek to clarify it and we seek to compare it with reliable knowledge. We screen the information through a value screen. The value screen has a scale related to betterness or worseness, that is, whether one would be better or worse off if one accepted this information as true. The ensuing struggle takes place at the intellectual, emotional and volitional level. Acceptance of the truth of the information causes a change in the operating self-image which results in a visible transformation and behavioral change.

In review, the seven phases of image change are as follows (ICA, 1997):

1. The Situation. The right time or the teachable moment.
2. Message Intrudes. The message pierces to the core of awareness.
3. Driven to check the value screen. How does this message fit with my deepest values and beliefs?
4. Going through the struggle. Intellectual, emotional, volitional offense.
5. The “yes” to change or, a “no” to change. If “yes” the truth of the message is accepted and the decision to change is made.
6. Taking on a new image. Changing the operating self-image.
7. Behavioral change. Visible transformation.

This model of image change is potentially quite useful in community work. It provides a possible strategy for transformation and capacity building at the individual

level. Whereas a community worker could prepare the ground to facilitate the teachable moment and provide new messages to the participants, the remainder of the process would be dominated by the individual. The concept of “space” provided by the process of praxis would be essential in the model of image change in that individuals need to have the time to go through the process at their own rate and the freedom to come up with their own result. This model provides for a high level of participation where participants have control, the freedom to alter, to move quickly or slowly, or to stop.

The concept of image change resulting in behavioral change is supported in CD and Popular Education (PE) literature. Fussell (1996) states that “when beliefs and values fail to meet the challenge of experience-knowledge a new insight is born which is manifested in a revised theory of how the world operates” (p. 46) and a new social reality emerges. If the new information is outside the social reality, its introduction may fail because it does not interface easily with existing knowledge but where new insight is brought to bear on the situation it will lead to an adjustment in beliefs about the situation (Fussell). Robinson & Cox (1998) support this view saying that changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes lead to change in behavior and where changes become institutionalized they lead to sustainability. Leis (1989), speaking from his experience in PE, says that transformative knowledge results in a change in manual skills, intellectual capacity, values, and behavior. Marino (1997) speaks about a point of resistance or a moment when we understand things differently and have ideas of how to do things differently. Jara (1989) presents a view from the standpoint of a practitioner and researcher when he states that to transform reality means to also transform ourselves as a person, our ideas, dreams, will and passion. We are at the same time researcher and subject. This is a reminder to all workers, whether we call ourselves facilitators, researchers, or educators, that transformation touches all those authentically engaged in the process.

Reframing appears to be important in transformative change. Using the Appreciative Inquiry model (Elliott, 1999), deficit thinking is reframed to accomplishment thinking and dependency thinking to what we can achieve in the future.

(1997) reframing occurs when “problems or experiences are represented in ways that both retain the realities of existing relationships and transcend them by opening up new ... and real opportunities ...” (p. 108, 9). De Oliveira R. & de Oliveira M. (1982) suggest that understanding of the process of change enables the group to re-define and deepen their scope of action.

The model of image change (ICA, 1997) supports the idea that new knowledge results in transformation but the question remains as to the importance of relationships in this process. Boulding (1956) links the two together. He maintains that knowledge is an organic structure that follows principles of growth and development similar to that of complex organizations. Knowledge is organized by an internal organizing principle that is responsive to outward messages as well as an inward teacher. The business of teaching or facilitating is not about breaking down defenses but of cooperating with the participant’s inward teacher. The inward teacher can only be accessed by establishing a relationship. Building a nurturing, growing relationship is part of facilitating a process (Wheatley, 1992).

A discussion of relationships limited to facilitator/teacher and participant/student misses a significant challenge in PR and CD, that is, the challenge of facilitating relationships between group members. Whereas there is documentation on the mechanism of how things should be done (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fernandes & Tandon, 1981; Horton & Freire, 1990; Rahman, 1993) this information does not address a fundamental challenge of organizing, that is the development of relationships between group members, the topic of the next section.

Groups and Relationships

Just as the process of personal transformation seems clouded by mystery, so is also the transformation process from individualistic, non-trusting individuals into cooperative and collaborative group members. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) declare that there “are no organizational theories that can account for the life-giving essence of cooperative existence, especially if one delves deeply enough” (p. 162). They go even

further to say “that *organizing is a miracle* of cooperative human interaction, of which there can never be final explanation” (p. 162). Gardner (1983) postulates that there are two types of society. Firstly, there is the particular society where the locus of the self is the individual. The individual has considerable autonomy and is in control of his own fate. There is a fascination with the isolated, lone, heroic individual. This individualistic type of society is fairly familiar to those living in North America and is likely that of Cooperidge and Srivastva. Secondly, there is the field society where the locus of attention, power, and control is in the hands of other people or in the society as a whole. The focus is on the environment in which the individual finds himself (Gardner). This collective type of society may continue to exist in relatively obscure regions of the world, but seems to be rare in the world known to many of us today. Wheatley (1992) proposes that individualism was raised to its greatest heights in America with protection of boundaries, assertion of rights and isolation. She encourages us to stop focusing on facts and to focus on relationships as the basis for all definitions.

One factor in relationships is socialization. Social relations are marked by the typification schemes that we apply to others. These typifications are negotiable. From our early years we learn to categorize people and we interpret an individual’s behavior in light of this categorization (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Some of these categorizations may be private or limited to one’s family members or they may be shared by the society in which one is raised as public knowledge. Thus public knowledge is a shared image of the world (Boulding, 1956) that is never static, fixed or unalterable (de Olivera R. & de Oliveira M., 1982) and has a substantial influence on customary behavior or norms. That is to say, socialization deeply affects how we relate to one another but it can be altered.

The concept of social capital provides an explanation as to how relationships affect the way society works. The concept of social capital “originated in the fields of sociology and political science to explain how citizens within certain communities cooperate with each other to overcome the dilemmas of collective action” (Lochner, Kawachi & Kennedy, 1999, p. 259). Social capital “exists in the *relations* among persons” (Coleman, 1988, pp. S100,1) and is built on trustworthiness and trust.

Trustworthiness of the social environment refers to obligations or “credit slips” – the extent to which obligations are held within the community and the assurance that obligations will be repaid (Coleman). Coleman continues to explain that “... without a high degree of trustworthiness among the members of the group, the institution could not exist...” (p. S103). Social structures that facilitate social capital are norms and closure. Norms may constitute a powerful form of social capital especially if they are effective but they may not come into existence if there is a lack of closure in the social structure (Coleman). Closure refers to the inter-relations within a group that cause norms to be implemented. If there is no direct linkage between actors A and B to produce external conditions on behavior of actor C, they will fail to provide collective sanction. Closure is important for trustworthiness in that it permits “the proliferation of obligations and expectations” (Coleman p. S107). Social capital helps create human capital in the next generation, as measured by parents’ education and potential for cognitive development. Social capital within the family depends on the presence of adults in the family and the attention given by the adults to the child (Coleman). Other important factors to social capital are a supportive climate within one’s neighbourhood, safety for children under the age of twelve to play outdoors, visitation between neighbors, and the desire for involvement in community based organizations (Doolittle & Macdonald, 1978). It would appear that we have a fairly high degree of social capital in Canada despite our individualism given that we adhere to norms and conventions such as traffic laws. We have a fairly high level of trust that others will also adhere to these conventions. There is an understanding that it is advisable to adhere to the laws because we know that if we do not we will have to pay a price, and we postulate that if the majority disregard the system, chaos would result. We adhere to the rules because we recognize the personal benefit of doing so (Brown, 1995).

One wonders whether such a thing as negative social capital exists, for just as trust and reciprocity may facilitate proliferation of obligations and expectations, so might the opposite occur in an atmosphere of mistrust or injustice. Buckland (1998) speaks to this condition saying that social capital may be limited in communities characterized by

physical impoverishment, political and economic marginalization. Existing social capital in these communities is the result of destructive historical forces and contemporary global forces. There is a breakdown of the social net due to a break down of trust beyond the extended family. Trust breakdown occurs “in the face of non-reciprocity diminishing the ability of people to work within extra-familial networks. Extra-familial normative behavior become untrustworthy, presenting an obstacle for any type of cooperative development effort” (Buckland, 1998, p. 241). This rather discouraging view is supported by Harrison (2000) who states that:

Where the radius of identification and trust is small, there may effectively be no operative ethical system. If the members of a society expect injustice, the ideas of cooperation, compromise, stability, and continuity will be undermined.

Corruption and nepotism will be encouraged (p. 8).

On a more positive note, Harrison finds that the values that foster progress are identification with others, trust, cooperation, compromise, self-discipline, justice, dissent, creativity, planning, hard work. These are the values required for organization and development of a social net.

Cordero & Gamboa (1990) in their article called, “Survival of the poorest” (translation), address the development of social nets. Contrary to Buckland (1998), they state that poverty generates solidarity; that there exists a form of solidarity in the community that assures survival. They go on to say that the social sectors characterized by low wages need innumerable ways to form solidarity to reach subsistence level and this is tied to the survival of the group as a whole. They form social nets of mutual help that are composed of the extended family and neighbors; that they help each other by exchange of goods, donation and by living together. But quotes from women in the their article seems to contradict their thesis that social nets are indeed formed, instead providing support to Buckland’s findings. These quotes are as follows:

- **“True friendships are rare; I don’t believe in friendships”. (p. 71)**

- **“I don’t have confidence in anyone. Many times one wants to be nice but being nice results in failure and I have experienced many failures as a result of being nice” (p. 71).**

Perhaps individualism has made its way into Central America as well. It is questionable that people living in impoverished communities engage in collective action spontaneously. It would seem that community members with confidence and experience in collective action would be more likely to engage spontaneously but it is not a given. Socio-economic status is not really a determining factor either although it would affect one’s level of education and perhaps one’s openness to new information and strategies. It appears that trust and reciprocity, as suggested by the concept of social capital is the most relevant to encouraging collective action. Important personal qualities to building trust are respect for other people’s gifts, understanding value systems, understanding the role and relationship of agreements, and understanding the importance of relationships (DePree, 1989). Empathy and investing oneself in the person communicating with you by listening with the intent to understand sets the tone for cooperation (Sharma, 1998). The question remains as to how growth of these qualities can be facilitated within groups.

Organizing

Trust and reciprocity can be developed through the process of organizing. Organizing assists the development of relational skills through the broadening of the socialization experience. Building relationships is facilitated by a process in which we step back from the fragmentation of describing tasks to view the whole. It is facilitated by focusing on qualities such as rhythm and improvisation (Wheatley, 1992).

Mena Calvopiña (1996) is more structured in his approach. He defines a group as (translated):

A complete social formation of a group of people who possess a common objective which in turn establishes interdependent relationships. It possesses an internal organization and distributes functions amongst its members (p. 9).

He finds six stages in the life of a group:

1. **The pre stage where people with different histories are motivated by a common interest.**
2. **A beginning stage where the group seeks a facilitator to help them deal with feelings of insecurity and fulfill the desire for knowledge and action.**
3. **A crisis stage in which the group experiences the ups and downs.**
4. **The commitment stage where the maturing group seeks a common meaning to define their objectives in the most realistic way possible.**
5. **The maturity stage in which new groups are created from the old group.**
6. **Old age where the group is no longer growing or achieving their objectives**

A mature group is characterized by frank and deep communication, cooperation not competition, and participation of all members. It is interesting to note that in the pre-stage there is sufficient communication between people to decide on a common aim. It is further interesting to note that the group realizes they have limitations and is therefore stimulated to seek a facilitator. These two stages are very similar to the example given by de Roux (1991) regarding the computers and the Electrification Company. They are not, however, entirely consistent with Buckland's (1998) typification of an impoverished, marginalized community. There appear to be at least two realities in regards to the question of spontaneous formation: one in which people are motivated enough to come together; and the other where mistrust is an obstacle to gathering with those outside of the familial network.

A study on community life in Barranquilla, Colombia (Usandizaga & Haven, 1966) supports Buckland's view in that community members were reluctant to become involved even though involvement could have addressed their aim of improved quality of life for their children. The authors believed that on arrival to the city, uneducated immigrants entered into a "culture" of poverty from which there was little escape. Their study seems to support the proposition that collaboration does not occur spontaneously. Usandizaga & Haven spoke about the residents' difficulty in expression and analysis in that they were not able to express their aspirations in concrete terms. They also spoke of diminished involvement in community and government affairs. This might be attributed

to complacency, poor self-esteem, mistrust, or poor identification with both the local and the larger communities. It is interesting to note that this study, published in 1966 alludes to a similar condition as that described by Buckland in 1998. It seems likely that organizing in communities with diminished social capital is full of challenges and ripe with complexity. It also seems likely that facilitation or even visionary leadership would be required to give the process of organizing a boost start. The question is whether facilitation or leadership is consistent with PR's philosophical stance that the whole process, data collection and analysis and documentation, should be controlled by the participants.

Leadership

It is of value at this point to briefly examine what is meant by leadership. DePree (1989) speaks about a visionary leader as a person who has a clear vision of what ought to be and a well-thought out strategy. A leader maintains momentum, ensures that the right thing is being done, and fosters environments in which high-quality relationships can be developed. Wheatley (1992) concurs with this view adding that the leader's task is to communicate and to keep ever present the guiding visions, values and beliefs of the organization. Nanus & Dobbs (1999) add to the discussion by pointing out the difference between leaders and managers. They maintain that managers are chiefly responsible for processes and operations, are mostly interested in what needs to be done and how it can be accomplished. A leader, on the other hand, is concerned with strategies and direction, with where the organization should be headed and what can and should be done in the future.

Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990) speaks of leadership from the educator's point of view saying that an educator must 'start' but not 'stay' from the level at which people perceive themselves, their relationships with each other and with reality. The task of the educator is to "provoke the *discovering* of the need for knowing and never to impose the knowledge whose need was not yet perceived" (p. 66). He goes on to say that in the process of organizing, one needs to from time to time to stop with the leaders in the group

to think about the space already walked. This ‘stopping’ provides space for reflection on the action of organization and is a prime time for teaching something.

These comments speak toward the process of organizing. ‘Starting where people are’ is similar to the first step in the image change model (ICA, 1997) preparing the situation for the teachable moment. This is the first step in trust building. ‘Provoking the *discovering* of the need for knowing’ is similar to the second step where there is intrusion of new messages that pierce to the core of awareness. The ‘stopping’ to provide space for reflection could correspond to the third and fourth stages of image change in which new information is driven through a value screen and the struggle ensues. Freire’s reference to leaders in the group suggests that some participants have already said ‘yes’ to change and have taken on the operating image as leaders. It seems possible, therefore, that the transformation of individualistic, non-trusting individuals into cooperative and collaborative group members could follow the same transformative process as that of an individual. It also appears that visionary leadership is recommended to facilitate the creation of a suitable environment that supports the development of relationships and nurturing of trust.

Morrissey (2000, p. 68) provides indicators of personal growth in the area of relationships and networks:

- People are brought closer together
- They develop cultural awareness and sensitivity
- There is an expanded network of relationships (discovery that we are not alone)
- People learn the importance of networking in community development

Carroll (1992, p. 95) indicates that the indicator of group capacity is the ability to act together, not once but consistently, to “get ahead collectively”. Max Neef (1991) believes that self-reliance changes the way people perceive their own potential and capabilities, sense of worth and values. Fals Borda (1985) states that transformation results in a modification of social attitudes towards outsiders and insiders. Relationship building within groups, therefore, has two requirements: the transformation of the identity of ‘self’

within the group; and of the identity of 'others' within the group. Transformation modifies attitudes leaving the way open to the building of trust.

Change in attitude toward self and others resulting in a change in behavior is a common theme of transformation. It is interesting to note, however, that the rhetoric of transformation is largely limited to the context of the community or defined groups. There is little reference to the transformation of relationships within the home. This relative silence regarding an issue so basic to self-identity is curious and warrants some examination. At this point, relations within the home will be examined only from the standpoint of gender relations and community development.

Gender Relations and Development

A review of the models put forward to address women and development is helpful to provide an orientation to the topic. Rathgeber (1990) provides such a review dividing the topic into three categories: women in development (WID); women and development (WAD); and gender and development (GAD).

WID is a model from the 1970's that was closely linked to modernization paradigm or the "trickle down" effect of economics. In this model, it was assumed that the norm of male experience was applicable for females. It accepted the existing social structures focusing exclusively on the productive aspects of women's work. In her critique of this model Rathgeber states that "when women's income-generating projects do prove to be successful and become significant sources of revenue, they often are appropriated by men. The women-in-development/liberal-feminist approach has offered little defense against this reality because it does not challenge the basic social relations of gender" (p. 492).

WAD is a model that focuses on the relationship between women and the development process. The attempt to integrate the two serves only to sustain existing structures of inequality for, although the model recognizes that men without elite status suffer as well as women it does not analyze the social relations of gender within classes (Rathgeber, 1990). Therefore, although WAD focuses on the impact of class it tends to

lump all women together without analyzing the effect of class, race, or ethnicity. One is reminded here of Freire's (1994) comment that "the questions of race and gender requires a comprehension of class division in that culture as well" (p. 156). WAD also fails to analyze the relationship between patriarchy in society, different modes of production, and women's subordination. Both WID and WAD fail to take into account the time burden placed on women by production in addition to reproduction.

GAD emerged in the 80s with roots in social feminism that links production to reproduction and takes into account all aspect of women's lives. Its primary focus is the examination of why women have been assigned inferior or secondary roles. It is concerned with the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities and expectations. GAD welcomes the contribution of men who share concern for social justice and equality. GAD leads, inevitably, "to a fundamental reexamination of social structures and institutions and, ultimately, to the loss of power of entrenched elites, which will effect some women as well as men" (Rathgeber, 1990, p. 495). Rathgeber acknowledges that the GAD approach does not lend itself easily to integration into development programs as it would require an examination of the sexual division of responsibility as well as the division of labor thus increasing the level of complexity and the time necessary to engage in the process.

PAR/PR emerged in the 1970's "as a scientific methodology for productive work (and not only research) which included the organization and promotion of grassroots social movements functioning as wide-based fronts made up of the working classes and various groups in the struggle to achieve structural change" (Fals Borda, 1985, p. 46). One can divine from this statement that the orientation was toward mass mobilization for the purpose of gaining equity of economic power. In this mission women were lumped together with men. In fact, they are rarely if ever mentioned in Fals Borda's writings. De Koning & Martin (1996) look back at the generalized language of that period and advise community workers not to get into talking about "the oppressed" but remember that there are groups within the group, for example, women.

Patricia Maguire (1996) came to PR with a feminist perspective and found that often the “community” was the male community and that women’s voices were being excluded. She recognized that there was inadequate differentiation of groups within the group. Parpart (1993) looks at the same lack of differentiation this time from a north/south perspective. She reports that feminists from low-income countries have accused scholars of creating women as an undifferentiated ‘other’ in that they are presented as uniformly poor, powerless and vulnerable. Cornwall’s (1996) reference to a political dilemma in PR provides insight into the tendency to keep the issue of gender relations within the home at arm’s length. She says that due to PR’s emphasis on social change, it may go beyond the conventional structure of society causing tension for women living in a patriarchal society. She suggests that far-reaching institutional changes would be needed for this process to be supported. Her words are a reminder of the cause/effect relationship in change and provide a warning to development projects that they be cognizant of the wide range of effect one change can make. This range exists within the social, political and economic spheres of life and are dependent upon the historical continuities of resources, power, livelihood and interdependence (Wade, 1997).

Some of those historical continuities in Colombia are presented by Whiteford (1976) and Bohman (1984). Whiteford, who looked at a whole range of attitudes, provided a brief commentary on the roles within the family. He found that the father was the unquestioned head and he could do as he pleased; he was accountable only to himself. The role of the mother, on the other hand, was to be hard working and obedient. Her main area of authority was in family affairs particularly in the socialization of the children. Bohman (1984) presents a very interesting ethnographic study on women in a neighborhood close to Medellin, Colombia. The following statements (not quotes) from the study provide an indication of the attitudes present at the time of the study but are still relevant to the present-day context of some communities.

- Women should be confined to the sphere of the house. They should stay inside where they are sheltered and may be controlled. Respectable women do not run around on the streets.

- **Women are not supposed to work but are to be provided for by their husbands.**
- **Women are permitted to engage in activities in other homes but these are usually homes of relatives on her mother's side.**
- **A woman would not want her husband to be seen to be doing housework as it is considered to be a feminine activity and it would make a man appear to have feminine tendencies.**
- **The role between girls and boys is sharply defined. Girls work in the house and work hard. Boys are told to get out of the way and to go play in the street. Here they become acculturated to a street life that is macho and irresponsible.**
- **Women are more vulnerable as subjects of gossip than men especially in the realm of morality. Immorality on the man's part does not stain the reputation of the house but immorality on the part of the woman certainly does.**
- **Suffering is seen to be an integral part of being female. It is God's will that women should suffer, first in childbirth, as a result of sinfulness. The link that is formed during gestation and birth induce a mother to suffer for her children. A woman who does not show willingness to suffer for her children is abnormal and perhaps mentally ill.**

This societal view of the role of women extends beyond Colombia and to a more recent time as evidenced by Olavarría & López (1989). In their work in rural Chile, women stated that they valued the role of submission, acceptance and sacrifice. The authors concluded that the women had internalized the role that society had assigned them. Chen (2000) addresses the role of patriarchal society on projects that operate in the WAD model. She comments in her study of micro lending projects in China, that although many projects have addressed poverty alleviation, they have not recognized a women's contribution to the community and have not led to a change in a gender-based system. She relates incidences of how women bore the responsibility as loan borrowers and yet the husbands decided how the loan was to be used thus providing credence to Rathgeber's statement that men often appropriate successful income-generating projects run by women. Chen attributes this lack of voice on the women's part to a faulty

organization that did not adhere to the requirement of regular meetings for the women. She found that in order to combat gender issues it was important to have women in leadership positions who would encourage regular meetings of the group.

Chebair & Reichmann (1995) examine a number of issues affecting women engaged in micro-enterprise in their comprehensive study of both women's and men's micro business in Latin America. They present the dilemma faced by businesswomen in juggling their reproductive role, which includes the care of children and the maintenance of the home, with their business role. Their reproductive responsibility limits the time they spend in the business, reduces their mobility in terms of location of the business, and requires that their economic resources be invested more in the family than in the business. Whereas Chebair & Reichmann address the effect of the reproductive role on the business, Arvin & Summers (2000) address the effect of working mothers on the family and specially, the child's education. They suggest that, in low-income countries, the effect of increased income on a child's education may be small or zero, as most of mother's income must go toward the subsistence of the family. In countries where child rearing is not a shared responsibility, working outside the home work puts increased stress on the family and affects the mother's emotional energy to invest in parenting. That is to say, for women of low education in a low-income country earning low wages, working outside the home may not be an attractive option. While work for straight pay does not seem to be a favorable option, working for an independent income with flexibility in terms of work location and hours appears to hold more attraction.

Chebair & Reichmann (1995) found that women started businesses not only because of the difficulty in finding work, but also because they needed work that had flexible hours. It permitted them some degree of autonomy and independence. The authors explain that in households with a traditional role structure the family income is controlled by the man who assigns a portion to the woman of the house. Her lack of involvement in decision making regarding the distribution of income often leads to "secondary poverty" or the poverty of women and children whose husbands use the household earnings for themselves. In houses where the woman is an independent earner

she is able to keep part of her income from her husband thus maintaining some autonomy in her business and her home. In the micro-businesses surveyed by the authors, 83 percent of businesswomen improved the nutrition and education of their children and 75 percent reported that the business unified the family. Twenty-four percent stated that their communication with their children improved and others stated that they received better respect from their friends and their children. Fifty-three percent reported improved independence and autonomy as a result of their ability to learn the art of business and increased economy power. The study states that women were transformed from a subordinate position to men to a position of equal status and a model for their children. The study does not refer to the effect of this transformation on the women's spouses.

Micro enterprise seems to provide a viable option for women wanting to increase family income. The proliferation of Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) working in this field is an indication of its popularity as a development method. The question is whether this method adequately addresses gender and development. Regarding familial relationships, Korten (1990) reminds us that:

... it is essential to recognize that the goal is to transform family relationships, not to separate the woman from the family —with the disastrous consequences this brings for men, women, and particularly the children (p. 170).

It is, at this point, difficult to gauge whether or not NGOs engaged in micro lending are addressing gender relations as the documentation regarding the formation of solidarity groups does not generally address the effect of increased autonomy on the part of the women on the relationship between spouses.

Rao, Stuart & Kelleher (1999) provide an interesting study related to the transformation of gender relations in a large NGO called BRAC. BRAC, the largest rural development NGO in the world, has the dual goals of poverty alleviation and empowerment of women. This organization established a gender equality action learning program involving female and male staff of BRAC with the goal of:

Increasing women's and men's ability to analyze and reshape socially constructed gender relations in order to transform power relationships; (achieving) equitable

access and control over both public and private resources; equitable participation in household, community, and national decision making; and reshaping social institutions and organizations to include women's and men's varied perceptions and to benefit both women and men" (p. 38).

The program was initiated because they found that rural women had little or no control over their loans; that their loans were being hijacked by men. They believed that working with men to "bring about changes in the perceptions and valuations of women was essential and that men should be included in small numbers in the female village organizations" (p. 43). Including men, however, complicated the building of women's self-reliance and solidarity. BRAC started with a program for their staff because they felt that most staff were unaccustomed to critical analysis and creative problem solving as a result of the patriarchal system. Through an open process, the staff learned, "... by living the process, that making mistakes was a rich source of learning and improvement" (p. 56).

This article provides valuable insight into the reason why gender and development is not more frequently addressed in development. Firstly there is the issue of social patriarchal structure that affects both the staff and the rural women. It would be difficult to promote change in the relationship between men and women at the rural level without the staff having developed self-awareness of the effect of culture on their attitudes and the attitudes of others. Secondly, there is the issue of complexity. Addressing male/female relationships by including men in women's organizations complicates the building of women's self-reliance. It becomes a question of how one successfully facilitates such a process within the framework of resources and time available. This leads to the third point, that learning is achieved by experience in a non-threatening atmosphere that values mistakes as a rich source of information. This insight has implications for all development workers by imploring an open, exploratory process in the endeavor to increase the level of understanding regarding the transformation of gender relations in participatory development.

The dearth of information in the literature regarding the process of transformation of gender relations leads one to speculate that much of the transformation rhetoric has been theorized and diluted with generalizations. Another possibility could be that NGOs incorporating the transformation of gender relations into their projects have not published their information regarding the process and outcome. The studies presented in this section do indicate, however, that women's authentic participation has gained increasing value in implementation strategy and that empowerment is the outcome.

People with Disability and Development

The International Year of for Disabled Persons in 1981 focused on three main goals for improving the quality of life of people with disabilities: full participation and equality; social integration; and solidarity (Thorburn, 1990). The term 'full participation' has already received attention in a previous section. Social integration is defined as "opening up social structures and attitudes to include disabled people, not changing disabled people to fit in an able-bodied society" (Coleridge, 1993, p. 63). Solidarity refers to the development of a mutual confidence that has profound social implications and releases people from dependency (Berenback & Guzmán, 1993).

Limited documentation does not permit a historical viewing of the relationship between people with disability and society in low-income countries. Yet studies performed by three authors (Coleridge, 1993; Leavit, 1992; and Thornburn, 1990) help to piece some information together from countries in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Thorburn's observations after four years of developing a Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program in Jamaica found that most people with disability were a "depressed, dependent, inarticulate minority" (p. 18) with the short-term goals of improving their living conditions and becoming accepted by their families. Longer-term goals involving advocacy needed to be facilitated by the receipt of some services and the formation of groups with a common interest. This observation mirrors that of Oakley & Marsden (1984) who found an air of despondency and despair, lack of access to resources, and various forms of oppression to be among the indicators of poverty. Factors

identified with this feeling of powerlessness are economic poverty, lack of information leading to misconceptions, societal prejudice, self-identity, and politics.

Thorburn (1990) states that disability has an economic impact on already poor families in that the presence of a severely disabled person becomes a double handicap for those families. The stress of economic poverty is compounded by lack of information or misinformation regarding the cause of disability. Societal superstitions or persistent misconceptions about disability may cause parents to feel shame or guilt. Ignorance of what can be done to help a disabled child may result in the child being left without stimulation. Poor expectations for the child may result in overprotection or isolation – both denying the child opportunity. Leavitt (1992) adds the dimension of societal prejudice toward people with disability stating that it depends on the rate of unemployment, the prevailing notions about the degree of individual responsibility in becoming ill, the stigma attached to different physical conditions, the visibility and the severity of the disability, and the effectiveness of public relations campaigns promoting integration.

Coleridge (1993) promotes self-identity as an important factor in integration. The testimonies from the disabled people interviewed for his book, led him to make the statement that “the process of attitude change starts with disabled people: their attitude towards themselves and their own disability” (p. 36). The first step in breaking out of the vicious cycle of negative attitudes is for the oppressed person to make the first move. If disabled people see themselves as victims they will be treated as victims. If they claim their right to contribute, they will be seen as positive and able to contribute (Coleridge). Self-identity is closely bound up in the politics of disability. The politics of disability refers to the issue of control people have over their own lives and the decisions that are important to shaping their lives. The politics of disability are expressed in the social discourse.

The tension between self-identity and social discourse is exemplified by the following authors with disability. Peters (1996) in her paper on the politics of disability sought to redefine herself as an individual and to free herself of oppression

that was both self-imposed through self-limiting attitudes, and societal, through cultural beliefs. She draws attention to the military metaphors used in sickness and disability such as fighting against disability and war on cancer and suggests new language metaphors such as physically challenged and alternative learner be used. Peters' personal desire is to weave disability into the fabric of life rather than reducing it to isolated traits or an innate deficiency.

Barnes (1996) identifies the following words in the discourse - unfortunate, sick, useless if unable to work, and members of a minority who are abnormal and different. He believes that the cultural response to disability depends on how achievement is defined, perceptions of age and sex, and aesthetic values as in the importance of bodily perfection.

Abberley (1996) picks up the thread of 'work'. He states that we will have to dissolve work as the utopia for disabled persons if society continues to tie work to productivity. An alternative would be to develop a utopia that rejects work as a crucial definition of social membership. He promotes the development of a social movement that reacts against inequalities and works to change the norms of society.

Barton, (1996) is also interested in norms and suggests an emancipatory approach in research in which biases, taken-for-granted norms, habits and rules are identified. He believes that historical understanding is one of the essential preconditions of an effective struggle for change.

Oliver (1996) follows the history of sociology of disability ending with the social adjustment model. This model seeks to determine the meaning that people with disability attach to situations and events through consideration of their life history, their material circumstances and their struggle for inclusion. He believes that consideration of these factors alone will not lead to social change unless disabled people are active participants in the research process. The two key fundamental principles on which an approach must be based are empowerment and reciprocity. This is achieved by encouraging self-reflection and an identification of the researchers with the subjects.

The presentation of viewpoints that began with self-identity and social discourse ended with the suggestion for a participatory approach leading to social change principled

by empowerment and reciprocity. The desire for 'bottom-up' participation where people with disability are partners in the creation of programs that affect their destiny rather than passive recipients came through strongly in the statements above. The change in orientation of society's view of people with disability from those requiring charity to those who are capable, is a work in progress that is occurring throughout the world. It is happening and it begins with the individual. In Coleridge's (1993) words:

Society cannot change unless individuals change. A change in consciousness happens at the individual level, in both disabled people and non-disabled people. This change in consciousness consists in understanding that it is a social and political issue (p. 50).

Summary

The discussion in this chapter has dealt with topics such as participation, knowledge, identity, and relationships. The viewpoints of authors from various orientations have served to broaden perspective beyond one single field of study. The topics mentioned were chosen because of their relevance to The Experience. They are all inter-related and all are subject to the process of change. The change process, or transformation, is a theme important to this study and to the field of participatory development.

CHAPTER THREE

OVERALL RESEARCH PLAN AND METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief outline of essential issues such as the 'what', the 'who', the 'why' and the 'how' of this PR. It begins with the 'what', a reference to PR and its relation to qualitative research methods. This section was written to provide another anchoring peg for PR as a research method. The 'who' refers to the organization that was my partner in the research. This section provides a sense of history and the purpose of that organization. The goals and objectives of the research are provided as the 'why' of this research endeavor. The 'how' is presented in two parts: the pre-research planning and the research implementation.

PR and Qualitative Research Methods

The methods of this research were modeled on PR/PAR as described by Orlando Fals Borda (Fals Borda 1998, 1997, 1985, 1978; Fals Borda & Kemmis 1989; Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991), and literature regarding experiences in the Southern Hemisphere (Chambers, 1998; De Konig & Martin, 1996; De Roux, 1998; McTaggart, 1997; Max-Neef, 1991; Rahman, 1993; Smith, Pynch, Ormealas, 1993; Smith & Willms, 1997). The central principle was the development of self-awareness through the collection of group data, the recovery of history, the re-discovery of core cultural values, and production and diffusion of new knowledge. Critical concepts were valuation of "common" knowledge, and praxis or the cycle of reflection, investigation, and action. Due to my limited understanding of the language used above, I sought to place PR within a more familiar language context, looking for the place of PR within a broader qualitative research context and seeking to appropriate helpful methods described therein.

Patton (1990) states that PR is a naturalistic inquiry in which real world situations are studied in a non-manipulative manner. It uses inductive analysis in which the researcher is immersed in the details of the data exploring open questions through the

discovery of interrelationships. PR takes a holistic perspective that studies the *whole* as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts. The need to study the whole is also addressed by Wheatley (1992), an organizational theorist: "The challenge for us is to see beyond the innumerable fragments to the whole, stepping back far enough to appreciate how things move and change as a coherent entity" (p. 41). In the study of the whole, multiple observations are made. The data collected is rich with description and utilizes direct quotations as well as participant's personal experiences and perspectives. The researcher's personal insights and experiences, gained through direct contact with the participants and their situation, are also important components of the data.

The design flexibility of PR is demonstrated by adaptation of the inquiry as understanding deepens and situations change. PR avoids becoming locked into a rigid framework that impedes responsiveness to new paths of discovery. PR could be considered to be incredibly ambiguous to the newcomer and to those educated in quantitative methods. The pros and cons of ambiguity in PR were addressed by L. D. Brown in 1982, a time when the tension between the positivist paradigm and the creation of alternative research methods was much higher than it is today. Here are his closing remarks:

I have suggested four critical areas of ambiguity for participatory research. Ambiguity about objectives offers freedom to innovate but calls for clarity about goals of particular projects. Ambiguity about the roles of participants and researchers poses the risk of reinforcing undesirable stereotypes, but offers opportunities for mutual learning. Ambiguity about methods opens a bewildering array of options but offers opportunities for invention and synthesis across many traditions. Ambiguity about outcomes offers potential for catastrophe or triumph." (p. 209).

Wheatley (1992) finds ambiguity to be a feature of innovative environments in which information from multiple sources coupled with new insights, initiates journeys in which new connections are made and knowledge is generated. Wheatley observes that organizations fear ambiguity because they still focus on the parts rather than the whole

system. These comments from Brown and Wheatley raise a basic distinction between the constructivist and positivist paradigm. Whereas researchers in the positivist framework focus on the parts, researchers in the constructivist paradigm focus on the discovery of reality. The view of reality through a value window, and acknowledgment of interaction between the inquirer and the inquired-into creates a space for the development of a knowledge that is the result of human activity and that is relative to the context studied (Guba, 1990). Rahman (1993) supports the constructivist view saying that:

Social reality does not exist 'out there' in an absolute sense, to be observed by standardized techniques. Reality is constructed by the observer, whose own perceptions, values and methods of observation determine what is seen, what is abstracted in distilling the observation and what is finally constructed (p. 220).

Trustworthiness

Validity or trustworthiness of qualitative research refers to the congruency of the findings with reality (Merriam, 1998). Merriam argues that qualitative researchers are "closer" to reality than if a data collection instrument had been used because the researcher *is* the primary instrument of data collection and analysis making interpretations of reality directly accessible through their observations and interviews. Wheatley (1992) supports this view stating that reality emerges from the process of observation; that people become aware of the reality of the plan by interacting with it and by creating different possibilities.

In qualitative research the investigator may use strategies to enhance internal validity such as triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory modes of research, and the clarification of the researcher's biases (Merriam, 1998). Triangulation refers to the use of multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, multiple methods or multiple theories to confirm the emerging findings (Merriam; Patton, 1990). Richardson (1994) prefers the concept of crystallization to validity saying that:

... the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities,

and angles of approach. Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic (p. 522).

In PR trustworthiness is gained through the collaborative experience, the practical skills developed by the participants, and the theoretical propositions that arise from the inquiry (Reason, 1998). The procedures to trustworthiness are praxis, or the dynamic process of reflection, investigation and action (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fals-Borda 1978, 1985), and exploring the authenticity of participation within the group (Reason, 1998).

Generalizability

Generalizability of findings in qualitative research is referred to as extrapolation by Patton (1990). He describes extrapolation as a clear attempt that one has gone beyond the narrow confines of the data to contemplate other applications for the findings. They are but speculations regarding the applicability to the findings to other situations that may be similar though not identical. He argues that qualitative research should

... provide perspective rather than truth, empirical assessment of local decision makers’ theories of action rather than generation and verification of universal theories, and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations (p. 491).

Merriam (1994) presents the concepts of “concrete universals” and “naturalistic generalization” that draw on tacit knowledge, intuition and personal experience to look upon one’s own experience as well as events in the world around them. Similarities of issues in and out of context build a foundation of experience that can guide but not predict a person’s actions. In the Latin American context of PAR/PR, Fals Borda (1985) speaks about the necessity of combining wisdom from several sources. The context of his comment is the local situation, but, considering that sharing across experiences is part of international congresses of PR, it seems likely that Patton’s concept of extrapolation would be applicable.

Participant Observer

The researcher in qualitative inquiry is referred to as a participant observer in that he/she will “experience being both insider and outsider simultaneously” (Spradley, 1980, p. 57). A participant observer “... comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation” (Spradley, p. 54). Spradley continues by defining four types of participation: complete, active, moderate and passive. Complete participation, the highest level of participation, occurs when the researcher studies a situation in which he/she is already an ordinary participant. It is the category most difficult for the researcher, for the *less* familiar one is with a social situation the easier it is to see the tacit cultural rules at work. In active participation, the researcher “seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules for behavior” (Spradley, p. 60). The moderate participator “seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation” (Spradley, p. 60). The passive participator, not relevant to PR, is present at the scene but does not interact with other people to any great extent. For Zamosc (1987) the role of participant observer is to put oneself in the context directly with the actors and to understand them in terms of their motives as well as their thinking processes. In his opinion, empathy, or putting oneself in the others shoes, is an important adjunct to rational thinking,

The language used by Fals Borda (1985) is full of cultural overtones when he talks about the role of the observer saying that the success of a project depends to some extent on the ability of the facilitators to break the relationship of submission or dependence which may exist between the group members and the facilitators. It is probable that the facilitators are active or complete participants, the designation depending on the length of stay in the community and their familiarity with cultural issues. In PR it is important that the researcher be overt in his/her role, give full

explanation of the real purpose of the observation to everyone, make multiple observations over a long term; and ensure that the focus of observations be broad or holistic (Patton, 1990).

Field Notes

Fieldwork is a data gathering process. Taking field notes is not optional (Patton, 1990). It is imperative that notes be written as soon after the observation as possible (Merriam, 1984). The notes must be descriptive, detailed and concrete. They contain what people say, the observer's feelings, reactions and reflections, and the "observer's insights, interpretations, beginning analyses, and working hypotheses about what is happening in the setting" (Patton, p. 242). The beginning analysis seeks to identify cultural themes, which are "assertions that have a high degree of generality. They apply to numerous situations and recur in two or more domains" (Spradley, 1980, p. 141). Most themes are at the tacit level of knowledge and are not easily expressed even though they are used to organize behavior and interpret experience (Spradley). Fals Borda (1985), in choosing words such as dependency, submission, authoritarianism and paternalism to describe characteristics inherited from traditional systems of the past, has identified cultural themes that are generalizable within the experience and perhaps to other experiences within Colombia and Latin America.

PR as naturalistic inquiry was presented as a practical adjunct to the theoretical tenets of PR as presented in the Discussion of Literature. The following section places the research in the local context by means of an introduction to the Partner Organization.

Context: The Partner Organization

This section explains who the partner organization is, its history and its mission. FANDIC (*Fundación Amigos de los Niños Discapacitados para su Integración a la Comunidad*) or literally translated Foundation Friends of Children Disabled for their Integration to the Community, is a non-profit organization registered and operating in Bucaramanga, Colombia. I selected Colombia for my fieldwork because I was resident in

that country for two and one-half years and am familiar with the culture and the Spanish language. FANDIC was selected because I am known to the organization, its Board members, the children affiliated with the organization and their families. My Board membership plus my previous involvement with the families legitimized me, gave me insider status, and permitted me to initiate the project immediately.

FANDIC's work is located in the *Ciudad Norte* or the northern sector of Bucaramanga, a city of approximately 700,000 people. FANDIC began in August 1997 as a search for an educational program for children with disabilities after hearing from the mothers of four children with severe physical and/or cognitive disabilities that education was their greatest priority for their children. A municipal program of integration for disabled children into the regular school system admitted three of the four children, but with schooling came the requirement for medical and dental examinations, and speech and physical therapy. As the families could not afford the cost of these interventions, or even that of the transportation between home and school, it was decided to form a foundation to raise the funds required to assist the children. In time, seven more children were added to FANDIC's roster, not all of whom had potential for schooling. It thus became necessary to train volunteer community workers who would have regular contact with the families and act in a supportive capacity. They were given thirty hours of training regarding disability using the Spanish version of Disabled Village Children by David Werner (1990). The three workers lived in the same part of the city in which our work took place and become Board members.

FANDIC was registered as a non-profit foundation in the Chamber of Commerce of Bucaramanga on June 4, 1998 with me serving as the first president, my colleague as the first vice-president and other interested Colombian volunteers taking the remaining posts. Board membership did not include any family members of the affiliated children. I left Colombia in July 1998, with the stated aim of going through a learning process that I would then share with them. My tenure as president ended in the elections held during the first stage of my fieldwork and I assumed the position of *Revisor Fiscal* or auditor, a non-voting position. I therefore began the thesis research as President of FANDIC but with

the understanding that elections would be held promptly and this position would move to a Colombian.

FANDIC's mission is to help impoverished, disabled Colombian children develop their potential and gain acceptance as a valued member of their family and the society in which they live. The Foundation acts as coordinator between the family and existing services in addition to establishing partnerships with other organizations to provide new services in the community. FANDIC provides financial assistance to ensure continuity in the child's educational and medical program. Home visits encourage parents to follow through with suggestions from therapists and teachers. Organized events help the families unite around the common goal of improving opportunities for their children. FANDIC's objectives are as follows:

- **To identify disabled children in the community**
- **To work directly with the families to affiliate them with other programs such as: medical and therapeutic, educational, governmental, and non-governmental.**
- **To continue providing assistance until the child has completed primary education or an equivalent.**
- **To instill in the families a sense of the child's value to society.**
- **To assist the children to discover their potential even as leaders in the community who can give help as well as receive it.**
- **To motivate the mothers to form a self-help group and to organize fund-raising events.**
- **To obtain the financial resources to assist the families in establishing micro-businesses.**
- **To collaborate with organizations and institutions which provide assistance to children with disabilities.**
- **To obtain sufficient financial resources to carry out the work of the foundation.**

In its early history FANDIC provided transportation assistance for the children to access educational and therapeutic services outside of their neighborhood because the services were not available in their community. In April 1999, FANDIC reached an agreement with the Faculty of Physical Therapy of the University of Santander (UDES)

to provide physical therapy services in the children's' community. The university accepted FANDIC's proposal that a practicum site be established in the community with the university supplying the students and a professor, and FANDIC providing the site and equipment. Physical therapy was thus made available to all disabled children and adults of the community. The agreement has had positive effect in terms of moving closer to the mission of integrating people with disability into the community. The community has become increasingly aware that disability exists as children, previously isolated in their homes, are seen being wheeled or carried to therapy. The place in which the therapy is provided, called "the therapy salon", has served as a clean, bright location for parties and recreational events organized by FANDIC and the students of the university. The students have also benefited from this community experience. Home visits expose the students to the difficult circumstances in which the children live. They are sensitized to the issues of disability and poverty. It is an experience that helps bridge the socio-cultural gap between different social classes.

The Board is comprised of Colombian (and one Canadian) middle and working class people who have come together because they care about their community. It is an administrative board with no paid staff. The members do all of the work of the organization including the home visits and the organization of events. This arrangement speaks highly of their dedication seeing that nearly all are employed full time, six days a week. Three of the members live in the community in which FANDIC works, providing an important point of connection and insight into community life for the organization.

In February and March 1999, I conducted a Participatory Evaluation with the Board of FANDIC as part of my course requirements. The members enthusiastically participated in four-hour workshops during which they engaged in activities such as discussion, drawing and drama all related to the theme of disability and poverty. The material for the activities were obtained from material such as *Visualization in Participatory Programs* (UNICEF, 1993), *Training for Transformation* (Hope & Timmel, 1984), *Dinámicas Participativas* (DESAPER, 1998) and *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Boal, 1992). The workshops had a favorable result in that the members were

sensitized to the reality of disability and poverty, gained self-confidence, learned to value their own contribution and those of others in the group. They learned to work together and their commitment to the organization was deepened. This preliminary work proved to be quite valuable in that it laid the foundation, not only for the thesis work with the families, but for further development of the organization. It was also important to the sustainability of the group, which has had to deal with difficulties in communication and cooperation.

The Goal and Objectives of the Study

The goal of the research project was to assist FANDIC to move towards a more profound interpretation of “integration”. The organization wanted to move beyond the service orientation of assisting children with disabilities to receive therapy and education, towards a development orientation that would encourage increased involvement of the children’s families in the organization. The specific objectives as altered through discussion with the President and Vice-president were as follows:

- 1. For the participants to develop a critical awareness of the realities of disadvantaged children with disability in Colombian society. This will involve the exploration of cultural behavior, beliefs, and attitudes regarding disability and includes exploration of the impact of the social class system on children with disability.**
- 2. For the participants to work collectively in a group; that they develop the organizational and communication skills necessary to present issues important to them to agencies and organizations.**
- 3. For the participants to develop experience and gain confidence with a research method that encourages reflection, investigation, and action; that they learn to investigate their realities on a continuous basis and to take action resulting in social change.**
- 4. For the participants to take action leading to greater self-reliance and independence in terms of control over their social milieu for the benefit of their children with disabilities thereby offering them more options and opportunities.**

5. That FANDIC integrate the families as working members of the foundation to gain strength in unity and to enhance the work of the foundation.
6. That the participants build awareness in the community regarding disability; that the disabled child be accepted as a valuable member of society.

In simple words as noted in my diary, "We would like them to come out of the process with some idea of their own capabilities; with some realization of how they could work together as a group to achieve an end" (August 28, 1999).

The Pre-Research Plan

Two research proposals were written, one for a CIDA Award and the other to the Ethics Committee of the University of Calgary. The format of the CIDA award application challenged me to think about the development impact of my research. It helped me to focus on broader issues. My proposal addressed three of Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Program requirements: basic human need, women in development, and human rights. In basic human need, the project would be working with people of the lowest socio-economic class facing daily challenges such as inadequate housing, unemployment, and poor integration of children with disabilities. The project would focus on bringing people together to work collectively towards addressing issues related to their needs.

Women in development was addressed through awareness of the increased responsibility carried by mothers of disabled children, the effect of an institutionalized class structure on attitudes toward self, and the perception of options available. The project would encourage the mothers of children with disabilities to develop the self-confidence and skills required to advocate on behalf of their children. It would support the mothers in their efforts toward self-development in a manner determined by them.

In terms of human rights the project aimed to help children with disabilities, women and their families, and community members to recognize their rights as citizens of Colombia (as stated by the UN declaration on the rights of disabled persons, adopted

by the General Assembly at its 30th session, 2433rd plenary meeting, New York, 9 Dec. 1975), and to learn to celebrate them with positive action toward greater liberty of choice.

The plan was to target the mothers of the children affiliated with FANDIC in the first stage (August 4 to October 1, 1999) and the larger community in which the children live in second stage (February 12 to April 16, 2000) of the fieldwork (See Appendix 1 for the Work Plan). During the second visit it became apparent that there was a second target group, the Board members of FANDIC. Also, an alteration was made to the timetable that permitted a third and follow-up visit to be made from September 25 to October 16, 2000.

It was anticipated that the project would lead to a degree of empowerment in all the participants (children, parents, community members, and members of the Foundation), and a flexible and dynamic host organization. It was hoped that the project would result in unity of purpose, awareness of the value of common knowledge, reduction of dependency on others, and a rising level in self-confidence and self-esteem. There was potential for sustained impact in that the skills of reflection, investigation, and action have the potential to liberate a person from dependency. However, continued support in terms of encouragement and/or financial assistance was viewed as a possible on-going need thus making links with other agencies and organizations an important feature of sustainability.

The proposal submitted to the University Ethics Committee challenged me to think carefully about the ethical implications of the research and the use of “understandable” language for the Letter of Information and Consent Form to be signed by the participants. The Spanish version of these documents is found in Appendix 2. The proposal also challenged me to think carefully about risk.

The possibility of psychological and emotional stress in the participants exists in a process that emphasizes awareness building and examination of beliefs and attitudes. There was also a political risk in that PR is a methodology that works toward social change. Perhaps some participants would face repercussions in some form or other. As a non-citizen, I felt I needed to be very sensitive to the directives from my colleagues in

making any decision regarding the process. Finally, there was personal risk. Doing research in Colombia can be a risky business due to the violence and political insurrection in the country. The knowledge of “what could happen” caused significant anxiety within my family. This anxiety was, however, tempered by the knowledge that I had close friends watching for me and the fact that I knew my way around. This research project would not have been possible without my previous experience of living in Bucaramanga and working with the partner organization, FANDIC. That familiarity made it possible to step right into the research without spending time authenticating myself as a part of a community.

It was anticipated that I would be working together with some FANDIC Board members to conduct workshops with the Mothers of the children. The plan was to use many of the same dynamic games that had been successful in the workshops with the Board members in February 1999. The specific approaches to be used and topics to be addressed would be worked out on a session-by-session basis with those Board members participating in the workshops. The themes of disability, integration, community, friend, social class, family, children, and FANDIC would be emphasized.

It was hoped that the participants would contribute to all stages of the research process including data collection, analysis, and documentation. The direction of the project would be flexible to allow for the incorporation of new knowledge and desired action. The frequency, timing, and location of the meetings would be made on the basis of a group decision. The project would take place in a setting that was familiar and comfortable to the participants. The data collected would be subjective in nature. The researcher would not be set apart from the research process but would be an active or complete participant observer. Thus the values and beliefs of the researcher would interact with those of the other participants in the process of data collection and analysis.

Not entirely consistent with PAR/PR (as presented by Fals Borda, 1985) but acceptable within a more liberal PR framework, was the fact that I would not live full-time in the environment in which the research took place. I chose instead to break the

fieldwork into stages. Although the lack of continuous contact appeared to be a disadvantage, benefits were recognized at the end of the process.

In summary, my pre-research expectations of the process were:

- **That the participants would participate in an authentic manner;**
- **That the participants would contribute to all stages of the research process;**
- **That the direction of the project would be flexible to allow for the incorporation of new knowledge;**
- **That I would be an active participant observer; that my values would interact with those of the other participants but that I would not “drive” the process.**

My outcome expectations were:

- **That the Mothers would develop the self-confidence and skills required to advocate on behalf of their children;**
- **That the community would gain awareness of their role in removing barriers for children with disabilities;**
- **That the project would lead to a unity of purpose amongst Board members and families with disability;**
- **That members of the Board would be empowered and the organization strengthened as a result of the process;**
- **That a desire for change amongst the participants would lead to the development of a critical consciousness and eventual self-reliance.**

Implementation of the Plan

Workshops were the primary method utilized in the first stage. Participation of the Board was high with the President and Vice-president attending all sessions. They also assisted with the pre-workshop organizational details such as: making the alterations to the Letter of Information and Consent forms; alteration and elaboration of the objectives for the research; finding a place to have the workshops; contacting the families on an individual basis to explain the project to them; and coordinating the workshops with therapy so the Mothers could attend the workshops worry-free while their children

received therapy. Ten workshops were held between August 23, 1999 and September 27, 1999. Various techniques were used to encourage discussion and to facilitate group union: icebreakers, drawing, skits, discussion in small groups and practice in concrete skill development. A tape recorder was used sparingly and always with preliminary consent of those present. It did not seem to negatively influence the process.

Soon after the first few workshop sessions, the 'method' became a 'process'. The process initiated by the gathering together of people followed its own course into the second and third visits. Each visit was distinct and unique. I kept a journal usually writing twice a day, at noon and in the evening. The journal contained information on the process, the outcome, recalled statements people had made, observations regarding the effect of the setting and interpersonal relationships, personal reflections and feelings. In the first stage journal information was based on the workshops, minutes of meetings with the families and Board, documents prepared by the Foundation, and information from the local newspaper. There was some integration of analysis as a function of reflection through writing. In the second stage the analysis component was strengthened through a systematic exercise of reflection on several key questions (Hara Holliday, 1998). I did this on a weekly basis and it helped to identify emerging themes as well as direction for the next week. Records were augmented by increased document production by the Foundation and by minutes from the meetings held by the Mothers.

The period between the two fieldwork experiences, provided a "quiet time" in which I could step back from a very intense experience and reflect upon it. This interlude provided time to gather information on emerging themes and to apply an analysis technique called systematization (Hara Holliday, 1998). This technique served to ground me in the experience, clarify the issues, and provide an action plan for the second visit.

The third visit was a bonus that was not planned for in the proposals. It was instigated by an invitation to a course on Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) in Quito, Ecuador but its greatest value was that it gave me the opportunity to have a third observation. On this visit, I observed the outcome of the process from a perspective that only time could offer.

Summary

This chapter presented methodological issues of concern to the PR researcher. It introduced the partners in the research and outlined the proposals submitted to the university and to the awards granting organization. The pre-research plan was followed by a broad overview of its implementation. A time line of my involvement in the community from commencement to current day is offered in Table 1.

Table 1

Time Line of Involvement

Date	Activity
August, 1997	First meeting with mothers and children in the community
June, 1998	Registration as a non-profit in the Chamber of Commerce
July, 1998	My return to Canada and the beginning of my studies
Feb/Mar, 1999	Participatory Evaluation with the Board
Aug. 4 to Oct. 1, 1999	Fieldwork Stage 1
Feb. 12 to Apr. 16, 2000	Fieldwork Stage 2
Sept. 25 –30, 2000	CBR course in Quito, Ecuador
Oct. 1 – 16, 2000	Fieldwork Observation of Outcome

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

The intent of this chapter on Country Context is to place the research experience within the context of the national situation. This chapter was written in the last months of 1999, between the first two fieldwork visits. Its purpose is to provide a snapshot view of some of the national issues that concern Colombians. Much of the material quoted was taken from the local newspaper in Bucaramanga, *Vanguardia Liberal*, from a Bogotá newspaper called *El Espectador*, and from World Bank and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reports. This chapter mirrors the despondency felt by Colombians regarding the seemingly unsolvable dilemma in which they live. It does not do justice to the positive characteristics of the country, such as the warmth of the people and their enchanting culture.

Colombia has a population of more than 37 million people, 74 percent of whom live in the urban setting and 17.7 percent in poverty (Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), 1999). The economic progress enjoyed in the 70's and 80's went into sharp decline in the late 90's. The country's backward slide is distressing to all Colombians irrespective of social class or political party. The complexity of the current state of affairs is difficult to untangle, as factors are inter-related. Without presuming to be an authority, I will present Colombia as presented to me through reports and articles. The information is submitted briefly and without much commentary.

Politics and Violence

Colombia elected the Conservative Party to power in 1997 following decades of Liberal Party rule. Participation in the democratic process increased dramatically over the last 30 years and voter turnout stood at about 72% in the last election. The increased interest in politics can be viewed as a reduction of passivity amongst the voters and the desire to use their democratic right to shape the future of the country. However, the

majority of Colombians remain pessimistic believing that there is no solution to Colombia's overwhelming problems.

Involvement in politics increases the risk of experiencing a violent act against one's person. Individuals working in the peace and human rights fields are assassinated with regularity as are a high proportion of journalists. The following excerpt from a local newspaper helps clarify some of the reasons for the culture of violence that exists in Colombia.

In all there are 5 players in the Colombian war: the guerrilla, the state, the dominant classes, the paramilitary, and the drug traffickers. They have 3 motives: make war, advance their interests, and protect themselves from their enemies. The war is being fought as a method to achieve objectives, as the most effective way of eliminating their enemies and to strengthen their political position. The group that is benefiting the most is the drug traffickers. It suits them to have the country at war because it occupies the attention of the state. They have much to lose should there be a negotiated settlement, as they know that all of the States' strength will then be directed against them (my translation) (*Vanguardia Liberal*, August 28/99).

Colombia's problem of "displaced persons" or refugees is a result of the civil war being fought in rural areas. This war displaces people from their homes, causing them to be refugees in their own country with the result of increased unemployment, an increase in female heads of the home, injury, and death.

Between August 1994 and June 1998, 726,000 people were forced from their homes. Fifty-five percent of Colombian refugees are under 18 years of age; 12 percent are under 5 years, 19.78 percent are between 5 and 10 years, 12.72 percent between 11 and 14, and 9.03 percent between 15 and 18. The causes are the territorial war between the guerrillas and the paramilitary, the link of the drug traffickers with subversive activity, and the lack of protection from the State. One in 50 Colombians today faces a future as a refugee. Fifty-six percent of the population that has fled in the last 15 years are women, 31 percent of who are

heads of the home. In the last 4 years the numbers of refugees has increased on an average of 50 percent due to an increase in armed conflict. The paramilitary were responsible for 33 percent of the refugees, the guerrillas for 29 percent, the State army for 14 percent, urban militia groups for 6 percent and the drug traffickers for 1 percent. Sixty-four percent leave because of threats and 14 percent because of assassinations. The rural population accounts for the majority of refugees accounting for 67.8 percent of the total between 1985 and 1994 (my translation) (*El Espectador*, July 8/99).

Violence has lowered the life expectancy of males between the ages of 25 and 40 by 4 years. The delinquency rates continue to rise with the highest figure being kidnapping for extortion (increased by 356 percent) and the lowest, being homicides with an increase of 29.7 percent. These statistics were obtained from the Center of Criminal Investigation of the Police Department of Santander, and presented in *Vanguardia Liberal*, September 26, 1999.

Economics

The Colombian economy grew constantly during the early 1990s with the gross national product (GDP) rising to 5.6 percent in 1994, before falling to 4.5 percent in 1996 (PAHO, 1999). In 1999 Colombia was said to be suffering the worst recession in 60 years and the GNP was expected to fall between 3 and 6 percent (*Vanguardia Liberal*, Aug 29/99). Between January and September 1999, the Colombian peso was devalued by 30.18 percent (*El Espectador*, Oct 1/99). Inflation was expected to finish 1999 at 9.8 percent, a decline from 23 percent in 1996 (*Vanguardia Liberal*, Nov 15/99; PAHO). The fight against insurrection and delinquency costs Colombia 6.1 million Canadian dollars, equivalent to 1.5 percent of the GNP (*Vanguardia Liberal*, Sept. 26/99). The insecurity and consequent abandonment of the rural areas have resulted in a decline in the agricultural sector forcing Colombia to import basic products once produced internally. Urban unemployment has hit its highest rate in recorded history and stood at 20.1 percent in 1999. In 1999 the unemployment rate rose 5.1 percent with women having the highest

rate of 23.2 percent versus that of men of 17.1 percent (*El Espectador*, Oct. 22/99). These figures represent formal employment sectors and likely do not account for the 55 percent who are employed informally (PAHO). According to the National Household Survey of DANE (National Department of Statistics) nearly 15 million Colombians (40 percent of the population) live in conditions of absolute poverty, i.e. their basic needs (food, health, education and services) are not met (*Vanguardia Liberal*, November 15/99). Note: The difference between this figure and the figure presented by PAHO (1999) is an indication of the difficulty in establishing reliable measures of poverty.

Class System and Poverty

Apart from the Catholic Church, the class system is the oldest tradition in Colombia. Four hundred years ago it was based on the ownership of land and on race. Defined as the grouping of people whose economic, occupational and socio-political levels and interests are closely similar (Smith, 1967), the social class system remains an important part of modern Colombian culture.

In 1983 the social class levels were increased from the traditional lower, middle and upper, three-class system to the present six strata system in an attempt to relate service costs to income levels. Houses were assigned a designation according to location, building characteristics, condition, and access to public services. Costs of services were fixed according to the stratum. People with houses in strata six pay a higher rate in order to subsidize houses in stratas one & two. Unfortunately, as pointed out by a World Bank's study on poverty in Colombia (1994), the subsidies have benefited the relatively well to do in stratas three & four.

Lack of access to water and sewerage was found to be mostly a problem of the poor (World Bank, 1994). Urban households in the lowest income brackets spent up to nine percent of their income on water and sewage while the population at large spent one to two percent. In terms of electricity, the distribution of the subsidy has been regressive with the lowest 20 percent of the population receiving a smaller subsidy than the richest 20 percent.

The executive summary of a World Bank Study on Colombia's social programs for the alleviation of poverty (1990) states in its executive summary that Colombia's economy has grown remarkably since the 1960s but serious problems with poverty have continued. Income distribution is skewed with the income of the top 20 percent of the population being 6 - 7 times greater than the income of the bottom 20 percent.

Social Class and Attitudes

The dominance of social class in every day life heralds back to the conquest of Latin America by Spain. A hierarchical system based on race and power continues to offer opportunities to some and limit upward mobility for others. Disparity between the "those who live above" and "those who live below" or those who live at the cooler, more desirable elevations and those who live at the lower, hotter and least desirable elevations, is very evident even to the casual observer. Also disturbingly evident is the manner in which social class has pervaded attitudes and everyday conversation. Those who *live above* are rarely in contact with those who *live below*. Social classes rarely mix in a work group and almost never on a social basis. There is a high power distance between the upper and the lower stratas of society.

Colombians in the upper strata believe that those in the lowest strata are resentful. Whitefore (1976) in his study of residents living in a neighborhood of Popayan, Colombian reported that the residents felt little control over their lives, thought they were being held down by the rich, and considered life to be continuous struggle in which one must fight to survive. He also made the point that the expression of resentment is kept well hidden.

Colombians, being 'relational' by nature, take note not only of what is being said (or not said) but how it is being said. In fact, the "how" may be more important than the "what". Thus indirect language such as facial expression, tone of voice and body posture are evaluated as well as the words. The words may not be given attention if one does not attend to the proper protocol.

The protocol varies somewhat as a factor of social class. Those of the lower class are called “uncultured” by the upper classes. A foreigner may also be uncultured due to a lack of interest or awareness of protocol. People from different social classes often find that a communication barrier exists between them. They use different words and have distinct attitudes and perceptions.

There is some evidence of attempts to make Colombian society more egalitarian in that the government is now instituting minimum wage, health and unemployment insurance for people working as maids, for example. Whereas most employers do not pay all of the components, they usually pay some of them. It is hoped that with time, an increase in wages and social services for the lowest classes will improve their standard of living.

The Church

The Catholic Church has played a very dominant role in the history and culture of Colombia. It was the official religion of the country until the new constitution of 1991 which permitted the free organization of other church groups, some of those being the Evangelical, Seventh-day Adventist and Mormon faiths. The Catholic Church supported and encouraged the formation of a hierarchical social system in Colombia and it is possible that the teaching of acceptance of suffering in the present life in order to gain entrance to the afterlife, has contributed to the passivity noted in the general populace. The influence of the church on the culture of Colombians is undeniable.

Colombians remain 95 percent Catholic but if appearances are correct, the people in the cities in which I have lived are not strict adherents. There seems to be some “elasticity” in their religious values. Many of my friends went to mass only on special occasions and did not follow teachings considered to be inconvenient. On more than one occasion I have been told the story of distorted religious values in which a paid assassin attended mass to pray for the success of his murderous mission.

In Colombia today, there is separation of church and state. I am told that the Church still wields considerable power and influence through political connections,

schools, and universities. The Catholic Church maintains a comforting presence in many communities and is responsible for important social programs. It remains a respected institution.

Depression versus Dancing

It is my belief that Colombians of all social stratas suffer from poor self-esteem. They are deeply affected by the international press that has put Colombia near the top of the list of the most violent, crime-ridden countries in the world. They are embarrassed and feel powerless to fight against this image. They are always apologizing. Add to this a deeply rooted conformity based on traditional values and one is left with a population that tends to close its doors on involvement whether it is political or otherwise. This raises an interesting question: Does Colombia have a culture of violence due to a tradition that values conformity, or is conformity a result of the violence?

Colombian culture is also one of hospitality. Colombians are noted for their personal warmth. They love to introduce the visitor to the richness of their culture and while they are intrigued by foreign customs they are eager to present their own. Foreigners who demonstrate interest in the people and their culture are welcomed into Colombian homes and invited to meet the entire family. They are included in parties and encouraged to learn the Colombian dance steps. Excursions to other towns and villages are organized to “show off” Colombia’s fine tradition in architecture and town planning. Colombian’s are proud of their heritage and so they should be. Their culture has a richness that has not yet been completely diluted by Western values. But they are proud and distressed at the same time. Dancing helps them to forget at least for the moment. Their parties are fairly spontaneous and the volume of music envelops the entire neighborhood. There are few complaints, however, as if the neighbors recognize the need to release tension and engage in celebration. In a way, this section on depression versus dancing characterizes the bi-polar nature of the country. On one hand, Colombia is

known for its violence and human rights abuse. On the other, it is a country filled with very warm and hospitable people.

Education

Colombia's educational deficits are still immense despite the government's interest in extending the coverage of secondary education (PAHO, 1999). "In 1994, 2 of every 10 children between the ages of 6 and 11 were not attending primary school, and 5 of every 10 youths 12 to 17 years were not in public school" (PAHO). Only 30 out of 100 students completed the ninth grade. Colombia has a public and private education system. The public system is reserved primarily for the lower stratas and includes institutions at all levels from primary to university. While the public school education is considered to be of poor quality, the public universities, open to all classes, are known for their excellence. Only the student's score on the national entrance examination restricts admission to the public university. Private universities abound and are of a variable standard.

The World Bank report on Poverty in Colombia (1994) found that children from the poorest 20 percent constitute 40 percent of enrollment in primary and 20 percent in secondary. These figures were 32 percent and 17 percent in 1974. In 1974 persons from the bottom quintiles did not attend university. Although there has been some expansion, higher education still benefits the relatively rich. Families in the bottom 20 percent spend 4.4 percent of their income on education while those in the top 20 percent spend 1 percent (World Bank, 1994).

According to the resident coordinator of the United Nations in Colombia the current literacy statistics demonstrate that inequities continue to exist within Colombia. Five percent of urban residents and 19 percent of rural residents are illiterate. The high school desertion rate among those aged 12 to 17 years is due to lack of money (46%) and the need to work (36%). This results in the lamentable statistic that 46 percent of urban youth and 73 percent of rural youth do not rise above the level of education of their parents nor reach a basic level of education (*El Espectador*, November 3/99).

Health

The move toward municipalization of health began in the 1980s (PAHO, 1999). The new Constitution of 1991 set out fundamental reforms to the social security system. This mandate was culminated in law 100 of 1993, which created the social security system in general (PAHO). The essence of the system reform was based on a partnership scheme “of income redistribution that ensures universal benefits through protection of the insured, the spouse, and minor children as well as parents and other relatives (PAHO, p. 9).

Colombia’s health system has emphasized curative care over preventative medicine and high level institutions over primary-level ones (World Bank, 1994). Twenty percent of people in need of medical care did not seek it due to cost. Among the poorest 10 percent this figure is 36 percent. Health challenges are an increase in non-communicable diseases (a major contributory factor to death and morbidity of those between the ages of 45 and 59), high levels of infectious disease and malnutrition (affects 13 percent of children under five), and high levels of homicide and accidental death to people between the ages of 15 and 44 which account for 55 percent of deaths in this age group (World Bank, 1994).

Health and Disability

Colombia published a national plan of attention to the disabled called “Disability, Everyone’s Problem” in 1995 (Vice Presidency of the Republic of Colombia). This plan was later supported by Law No. 361 of February 7, 1997. The purpose of the law was to establish mechanisms to assist the social integration of people with disability. It addresses prevention, education, rehabilitation, labor integration, accessibility, transportation and communications. This law is an excellent starting point and it has resulted in the increase of awareness among professionals such as teachers. However, scarcity of economic resources has limited the full implementation of the plan’s programs.

The United Nations released a report (Michailakis, Part I, 1997) giving the results of a survey of member nations regarding their action on disability policy. One of the

aims of the survey was to determine whether the work performed was carried out in co-operation between national authorities and organizations of persons with disabilities. The prerequisite to success was the active involvement and genuine participation of persons representing disability organizations. Regarding Colombia the report states:

The officially recognized disability policy in Colombia is expressed in law, in guidelines adopted by the Government, and in guidelines adopted by the national disability council. The emphasis – in descending scale – is on rehabilitation, individual support, accessibility measures and prevention. There is no emphasis on anti-discrimination law.

The lack of anti-discrimination legislation opens the potential for misuse of funds allocated to groups of disabled people. There is little recourse for groups who find their money has been “lost” or reallocated to other projects.

Mickailakis (1997, Part II) also evaluated Colombia’s record of involvement of people with disabilities in policy development. He found that a national umbrella organization representing all existing organizations exists in Colombia. As well, “there are legal provisions mandating the representatives of persons with disabilities to participate in policy development and to work with governmental institutions” (p. 2). He reports that people with disabilities are sometimes consulted when laws regarding disability are being prepared, but that the degree of involvement in legislature, the judicial system and in political parties is very limited. The highest involvement of disabled people is found in non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

There are a wide variety of NGOs in Colombia; some are composed entirely of disabled people. The most notable group I visited was ASCOPAR in Bogotá. ASCOPAR provides services to disabled people involving preparation for living in the community and recreation. They own and operate a printing press that permits them to take contracts in graphic design and printing. They also distribute their own magazine filled with information of interest to disabled people. They are politically active, and serve their members by making representation to government. ASCOPAR is an example of high level participation.

Summary

This chapter has provided information on some of the areas of interest in any society – politics, economics, education, health and religion. Presentation of these topics has been placed within the time frame of the last decade to provide a sense of currency. The chapter has attempted to set the stage for the actors involved in the research project. The next chapter, The Experience, gives those actors a face and a voice.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXPERIENCE

The fieldwork to gather the information of “The Experience” was carried out during three visits from August 1999 to October 2000 (see Chapter three for timetable). This chapter presents the players involved, the process of the research and some of the outcomes. It is divided into four parts to facilitate the organization of the quantity of material that came out of the fieldwork.

Part 1 tells the story of the Mother’s Group. Inherent in the story is my own reflection and analysis as I came to understand what the story could mean. The use of italic style for narrative mode is intended to assist the reader in making the distinction between story and analysis. The sections in italic style in Parts 1 and 2 contain journal entries as well as narrative.

Part 2 addresses the children and the home. Children with disability, central to the mission of FANDIC, were a constant concern even though they were not the focus of this research. Observations made in Part 2 could be considered directional indicators for further research.

Part 3 addresses organizational issues. It begins with a brief account of issues within the Board of FANDIC and closes with an organizational framework that is based on experience amalgamated from both the Mothers’ Group and the Board. The framework is a product of praxis – reflection on the Experience, investigation of literature, and the synthesis of reflection and investigation.

Part 4 addresses the role of the researcher. Reflections regarding the researcher’s role raise issues related to the congruency of theory with practice. This section ends with contemplation on the effect of process on outcome and the role of experimentation in knowledge building.

PART 1

The Mother's Group

The desire to move from providing a service to having the stakeholders participate fully in decision-making prompted FANDIC to embark on an experimental project with the mothers of children with disability. The women selected to participate were affiliated with the organization and had been regularly consulted in the past regarding the services required by their children. Assistance in linking the children to therapy and schools was FANDIC's vehicle for entry into the community. Board members, including the author, had already shared many visits in the homes of the children and had organized recreational events and parties to the enjoyment of all involved.

Eight mothers of children with disability were approached regarding their willingness to participate in the study. It was explained that the purpose of the study was to engage in a participatory process for the purpose of collecting information that could be utilized to take group action regarding the integration of children with disabilities. Seven of the eight women approached agreed to participate.

Laying a Foundation

The first workshop session on August 23, 1999 began with the Mother's listing their expectations for the workshops. Their responses were: to learn how to read and write; to learn a manual skill such as embroidery; and to learn how to treat their children in the challenging environment in which they were being raised. These responses were unexpected. The three facilitators of the workshops, the President and Vice-president of FANDIC and the author, anticipated that the Mothers would have expectations more closely related to the mission of FANDIC and to the study objectives already elaborated and summarized as follows: 1) To stimulate discussion regarding the reality of disability

in the home; 2) To encourage organizational and communication skills basic to group formation; 3) To develop the ability to reflect and analyze; 4) To take action leading to greater self-reliance; 5) To integrate the family members into FANDIC; 6) To build community awareness re disability. It was a surprise to the facilitators that disability or the need to develop a group activity that could address issues of disability was not mentioned by the Mothers. Upon reflection on the incoherence between the two sets of expectations, the facilitators became aware of shortcomings in the procedure of the research. The failure to canvass the mothers beforehand to ask them about their concerns and the pre-writing of the objectives outside of the participatory process were two weaknesses that affected the level of participation in early workshop sessions.

In keeping with an open process method, the workshops were designed to “discover” the real needs of the participants. Each workshop was planned with an objective and several activities related to the objective. In the first sessions, the activities revolved around self-image and values. A drawing exercise raised the following image:

They drew figures without arms, some of which looked like ghosts without arms, legs, or a mouth. Each figure was drawn well separated from the other - in other words there was no unity. No power, no voice, no unity (Journal entry, August 26, 1999).

Figures without mouths and with poorly formed arms and hands; figures that were faintly drawn in pastel colors spoke of silence, poorly developed manual skills and invisibility. The figures were disconnected even though the topic was working together in a group. One facilitator responded to these images with the words, “They have drawn us – our group. This is how they see us.” It was as a result of these exercises that we came to the realization that the Mothers were not as well known to us as believed. Even though the other two facilitators were Colombian and therefore assumed knowledge of attitudes, we were frequently caught off guard by differences in the meaning of language and culture.

Dynamic games and skits were conducted as a group as a whole or in pairs. They were typically accompanied by discussion that provided information on

values and beliefs held by the participants. The exercise called “The Blind Person’s Guide” and a mini-drama named “Welcoming a Stranger to the Neighborhood” are examples of exercises that proved helpful in eliciting characteristics valued by the Mothers in others and beliefs held regarding child rearing and neighborly relationships. The characteristics valued in others were:

- **Patient**
- **Friendly**
- **Careful**
- **Conscientious**
- **Respectful**
- **Provide a sense of security**
- **Tolerant**
- **Helpful**

Values regarding child rearing and relationships with neighbors are presented in Tables 2 and 3 along with corresponding characteristics.

Table 2**Values re: Child Rearing**

Values	Characteristics
Don't let your children run around on the street	Careful
Keep your children clean	Conscientious
Take your children to the doctor	Conscientious
Look for help when they are sick	Conscientious
Don't let them play with poorly behaved children	Careful
Stay with them	Provide sense of security
Educate your child to be decent, to respect his elders, to get ahead, to protect himself	Helpful, respectful, conscientious
Give the child what he needs, show him that he can count on his mother.	Provide sense of security
Punish your children to correct them	Conscientious

Table 3

Values re: Neighbors

Values	Characteristics
Don't have buddies	Careful
Don't get involved in gossip	Careful
Be nice to everyone but don't tell anyone anything	Friendly, careful
Be careful or they will steal your husband	Careful
You need to know your neighbor well to know whether you can trust her or whether she gossips	Careful
Have few friends so as to stay away from gossip	Careful
Really examine your friends well to make sure you can trust them	Careful
Needs are not noticed with the objective of helping but as topics of gossip	(Suspicion)
Don't get involved with the evangelicals because that is all they talk about	(Suspicion)
You will be discriminated against because you live in the north of the city	(Suspicion)
Know how to choose your friends	Careful

Note: Suspicion does not appear in the Mother's list of characteristics. The placement in parenthesis signifies that it is the author's interpretation.

Although characteristics such as tolerance and respect were mentioned as being valued, they seemed to have little practical application. The need for caution was frequently expressed in terms of mistrust. Mistrust seemed to be a dominant theme that was alluded to in the stories told by the Mothers and in their discussion. Mistrust and the tendency toward isolation were two factors that challenged the sustainability of their group.

Creating a Common Purpose

There was good participation in the discussion and decision making by the fourth workshop session. The meeting began with open-ended questions regarding the expenditures of the home, the prices of food items in the *barrio* (neighborhood), and the quantities in which these items were purchased. It ended with the following decisions: (1) that the Mothers would keep a record of expenditures in which they detailed the quantity and the price of each item purchased for a two week period; and (2) that we would investigate forming a cooperative. The following narrative provides an indication of activities and observations.

We made our expenditure booklets in the following meeting with FANDIC's President explaining the layout for each page and the participants following his instructions. The facilitators paired with the Mothers to give them a hand, as they had done on previous exercises. We learned as much as the Mothers by means of this exercise. Besides learning about average daily expenditure, we also gained a window of understanding into the meal preparation habits of the Mothers, for example, the frequency of purchase of protein rich foods, of vegetables and fruits. We became aware that the nutritional habits of some families were deficient and began to question whether the Foundation should become more involved in promoting good nutrition. The Mothers, on the other hand, gained some practice in maintaining records. It was hoped that their consciousness would be raised in terms of budgeting home income but we learned as time progressed that more skill and confidence building was required before new learning could be applied to different circumstances.

The development of respect for others in the group was marked by an increase in listening to each other. Listening varied depending on who was talking and the topic. Participation in discussion varied according to personal interest but also due to individual characteristics and confidence. Participation on practical themes was the highest but it would be simplistic to suggest the Mothers were not interested in discussions of a more theoretical nature because this was not consistently born out. On one occasion, they demonstrated that they knew the theory of why working together in a group was helpful: to develop the community; to have union; to develop more trust and friendship; to be able to achieve more; to gain more strength; and to give us self-confidence and security. On another occasion, I was surprised to hear what two Mothers chose to talk about in their presentation to the husbands regarding the workshops.

They did not talk about the keeping of expenditures with the aim of establishing a cooperative, as I had expected. Instead they spoke about the very first session and a reading we had used about a conversation between a professor and a farmer (Smith, Pynch & Orneal, 1993). When I asked about the significance of the story, M. expressed clearly that there was a leveling of knowledge in that both knew things that the other didn't. They talked about the purpose of the dinamicas (exercises); that it was to integrate the group and help us understand each other better (Journal entry, August 23, 1999).

The level of participation deepened as security within the group developed. However, sufficient trust to disclose personal information even regarding childhood, was not present in all participants by the end of the workshops. Whereas the older women told the story of their youth, younger participants refused to do so. This activity seemed to be very threatening to them. Thus, recovery of history (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991) was put on hold. This was another lesson learned - readiness to engage in participatory activities such as recovery of history and collective research require skill in self expression and reflection, and the confidence to engage. Readiness cannot be put on a time schedule; space is needed for the building of confidence and trust. Thus preparing readiness to engage appears to be a preliminary step.

The Cooperative is Born

Group identity is built through working together on a common goal (Mena Calvopiña, 1996). The Mothers' Group, although they were all mothers of children with disability, had little collective identity. It was hoped that they would begin to organize themselves by engaging in a purposeful activity. The exercise of tracking expenditures led to their decision to form a cooperative. The following description provides an account of their organizational process.

The eighth session held on September 22, 1999 literally exploded with enthusiasm. The objective was to plan the cooperative. We now had the summary of expenditures detailed by the Mothers plus some initial investigation regarding bulk prices done by one of the men. Through discussion we decided that the cooperative would be in R.'s house, that she and M. would be leaders, that the hours of operation would be Monday to Saturday 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. and that the prices of the products would be below the barrio price. Each woman would volunteer time to help and a schedule was drawn up. It was decided that the earnings would serve to build the cooperative but that shares would be divided periodically.

There was a lot of informal discussion that day and it was heartwarming to see R. slip so easily into a leadership role as she answered the Mother's inquiries about this and that. She had already developed a clear concept of the 'what' and the 'how' and was displaying amazing confidence. In fact, she seemed calmer about this new course of action than the facilitators; we all had our doubts and fears about the capacity of the Mothers to make a success of the venture. I was struck with R.'s calmness as we were waiting in line to open an account for the cooperative at the bank. I asked her if she needed any type of help with the cooperative. She mentioned that she needed help maintaining the accounts and with using the scale to weigh the products. She indicated with confidence that she knew that this was all a matter of practice; that with time she would catch on to it. This response indicated to me that R. had analyzed her strengths and weaknesses and had recommendations to make based on that analysis.

The training began. Two trips were made to bulk price locations to check on prices. We spent about ten initial minutes with R. instructing her on the method of the investigation. We were comparison-shopping and wanted to know prices in bulk and the number of pounds in the bulk unit used (they were not all the same) for the purpose of then finding out the price per pound. This would then be compared to the price in the barrio and estimated earnings could be calculated. Although R. was nervous she presented herself well, asking the questions and systematically writing down the answers. This is admirable as both activities are outside of her normal sphere of activity. Later, M. showed her how to use a calculator to calculate price per pound. R. chuckled to herself as she manipulated the keys of the calculator stating that she was learning something new. After completing a few examples she was given the rest to do on her own.

The training was extended to M. when the cooperative was at the point of inauguration. FANDIC's President worked with both leaders teaching them how to keep inventory and accounts. He then set up a number of applications for them to practice.

At one point we all vacated the house so they could work without the children around. When we returned he examined their work and said there were errors.

"Oh no! What did we do wrong? Explain it to us so we don't make the same error again." Explanation and more application problems. The second time they got it right and they were very pleased with themselves (Journal entry, September 30, 1999).

The last two workshops were held in R.'s house, firstly so all the Mothers would be familiar with where she lived, and secondly to package the items into half pound and one pound bags. After they had packaged and weighed the rice, sugar, beans, and dried peas we settled back to admire our work and to have a small inauguration ceremony.

FANDIC's Vice-president had thought to bring a prayer, wine, and a cake.

The prayer was well received. The toasts were also special. I was called to start. I talked about how far we had come and that I wished them the best of success, that by working together in a group they could accomplish a lot. This was backed up

by others. I think it is important to mention that both R. and F. spoke up with a toast of their own. We all felt good. (Journal entry, September 29, 1999).

The above story tells of the process of organization of the cooperative. The inauguration ceremony brought the workshop sessions to an end. Whereas the process was exemplified by group decision-making, it was questionable whether the cooperative members felt empowered by their ownership as only the two cooperative leaders benefited from individual training. Time would tell if the process had been given sufficient time. The Mothers were now on their own apart from monthly visits by the President who, as an accountant, would check the accounts.

Revisiting the Cooperative

The second stage of the fieldwork initiated in February 2000 found the two leaders discouraged and disillusioned. Participation in the cooperative had decreased leaving them to shoulder the responsibility alone. It was anticipated that the reasons for the neglect of the cooperative would come to light in the interviews to be held with the Mothers. Individual interviews were chosen to ensure that each participant would have privacy of thought and expression. The themes of the questions were:

- Prioritization of needs as expressed during the workshop sessions;
- Motivation to start the cooperative;
- Opinions about the cooperative;
- Concept of working in a group;
- Saving.

The results were collated and written in a format sensitive to the educational level of the Mothers. This report (Appendix 3) was utilized by the Vice-president in the preparation of a visual presentation given to the Mothers in the first meeting of the second phase. A summary and interpretation of the results are as follows:

1. Needs. Personal education and training gained the greatest number of votes; housing and saving were tied for second, education of the children was third, followed by security, greater independence and finally, stable income.

2. **Motivation to start a cooperative.** Replies were to have a “help” for themselves and their children, to earn some money that could provide a steady income, and to learn something new.
3. **Opinions about the cooperative.** The participants were disappointed at the limited selection offered by the cooperative and therefore did not utilize it for purchases. They also expected it to be a source of income and were disappointed that this was not the case.
4. **Concept of working in a group.** Apart from the two leaders, the Mothers thought they were working together as a group.
5. **Saving.** The respondents did not believe that saving was a viable option for them.

There appeared to be inconsistencies in the results. The lower value given to stable income and the belief that saving was impossible could be interpreted as impediments to achieving needs of high value such as education and housing. The belief that saving was not viable could negatively affect the expressed desire to save. The results pointed toward a contradiction between the Mothers’ failure to shop at the cooperative *and* the expectation that they would receive an income from it. It appeared that the Mothers did not really understand the concept of a cooperative.

An examination of the accounting books of the cooperative brought the following information to light:

- Based on actual sales, the cooperative earned 26,000 pesos (\$20 CD) per month for a total of 130,000 pesos in the five-month period;
- Ninety-six thousand of the 130,000 pesos were tied up in credit to purchasers thus choking cash flow.

The decision to give credit was made independently by one of the Leaders of the cooperative without consultation with the other Leader or the other members. Reduced cash flow retarded the growth of the cooperative, restricting the purchase of new products. Poor participation of general membership crushed the faith of the two Leaders that the women would keep their commitments.

There appeared to be shortcomings in the process of organizing. The collective identity of the Mothers' Group was not sufficiently strong to sustain an absence of facilitation. On-going nurturing activities to motivate and orientate the group regarding the functions of a cooperative were lacking. The leaders had not been given leadership training. Lastly, the cultural attitudes toward money and group formation were still not well understood.

The aim of the second visit was to utilize the experience of the cooperative as the basis for reflection and analysis, to move beyond it toward the goal of building individual and group capacities. To do so, it was necessary to build experience. The following narrative account provides the details of this endeavor.

Building Experience

I suggested to the Leaders that the Group organize an event such as a bazaar. Initially, the Leaders were reluctant to consider the possibility. They were convinced the rest of the Mothers would not participate. Despite their reluctance, they put the topic of organizing an event on the agenda for the next meeting. The following journal account provides some insight into the level of participation and interest in the meeting:

M. (Cooperative leader) read the agenda of the meeting. The first two items of discussion were whether things should be sold in smaller packages and how we could get better participation of the members in buying. Those present talked about the things they knew - the prices and the quality of products available to them. M. asked them to change their focus to think about something novel, but the discussion kept returning to the things they knew. However the discussion was useful in that it gave both the leaders an opportunity to present how a cooperative works; that the purchase of new products depends on the net gain in sales, and the more sales, the more gain.

By this time, it was 4:30. People were making signs of boredom or the need to go. The next item on the agenda was whether we should hold an event,

like a bazaar. To our surprise the idea took hold very quickly. F. offered to make masato (a fermented rice drink); A. to make mute (a traditional soup). They started to talk recipes. "How do you make masato? Mine is delicious!" "We could do the same thing that the Mothers of the Community committee did - hold it in the plaza and announce it by loudspeaker"" C. was not participating in the discussion but was at the door of the house looking toward the street. I called out to her" "C., you like to cook don't you? How would you like to make something for a bazaar?" She was hooked and participated enthusiastically. The date was set for Sunday, April 2, which gives them 3 weeks to plan. They thought they would offer mute and yucca for 1000 pesos a plate and the masato for 200 pesos a cup. The profits would go to improve the cooperative (Journal entry, March 11, 2000).

The change from poor response to engaged enthusiasm was dramatic. A lesson relearned - start with the concrete, with what they know. The enthusiasm continued to build on a week to week basis with further planning. The cooperative leaders, dubious to the very end that the Mothers would be responsible, did their part in organizing the duties and doing the shopping. At the last moment, a wrench was thrown into the plans. Apparently there was to be a similar event in the same barrio to raise money to fix some roads. We could not possibly compete so we decided to move operations to another barrio about a 30-minute walk away. This move had its pros and cons. It benefited one of the Mothers who was 'shut in' due to the delicate condition of her son by giving her the opportunity to visit with the others throughout the day. Unfortunately, the assumption was made that this other barrio would have a resident loudspeaker that could be used to announce the dinner and this was not the case. Thus the dinner lacked adequate publicity. The mute was cooked on a wood fire in a vacant lot. All but one of the Mothers participated along with three Board members. To increase sales, three of us went selling door to door in an area full of squatters' houses. We were led by the youngest Mom, whose strong voice calling to prospective customers, good humor and great looks, won us a few extra sales. It was quite the experience.

FANDIC's President gathered us together for a debriefing after the sale. He calculated that we had earned a net profit of 28,150 pesos (\$20 CD) from our efforts and added to the 28,000 pesos from the used clothing I had brought and which the Mothers sold, we were 48,150 pesos (\$40 CD) ahead. In terms of money, we did not make a lot but the experience was excellent. We all learned a lot and participated to our maximum ability. And we were able to add one more element to the cooperative, arepa flour.

Emphasis during this visit had been placed on building leadership skills in the Leaders and organizational skills in the Group. I met with the leaders prior to each meeting to assist them in planning the agenda for the meetings which they then conducted. It was strange and uncomfortable for them to play the role of leader but they led the meetings capably. Their mistrust that the other mothers will fulfill their responsibilities, however, persisted.

Besides planning the event, the issue of forming a registered cooperative was discussed. A representative of Dansocial, a governmental organization supportive of cooperatives, visited the Mother's Group to give them information about the requirements for registration. She presented two possibilities: 1) The formation of a legal cooperative which would require a constitution, registration in the Chamber of Commerce, and a minimum of 20 members; 2) The formation of a pre-cooperative which required only five members but would also have to be legally registered and demonstrate the move to a full cooperative in five years. She recommended option one so the cooperative would only have to pay the costs of registration once. Dansocial would provide a training course in the legal requirements. The presentation raised the issue of whether or not the Mother's Group wanted to include more members. Following a brief discussion they decided against the incorporation of new members at that time. They also decided that the cooperative should consist of women only and only of mothers of disabled children.

The discussion regarding the possibility of taking in new members rendered information that was indicative of a growing group identity. The decision to include only mothers of disabled children was an indication that they had formed some identity as a

group – first of all as a group of women and secondly as mothers of children with disability. The decision not to include more members may have been due to a lack of confidence that they had the necessary skills to carry the task forward. Resistance was strongest from the two Leaders. They were clearly uncomfortable with taking such a large step at that time.

By the end of the second visit, the Group had increased its experience in organizational activity. Members were encouraged by this and promised to hold another event in two or three weeks. The Leaders also had learned basic skills in planning and leading a meeting. It was hoped that these skills would continue to be practiced in my absence, for once again it was time to leave.

The Mothers fell into well-established patterns following the end of the second visit. No new events were planned and the cooperative closed within a month. Why did this occur? Besides the shortcomings in terms of on-going motivational and leadership support, one could question whether the Mothers really felt they “owned” both the process or the product. Peel back one layer, and one questions whether they were really “prepared” for commitment. Peel yet another layer and one questions whether the group should have been self versus pre-selected. Encompassing all of the above is the overarching question of how much time is *really* required to alter beliefs, attitudes and self-image. How much time is required to build capacity? Jennings (1990) reports that over 100 sessions were used in his study to achieve the integration of participants into a group. He states that “integration is not a phenomenon that occurs naturally. Simply designing and operating a project with several sectors does not guarantee that there will be interaction between the various fields or that such interaction will be positive” (p. 245). Despite the apparent failure in the desired outcome of group organization in our project, the process had positive individual outcomes.

The Outcome of the Process

These outcomes were noted on the third visit during which there was an opportunity to have a meeting of celebration with the Mothers and a debriefing with the

two Leaders of the cooperative. An account of those meetings is placed under the outcome observed.

Enhanced Self-confidence

The Mother's Group was reunited on October 10, 2000 for a meeting of "celebration". Six of the seven mothers, three Board members, and I gathered to share a moment together. The meeting began with a talk on self-esteem given by FANDIC's Vice-president to which the mothers listened attentively. Then it was my turn. I explained that this was the completion of the program to which they had agreed to participate many months ago and expressed my appreciation for all I had learned from them. I then presented each of them with a gift, a "creative memory" scrapbook filled with photographs taken of them during our activities together explaining that this was my way of demonstrating the special place they had in my heart. They loved the scrapbooks and spent the next 15 minutes pouring over the pictures, pointing at them and laughing at them.

During the meeting I was struck by the Mother's freedom of expression and their openness to sharing personal information. One mother told us a heart-warming story of her son, now 26 years old, who had lived on the fringes of family life throughout most of his life, not only due to his physical and intellectual limitations but also due to poor community, medical and therapeutic support to the family. Her story demonstrated how his level of comprehension and his ability to pronounce a few words were improving through the stimulation and therapy he was now receiving. This was the story. One day she told him that if the telephone rang when she was not in the room to hear it, he should call her. (Those who knew her son would have said that this was a 'long shot'). Some time later she heard, "Mama", as clear as a whistle. The telephone was ringing and he wanted to alert her. In her mind, and for those who know her son, this was indeed a remarkable occurrence.

There was a maturity in the Mothers that was not there at the beginning of the project. They were more alive and more confident in speaking in a group. They expressed

greater self-confidence and a more positive “can-do” attitude toward life. Their life circumstances were as difficult as ever, but it seemed as if they didn’t complain or speak with pessimism as before. One could visualize the mouths and hands starting to form the on those incomplete beings drawn at the beginning of the project. They were becoming easier to see. They were more visible because they were stronger.

Enhanced Know-How

FANDIC’s President and I met later with the two leaders of the cooperative to finalize its closing. The cooperative closed due to the desire of one of the leaders not to continue. The cooperative was in this leader’s home and during a very difficult circumstance in which there was no income into the home, she accumulated a debt with the cooperative that far surpassed the agreed upon credit limit. She felt the responsibility of this debt and decided to end her conflict by closing the cooperative.

When the leaders were asked about the most positive aspect of their experience, they spoke without hesitation, as if they had given the matter considerable thought. They replied that the training had been the most positive aspect and that they now felt capable to start a small business. They used the word “capable” deliberately and stated that it was not due to lack of ability that the cooperative closed. When asked how they would improve the process if they were to do it again, they offered three suggestions:

- *They would involve more people in the preliminary stage of cooperative formation thus allowing for the natural selection of the committed. This point contradicts their earlier objection to include more members. With this response, the leaders seem to have moved toward a more inclusive strategy.*
- *They identified the location of the cooperative as one of the difficulties. The next cooperative should not be in a home but in a neutral space, one in which there were more checks and balances.*
- *They spoke about the importance of spousal support for their activities. Although the man of the house in which the cooperative was located seemed to be supportive, his lack of orientation to the cooperative led to tension within the home. He was upset*

that the other women did not do their part. He did not want her to leave the children alone in the house to do the marketing. He didn't like her to carry heavy bags of rice. Lastly, when he was alone and made sales for the cooperative he did not keep record of the sales thus upsetting their accounting system.

When asked their opinion regarding their leadership of the group, they stated that running meetings and providing leadership to the group was the most difficult aspect of the experience for them and that they needed much more training to gain skills and confidence in this area.

I found the responses of the Leaders quite analytical. They had given considerable thought to the cooperative and its effect on their lives. They looked at both the positive and the negative giving their analysis balance. They were neither discouraged nor did they belittle their efforts. They believed in themselves and were confident in their abilities. The change in their personae was remarkable. If that were not enough, they touched on some very basic fundamental issues that needed to be addressed: selection of the participants; and the importance of close examination of issues such as the influence of attitudes on gender, on work, and on group formation. These issues will be addressed in the remainder of Part I beginning with lessons learned.

Lessons Learned

Prepare the Ground

Few articles on PR and CD give importance to the preliminary step of preparation for involvement. Perhaps the dearth of commentary regarding the preparation to engage in a participatory process is due to an assumption that it is, of course, part of the strategy. On the other hand, failure to report this step leads one to suspect that it has failed to gain adequate attention. Yet it is vitally important in the process of capacity building. Purdy et al. (1994) states that the participants in their study were *ready* to participate due to previous exposure to empowering experiences in which they learned to overcome shyness and articulate their thoughts. Robinson & Cox (1998) place "latent or unidentified problems/issues" at the entry level of their spiral model of capacity building

and “exposure/ideas” as the next level (p. 130). Both articles allude to the issue of preparation or readiness to engage. “Preparation for participation” refers to preparing the ground for the teachable moment, for the intrusion of new messages into awareness (ICA, 1997). It is the development of experience in self-expression and analysis (Purdey et al.); it is a form of consciousness-raising that prepares individuals for the task of participating (Oakley & Marsden, 1984) and integrating as a group (Jennings, 1990). It is the means by which one acquires sufficient confidence and security to search for a means of improvement (Olavarria & López, 1989).

In engaging in the discussion of ‘readiness’ it is not the intention to assume that only the selected participants require preparation. In this study, the facilitators would have clearly benefited from a preparatory stage in which beliefs, concerns and the influence of culture on language could have been explored. We entered the process as “experts” with preconceived perceptions of need and assumptions that the Mothers would be of the same mind. Instead we found that we did not understand what the Mothers were telling us. From this perspective, the knowledge gained was indeed “equalized” and the exhortation to prepare the ground was just as important to the facilitator/researcher as it was to the other participants.

Preparation to engage encompasses at least two principles: start from where the participants are; and build on practical experience.

Start from Where *They* Are.

Reference was made in chapter 2 to the development of self-awareness through praxis and activities such as collective research and critical recovery of history (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Fals Borda, 1978, 1985). The example provided in that chapter tells the story of a community that united around a common issue to engage in a process of discovery (de Rioux, 1991). They explored their commonalities, present and past, and explored how they could use them to further a common purpose. This was collective research. This is what I expected to happen in the Mother’s Group. But it did not.

Collective research is not an entry-level activity. We noted the difficulty the Mothers had in self-expression, of expressing their real needs. There was a tendency amongst them, especially at the initiation of the workshops, to repeat and to imitate. Considerable skill in the analysis of reality is required to convert ‘felt’ needs reflecting inner sentiments into ‘expressed’ needs (Leis, 1989). Individuals characterized by isolation are not likely to have either the skill or the confidence sufficiently developed at the beginning of a project to engage in collective research.

The Mothers also demonstrated poverty in creative expression. They found it difficult to draw, to play, and to act. It was clear they had not had much experience in these activities. The level of enthusiasm rose when the discussion centered on concrete themes such as the home and the children. This was the real starting point for the building of self-awareness. Freire (1994) states, “You never get *there* by starting from *there*, you get there by starting from some *here*” (p. 58). The lesson learned was to start where the participants are, with what they know, as the foundation for building self-awareness.

Build on Practical Experience

Practice is the entry point of knowledge (Leis, 1989). But knowledge is not an end in itself. One is not transformed through “knowing” but by acquiring new skills. New skills change one’s intellectual capacity, one’s values and one’s behavior (Leis). The ‘most known’ to the Mothers were issues surrounding the home – cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Discussion surrounding these themes generated a degree of enthusiastic participation unparalleled by any other topic. For some reason this surprised me. Gradually, I understood their drawings depicting isolation and saw the boundaries of their world in a new light. I realized that concrete practice starting from the known was essential. The purchase and preparation of food was something that all the Mothers had in common. The theme of food spun off into various directions – home expenditures, budgeting and saving, the cooperative and the food bazaar. Food became the tool of diversification for the building of experience. Living that experience, with its successes and failures developed new competencies in all of us. Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990)

explains, “that without practice there’s no knowledge; at least it’s difficult to know without practice” (p. 98). Practice, however, would be incomplete if the theoretical components of praxis were not incorporated into the experience. Praxis, woven into the fabric of everyday life liberates the discovery of personal potential (Leis, 1989).

It was in October 2000, fifteen months after the initiation of the workshops, that I observed an increase in self-confidence in the Mothers. The Mothers were now ready to begin collective research. They had confidence in themselves as persons; they could see beyond today to look toward the future. There was evidence of reflection and analysis in their discussion. This was evidence of improved self-esteem. The process of empowerment exemplified by movement towards self-control, self-confidence, and the right to make decisions (Morrissey, 2000) had begun.

Issues Requiring Greater Understanding

The Experience outlined above raised some fundamental issues that warrant further understanding: the selection of the target group; the relation of money and dependency, the role of trust, and the influence of men in a project designed for women.

Selection of the Participants

The method of selection of participants is not always reported in project literature. Frequently participants are referred to as “the community” with no further elaboration leaving the reader without clarity as to whether all or some of the community were involved or if the project was targeted towards certain “volunteers”. Results oriented projects that place greater emphasis on efficiency and range of service delivery than on participation and empowerment are more likely to encourage self-selection. Self-selection typically brings forward those who are more likely to be successful due to previous experience and willingness to take risks (Carroll, 1992). Self-selection, however, often does not reach the marginalized and unorganized of the community. Botes & van Rensburg (2000) state, “It remains one of the biggest challenges to ensure that the

people who neither have the capacity, nor the desire to participate, are involved in the development process” (p. 46). The participants of this study were pre-selected. The question is whether or not this was a good approach.

The Leaders of the cooperative were frustrated with the group that had been dealt them. Their group was pre-selected by their affiliation with FANDIC, not self-selected by their motivation to establish a cooperative. Perhaps the strategy of this study should have been to encourage those interested to participate, as long as they filled the criteria of being a mother of a child with disability. This strategy would have required that we contact a large number of women in advance with the expectation that only 40 percent of those invited would participate (personal communication with a director of Opportunity Canada). This approach was not really under consideration, as the partner organization did not have sufficient resources to conduct a preliminary survey. Neither was this strategy consistent with PR open process methodology. There was no pre-set agenda at the beginning of the study to form a cooperative. Perhaps there should have been. Perhaps it would have been more helpful to all involved if the objective of forming a cooperative had been stated from the outset and this end product had been used as an incentive for involvement. Jennings (1990), for example, used adult literacy as a vehicle to community preparation to form cooperatives.

This study chose the open-ended approach and although the ambiguity was frustrating for all the participants (facilitators included) it gave potential for the group to devise it's own process. The pre-selection of the participants meant that some of the most marginalized women in the community were engaged in a new learning experience. The cooperative, although it could be viewed as the product of the process, was not the final result. It was only part of the process. The dichotomy can be expressed as process or product, dedicated experimentation or guaranteed success. Both components have value.

Relation of Money and Dependency

Another issue requiring greater understanding is the role of money in participatory development. The Mothers were discouraged that the cooperative did not

have more products and was not providing them with additional income. Although one could dismiss their complaints as lack of understanding regarding the formation of a viable cooperative, it is worthwhile spending a moment to consider whether more money would have helped or hindered the process. The cooperative started with a loan of 250,000 pesos (\$175 CD). This was a huge sum of money to repay but only enough to purchase basic implements such as the scale, a calculator, and six bulk items. Perhaps more money would have provided the cooperative with immediate success.

Success is a very important motivator for continued involvement. There were two arguments against starting big. One was the need for experiential learning and preparation on a small scale before scaling up. The other was the issue of dependency. It was feared that a larger investment would raise the expectations of external assistance thus hampering the development of their own local resources (Kamara & Kargbo, 1999; Rahman, 1993).

Expectation of external assistance was already raised due to my involvement. Whereas I initially equated lack of opportunity with lack of resources, (i.e. money), I learned that money was a false leader that had the potential to undercut the development of personal and group capacity. The heart of the issue, in my mind, was the definition of poverty. Poverty is typically defined in terms of income level (Hatch & Frederick, 1998; PAHO, 1999; World Bank, 1994) resulting in an approach to development that is economical, not social and political in nature. Poverty is complex; it affects other needs such as affection, identity, participation and creation (Max Neef, 1991). Showing affection requires self-esteem, generosity, tolerance and respect. It results in relationships and partnerships (Max Neef). Identity emanates from a sense of belonging and of differentiation, and results in customs, reference groups and norms (Max Neef). Participation requires adaptability, receptivity and solidarity, and results in affiliations, duties and work (Max Neef). Creation refers to intuitiveness, invention, and imagination. Creative people invent, design and interpret (Max Neef). Not only were the Mothers economically poor, their relative isolation in their local community and much greater isolation within their region led to a poverty that was also social and political in nature.

Whereas Cordero & Gamboa (1990) maintain that poverty generates solidarity and the development of social networks, there was not much evidence of social networks consisting of extended family and close neighbors. The Mothers gave more credence to the involvement of institutions such as FANDIC in their lives than family, when speaking of past and current influences on their lives during the Tree of Life exercise (Hope & Timmel, 1984). This may have been due to the weakening of family links through displacement of family members from the rural to the urban areas. It could also be considered to be an indication that social institutions (mostly NGO's and the Church) have usurped the traditional social net in importance. This relative dependency on agencies may have had a harmful effect on values. The belief that one *should* get something weakens values that foster progress - identification with others, trust, cooperation, compromise, self-discipline, justice, dissent, creativity, planning, and hard work (Harrison, 2000). Greenleaf (1977) states that the giving of charity can have a corrupting influence on both the donor and the recipient. Landes (1998) maintains that:

The most successful cures for poverty come from within. Foreign aid can help, but like windfall wealth, can also hurt. No, what counts is work, thrift, honesty, patience, and tenacity. To people haunted by misery and hunger, that may add up to selfish indifference. But at bottom, no empowerment is so effective as self-empowerment (p. 523).

The issue of money and dependence is a very relevant issue in development today. Money may set up false expectations in both the eyes of the "developer" and the target group. It may actually hinder capacity building and sustainability. Based on the experience in this study, strategy that is heavily invested in time is endorsed – time to build awareness; time to build trust.

Trust

It would appear that the Mothers had not developed sufficient trust for effective organization. The issues of trust, envy, and gossip were big ones for them. They asserted that a bad neighbor could make your life miserable, spread slanderous gossip about you

and turn others against you. One mother described her neighbors as “odioso” which means nasty or hateful; that they wanted to “be better or get more” than others. They said this was the culture of *Ciudad Norte*. Trust, an element basic to community cooperation and to social capital, seemed to be quite limited in *Ciudad Norte*. Lack of trust seemed to spill over to fear:

... fear of losing their husband, their reputation, that their children will be hurt, of the dangers of the street. Fear seemed to immobilize them, to keep them from considering viable options. It seemed to keep them isolated from neighbors and the world outside their barrio” (Journal entry, May 23, 2000).

Whiteford’s (1976) study of customs in Colombia supports the Mothers’ statements. He found that there was resentment toward those who managed to get ahead; that neighbors sought to impose a social sanction through gossip. This desire to limit others may come from a concept of “limited good” in which “peasants thought that the sum total of value available to them all was limited” (Wade, 1997, p. 44). Therefore, anyone gaining wealth was doing so at the expense of others, and this generated intense envy, conflict and mistrust (Wade). Mistrust, fear and isolation, maintained by the sanction of gossip, undermined factors supportive to social capital such as safety, visitation and involvement. There was breakdown of the social net in the face of non-reciprocity, diminishing the ability of people to work within extra-familial networks and presenting an obstacle for any type of cooperative development effort (Buckland, 1998).

Reference to the study by Usandizag and Haven (1966) regarding attitudes and aspirations of *barrio* dwellers in Barranquilla, Colombia indicate some parallels between the two locations, such as a low participation rate in local community affairs and poor integration into the larger city context. Reviewing the *Country Context* section one wonders whether the violence existing in the country is not partially due to diminished trust, trustworthiness and lack of closure on the part of the government and judicial system. This macro social context is reflected in the attitude of suspicion in the Mothers and perhaps accounts for a diminished capacity for creativity. Moving outside one’s cultural framework to embrace new concepts and ideas receives little reward in a society

in which there is little respect for human rights (Harrison, 2000) and is especially difficult for a group of woman who are near the bottom of the power hierarchy, both socially and economically. It is probable that the suspicion and deep seated distrust expressed in *Ciudad Norte* follows a pattern that is typical in the wider country context.

The Mothers, in the expression of their values, placed the need for caution above their desire to be helpful, friendly, or respectful. Caution was deeply ingrained as a way of life. What is the source of this caution? Traditionally, Colombian society has been family oriented. In the past, many private business arrangements, social engagements and obligations were restricted to the extended family. The focus on family appears to have led to a dichotomy between trust/mistrust, inclusively/exclusivity and collectivism/individualism according to one's family membership status. Whereas those inside the family seem to be included and trusted, those outside the family seem to be excluded by distrust. While the family unit appeared to have weakened in most of the family groups studied, the reluctance to associate with outsiders had not. Collective attitudes noted by inclusive language such as "we", harmony and loyalty, were expressed only when facilitated by an outsider. Individualism, or the "I" consciousness, was the norm when the Mothers were on their own. They turned away from the cooperative and walked down their separate paths. It appeared that while they were "collective" within the family, they were "individualistic" outside the family unit. Individualistic behaviors such as circumvention of agreed to responsibility resulted in discouragement in the Leaders. Exclusivity influenced the decision of the Group not to include new members into the cooperative. Cultural attitudes strongly influenced their behavior. It was, therefore, all the more remarkable that the Leaders suggest *including* more people in the cooperative should it be reactivated.

Gender and Development

The issue of how best to incorporate gender issues into community development requires further exploration. Our participants were mothers of children with disability and although we had general meetings in which the men were present, we did not include

them in the majority of activities. The exclusion of men seemed important to the development of voice and confidence amongst the women. It did, however, lead to a less desirable result, that of loss of interest of the men in the activities of FANDIC and to tension within the home. The response from the leader of the cooperative regarding her husband's cooperation (or lack of) was an example of a man subtly attempting to subvert the process of his wife's development.

The Mothers spoke sparingly about their relationships with their husbands but the comments they made were telling about the inequalities they faced as women. One young mother began to cry as she talked about the fact that her eight-year old daughter from another union was not permitted to live with them whereas she was expected to accept her husband's daughter from his other union. An older woman spoke of her happiness with her husband of 30 years because he did not beat her and she had the freedom to leave the house for a meeting (see Appendix 4). One mother remarked that, at least her daughter was making something of her life because she was useless. Several talked about having no input into family finances but were simply expected to make do with what the husband brought home. Few of the mothers had control over their day to day activity or the freedom to participate in decision making. Brackrack & Botwinick (1992), in their analysis of participation in relation to power state that "... power to participate effectively and democratically is an acquired trait that individuals gain from participation" (p. 57). Most of the Mothers were inexperienced in participation and this could have been due to lack of practice in the home, both as children and as adults. The issue was complicated by culture of male dominance and power. Some Mothers were less participative in the presence of their husbands – their voices were tiny or non-existent.

For participation to be meaningful there must be some active involvement in the determining of problems and practices (Oakley & Marsden, 1984). Home economy is a case in point. One of the questions in the interviews with the Mothers dealt with saving. One-half of the respondents were highly dependent on their husbands in all aspects of home economy; the couple discussed finances only superficially or not at all. In the budgetary exercises that followed it became apparent that most of the Mothers had no

idea how much was spent by their husbands, or any control over the amount they decided to bring home that day. According to custom, it was the man's obligation to provide the necessary elements for his family – about 6,000 pesos (\$4.20 CD) a day for food.

The question remains as to how a project could better encourage participation of *all* those involved. FANDIC, as an organization dedicated to assisting families with children with disability, needs the cooperation of all family members. Establishing the Mothers as the target group had an unexpected backlash in that the fathers became less interested in the organization. This was not helpful or desired. Although the objective to strengthen the voice of the Mothers was valid, the failure to sufficiently understand the role of pre-existing relationships had a negative effect on the organization. Perhaps it would have been better to encourage the formation of a men's group that would run parallel to a women's group with the aim that one day the two groups would amalgamate. Perhaps this would lead to a more authentic examination of cultural roles and distribution of power in participation.

Revisiting the Objectives

Revision of Project Objectives

The termination of an experience that started in August 1999 and concluded in October 2000, ushered in a final opportunity to reflect on the experience and to review the objectives. However, before delving into a review of the objectives themselves, an examination of how the objectives were formed is in order. Counter to PR methodology as stated by some authors (De Konig & Martin, 1996; McTaggart, 1991) in which the target group set the agenda and are involved in all aspects of the process, I wrote the objectives and the President and Vice-president of FANDIC modified them. The Mothers had no input into their formation; they had the objectives imposed on them. Thus, the research started out with a flaw according to PR methodology.

Did this flaw have a substantial impact on the research outcome? There is evidence that it did. We made certain assumptions while writing the objectives, one being

that these objectives were for the work with the Mothers and not for work within ourselves. In reality, the people who wrote and modified the objectives were the greatest benefactors of the research. While I did the literature review, the analysis, and the write-up, the Board worked alongside me, collaborating, investigating, verifying, and clarifying. We learned a tremendous amount from the process. The Mothers also gained in that they learned new skills, learned to share experiences, and initiated organizational activity. However, it is the Mothers' group that has shown the most stress in terms of sustainability. Group collaboration and an energized commitment to a common goal, something more typical of groups that have worked together through all stages of the process (Elliott, 1999), was not sustained between visits.

This departure from the ideal of participation in all aspects of the project was initiated with the requirement that objectives be clearly stated in the research proposals. The presentation of a strategy as well as possible outcomes at inception of the project seemed to leave little room for a participatory process at the highest level of citizen involvement. The expectation that the Mothers *would* participate at the highest level could be attributed to my theoretical preparation in PR and lack of experience in its utilization. However, the theory of PR also prepared me to engage in an open process and this served to appropriately modify the pre-written objectives.

Nevertheless, I initially found this modification of objectives somewhat distressing, as if we were getting "off track". Grossi's (1988) presentation of the phases of revision of objectives was helpful in that I found some correlation with our own experience. The seven phases, translated and paraphrased, and our correlating experiences at the end of the first visit are as follows:

1. *First approximation towards the strategic objective. It is the statement of a provisional objective because it responds more to secondary than primary contradictions.* Our objectives to explore cultural attitudes toward disability and seek greater acceptance for their disabled child in the community were not priorities for the Mothers.

2. *Analysis of internal obstacles.* Our internal obstacles were the reluctance to share personal stories and to form a cohesive group.
3. *Analysis of exterior obstacles.* The more pressing external obstacles of the women were work in the home, childcare commitments and illness. These obstacles were strongly influenced by the economic status of the family, which in turn was influenced by social class.
4. *Elaboration of a casual structure.* You begin to put an order to the concerns expressed. This reveals not only a contradiction with the principle objective but also an ordering of the secondary objectives. You apply a method that permits a logical reordering and the intertwining of various functions that determine social change. Housing concerns came to light through home visits. The Mothers began to explore their finances in a logical way and to reorder their social reality by forming a cooperative.
5. *Determination of the strategic objective.* The strategic objective became to earn money for housing and for improved nutrition of the children.
6. *Determination of the different levels of viability.* The observation of interest that lies behind all of the secondary activities gives one an idea of what is most viable. Activities such as the expenditure exercise, document collection for the housing project, opening the bank accounts, election of leaders and making a timetable all served to gauge real interest.
7. *Determination of the tactical objectives and short-term action.* This permits one to re-enter the cycle, this time being in a different state of development. Both the cooperative and the housing projects provided an entry point to the next stage of development permitting us to examine changes in individual behavior and group solidarity.

My expectations regarding the process were fashioned by my theoretical preparation and by the exercise of writing objectives. The tension between 'what was happening' and 'what was supposed to happen' played itself out during the course of the study. It was tension between theoretical suppositions and confrontation "with a reality

which is full of contradiction and conflict” (de Oliveira R. & de Oliveira M, 1982). Grossi’s (1988) phases of revision of objectives provided relief that our experience had been shared by others. They also provided a framework with which to look realistically at our experience. Phase four presents the elaboration of a casual structure that speaks of a pulling away from the established objectives in order to listen to the concerns expressed. Being open to expressed concerns was how we found *the way in* during the first visit. This is how we found common ground.

Review of the Objectives

A review of the objectives written for the study led to a reflection on the intention of those objectives as well as the result. The first objective reads as follows:

For the participants to develop a critical awareness of the realities of disadvantaged children with disability in Colombian society. This will involve the exploration of cultural behavior, beliefs, and attitudes regarding disability and includes exploration of the impact of the social class system on children with disability.

This objective appears to be presumptuous in that it seems to suppose that people who live the reality do not have an awareness of it. The key lies in the word ‘critical’. The aim was to move beyond a common understanding, or subjective knowledge, to a deeper level by understanding how our own attitudes and beliefs regarding ourselves and disability impact our actions and behaviors. Although attitudes toward disability were not formally addressed, there was superficial discussion at the informal level between the Mothers. The airing of stories and comments was helpful to the building of a common history. It was a beginning.

The exploration of the impact of social class on children with disability is quite a political issue and no one spoke of it. Attitudes resulting from the class structure seem to be so pervasive in Colombia that they overshadow the marginalization that might occur as a result of disability. A disabled person from the middle class still has more power than the able bodied person from the lower class. Amongst people of the lower class there

is evidence of discrimination of the disabled, although it seems to be in decline as general awareness increases. The increase in acceptance amongst Colombians in general is likely due to the Colombian government's National Plan of Attention to the Disabled (1995). The presence of the therapy salon in the community has increased the awareness amongst the general public and encouraged the families to treat the child as one with "special needs" instead of just hiding him or her in the house. Former attitudes toward disability are being challenged, not so much by in-depth discussion, but by exposure. This exposure plus the fact that there is an organization that takes special interest in this population opens the door to re-examination of attitudes toward disability.

The second objective challenged all of us as we struggled to find common purpose.

For the participants to work collectively in a group; that they develop the organizational and communication skills necessary to present issues important to them to agencies and organizations.

Although the Mothers' Group did work collectively during episodic periods, they did not develop sufficient cohesiveness for their group to sustain itself without regular facilitation. Factors such as the selection strategy and the degree of preparedness heavily influenced the outcome of this aspect of the objective. Individual Mothers did, however, enhance their communication skills to effectively present themselves and their requests in the market and the bank.

The third objective was a challenge for most of us.

For the participants to develop experience and gain confidence with a research method that encourages reflection, investigation, and action; that they learn to investigate their realities on a continuous basis and to take action resulting in social change.

The Mothers utilized the process of reflection, investigation and action as they addressed the issues of the cooperative and the event. There was carryover to daily life to a limited degree. Regular on-going meetings and facilitation would have been of benefit in developing the habit of praxis and broadening its application to other aspects of life.

Continued involvement with the Mothers over a long time period should have been part of the strategy.

The fourth objective appears a bit arrogant considering the survival skills of the families:

For the participants to take action leading to greater self-reliance and independence in terms of control over their social milieu for the benefit of their children with disabilities thereby offering them more options and opportunities.

On the one hand, the families were doing their best to meet basic needs and had accomplished a lot in the course of their personal histories. On the other hand, many were fairly dependent on organizations such as FANDIC to help alleviate the stress of emergencies. We attempted “to break up” dependency (Fals Borda, 1985) by addressing cultural attitudes such as lack of trust, individualism, and the inferior position of women and encouraging activities that supported development of opposite trends. We were disappointed when we found these patterns resistant to change. We were naive. Wade (1997) acknowledges the importance of postmodern deconstructionism in helping us see the flexibility of culture but warns of the danger of denying real historical continuities. He points out that:

... identities are involved with - resources, power, livelihood, autonomy and interdependence, knowledge of oneself and others, a sense of the past and the future - to see these concerns are culturally constituted in an historical process and in relation to differences of power (p. 113).

Our lack of deep understanding of the cultural roots of the attitudes encountered gave us the false expectation that self-awareness could be developed within relatively few workshop sessions. Self-awareness may have developed more quickly if the participants had been ‘readied’ by previous experience. The experience that the Mothers gained from the workshops, the cooperative, and the bazaar should serve to prepare them for future opportunities.

The fifth and sixth objectives related to the integration of family members into the Foundation and the development of community awareness regarding disability will be

addressed in Part 3. This brings to a close the most central aspect of this study, the work with the Mothers. Part 2 brings a shift of attention from the Mothers to the children.

Summary

The experience of the Mother's Group is full of new learnings and practical applications for future endeavors. Those most crucial to my understanding of participatory development have been outlined as lessons learned. Other issues, identified as requiring further understanding, will be picked up as we thread our way through other parts of the experience. Keeping in mind the Mother's concern for the welfare of their children, we turn our attention to the children and to some of the challenges they face.

THE EXPERIENCE

PART 2

Children and Their Families

Children with disability are central to FANDIC's purpose, its reason for inception. The fact that they were not central to the study did not mean that investigation was not done on their behalf. My desire to include the children in the thesis report is an acknowledgment of their centrality to the mission of FANDIC and their relatedness to the family and the community. Anthony A. Kennedy, UNICEF Representative for Central America and Panama once said:

If we solve the problems of childhood, we will surely have a better world tomorrow. But the child is not an island. The child is an integral part of a family. Therefore the problems of the child are a consequence of family problems. The family, on the other hand, is an integral part of a community and many of their problems have their roots in the problems of the community. Child, family and community, therefore, form an indivisible trilogy (Toledo, 1982, p. 1).

Although the investigations on behalf of the children were limited in their scope and practice, they indicate interesting directions for research in the future. Part 2 begins with discussion of issues relevant to the children affiliated with FANDIC and ends with a limited discussion about family challenges.

The Children

School

Since its inception as an organization, FANDIC has sought to help children with disability to go to school. Law 361 requiring the inclusion of disabled children into public

schools was passed in 1997. As this law was favorable to our objective, the organization sought to have children with disability included in programs provided by it. FANDIC's investigation over the past two years has rendered information regarding the public school system in general and the learning environment of the sponsored children in particular.

Colombia's public primary school education system is designated for the lowest two socioeconomic stratas. The teaching method still favors "banking" information over the development of skill in investigation and the communication of results. Classroom size, formerly around 30 students, is edging up to 40 children. One could suppose that the addition of a child with a disability to a classroom already brimming with students might be difficult for a teacher with no teacher's assistant. One could also suppose that reading text written on the board and having to copy it might prove difficult for a child with visual impairment or perceptual difficulties. Regarding the fate of children with perceptual and/or intellectual limitations in this type of system Baine (1988) states:

In many Developing Countries, "special education curricula" are merely "watered-down" versions of regular education curricula. In special education, some of the more difficult tasks have often been replaced by simpler craft activities and/or more practical life-skills. Otherwise, students with handicaps are merely expected to follow regular curricula at a slower rate than that of regular students (p. 5).

Primary school education is not free. Average tuition for primary education in the *Ciudad Norte* was 25,000 pesos (\$19.50 CD) per year in 2000. The cost of the daily uniform was 18,000 (\$12.60 CD) and the sports uniform was 23,000 (\$16 CD). Workbooks were an additional cost. Keep in mind that average daily food expenditures in the families in this study was 6,000 pesos (\$4.20 CD). A survey of six primary schools in the *Ciudad Norte*, performed by a Board member and myself, found that only four children with disability had studied in these schools in the past or present. Possible reasons for such low attendance were: failure to accept children with disabilities before

the law was passed in 1997; architectural barriers; and fear on the part of the parents that their child would be bullied.

In accordance with Law 361, the Municipal Department of Education developed supportive programs for inclusion of disabled children in several sectors of the city. As the *Ciudad Norte* was not included in this coverage, three children with disability were sponsored by FANDIC to study outside of their community. All three children were evaluated by a team of specialists in regard to their appropriateness to the program and placed in an accessible school. The team was responsible for providing the classroom teacher with support and training. Two children stayed in the program and the third withdrew to find a school closer to home. The following narrative provides the story of schooling in these three children.

All three sponsored children had a neurological disorder that limited their abilities. Two children, a brother and sister pair, had motor, speech, visual and perceptual impairments. The third child had primarily a motor impairment. In the first year of School Integration, FANDIC was very pleased just to have the children in school. Improvements in the brother/sister pair in terms of attention span, ability to form letters and coloring were observed. But in the second year there were signs that these children were experiencing difficulty. We began to question whether sitting in a classroom without any individual attention was helping them progress. My journal notes:

The kids are really different in school than at home or in the barrio. D. is very serious and almost mad. He doesn't smile. The teacher says that he doesn't listen well to instructions. For example, instead of copying what the teacher puts on the board, he devises his own letters or numbers and practices them instead. He is obstinate.

T. smiles but is more subdued. The teacher praised T.'s improvement in her coloring, but was concerned about her tendency to reverse numbers such as 3 (September 14, 1999).

A student psychologist doing a practicum at the children's school helped to clarify the question of whether or not the children were learning. She agreed to do a

formal assessment as well as classroom evaluation. Here are comments from her written and verbal report:

D. & T. are socializing in school and that is valuable, but they are not learning. Some of this is due to the type of education offered in the public school system. The teacher dictates, writes on the board and the students copy it. There is very little interaction between student and teacher. This isn't particularly good for kids even without a problem. T. has a lot more trouble than D. in managing a pencil and fine motor activities. She doesn't have much concept of body and can not draw a person. She recommended that the children work on skills of execution to help their learning, for example, to practice summation by moving balls from one place to another and adding them up. The work on the board had no meaning for them. They needed concrete activity that improves their fine and gross motor skills (Journal entry, April 10, 2000).

The report provided by the student psychologist helped gain individual assistance for the children in the classroom. Although this solution was time limited, the request helped raise the awareness of the Special Education Team regarding the necessity for teacher's assistants.

The third child was pulled out of the Integration Program by his parents because of the stress caused by the travel. He switched to a school closer to home. His story can largely told from journal notes:

M. studied in the Integration Program last year but failed his year. His parents blamed it on the poor quality of education. Perhaps he was also affected by the constant squabble within the family about who would take him to school. M. has normal intelligence (my opinion) and talks a mile a minute. There is no reason, from my point of view, why he should not succeed in school (November 1999).

M. is not doing that well. He is behind in reading and writing. He has been offered practice sessions with a school graduate but hasn't been attending. In terms of math's, he sums and subtracts. He can do simple problems, but he is

limited by his inability to read. He doesn't yet recognize all the letters of the alphabet by sounds or by reading (September 1999).

If M. really had normal intelligence he would have absorbed the alphabet by now. What are we missing with these children? Is it a problem of dyslexia or poor nutrition, or is it a poor home atmosphere and lack of stimulation? How much of a role does the disability play? Do they feel accepted and comfortable in their school environment (November 1999)?

M.'s mother told me that none of her kids have done well in school and she believes it is a factor of nutrition. It seems that no one in the family takes education seriously. Most of the kids have had to repeat the first grade. She feels inadequate because she hasn't had much chance to study either (February 14, 2000).

The social worker (at M.'s school) was quite blunt. The problem was in the family. She has seen it with all of the kids. There doesn't seem to be the push in the home for the children to discipline themselves to study (February 16, 2000).

M. ended up repeating the first grade for the third time. The questions asked in the November 1999 journal entry remain relevant and largely unanswered. As my awareness rose regarding the issues faced by these children, I began to inquire into the influence of disability, play, and home environment on learning.

Disability and Learning

Findings of two studies on neurological disability and learning, specifically cerebral palsy (CP), confirmed some of the recommendations made by the student psychologist. Boyce & Smith (1999) found that visual impairments were the most frequently noted problem in children with CP along with difficulties with fine or gross motor functioning. It was also noted that general development was delayed with motor

skills and community living skills rated as particularly low. Haskell & Mittler (1973) point to the importance of manipulating objects to develop mathematical concepts. Besides ocular defects the children may also have disorders of perception leading to difficulties in recognizing shapes, matching and discriminating forms, distinguishing a figure from its background, and integrating the constituent elements to form a whole. These studies help to provide a scientific basis to the utilization of manual manipulation for the development of logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, and spatial intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

Play and Learning

Fals Borda spoke of the need for ludic tendencies or games (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). Although he was likely speaking of adults, my application would be with the children. Perhaps play for children living in areas reputed to be insecure and violent, or for children with limitations due to disability, should be actively facilitated. The aim of this facilitation would be to provide early stimulation and develop socialization skills in preparation for learning in school. Play develops expression through singing and dramatization, it provides the opportunity to construct or “try on” identities, and it assists with the coordination of thoughts and actions (Kelly-Byrne, 1989).

An experience toward the end of the first visit set me to wondering about the level of encouragement the children have to play imaginative or silly games. This experience took place in one of the Mother's homes where I was playing with five children aged 1 to 12 years. The objective was to keep them occupied for about three hours while FANDIC's President taught their mothers the basics of accounting. This is my story:

The “tickling” went over the best. The youngest girl was the keenest to play and with time, G. joined in. He hung back shyly for the longest time before trusting all this activity with laughter. It seemed to me that he had not experienced much play with adults before. (September 30, 1999).

I don't know why G. was so reluctant to join us. It was as if he didn't know what it was all about. Do these children play? Do they play with adults? How much does their home environment influence their play? G.'s home has a dirt floor. It seems likely that G., at his young age (5) feels insecure. He has just changed Dads, and they were practically living on the street before their latest squatter's house was built. How can a kid develop self-confidence in such an atmosphere? (November 22, 1999).

Regarding the interaction between adults and children in play, Wilson & Herbert (1978) found that mothers in the unskilled working class were less likely to participate in play with their children and that over half of them imposed moderate restrictions on play. Twenty-three percent of lower class children versus seven percent of middle class children did not like to be left on their own to play, perhaps because of the absence of toys. They observed that:

The scarcity or total absence of toys and equipment suitable for play, and the absence of privacy allowing intensive play prevent the development of creative activities, powers of concentration, manipulative skills, and the re-enactment of experiences in imaginative role-play. The absence of personal possessions deprives children of a culturally essential experience, the care of valued objects. Limited patterns of parental hobbies and interests and family activities deprive children of many enriching experiences, and thus many behavioral competencies useful in school and in society at large cannot be developed (p. 185).

Home Environment and Learning

Home environment has a significant effect on development as stated in a study on the impact of poverty on early child development by Parker, Greer & Zuckerman (1988). They report that:

Children from highly stressed environments are at increased risk for a variety of developmental and behavioral problems, including poorer performance on developmental tests at 8 months, lower IQ scores and impaired language

development at 4 years, and poorer emotional adjustment and increased school problems at school age” (p. 1231).

The effect of home environment on learning became an area of more dedicated observation during my second visit. I kept my eye out for books and scribbles on each home visit, encouraging the children to show me their schoolwork. It was rare to see books in the homes and I began to wonder if the parents read to the children at night. One of the community volunteers answered my question saying that reading to the children was not done; that the parents would feel silly reading to their children. The interaction between cultural customs and poverty became difficult to sort out in the quest to understand why children were not more successful in school.

Regarding the effect of poverty on learning, it is said that children from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to start school with poor language skills and inadequately developed auditory and visual discriminatory skills (Rutter, Tizard & Whitmore, 1970). The development of these skills seems to be linked to the educational and occupational characteristics of the parents as well as the patterns of communication between parents and children (Rutter et al.). Regarding the importance of adult/child interaction in learning, it is said that adult/child interaction and play help to prepare the readiness to learn, the discipline to study, and ability to form relationships (Bagley & Thurston, 1989; Segal & Adcock, 1981).

Although the Mothers stated that they valued education, perhaps their cultural customs in child rearing and their own low level of education did not adequately prepare them to provide sufficient stimulation in the home. In addition, their day-to-day concern with basic necessities such as food, could have demoted the importance of assisting their children with learning. Beyond a doubt, the condition of poverty placed a great deal of stress upon the family. Wilson & Herbert (1978) found that inner-city families in London, England suffered a stress that was all pervading due to their chronic condition of being in want of something that is needed or desired. It was greatest in large families with a number of pre-school aged children and in those with a severely handicapped child or an invalid parent. Feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness were expressed by all

families at some time. They were aware of their low status and the low esteem in which they were held by others not in their group. They were conscious of the poverty trap and of the limited opportunity in the market for jobs. The poor performance of their children in schools reawakened their own difficulties. Since upward mobility seemed to be blocked the only way out was adaptive retrenchment with the slogan, "The objective is survival, the operative unit is the family" (p. 186).

The similarity to the condition of the families in the Wilson & Herbert study to families in our study was astounding. Stress was very evident in the families – the stress of having a child with special needs; the stress of having the major bread earner ill and unable to bring an income into the home; the insecurity of living as a squatter. Feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness were expressed by Mothers at various points in time. Yet, it could be wrong to characterize the families as powerless. They had some power to make choices. However limited, they did have choices to make. The next section on the housing plan presents the story of one such choice.

The Families

An opportunity was offered to several families to secure permanent housing. In putting forth this program, an assumption was made that the most significant impediment to permanent housing was financial resources. The procedure used to implement the plan illuminates cultural values and attitudes.

The Housing Plan

The Housing Plan came about as a result of FANDIC's increased awareness of the effect of housing on health and stress levels. Three families in the study were living as squatters. Squatting has a long tradition in Colombia and as soon as permanent housing is provided for one group, others arrive to occupy their vacated squatter's dwellings. There are rules to building a squatter's house; no bricks can be used, only lightweight materials such as wood and aluminum. If a squatter builds a brick wall in his house, the authorities have every right to destroy the house and the owner would lose his

investment. This rule was established to avoid people claiming legal right to property to which they do not have ownership. All squatters' houses are enumerated and receive postal services, thus legitimizing a supposedly temporary and illegitimate claim. In fact, a postal address is an essential requirement for entry into any government or institutional assistance program. Recent squatters often cannot receive services due to lack of an address, as was the case of one of the families in this study.

The *Ciudad Norte* is administered by the municipality that works in conjunction with a national housing corporation called INURBE and the municipal corporation called INVISBU. Both corporations collaborate to build planned communities. They offer a housing subsidy to those meeting the requirements, one of which is a down payment of ten percent of the cost of the house. The deed of the house is put in the name of all of the inhabitants, not just the parents, thus preventing one or two members of the family from selling the house and pocketing the profits. The house can not be sold or rented for a five-year period.

The *Ciudad Norte* has been designated as social stratas 1 and 2 (Census, 1993). Social strata are determined by the number and type of services that a house has, for example, gas and water. The housing corporation initiates construction with placement of sewer facilities and later adds electricity, water, telephone and natural gas, in that order. Communities that do not have all of the services are in stratum 1. The communities with all the services are designated as stratum 2 (Conversation with long-term resident).

The investigation regarding options for housing began during the first visit with the core investigators being the President, Vice-president and I. We met with representatives from INVISBU and INURBE and asked about programs for squatters. We were told emphatically that there were not any. Squatters were considered to be very poor risk because not only did they not have the financial resources to deposit the required ten percent of the house to enter the program, they lacked sufficient income to pay for services and taxes of the house once built thus facing the possibility of losing their houses in the end. There was, however, the option that FANDIC could act as sponsors for the three families enabling them to enter the selection process for permanent housing in a

new community. The plan required a deposit of 1,180,000 pesos (\$828 CD) per family to qualify for corporation subsidies of just under 9,000,000 pesos (\$6316 CD). The prospect of FANDIC becoming involved in a scheme to assist the three families caused a great deal of tension amongst the Board members. The prospect of having to earn 500,000 pesos (\$350 CD) in less than a year to pay for land title to their new home created a similar degree of tension amongst the families involved.

The information from the housing corporations was presented at two forums, a Board meeting and a meeting of all the families. A SWOT exercise (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and the Six Thinking Hats system of disciplined thinking (de Bono, 1985) were utilized to evaluate the proposal. The completion of the same analysis with both groups provided a comparison of opinion as presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Comparison of Opinion between the Board of FANDIC and the Families regarding the Housing Proposal.

	The Board	The Families
Strengths	Improved health of child and family, and for opportunity for families to form a community	Their desire to work for the welfare of the children, to “have something”.
Weaknesses	Difficult to raise money through fundraising	Difficult to save money due to lack of work or poor paying and unstable jobs
Opportunities	To integrate the families with the Foundation; to build a better image for FANDIC in the community.	Stability for the children, a source of strength for the family, will not have to pay rent, facilitated payments, opportunity to work with the Foundation
Threats	That the subsidies will not be awarded, the lack of organization in the families, the families’ poor work history and the possibility that they might deceive the Foundation	Subsidies will not be awarded or that the money would be embezzled (stated in indirect language), inability to get the money, family breakup, breakup of FANDIC
Red Hat	Two yes, three yes-but, and one no.	The families were all for it.
Green Hat	Thoughts were concentrated on how to safeguard the money the Foundation put into the program for the families	Focused on how to raised money such as raffles, bazaars, institute a savings program, learn a trade, the women could make a product and the men sell it.

The remainder of the story is presented in narrative style.

Optimism and pessimism was present in both groups. Those Board members living in Ciudad Norte thought it was a tremendous opportunity but feared that the families could not earn and save the money. One of the family members said quietly, "But we are so few in number" meaning that it would be difficult for us to gather sufficient resources. One of the fathers, an optimist by nature, said he would have no difficulty collecting the money and was full of ideas. Generally speaking the list of weaknesses was longer than the list of strengths. It was a risky venture and if playing it safe were the priority we would have done nothing at all. But to not address the basic need of adequate housing was to apply a bandage to poor health, insecurity, and environmental dangers. We believed that by addressing housing we were acting in the interests of the disabled children many of who suffer illnesses due to the sub-standard conditions in which they live.

The President laid out a list of all the documents required by INVISBU and the families went to work collecting them. This required visits to the notary to register common-law marriages and a 14 year-old child. The next step was to open the bank accounts. Each family opened two accounts, the account for the housing corporation and a private account. As FANDIC provided the money for the houses, the families signed a legal agreement stating that in the event that they did not receive the subsidies the money would revert back to FANDIC. The private account was for the deposit of their house savings. Banking was a new procedure to these parents. They would not normally have the money to open an account or money to deposit. Neither did they trust banks. We spent about five hours in the bank that afternoon.

The following excerpts from the local newspaper regarding the housing project give one an idea of its national scale.

In Colombia 43,000 completed the requirements to enter the housing program but only 23,000 qualified due to inconsistencies found in the information, for example

the computer found that many of them already had a house and therefore did not qualify. In Santander only 1560 families out of the 4,233 who completed the requirements qualified. A new decree, #1538, states that the subsidy will be given in the name of the entire family i.e., all those who form the home – parents, children, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc. (*Vanguardia Liberal*, September 26 & 30, 1999).

One of the three families received the government subsidy. This family has three children with a chronic progressive disease and has been given an eviction order from their squatters' home. They had no place to go; they had no money; the man of the family brought home money just sufficient for food. They have saved a small portion of the 500.000 pesos required as their part of the agreement and this is due to the efforts of the Mother. Giving the house to the family would be only temporary solution. Without a steady income or some system of regular saving, the family would stand to lose the house due to inability to make the payments for services and taxes. The responsibility for solving this dilemma has fallen on to the shoulders of the mother who, despite a very bad back and the need to care for her five children, must seek the means to bring additional income into the home. Due to her involvement with the cooperative as one of the Leaders she now has some small business skills that could be put to good use once she settles into her new home.

The Board members learned a great deal from this experiment. They gained confidence in their ability to present FANDIC to government officials and bank managers. They gained experience with legal documentation, with holding focused meetings and with drawing up an action plan. These were organizational competencies.

We all learned a lot from the response of the families. We realized that their commitment to save was loosely held; that there were internal and external constraints that impeded the completion of their part of the agreement. External constraints were the poor economic situation resulting in fewer work opportunities and less pay, and ill health due to years of poor nutrition and inadequate health care. One internal constraint was attitude towards work.

Attitudes toward Work

All of the men of the families studied were day laborers. As there were very few employment opportunities in the *Ciudad Norte* those seeking work had to leave their community to where the economic activity took place. There was little security that they would have work from one day to the next and they certainly did not have social benefits such as health care, which would be the case if they had regular employment. Their occupations included car painting, construction worker, recycler, carpenter, and farming. Some of the men had had some training, for example the car painter and the carpenter. But both these men expressed attitudes that impeded progress toward saving for the house.

The Housing Plan stimulated the Board to look into alternatives for employment for these men. Rather than get involved in the risky enterprise of lending them money to enable them to start a small business, FANDIC's President felt that the organization should work towards helping them with jobs. He felt that they needed to learn the responsibility of completing a daily schedule, that is, arriving to work on time and on a regular basis. When one man was asked if he could supply us with a brief resume, he admitted that he had not worked as an employee for 14 years and that he had no desire to return to regular employment. He suggested that selling vegetables from a cart would be preferable and that he would need about 100,000 pesos to start. When asked if he had a business plan or a budget for a loan, he replied that there was no need for a budget as it was not hard to keep track of the figures in his head.

On the surface, this account appears fairly innocuous. The expression of a non-progressive attitude, or that of conformity to one's current state is found in the last sentence, that he did not need to know about business plans or budgets. He believed that he had all the skills required and that new learning would not be helpful. It seemed to us that he wanted the money without the responsibility for repayment or making the business grow. Narrative is utilized to tell the story of the second example.

The second example was that of the car painter who recently left that occupation due to lack of work and became a recycler, a job that is on the bottom of the rung in terms of respectability and income. When he was offered assistance to obtain a regular job, he too declined saying that he was not willing to give his work away for nothing.

"But can you earn more as a recycler?", I asked incredulously. "Yes, perhaps...". At any rate it gave him enough to put food on the table and that was his priority. Regarding saving for the house, he was viewing various options such as obtaining a loan from a bank, from his mother in law, or from a moneylender. I was rather horrified by this prospect and asked him if he wasn't nervous about becoming really indebted. Well he would mortgage the house. At this point the Vice-president rushed in saying that this was against the rules of INURBE, that the house could not be mortgaged or sold for 5 years. "Oh". (Journal entry, February 24, 2000).

Later, on another visit, we had quite a discussion in which this father of three young children admitted that, when he was earning good money he wasted it on food, drink and women. He didn't think of the future. When he looks at the boys he trained in car painting and he sees that they have a motor bike, live in a good house and he realized that he goofed. Now, when work is limited he is really caught short and even more when he has a good opportunity like the housing plan. He seemed repentant, as if he had learned from past experiences. He was, at this point, engaged in building a recycling cart for which he needed to borrow money. He expressed hurt and surprise that a friend that he had approached for 3,000 pesos refused to lend it to him. The visit was over but he later sent a note with his wife requesting a loan of 20,000 pesos which was lent to him by the President only after gaining his solemn assurance that he would return the money in two weeks. To date he has not repaid the money.

These experiences, coupled with the experience of the cooperative have had a formative influence on FANDIC's philosophy and programs. They have taught the Board to go slow; to be as cautious as the Mothers proposed in their values and action statements. The sense of caution is related to the danger of raising expectations that can

not be met – a negative for the families. It is also related to the risk of not understanding the culture of the participants. Understand first, then build mechanisms into the program that reduce the vulnerability of the organization. Vulnerability is not respected by stakeholders. Vulnerability is seen as an opportunity for exploitation.

It is reasonable to propose that these difficulties with the men were experienced because they were relatively unknown to the organization. They were not a part of the workshops or of the cooperative. The meetings held with the families were of a nature that would raise only limited awareness regarding attitudes and beliefs. The strategy of working primarily with the women began to be viewed as a weakness. Not only did it raise the possibility that the relationship in the home would be more conflictual, it seemed to raise the expectation of the men that they could get something from the organization because of a special relationship with their wives. The playing field had changed. The power dynamics were altered. They used their power by not collaborating to the same extent. One father of a disabled child threatened to use his positional power within the family to prevent his disabled son from going to school.

Successful strategies to work with both men and women in participatory development are desperately required. The suggestion put forward in Part 1 that a men's group be formed would present a considerable challenge to the organizers. It is supposed that due to their schedule few men would have the time. It is further supposed that because of their dominant position in a patriarchal society that few would have the interest. Yet, there is one example in the community where men have been incorporated into a group experience. This example comes from the local high school in which the guidance counselor established a "parents' school" with the objective of improving interfamilial relationships. She reported that only women attended for the longest time, but that men were now attending in small numbers. The school has had a beneficial effect on the families of the men involved in terms of less drinking and absenteeism on the part of the men and better familial interaction. There are lessons to be learned in this example – that an organization addressing interfamilial relationships would need credibility, a strong presence in the community, strong and enthusiastic leadership, and persistence.

FANDIC is moving forward in the effort to meet those criteria, as Part 3 will demonstrate.

Summary

The overall theme addressed in Part 2 was values - values held by the department of education, by the parents, and by the children. Poverty and its implications were so heavily enmeshed with values that it became difficult to determine which came first. The influence of school, disability, and home environment on learning has been briefly examined as have the influence of attitudes on decision-making. This exposition of 'real' experience served to demonstrate the complexity of participatory development. The remaining parts of this chapter deals with other dimensions of the whole, the Board of FANDIC and the researcher.

THE EXPERIENCE

PART 3

The Process of Organizing

The first section of Part 3 will briefly outline the Board's organizing process as well as some of the issues faced. The second section will put the experiences of the Mothers' Group and the Board together in a format that permits the viewing of group organization from 'unformed' or "zero", to the establishment of a collective self image or "one".

The Board's Process of Organizing

The lessons learned from the Mother's Group, to start from where *they* are and to build on practical experience, could be equally applied to the Board. In some ways, the two groups ran in parallel but it was not until the second visit that I realized the need to consider the Board as a group requiring a separate analysis. The purpose in presenting the Board as a separate group is to present a more rounded picture of organizational issues and process.

Similar to the Mothers, the Board began as "unformed" in that they were a group of individuals who had not previously collaborated in collective action together. The process of forming a group began around the time of FANDIC's registration in June 1998. The workshops held in February and March of 1999 were another step in the process that gave participants an opportunity to explore their attitudes, values and the meaning of working together with common purpose. During this period, I was both facilitator of the workshops and president of the Foundation. It was not until the first fieldwork visit, from August to October of 1999, that the group was ready to elect a new president. The persons elected at that time remain in their positions at the time of writing although general members have been added and lost. The Board remains a small group,

but the organization has grown considerably stronger as a result of growth in both individual and group capacity.

The Board experienced many difficulties in group formation. They were more heterogeneous than the Mother's Group with social classes two to five and both genders represented. Cultural beliefs and resultant behaviors raised barriers that affected the participatory level of members in meetings as well as day-to-day communication. Some members lived in *Ciudad Norte*, the community in which FANDIC worked, and some did not. An *us – them* division arose aggravated by personality conflict, and differing expectations about roles and responsibilities. Throughout my first and second visits the Board appeared to be fluctuating between stages two and three of Mena Calvopiña's (1996) six stage model of group formation: seeking a facilitator to help them deal with insecurity and to fulfill the desire for knowledge; and a crisis stage in which the group experiences ups and downs. The difficulties appeared unsolvable and remained without solution until the organization went through a structural change.

Breaking down Barriers

Board meetings had been held outside the *Ciudad Norte* because members could only meet in the evenings and it was not safe to meet in the community at night. Members living in *Ciudad Norte* had to leave the meetings early because buses and taxis did not run to this district past ten p.m. The meeting location and schedule became so difficult to coordinate that meetings were held infrequently. Thus the business of the organization did not get done, leaving the members working in the community with their hands tied. It became a barrier to forward movement that drew attention to a basic contradiction in the identity of FANDIC as a community organization. Having the meetings outside of the community signified that the "real" power existed outside of the community. The perception of where the power lay affected the attitudes and behavior of the various Board members toward each other.

There was another reason for the meetings being held outside the community. FANDIC had operated until very recently (November 2000) solely on volunteer help.

Board members were *the* volunteers except on special occasion such as Christmas parties when outside help was obtained. Board members were responsible for both the operational and administrative components of FANDIC. Due to financial necessity most members had jobs that kept them busy six days a week. Whereas their desire to do the work of the organization was a “boon” when FANDIC was first organized, reliance on solely volunteer help became an impediment. As Kamara & Kargbo (1999) point out, “Volunteers who may be fully employed and may not need any remuneration, usually have little time to spare” (p. 115). As most members were occupied during the day, Board meetings were held in the evenings after seven p.m. As the *Ciudad Norte* was not considered to be a safe place to meet after sundown, the meetings were held outside of the community.

This situation changed rather dramatically in October 2000 due to unforeseen events in the lives of two of the members living in *Ciudad Norte*. Suddenly they both became available on a part-time basis. One member had stopped working and was ready to dedicate herself to FANDIC. Another had gained admittance to study Social Work at the Public University. They, along with a third volunteer working afternoons in the therapy salon, formed a core group that initiated regular meetings in the community. By this time, FANDIC had accumulated sufficient resources to pay them part-time wages for at least the next six months. Thus, quite quickly, the structure of the organization shifted. FANDIC became a community organization based in the community. The payment of the three volunteers legitimized them and gave them the authority to represent FANDIC in the community. They developed a new image of themselves, that of community promoters. They became the axis around which the programs revolved and through which greater community involvement was realized. Their participatory level increased to “delegated power”, a degree of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). Power shifted from outside of the community to inside the community. The move of FANDIC’s administration to the community also unleashed the expression of capabilities that had been developed over the past year.

Enhancing Capability

The elections held in September 1999 gave members new roles to try on. New identities were developed experientially –all were on a steep learning curve. Working with the Mother's Group added another dimension. None us had engaged with the community in that way before. Establishing contact with the housing corporations developed presentational capability. The mode of operation throughout both experiences was first experimentation, then evaluation and revision. The desire to fulfill FANDIC's mission was strong. It was how to do it that was the challenge.

In the second fieldwork visit, the Board focused on consolidation of FANDIC through documentation, evaluation, and the production of a vision of the future. An annual report for the first year of operation was written and documents developed over that year were compiled into a manual. FANDIC's operation was evaluated by reviewing the mission statement and objectives, the relationship with the families, the programs, the deployment of community volunteers, and lastly the Board itself. This discussion formed the basis of members' vision for the future and was captured in a three-year development proposal that was later presented to Christian Blind Mission International (CBMI). The proposal had three main focus areas: the expansion of rehabilitation services in the community, promotion of integrated education, and the training of community volunteers. Although CBMI thought FANDIC was not yet ready to receive major funding, they did provide encouragement stating that the organization was on the right path and inviting the President and the author to a course on Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) to be held in Quito, Ecuador in September 2000. The ideas presented in that proposal plus the new learning from the course readied us for the structural change that was to come in October 2000.

We continued to present FANDIC to others throughout the second visit, seeking opportunities for partnership. This list of the contacts made included: the Municipal Department of Development; the Speech Language and Medical faculties of two different universities; the Special Education Team to seek better opportunities for the children in school; the Director General of the Children's Rehabilitation Hospital; the child welfare

system; the schools in the district; the Canadian Embassy; and the Chicamocha Rotary Club regarding a special project to bring a container of wheelchairs and therapeutic equipment into Colombia from Canada.

The third visit was dedicated to making alterations to the development proposal and specifying a work plan. The following is a brief outline of that work plan.

- 1. Extend the coverage of FANDIC in its zone of influence with home visits. As of November 23, 2000, 200 families with disability had been visited by the community promoters.**
- 2. Community meetings held on a monthly basis. The purpose of these meetings is to increase the stakeholder's involvement in the administration and development of FANDIC's programs.**
- 3. Preventative Health Brigades held on a monthly basis. Preventative Health talks by a doctor covering topics such as parasite infestation, nutrition, personal hygiene, oral health and respiratory health as well as physical examination of families with disability is offered.**
- 4. A community volunteer training course is planned to begin in January 2001. The eight-week course will train volunteers to make home visits, an essential component in the orientation of families. It will be organized by the promoters.**
- 5. A course on home economy and saving for people with disability and their family members is being planned by the promoter studying Social Work. The promoter will be supported in the development of this course by her university professors and her social work colleagues.**
- 6. A seminar on Community Development with emphasis on disability is being planned for April 2001. Two objectives of the seminar are to increase the net of contacts and to promote local community leadership in the development of programs, especially those with disability.**

The movement of the decision-making power to the community addresses the fifth objective of the study:

That FANDIC integrate the families as working members of the foundation to gain strength in unity and to enhance the work of the foundation.

This move was not envisioned at the beginning of the study. The process of learning through experience and reflection gave us this direction. The intent of the move was to provide a forum for regular input of people and families with disability. The move has already had a positive impact on the development of leadership skills and ownership of the program, especially in the community promoters. Individual capabilities have been increased in terms of self-confidence, decision-making ability, and the ability to mobilize resources. Group capabilities have increased in terms of organization and group solidarity.

Relations between Board members have also become more cooperative. They are now preparing to transfer skills to others through local educational programs. The training of community volunteers, the course in home economy for families with disability, and the Health Brigades will assist in developing community awareness regarding disability. The seminar on participatory development with a focus on disability is designed to reach the broader community of Bucaramanga. In this way, FANDIC is moving toward the accomplishment of the sixth and last objective of the study:

That the participants build awareness in the community regarding disability; that the disabled child be accepted as a valuable member of society.

The ambitious work plan set by the Board requires collaboration from various sources, both individual and institutional. The contacts made with local firms and organizations in the attempt to develop partnerships have been fruitful to some degree. Obstacles to securing more partnerships in the past have been the limited number of affiliated families and immaturity as an organization. It is hoped that the work done in and by the community, as presented in the work plan, will address both these issues and lead to the ultimate goal of sustainability.

The need to nurture grassroots organizations as they evolve is a lesson learned from my work with the Board. The evolution from unformed to sustainability is tenuous and fraught with uncertainty. It is a varied process in which structures come and go as

one focuses on what is viable rather than what is right (Wheatley & Kellner-Roger, 1996). It requires playful tinkering and careful attention to what is happening as it is happening. And throughout all, it requires the support of relationships (Wheatley & Kellner-Roger). Achieving the goal of sustainability requires a commitment to 'mentor' over the period of the organizing process. Mentoring is facilitated by long-term commitment. A commitment for the long term is empowering to those involved in the process (Watt, Higgins & Kenrick, 2000) in that it assures them that they are not alone and that they will not be forgotten. The length of that commitment is an unknown variable. Perhaps it will not be within the two or five year period allotted to a research or a development project.

Long-term involvement does not necessarily mean continuous involvement. My periodic visits, designed more out of necessity than deliberation helped gauge "real" interest. Whereas the visits served to enhance capabilities, the absences helped to augment independence, ownership, and leadership. The experience gained by independent practice has helped to raise self-awareness and self-confidence.

The process of organizing within FANDIC could be best described as a journey of ebbs and flows accentuated by experimentation in the endeavor to discover what worked. Board members were novices who despite some tremendous interpersonal struggles, made progress together. The organization is stronger today than it was yesterday. The level of understanding regarding complex issues is more profound and capabilities have increased. Board members are now ready to start to share their knowledge with others.

The Process of Organizing from Zero to One

Review of the Experience with both the Mothers and the Board provides a continuum of experience from which the process of organizing can be viewed. The continuum begins with an unformed collection of individuals or zero, and ends with a group that is approaching sustainability, or one. The stages that these groups went through, if considered collectively, relate well to the model of image change (ICA, 1997) in that they identify a process of transformation in the individual as well as the group.

The linking together of three capacities, individual, group and organizational, is somewhat unique. Sadan & Churchman (1997) in their paper on process and product-focused community planning, present seven stages of Empowerment Facilitating Practice beginning with Developing a Relationship and Establishing a Dialogue and ending with Evaluation (pp. 9-12). Mullinix & Akatsa-Bukachi (1998) identify six levels of development of women's groups with the first level being 'unformed' and the last being 'independent'. Robinson & Cox's (1998) spiral model deals with individual and community capacity building leading to institutionalized change. Of the three, the last model is closest to the intent of Zero to One. The usefulness of a model that could provide guidance for achievement of sustainable development has been acknowledged in CD literature (Purdey et al., 1994). The usefulness of a reliable framework for the evaluation by large NGOs of smaller intermediary organizations has also been acknowledged (Carroll, 1992).

The risk to formalizing an experience into a framework is that the stages could be viewed as inflexible rather than permeable. It is preferable to view each stage as enfolding previous stages thereby becoming larger and deeper (Wilbur, 1996). It is understood that mentoring is basic to the process and facilitation of participation is essential. Carroll (1992) states that "vigorous promotion (is) needed to create sustainable grassroots organizations and ... nurturing support (is) needed to help them grow, mature, and multiply" (p. 156). Mentoring implies a complex relationship between the "facilitator" and the participants. It signifies responsiveness and attention to core activities over an extended period of time. It also suggests that experimentation, risk-taking, and flexibility are part of the process. Participation is the process through which all the activities are realized. It implies respect for others and the valuing of all perspectives.

The Zero to One framework is a basic system designed to assist the understanding of organizing in participatory development. The stages are not absolute; movement of elements between various stages is understandable and completely acceptable. It should not be considered the "right" way to organize but an indication of one way. It is based on

one experience and as such lacks verification by repetition. It is hoped that the framework will stimulate a discussion on the process of grassroots organization.

1. Prepare readiness for Participation.

- a) **Define the target.** It is helpful for the “facilitator” to be invited in by a community member who has a concern or question. This was the case in the earliest days of FANDIC when a community member approached me for information regarding disabilities he had noted in children in his community. Children with disability in the *Ciudad Norte* became the target group of the Foundation and the mothers of these children became the target group of this study. The selection of the target group, who is selected and how are they selected, should be done in consultation with community members.
- b) **Conduct a preliminary analysis.** Get to know people in the community. Begin to identify some of the latent or unidentified problems/issues (Robinson & Cox, 1998). Learn about attitudes, customs, and norms. Understand the nuances of language that provide a glimpse into the culture (Esteva & Prakash, 1998). Gender differences, class differences, language, medium of communication should all be considered in a participatory process that is biased in favor of the most marginalized (Jackson & Kassam, 1998).
- c) **Find a point of entry.** People will be much more willing to become involved if a level of trust has already been established. Provision of a service that addresses the needs of the target group is one way to gain trust. It provides the opportunity for two-way communication and learning. It is a means by which to develop a relationship and establish a dialogue about the larger developmental issues of the community (Sadan & Churchman, 1997). Jennings (1990) used literacy classes as the entry point to discuss local issues such as health and nutrition, and income generation. Carroll (1992) in his study of 30 Latin American NGOs, found that those organizations that started with economic/productive activities proved to have a longer-lasting impact than those that began with pure community

development activities. FANDIC started with the provision of a service that directly addressed the needs as expressed by the Mothers. The interactions that followed developed a cooperative relationship between the organization and the target group.

- d) Start from where *they* are. In starting from the base of experience and knowledge of the participants, the facilitator adheres to the first four principles of participatory development as defined by Keough (1998). They are: approach each situation with humility and respect; understand the potential of local knowledge; adhere to democratic practice; and acknowledge diverse ways of knowing. Starting from where *they* are has implications for continuous dialogue and praxis, for *where* they are is discovered only through discussion, reflection and analysis. This step was not an easy one in this study. My own knowledge building required multiple observations and discussions flavored by a heavy dose of time. Lastly, starting from where *they* are means gathering people around a “safe” theme. People are likely to find discussions regarding relationships, power, and social change threatening when they first come together and perhaps for months/years to come. At this stage it is important to encourage an environment in which it is safe to talk.
2. “Breaking Through” into awareness with new information.

This is the stage of exposure to ideas (Robinson & Cox, 1998) in which subjective knowledge, or the knowledge one has of the world, is challenged by new information (Boulding, 1956). New information challenging the social reality of the participants may fail if it does not interface easily with existing knowledge (Fussel, 1996). It may, on the other hand, result in an insight that leads to a revision of theory or self image (Fussel, Boulding). This is the beginning of awareness building, a process that gains strength as one progresses. Here are some of the key elements:

 - a) Start with the concrete and build on practical experience. There appear to be two approaches in this element in participatory development. One is to “discover” the

concrete basis from which to begin through dialogue. This PR approach was utilized in this study. The other method is to offer the target group practical skill development in an area that has been predetermined, hopefully through previous community analysis. This was Jennings's (1990) approach in Bangladesh in which the development of language skills was the concrete basis on which experience was built. Supposing that the level of participation was the same in both examples, I believe that the effectiveness of both approaches would be similar.

- b) **Combine practical skill development with discussion and creative activity.** The Mothers, on initiation of the workshops, lacked experience in self-expression and creative activity. The discussions and skits provided an opportunity to begin to reflect on their values, relationships, likes and dislikes. Encouragement of reflective analysis and release of imagination are key to progressive development (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Harrison, 2000). Practice, both in practical skills and in creative activity, raises awareness of one's potential, essential for those who have been labeled as incapable or hopeless. One's sense of worth is enhanced by ability to clearly articulate thoughts, feelings and needs. It is also empowering to discover that one is not alone (Fussel, 1996).
- c) **Provide opportunity for decision making.** Oakley & Marsden (1984) state that "for participation to be meaningful it must involve some direct access to decision-making and some active involvement in the determining of problems and practices" (p. 64). Development projects of the past that did not involve the community in determining the course of the project were found to have reduced impact (Carroll, 1992). Being included in the decision-making process gives the message that one's opinion is valued. This may be new information to women who are restricted to only those activities approved of by their husbands or who have little say in how the home finances are spent. Providing the opportunity for practice, in all the dimensions of human development, effectively delivers messages of capability and worth.

d) Allow “space” for new learning and change in direction. Allowing space for learning is part of the empowering process in that it gives people time to build up their own assets for self-reliant development (Oakley & Marsden, 1984). A project in which there is a high level of participation will build in the expectation that objectives and strategy will change in the course of the project (Grossi, 1988). This point speaks against pre-conceived agendas or dominant leadership; it advises one to wait and be patient. Yet one must also know when to move on to the next step or the interest of the group will falter. The role of the facilitator is to listen carefully, to honor each person’s wisdom (ICA, 1985) and to serve as a bridge to a new social reality (Fussell, 1996). Although the facilitator provides the leadership at this stage, the object is the transfer of that leadership to the participants as capabilities are strengthened.

3. Nurture the Process of Image Change.

The stage of breaking through saw the preliminary introduction of new information. A figurative bombardment of new information is continued as the process of image change is nurtured. The objective is to expand the class of experiences thus providing each participant with internal and external messages that challenge attitudes and beliefs. New information is checked against subjective knowledge about self and one’s society. Some of this information will cause a shift in perception or image (ICA, 1997). A shift in image will result in a change in behavior (ICA; Robinson, 1998). In this stage the participants diversify their experience and begin to organize (Fals Borda, 1985).

a) Diversify the Experience. Experience is diversified in order to:

- Round out abilities
- Build capacity and self-confidence
- Build in carry-over to other areas

Examples of diversification in this study were the planning of an event in the Mother’s Group, and the development of the Housing Plan in the Board. Both experiences served to stretch and challenge. The change in perception was most

notable in the President. For him, the respect given to FANDIC in the crafting an agreement with INVISBU, resulted in a shift of his image of FANDIC. It also gave him personal confidence in dealing with financial agreements, an ability that was carried over to other activities of the organization.

- b) **Move from Individual to Group Capacity Building.** The goal of participatory development is for members of a society to increase their capacity to mobilize and manage resources in order to improve their quality of life (Korten, 1990). In order to move toward that goal, individuals need to form groups. This is stage two in Sadan & Churchman's (1997) model, that of building cooperation to enable the creation of the participatory infrastructure. There is an attempt to move from individualistic to collective behavior, to build trust and tolerance, to be attentive by listening, and to pay attention to language and behavior and its affect on others. Although this element is not restricted to this stage it begins here. The nurturing of group formation is an activity that continues until the group has sufficient strength to successfully promote itself to others.
- c) **Gain Practice in Organizational Activity.** This is done through planning and activities (Robinson & Cox, 1998). By planning and implementing, experimenting and taking risks, a group learns to manage resources collectively and to negotiate within and outside the group. The Mother's Group gained practice by organizing a food bazaar. They decided what they would do, who would do it, when it would be done, and how it would be done. They participated in a collective manner dedicating the entire day to the activity and enjoyed the experience. The Board members gained a lot of experience planning parties for the children. The parties usually required the bringing together of multiple players, from outside and inside the *Ciudad Norte*. The experience and confidence gained enhanced their ability to adapt to new circumstances and carried over into programs such as the Preventative Health Program. Mobilizing people and asking for donations of time or products was something in which they were already experienced.

4. Growth through Shared Learning and Mentoring.

True to the nature of participatory process, the outcome of the process may not be totally clear at this time. Haste in naming the product of the process may lead to disillusionment and a sense of failure when it is discovered that the supposed product was only just a part of the process. Space should be provided for experimentation and incremental building of capacity. This stage notes a move from a focus on individual empowerment to that of organizational capacity building. Group members become progressively more interdependent (Mullinix & Akatsa-Bukachi, 1998), more aware of local community issues, and self-confident in their group identity. The relationship between facilitator and group members begins to change; it becomes more of a sharing relationship. Not only is there a sharing of ideas but a sharing of responsibilities. There is an active “handing over” or transference of authority, tools and training. Local ownership of the process and product is the ultimate aim.

In the experience of this study, this stage had two elements:

- Sharing
- Incremental capacity building through:
 - Program development and evaluation
 - Evaluation of mission and purpose
 - Proposal writing
 - Competency in management of financial resources

Nurturing is accomplished through sharing. Through sharing one becomes attuned to hopes/fears, aspirations/needs, dreams/frustrations, the results of practical experience and the state of relationships within the group. All this happened in my first and second visits as I dealt with individual and group concerns. I was “Mother” and the group was “dependent” as defined as Mullinix & Akatsa-Bukachi (1998):

The group believes that it cannot accomplish anything without help from the outside. Most of the members are able to identify their problems but believe that action is not their work but the duty of the leaders (p. 175).

Interestingly, by the third visit this dependency had changed to more interdependency where the work of the group was being shared and problems were being solved. Although interdependency did not involve the entire group, it was present nonetheless.

5. Self-Image is Defined.

The organization begins to take on the form of a properly constituted organization that follows principles of growth and development similar to those of other organizations. It gains identity through the practice of various activities:

- Documentation and systematization of experience (Hara Holliday, 1998)
- Development of a code of ethics that reflect the values of the group (Carroll, 1992)
- Explaining “who we are” through public relations opportunities
- Organizing and leading community meetings
- Proposal writing and presentation
- Identifying gaps and developing plans to address them

FANDIC is currently at this stage of development. Although the Board is not yet independent or at the point where they work well with a minimum of outside assistance, they are starting to solve our problems, share the work, carry out projects and even train others (Mullinix & Akatsa-Bukachi, 1998). Attention to individual capacity building in relation to the whole is helping to strengthen the organization. Recognition of the importance of the individual within the whole is encouraging accountability or the completion of responsibilities, the ownership of tasks, and enhancing leadership abilities.

6. Establish Self-Sufficiency.

This is the end product “dreamed of” by development agencies. It is a stage noted by:

- Transference of ideals, ideas, mechanisms, and methods to others
- Achievement of sustainability through partnership, contracting out services, institutional support and public relations.

FANDIC is moving toward this stage. It has made overtures for partnership with an international NGO and it is planning a seminar that will generate interest in the field of participatory development and disability. Time will tell whether the Foundation will reach sustainability. Meanwhile, the need for nurture continues.

Conclusion

The above framework was born out of practical experience with two groups – the Mother’s Group and the Board of FANDIC. It is unique in that it acknowledges the process of organizational development from point zero or unformed to sustainability. The claim has not been made that all groups pass through these stages; the intention was simply to demonstrate that there are stages of growth. Although the initial stages of the Board were not presented in this study, they did, in fact, start as unformed.

It is lamentable that many institutions and NGOs do not recognize their role in nurturing the growth of grassroots organization. Because the outcome is not assured, they may feel that risk is too great. More needs to be done to help increase the administrative and managerial capacity of promising grassroots organizations. They need “hard” management skills in planning, budgeting, financial and information control, and in institutional development (Carroll, 1992).

Nurturing grassroots organization is a complex task that requires vision and flexibility. Above all, nurturing is enhanced by formation of relationships and trust. These and other elements will be discussed in the following section with the examination of the role of the outsider.

THE EXPERIENCE

PART 4

The Role of the Outsider

I struggled with my role throughout the research process. I was facilitator and active participant. I was a researcher and a leader. I was mother, counselor, and motivator. I was an organizational consultant and program evaluator. There were many roles, some of them seemingly conflictual. The roles as facilitator, leader, and researcher examined in the discussion below, provide my interpretation of practice and theory and how it related to my role. This is followed by reflections about how process implicated outcome.

Role as a Facilitator

It seems surprising that the role as facilitator is consistent with PR. It is surprising in that a facilitator has elements of power which run counter to that of leaving the role of 'expert' and the leveling of power through knowledge sharing. It also does not appear to be consistent with mandate to promote equal participation in all aspects of the investigation. Are those theoretical concepts consistent with reality? According to Carroll (1992) the reality of impoverished communities calls for outside assistance to facilitate the development of collective action. Carroll calls the expectation that groups will come into being through natural processes the "immaculate conception" myth. He says "it undervalues the vigorous promotion needed to create sustainable grassroots organizations and the nurturing support need to help them grow, mature, and multiply" (p. 156).

Facilitation by outsiders is addressed by authors of PR and CD. Rahman (1993) refers to outsiders as animators and provides a list of essential characteristics required: a sense of commitment; the ability to discuss and listen to people; flexibility to learn from

one's own and others' experiences; intellectual ability and emotional maturity. Fals Borda (1985) calls outsiders 'external cadres' whose goal is to teach the 'peasants' to analyze their patterns of dependency, authoritarianism and paternalism. He suggests the training of 'internal cadres' to engage in simple research techniques such as census taking. Fussell (1996) maintains that the value of an outsider lies in the effect that he/she can have on the social knowledge held by the community. The drawback of outsiders is that they do not have the sensitivity required due to a poor grasp on the community's knowledge base.

Placing these comments together, the suggestion is that community organization requires a "catalyst" for initiation and that this catalyst is most effective in the form of an outsider who has good communication and listening skills. The outsider, limited by an insufficient grasp of local social knowledge, can best promote the process of community organization by training 'insiders'. Assumed, but not clearly stated above, is the transfer of skills, leadership and authority to the inside facilitators. Inherent in this process is a leaving of the role of 'expert' and a leveling of knowledge.

The process of training inside facilitators is the process in which the Board members are currently engaged. I, as the outsider, presented an image of 'what could be'. Although this image received repeated modifications, we were all engaged in the process of evaluation and revision of that image. The constant effort to clarify our identity and purpose served as training to 'ready' us for the future. The shift in authority from outside to inside the community was an important step in the process of 'handing over' to those are now the local facilitators. The local facilitators are currently the animators of the community. This transformation was accomplished under the role of facilitator, but it also required elements of leadership.

Role as a Leader

At times I found myself denying that I played a strong leadership role. Whereas I recognized the importance of my leadership in the beginning of the study, I was anxious to have others take the reins as time progressed. Handing over responsibilities did not

necessarily translate into a handing over of leadership. Why not? Zamosc (1987) provided some understanding with the explanation that sometimes the investigator is pressured into taking a leadership role to complete the functions of groups that have difficulty in defining their social identity. While this explanation was helpful during the first two visits, it is not so applicable in the third visit where a more complete transference of leadership was desired. It does not shed light on the difficulty in transferring visionary leadership.

The qualities of visionary leadership are broad in their dimensions. Sharma (1998) refers to the empathetic leader who invests him/herself in others by listening with the intent to understand. He qualifies adaptability as one of the most essential leadership skills – the ability to recover from the anxiety of setbacks and having the flexibility to move ahead realizing that setbacks allow one's vision to emerge stronger than ever. DePree (1989) talks about the search for comfort with ambiguity as an important quality. The search is part of a growth process where one learns to live with the questions as opposed to having all of the answers. The intimacy developed by the search for knowledge rises from and gives rise to, strong relationships. Strong relationships build trust and trust helps sustain the culture of flexibility and adaptability.

Elliott (1991) raises the issue of self-awareness pointing out that we have a choice in what we see in others and in ourselves. Awareness regarding the social construction of our reality affects self-identity and permits an openness for negotiation of group reality. Language and behavior, products of self-identity, serve as the conduit for interpretation of meaning in what has been said (Elliott, Sharma, 1998). Nanus & Dobbs (1999) state that a leader is concerned more with strategy and direction than processes and operations. Simply put, a leader is a person who has a vision of 'what could be'. Although his/her grasp of how to get there is imperfect, he/she is comfortable with not knowing.

In summary, a visionary leader is one who concentrates on the whole rather than the fragmented parts; one who invests in others through the building of relationships and trust; and one who is aware of multiple realities. The language and behavior of a visionary leaders is consistent with his/her values making it possible for others to find

meaning. One questions whether this type of leadership is 'handed over' or whether it is developed by reflective practice.

The leadership role was mine to play as patron of FANDIC. The progressive withdrawal from the responsibility of this role has been facilitated by my absences. While I am no longer consulted on day-to-day managerial matters, I still retain influence on matters of strategic direction. We worked hard on building interpersonal relationships and group capacity as we passed through the stages of Zero to One and I believe that visionary leadership will emerge as part of this process. It will be built by the diversification of experience and by sensitization to issues such as discrimination, intra-familial violence, and poor utilization of resources. Reflective practice and formation and testing of hypotheses, will clarify the vision of 'what could be'. Visionary leadership will emerge as the process continues to unfold. Its emergence, however, will not be spontaneous; space needs to be made within the organization for it to develop.

Role as a Researcher

Mertens (1998) in her discussion on PR provides seven questions related to efficacy. One question, "Do the researchers and participants share a peer relationship?" (p. 173) causes me some degree of discomfort. I expected to be a complete observer with the Board, indicating that my relationship with the Board members would be that of a peer. In retrospect, it was not truly a peer relationship in that we were not truly on the same level. As "the researcher" I spent months studying the literature and developing my theoretical philosophy. During the fieldwork, I continued to study and spent hours documenting and reflecting. The outcome was suggestions for strategic direction and action - a leadership not a peer activity.

The ideal that the participants collaborate in all aspects of the study suggests a co-researcher role. Patton (1990) and Reason (1998) discuss co-operative inquiry as a condition in which the participants are co-researchers. The intention is that co-researchers become trained in the art of observation, interviewing, reflection and journal writing; that as a result, they gain self-knowledge and conscientization regarding the theme being

studied. The above statement seems to assume equality in circumstance; that co-researchers have time to reflect through journal writing and that they have the inclination or the “culture” of writing. Although Board members engaged in these activities, they had a minimal amount of time to dedicate to reading and documentation. This unequal dedication to the research process removed me from a strictly co-researcher relationship and placed me in the position of leader and educator.

Reason (1998) admits to the conflict within PAR/PR regarding the role of leaders versus the desire for “authentic commitment” (Fals Borda, 1985) where there is no “expert” but knowledge at all levels is respected. Reason states, “... many PAR projects would not occur without the initiative of someone with time, skill, and commitment, someone who will almost inevitably be a member of a privileged and educated group” (p. 283). This was surely true of our experience and because I had the time, I provided much of the direction. The Board discussed these initiatives and collaborated in that they presented their points of view based on their experience. In this sense, we engaged in more of a democratic than co-researcher process.

As a researcher, I became a dedicated observer. I wrote down my observations, studied them, and drew preliminary interpretations. While I shared interpretations regarding the Board with the Board, I was less likely to share interpretations regarding the Mothers with the Mothers. The difficulty in achieving a peer relationship with the Mothers had its basis in power distance. I felt that I could not validate my interpretations with the Mothers because I sincerely believed that the Mothers would agree with me no matter what I said. Differences of power and knowledge magnified the difficulty I experienced in achieving a peer relationship with the Mothers in comparison to Board members. Interestingly, those differences also created distance between Board members and the Mothers. The issue of language and culture was a distancing factor between nationals and was not limited to me, an outsider. Not one of us (even those living in the *Ciudad Norte*) could be described as a complete observer in the work with the Mothers. At best, we were active observers in that we participated in the activities with the Mothers, “not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules for

behavior” (Spradley, 1980, p. 60). Based on this experience I question some of the idealism that is part of the rhetoric of PR, thinking that perhaps authentic validation of knowledge occurs only after repeated exposure over a long period of time or under very special circumstances.

The last tenet of PAR/PR, the devolution of knowledge (Fals Borda, 1985), is vitally important to me. Between visits, I pondered over how I could return knowledge to the Mothers knowing that half of them were illiterate. The idea of a scrapbook creatively presenting photos taken of them throughout the first two visits solved the dilemma. The scrapbook, presenting the Mothers at various stages of their development as a group - discussion, investigation, implementation and celebration, were given to them during the last visit. My hope is that the memories generated by the photos will keep the experience alive in their memories. The other dilemma, as to how to return of knowledge gained from the writing of the thesis, remains. Having the fieldwork broken into stages was advantageous to the return of the knowledge gained through the preliminary analysis. The knowledge gained through the writing of this thesis, however, will have to be returned outside of the timetable of this study. The constraint of time raises the issue of ownership of knowledge. Is it owned by the university and the grant-awarding agency or by the people who generated it? The issue of the final product and to whom it belongs is a research conundrum. Lincoln and Denzin (1994) call this the “crisis of representation”. They describe the very difficulty that I feel, that despite the researcher’s desire to engage in research “characterized by authenticity, reciprocity, and trust” the “actual differences of power, knowledge, and structural mobility still exist in the researcher-subject relationship” (p. 577). They conclude that the final product is that of the researcher no matter how much input and modification by the subject.

Several assumptions of PR have just been questioned by the intersect of theory with practice: the possibility that a leveling of knowledge and power can truly be achieved; that knowledge can be truly validated in the context of unequal power, and that the knowledge generated can be truly returned to the participants. I question the realism of some aspects PR theory and wonder why, despite the admission of imperfection by

researchers such as Reason, that revisions to theoretical concepts have not been made. Whereas it is important to maintain the utopian ideal in view, tempering the ideal with realism would be helpful to the beginner.

It is interesting to note that little attempt has been made to address the 'quality' of participation in PR. Perhaps it is assumed that for participation to be authentic, it will be at the level of co-researcher. PR literature is limited in its analysis as to whether or not this is truly possible. Selection strategy and its effect on the quality of participation are rarely mentioned. The tendency in the literature to focus on successful outcome rather than the challenges of a painful process does not provide sufficient understanding of how the methodology is applied in real settings. The lack of attention to the quality of participation is augmented by the tendency to group participants together with general descriptors such as "the community" or "the oppressed". This is a denial of the complexity of participatory development and it fails to acknowledge the existence of groups within a group. Women's issues have become lost in this assumption of homogeneity. The issue of power and the use of power in a so-called "powerless" community have been submerged by what I believe to be the unwillingness to examine the complexity of relationships. Perhaps these issues have received less attention than warranted because of an incomplete definition of poverty. In our experience, it was difficult to separate the economic domain from the social and political. We did not expect to find so much complexity in the reality of poverty.

The ambiguous nature of PR could be considered a strength as well as a weakness. Ambiguity provides space for creativity. Creativity speaks to the making of something from disjointed parts and to the process of continuous molding or cobbling (Lincoln and Denzin, 1994). It speaks of the melding of head and heart (Fals Borda & Kemmis, 1989), of moving beyond the "box" of one's assumptions of reality (Elliott, 1999). It acknowledges that there are no wrong answers (ICA, 1985) or a single approach. It acknowledges complexity and multiple shades of gray.

The process of praxis is a creative process. It is not a vicious circle but an upward moving spiral. The quest in the spiral is to know self, to build trust with others and to

awaken to a new truth or reality. The thirst for knowledge assures continuation of investigation and action. As hypotheses are made and modified there is a realization that truth is temporal and conditional; that reality is molded by complex and sometimes hidden factors that are altered through their discovery. Reality is viewed as a process, “always emerging through a self-contradictory development, always becoming” (Reason, 1981).

Reflective practice may conflict with theoretical constructs. There is a tendency to make reality fit theory, but perhaps it should be the other way around. Keough (1998) advises us to put reality before theory saying that when dealing with community issues on a daily basis, “the shortcomings of theory become clearly evident, and it is a challenge for those of us immersed in our practice to recognize these shortcomings” (p. 192). Jara (1989) finds that theoretical concepts are quite abstract and unconnected with concrete practice; that they do not address the concrete necessities and worries of the participants.

I enthusiastically shared theoretical concepts with Board members in a workshop session held with the Board in February 1999, laying out the process of praxis and explaining the concept of equalization of knowledge and power through sharing. The session fell flat. At that point, I began to realize that theory is best woven into practice and that practice must come first (Leis, 1989). We practiced praxis in many ways; we reflected on the housing situation of the families, investigated the options, and took the action of establishing agreements that would facilitate housing for three families. Most of the investigation for the cooperative was done by the Mothers. They investigated the food items most commonly used in the home, their prices in the *barrio* and in bulk, and the cost of the implements needed for the cooperative. Taking action based on reflection and investigation meant moving past passivity and acceptance of the status quo. It took the confidence to present oneself before others and to make oneself heard. It meant embracing uncertainty regarding the response from others while believing that change was possible. The theory of praxis is best taught through practical experience.

Reflections about Outcome

Theory aside, it is time to look at what happened and why it happened that way. On the subject of group formation, it was clear at the end of the fieldwork that the Board was sustainable but the Mothers' Group was not. Several factors contributing to this outcome have already been mentioned. There was the factor of selection - the Board was self-selected but the Mothers were pre-selected. There was participatory level – the Board participated at the level of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969) while the Mothers started at the level of manipulation and moved up to the level of tokenism. There was the factor of time. I had been working with some of the Board members since 1998. We had already spent hours building our relationships. While I also learned to know some of the Mothers in 1998, we did not spend the same time together. Relation-building time was related to the degree of readiness. The Board was at the intermediate stage while the Mothers were beginners.

Moving to a deeper level, the factor of self-identity is identified. The outcome was related to how the participants perceived themselves. The Board members perceived themselves as collaborators in a meaningful process. They were anxious to learn and to assume more responsibility. I believe the Mothers viewed themselves primarily as beneficiaries. They had a lot of experience as beneficiaries and almost no experience as collaborators. They were not prepared for collaboration. Past experience and cultural norms had taught them to be careful, not to trust, and not to speak out. There was little concept of reciprocity or of fulfilling commitments. They had not had much practice in this regard. They were not ready.

The Board was not always ready either, for that matter. We assumed a risk for which we were not properly prepared. I refer to the Housing Plan. As explained, we went through a process of praxis in making the decision to support families in their quest for permanent housing. The experiment could have paid off, and perhaps will pay off in the future. At this moment the situation looks bleak and we realize that our process was hurried. The families have not changed their image of themselves as beneficiaries and have failed to become collaborators. Without collaboration, the plan fails.

Turning to accounts in the literature for comfort, I realize that housing is the concern of other NGOs throughout the world. There seem to be two approaches: one linked closely to micro enterprise and benefits the middle to low income; and the other linked to an advocacy agenda that targets the poorest of the poor including squatters. The latter is process-oriented, often at the expense of sound financial performance (Development Alternative, Inc., 2000). FANDIC Board members saw their role as a promotional one in that they were linking the families to a subsidized housing program. Edgcomb & Barton (1998) state that experience of social intermediation organizations such as FANDIC in linking the poor to financial institutions is not well documented but that it carries disadvantages. Firstly it requires the organization to overcome the very barriers that kept the poor out of the system in the past and, secondly, it requires an enforcement of financial discipline on both the clients and itself.

The points are well made. FANDIC has not yet been able to overcome attitudinal barriers nor have we been able to enforce compliance with financial obligation. It would appear that our strategy was not sufficiently rigorous. The alternative to our strategy of utilizing individual programs, the formation of a solidarity group, would have been more helpful in addressing attitudes and promoting the discipline of saving. Encouraging self-selection and homogeneity within the group could have stimulated the transformation from 'beneficiaries' into 'clients'. While the Mothers' Group was homogenous, it was not self-selected. But even if it had been self-selected and even if we had had more time to help the group develop solidarity, we still may not have been successful in the Housing Plan. That is because, in the majority of homes, the men control the household finances. This reality returns us to the issue of gender relations within the home and the need to involve both partners in programs that influence the dynamics of relationships within the home.

Saving, as a program, is promoted world wide as a useful addition to micro lending. Savings demonstrate discipline and commitment, serve as a guarantee against default in the solidarity group, and act as a source of emergency funds in times of crisis (Edgcomb & Barton, Berenback & Guzmán, 1993; Otero, 1990). It will be of great

interest to follow the progress of one of FANDIC's newest initiatives in this domain, the Savings Program. The suggestion to mount this program came directly from our experience with the Housing Plan and the Mother's Group. The Housing Plan demonstrated the difficulty the families had with the concept and the practice of saving. The household economic review done as part of the program with the Mothers showed that many women did not have much control over family finances or understanding of budgeting.

FANDIC's community promoters have identified 70 people interested in the Savings Program. The objectives of the program are to build awareness regarding one's self and others, to improve the educational level regarding the topic, and to develop the capacity to save. One of the community promoters, currently a Social Work student, is in charge of this course. Her professors are her advisors and her fellow students are her assistants. The precise course content has not yet been divulged to me as it will be developed as the course progresses. What is important to me at this point, is that one of our community promoters is responsible for its development and administration. The building of this capability began long ago with the development of relationship and trust, the questioning of today's reality, and the confidence to dream. The transformation in her self-identity has influenced those around her including her family members. The transformative potential of the course she developing is enormous. It has the potential to change the lives of the families as well as those administering the course. It also has the potential to transform the way FANDIC carries out its mission in the community. The development of the capabilities to plan and administer the Saving Course is an important and impressive outcome.

The Housing Plan, with its twists and turns, has been presented to make two points: that life uses messes to get to well-ordered solutions (Wheatley & Kellner-Roger, 1996); and that development is a complex process that requires a multifaceted approach (World Development Report 1999/2000). We would not know as much as we do today if we had remained in the safe, no-risk zone. We became aware of our reality by interacting with it, thereby creating a different possibility. Experimentation can be, at the same time,

costly and rewarding. In all and throughout all, we are reminded to be playful, for there are many ways of looking at things (Sharma, 1998). Life is intent on finding what works, not what is “right” (Wheatley & Kellner-Roger), so we must trust the process and let the process do its work (Elliott, 1999).

Conclusion

I would not like to leave the impression that the process is over or that the final product has been declared. The process is not over – it has just begun. The fact that I do not know what the final outcome will be does not cause me anxiety. It used to, but not now. A process is in place. Logically, the process still requires nurturing, but it is gaining strength and that gladdens my heart.

Reflections about my role and outcome were presented in order to complete the story. I was very much a participant and as such was intensely involved in the process. I do not bear full responsibility or credit for the outcome as we were all democratically engaged in decision-making. It is interesting to note that the only issue on which we did not reach consensus was the Housing Plan. That remains one of those lessons from which we continue to learn.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

“Zero to One in Participatory Development” has been presented as a PR project in which the preliminary phases of group organization have been emphasized. The project was conducted in Bucaramanga, Colombia in a zone typified by poor personal security and poverty. The purpose of the research was to integrate families with disability more fully into the partner organization, FANDIC. The participants of the study included mothers of disabled children, members of the Board of FANDIC and the researcher. The research was only one part of a process that continues beyond the writing of this thesis. The end point(s) in that process will be defined by others and not the researcher.

“Zero to One” began as a PR project but it did not *stay* there. While the philosophy of PR formed the foundation and orientation for the methodology of the study, the need to explain what was being observed in the reality of the experience impelled the exploration of other domains. Comparative analysis gained through the reading of literature from other sources proved essential to the deepening of understanding of the research experience. Themes considered important as a result of the experience were participation, relationships, identity and leadership. These themes will be briefly discussed below.

The initial strategy of this project was to conduct an investigation with the Mothers’ Group. The additional observation the Board of FANDIC rounded out a perspective of the process of organizing from the unformed group to the stage in which a formed group has developed organizational capabilities. The preliminary stages of organizing receive particular attention as there is little emphasis on these stages in the literature. An outline of the “Zero to One” Framework is presented in this chapter.

Work with the children and the families raised issues that, while not the focus of this study, indicate areas for further investigation. These themes, referred to as “loose

threads”, raise questions regarding the attention paid by the public school system in Colombia to special needs children, and the effect of play and home environment on learning.

Concluding remarks provide an opportunity to view the experience from a personal point of view. The desire to understand the practical and theoretical implications of how one “teaches someone to fish” opened a world of complexity for the researcher. As a result of the research experience, many previously held assumptions and expectations regarding PR were discarded. Struggles between ‘what was supposed to be’ and ‘what was’ initiated a search for understanding and for meaning. The result of that search was transformation.

Methodological Considerations

PR was the methodology of choice due to its emphasis on openness of process, respect for local knowledge, and development of awareness and knowledge through praxis (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). Ambiguity was found to be both a strength of the methodology and a frustration (Brown, 1982) as the researcher, a newcomer to PR more accustomed to quantitative methods, sought to re-orientate her research perspective from the examination of “parts” to a study of the complex whole (Wheatley, 1992). Reflection on the role of participant observer at the complete level with the Board and active level with the Mothers’ Group (Spradley, 1980) led to a perception of conflict between her interpretation of theory and the reality of practice.

The PR project, planned in stages, provided for intermittent rather than continuous contact with the participants. The staging of the project permitted ‘space’ for reflection, reading and writing when not in the field. It permitted the stepping back from the intensity of the experience and provided access to resources not available in the field. Staging doubled the time of the fieldwork from seven to fifteen months – time to observe change in the Mothers’ Group, the children, Board members and the researcher. Intermittent contact acted as a gauge of “real” interest, facilitated the “handing-over” of responsibility and the development of ownership.

Major Themes

Participation, relationships, identity and leadership were the inter-related structural threads carried throughout the thesis. An exploration of these terms from various perspectives led to a fuller understanding of their dimensions. An important element in participation was the level of participation. Was participation always from the bottom up as suggested by Fernandes & Tandon (1981) where the poor and marginalized were empowered to be democratically involved in collective action (Bloem et al., 1996) or were there levels of participation (Arnstein, 1969) that varied depending on the selection process and the strategy of the research?

This study presented evidence that the initial level of participation was closely related to selection process and the “readiness to engage” in group activities. Level of participation was strongly linked to cultural factors such as the degree of decision-making power permitted in a social role (Oakley & Marsden, 1984). It was heavily bound up in participants’ self-identity or what one thought one was capable of being, doing and achieving (Berger & Luckman, 1966, Max Neef, 1991). Participatory level depended on one’s prior experience with self-expression (Leis, 1989) and on trust of outsiders and of group members. Trust, basic to the formation of relationships (Coleman, 1988), was at a low level in the Mothers’ Group. Socialization, important in the development and maintenance of relationships (Berger & Luckman, 1966), spoke about cultural norms, beliefs, as well as trust.

The building of relationships based on trust and reciprocity (Coleman, 1988), was found to be essential in the process of organizing. While the Mothers’ Group remained at the pre-group stage where people with different histories are motivated by a common interest (Mena Calvopiña, 1996), the Board reached the stage of commitment where the maturing group seeks a common meaning to define their objective in the most realistic way possible (Mena Calvopiña). The difference between the two groups was attributed to factors of time to build relationships, to self-identity and to the process of selection.

Self-identity was heavily bound up the historical continuities of power and interdependence (Wade, 1997). The participants in the Mothers' Group were influenced by values and beliefs regarding the role of the woman in the home that were not unlike those observed in other Colombian studies (Bohman, 1984; Whiteford, 1976). Self-image, based on subjective knowledge of the world (Boulding, 1956), can be altered through transformation (ICA, 1997). The process of transformation or image change was presented in this thesis at both the individual and group levels and was demonstrated in the Zero to One process of organizing. This study demonstrated that image change was facilitated by a process set to the rhythm of the participants (Leis, 1989) and to the provision of 'space' for reflection (Horton & Friere, 1990).

Participation, relationship building and transformation are facilitated by leadership that is open, flexible and attentive to others (DePree, 1989; Sharma, 1998; Wheatley, 1992). They are enhanced by leadership that respects local knowledge (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991), encourages decision-making (Oakley & Marsden, 1984), and cultivates new learning through diversification of experience (Carroll, 1992). Set apart from 'management' by concern with strategy and direction versus process and operations (Nanus & Dobbs, 1999), development of leadership within an FANDIC was seen as a progressive process requiring mentoring over an extended period of time.

Zero to One Process of Organizing

The themes mentioned above became important as the author puzzled about group formation. Encouraging individuals to assume a collective identity proved to be more challenging than expected therefore stimulating a search for 'why'. That search led to an understanding of the process of organizing from the ground up. The Zero to One framework of organizing was a product of analysis of the experience with the two groups discussed in the thesis - the Mother's Group and the Board. It followed the process of individual capacity building, formation of group identity and development of organizational capacities. The framework, based on the experience of this thesis, was supplemented by complimentary concepts and frameworks of authors of PR (Fals Borda,

1985), PE (Leis, 1989; Freire, 1994), and CD (Mullinix & Akatsa-Bukachi, 1998; Robinson & Cox, 1998; Sadan & Churchman, 1998). Reference to their work provided a broader scope of experience.

The Zero to One framework is intended to be permeable and flexible. It is meant to present *a* system of organizing, not *the* system. The title of Zero to One refers to a process where Zero indicates an unformed group state and One signifies the stage in which an organization has established sufficient self-identity and capability to attract support from outside. The framework is intended to assist the understanding of the preliminary stages of organizing in a participatory development project.

The process of organizing from Zero to One has six stages:

1. Prepare readiness for participation.
 - Define the target
 - Conduct a preliminary analysis
 - Find a point of entry
 - Start from where *they* are
2. “Breaking through” into awareness with new information
 - Start with the concrete and build on practical experience
 - Combine practical skill development with discussion and creative activity
 - Provide opportunity for decision making
 - Allow “space” for new learning and change in direction
3. Nurture the process of image change
 - Diversify the experience
 - Move from individual to group capacity building
 - Members gain practice in organizational activity
4. Growth through shared learning and mentoring
 - Encourage interdependence of members through sharing and
 - Incremental capacity building
5. Self-image is defined by members through:
 - Organizational capacity building, documentation and presentation of self to others

6. The Organization establishes self-sufficiency through:

- **Transference of knowledge to others**
- **Partnership, contracting out services, public relations.**

The process of organizing from Zero to One is a creative process in which the players determine the outcome. It can be likened to a weaving composed of different colors, textures and fibers. A thousand designs could result from the interplay of the threads. That interplay is made possible by the presence of dominant threads that provide strength and structure. These threads, already mentioned, are participation, relationships, identity and leadership.

Implications for Further Research

The creative process of weaving inevitably leaves loose threads. Loose threads are themes that require more investigation. This thesis has suggested a number of such themes. Gender and development is a theme that will continue to challenge the work of FANDIC. There is recognition within the Board that both women and men need to be included in developmental programs if gender roles are to be successfully addressed (Rathgeber, 1990). How best to examine gender roles in a patriarchal society will be left to experimentation for there are few examples documented in the literature.

Loose threads became evident as a result of observation of children affiliated with FANDIC in school, at play and at home. The difficulty experienced at school by children with disability in this study could only be partially explained by poor development of curriculum for the special needs child (Baine, 1988). Other influences on learning seemed to be play and home environment.

The preparation of disadvantaged children for learning appears to generate little attention in CD and PR literature. Play is important in development of identity and in socialization (Kelly-Byrne, 1989). Children poorly prepared may suffer a form of culture shock that retards their initial progress in school (an observation in this study). The children observed were not encouraged to play in the street due to poor security in the neighborhood. It also appeared that they were not accustomed to interacting with adults

in a playful manner. The role of play in learning was thought to be closely linked to that of home environment and the development of human capital through interaction between adults and children (Wilson & Herbert, 1978; Coleman, 1988).

Children from highly stressed environments are at greater risk for developmental and behavioral problems and difficulties at school (Parker et al., 1988; Rutter et al., 1970). Cultural customs and educational level of the parents affect child-rearing practices (Coleman, 1988; Harrison, 2000). Disability within the family and poverty added additional stressors to the families studied. It appeared that the need to survive left less time for investigation on behalf of the disabled child or opportunity for child/parent interaction.

The attention to play and home environment as well as gender relations placed the work of this study in the home where participants were perceived as individual players with history, beliefs and values. The small number of participants permitted direct observation of the players and led to a deeper understanding of some of the issues that complicated their lives.

Attention to the individual led the author to question her assumptions regarding poverty. Various social elements of poverty have been raised in this thesis: issues of dependence/interdependence/choice; and attitudes towards child rearing, learning, work, and money. A political contributor to poverty in the context of this thesis was social class. The distinction of individuals based on socioeconomic status set the families studied apart for "special" treatment with respect to the education and health systems. It appears that their "distinctiveness" has, over the years, led to a culture apart and poor integration into society as a whole.

Concluding Remarks

The research in this thesis addressed the issue of integration of families with disabled children into the organization, FANDIC. Even though Board members and I did not see it as clearly at the beginning as now, we were attempting to promote a change in identity in the participants from beneficiaries to collaborators. We wanted to see

transformation. Transformation, used in this way, is an outcome. But transformation also is a process. The process of transformation, at the individual and organizational levels, is discussed in this thesis. Transformation, like participation, could be considered to have both process and product implications. The process and product components of 'transformation' can be pulled apart for analysis and synthesized for creation of new knowledge (Hara Holliday, 1998).

Transformation is not limited to the participants selected for the study. All actors are participants. As a participant in this research, I was influenced by the other players and by the context in which the research took place. My awareness of others as well as of myself grew immensely as I was challenged by the complexity and intensity of the experience. I am no longer the same person as I was before. My identity has been transformed. I think differently; I have left behind many old assumptions and expectations. My comfort with ambiguity and not knowing has increased enormously.

Engaging in this research project has helped me move beyond linear thinking to acknowledge of the complexity that exists in participatory development. It has taught me the need for understanding. This understanding is not of the type that can be possessed and frozen for future viewing. It is progressive and variable in all its complex dimensions. It is an understanding that embraces feeling from the heart as well as critical analysis. The interpretations that have been presented in this thesis are temporary; there is nothing permanent or fixed about them. I acknowledge that they fall short of expressing the reality experienced by all participants in the study. They are only a glimpse viewed through a window at passing change. However, having glimpsed the landscape, I feel better prepared to continue my travels in this complex but rewarding field of participatory development.

It is hoped that my effort to "discover" the meaning of our experience will help to broaden and deepen the understanding of others. I have attempted to weave the process and product of participatory development together into a seamless garment. There have been dominant threads and loose threads, threads with variable qualities and characteristics. All are inter-related in the process and product of organizing.

EPILOGUE

One of the objectives mentioned on page 130 in Part 3 of the Experience, was to hold a conference on Community Development (CD) and disability. This was realized on April 6, 2001 in Bucaramanga. The First International Encounter on Community Development with a Focus on Disability was conjointly organized by FANDIC and the Universitaria de Santander (UDES) with more than 400 students, professionals, government officials, hospital administrators and people with disability in attendance.

The objectives of the conference were as follows:

- To bring together people and organizations working in the area of disability
- To present Colombian projects focusing on CD and disability
- To present the model of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)
- To understand more fully the concept of participation and leadership at the community level
- To improve the quality of life for people with disability by addressing the complexity of the issues of health, education, economy, the environment, social issues and human rights
- To recognize the implications of disability in Colombia and to learn about the services offered in Bucaramanaga
- To improve the interdisciplinary management of the disabled patient.

Most of these objectives were realized. The keynote address, given by Karin Motesh, an expert in CBR, was very well received. She encouraged the professionals in the audience to consider the realism of treatment recommendations that did not take into consideration the social condition of the community. I gave a talk on the concepts of participation, transformation and the process of organizing in the community. This was my opportunity to return new knowledge gained from the thesis to those who participated in its development. Other speakers presented on the early detection and treatment of disability in children from the perspective of their professions. Representatives of associations working in the field of disability were given opportunity to speak about their

programs. All speakers were listened to with interest. The value of this conference lay in the broadening of relationships and in learning a new perspective.

People with disability were clearly happy to participate and used the opportunity to meet with each other and other attendees. They expressed interest in establishing contact with groups outside of Colombia and indicated a desire for training leading to improved organization and income-generating options. Many stayed until the end of the day to participate in the open forum.

The open forum had potential for impact on the community at large as it was taped and presented on television. The panel consisted of two Presidents of Associations representing people with disability, the Director of the Faculty of Physiotherapy of the UDES, a representative from the Ministry of Health, a Doctor working with children with neurological disability and myself as the foreign representative. The moderator, a member of FANDIC, did an excellent job of gaining equal representation from the panelists and drawing in comments and questions from the audience. The forum permitted questions regarding governmental programs for disability, an opportunity valued by the participants, and the consideration of various perspectives.

The conference was on the “leading edge” in sensitizing the public to the topic of disability, a topic rarely addressed at the institutional level in the past. It opened the doors of the state government building to FANDIC where we met with government officials grappling to fulfill the requirements of Law 361 (1997) on disability throughout the state. We were also privileged to have the State Governor open the conference. The interest demonstrated at the highest level bodes well for future conferences and the development of collaborative projects.

The conference, a huge undertaking for the organizers, was clearly a success. It was a conference that captured the interest of a significant number and a variety of people. One reason for its success was thought to be the timeliness of the topic of disability. Another ingredient of success was considered to be the high level of involvement of the university professors in the planning of the conference. Their enthusiasm generated enthusiasm amongst students, the largest group represented at the

conference. Pre-existing relationships with hospital administrators and associations of people with disability also helped to generate enthusiasm, having almost a snowball effect as one contact led to another.

The conference also had a significant impact on FANDIC and its community workers who worked side by side with the university committee in the planning and implementation of the event. The benefit of the decision made in October 2000 to establish a permanent site for FANDIC and to have dedicated community workers became apparent. These decisions prepared the community workers to participate as equal partners. The conference raised the profile of FANDIC as a community organization. FANDIC suddenly had a name and the community workers were thrust onto center stage as they were approached by conference attendees to answer questions and to provide information. The conference assisted the integration of FANDIC into the community at large thus providing the organization with a greater range of contacts with which to fulfill its mission of integration of children with disability into the community.

FANDIC has entered into a new era. It now appears that the organization is destined to survive with the cautionary note that survival still depends on the development of those abilities and capabilities as outlined in the process of organizing. There is still a lot of work to do before FANDIC is considered sustainable. Of interest, however, are the options that have spun off as a result of the conference. The risk of undertaking such a huge effort was rewarded with potential to fulfill the mission of FANDIC in new and empowering ways. It has been repaid in potential for collaborative effort both nationally and internationally. It has been reimbursed in new energy and enthusiasm; with vision for the future. If FANDIC were envisioned as a young tree, it could be said the roots of this sapling have been strengthened by this capacity-building experience thus providing a firmer foundation for a hardier fruit-bearing tree.

As mentioned previously, the story of FANDIC will not end with the termination of this research project. The movement that began with the collection of a few people interested in addressing issues of disability in a community is gaining strength and has the potential to broaden in its conceptual and geographical dimensions. Canadians will

continue to play an important role as we share “lessons learned” regarding the disability movement in Canada with our colleagues in Colombia. The timing is ripe for collaboration.

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Appendix 1

Workplan

Stage I

Time Frame/Location	Activities	Anticipated Results
<p>Aug/Sept/Oct/99 Bucaramanga</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draw together cohort of mothers, families, FANDIC members ● Collective research on themes of disability, family, community, etc. ● Data collection and analysis by participants ● Preparation of Outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of a core group of participants ● Increased awareness re issues raised ● Action plan for desired outcome ● Presentation of Outcome to the community
<p>Nov/99 – Jan/2000 (researcher no longer in Bucaramanga)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Further analysis and reading by researcher * Further attempts at linking with possible collaborators (individuals &/or organizations) * Continued animation of existing community in Bucaramanga by internal animators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in clarity of issues involved and preparation for next stage * Increased involvement of collaborators * Continued investigation re issues determined in Stage I

Stage II

Time Frame/Location	Activities	Anticipated Results
Feb/Mar/Apr 2000Bucaramanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a larger cohort using survey, invitation. * Collective research with emphasis on eliciting the voices of mothers and children with disabilities • Data collection and analysis by participants • Preparation of final outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the magnitude of the numbers with disability • Greater involvement of mothers and children in decision-making • Formation of action plan re desired outcome * Presentation of final outcome
May/June/July 2000 (researcher not in Col.)	Further analysis of the process and the outcome by the researcher	Preparation of reports for submission to journals etc

Appendix 2

Carta De Información

Apreciada Familia,

Esta es una carta de invitación dirigida a las familias con deseos de mejorar las oportunidades para sus niños discapacitados. Mi propósito es colaborar con ustedes para realizar un proyecto, cuyo objetivo es la mayor integración de los niños discapacitados a la comunidad.

Mi nombre es Marlene Wiens. Hace dos años inicié, con otras personas, la obra de la Fundación Amigos de los Niños Discapacitados para su Integración a la Comunidad, FANDIC. Los logros obtenidos por FANDIC son el resultado de colaboración entre ustedes, las familias con niños discapacitados, la Alcaldía, la UDES, otras instituciones y nosotros. Me agrada saber que ustedes se benefician de nuestra fundación de manera que sus niños pueden estudiar y recibir terapias.

Además de ser integrante de la junta directiva de FANDIC, estudio en la Universidad de Calgary en Canadá. Tengo el respaldo de la universidad para realizar un proyecto de investigación en “Ciudad del Norte”. Mi propósito es reunir un grupo de madres de los niños discapacitados y estudiar cómo podemos mejorar la integración de los niños. Esta investigación se hará con reuniones en grupo y tendremos representaciones, dibujos, historias personales, cuentos, discusión y juegos. El propósito básico es que el grupo genere ideas sobre las acciones necesarias para mejorar las oportunidades de los niños en la comunidad. A lo largo del proceso, cada miembro tendrá la oportunidad de explorar sus actitudes y creencias personales sobre la discapacidad y también los de la sociedad en donde vive.

Durante algunas de las sesiones del grupo se utilizará una grabadora con el debido consentimiento de los participantes. La investigación durará tres meses y durante este tiempo los participantes estarán en libertad de retirarse del grupo en el momento que lo consideren necesario y sin que esto afecte su relación con FANDIC.

La participación de las madres es importante porque son ellas quienes mejor conocen las necesidades cotidianas de sus hijos y también tienen sueños para mejorar la calidad de vida para ellos. Su participación en esta investigación no generará nuevos riesgos en su vida diaria. La información recopilada se mantendrá en forma confidencial, según los acuerdos logrados en el grupo y se devolverá al grupo en una forma útil para él. En caso de que el acuerdo con los participantes sea un manejo confidencial y personal, la información se guardará en lugar seguro y se destruirá una vez finalice la investigación.

Si tiene algunas preguntas, por favor, llámeme al teléfono: 634 7899 en Bucaramanga. Además, puede escribirle a mi supervisora, Dra. Marlene Reimer, en la Universidad de Calgary, Facultad de Enfermería, 2500 University Dr. N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2N 1N4. También, tengo que avisarle que puede llamar al Director del Comité de Ética en la Universidad de Calgary, tel:(403) 220 5627, o al Vicepresidente de Investigaciones en la Universidad de Calgary, tel: (403) 220 3381.

Gracias por su cooperación.

Atentamente,

Marlene Wiens

Formato De Consentimiento

Yo, el abajo firmante, doy mi consentimiento para participar en una investigación sobre la integración de los niños discapacitados a la comunidad, con la Sra. Marlene Wiens como investigadora y con miembros de FANDIC (Fundación Amigos de los Niños Discapacitados para su Integración en la Comunidad).

Comprendo que mi consentimiento significa que haré parte de un proceso participativo para recopilar información y tomar acción en grupo sobre la mayor integración de los niños discapacitados. Además, comprendo que seré considerado como un miembro más y con igualdad de condiciones durante el proceso de la investigación. Comprendo que a lo largo del proceso, contribuiré en los ejercicios y técnicas que puedan ser usados para estudiar la cuestión y exploraré mis actitudes y creencias sobre la discapacidad y también los de la sociedad en donde vivo.

Comprendo que mi participación en la investigación es negociable, pero no durará más de tres meses y que mi participación en esta investigación puede terminar en cualquier momento, por petición mía, o de la investigadora. Mi participación o retiro de este proyecto no me afectará negativamente de ninguna manera. Comprendo que la investigación no genera nuevos riesgos en mi vida cotidiana. Comprendo que la información recopilada se mantendrá en forma confidencial, teniendo en cuenta los acuerdos hechos en el grupo y será devuelta al grupo en una forma útil para él. Comprendo que la información será destruida al final de la investigación.

He recibido una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para mis archivos. Comprendo que si tengo preguntas, puedo contactar a la Sra. Marlene Wiens, en Bucaramanga, en el teléfono: 634-7899, o escribirle a su supervisora Dra. Marlene Reimer, en la Universidad de Calgary, Facultad de Enfermería, 2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, T2N 1N4. También comprendo que puedo llamar al Director del Comité de Etica en la Universidad de Calgary, tel: (403) 220 5627 o al Vicepresidente de Investigaciones en la Universidad de Calgary, tel:(403) 220 3381.

Fecha

Firma

Nombre en letra imprenta

Appendix 3

Report to the Mothers Regarding the Interviews Presented February 29, 2000

The general objective of the interviews with each of you was to give you an opportunity to speak about your opinions about the cooperative - your ideas, the difficulties that you experience y your wishes for the future. The information gathered from the interview is the base of this report that I am presenting to you. The intention is that, with this information, we can examine the cooperative more closely and make decisions about it.

First of all, it is a good idea to understand your motivations to participate in the cooperative, that is to say, your expectations and hopes for the cooperative. According to the information that we received from you, your motivation to initiate the cooperative was to achieve an income for yourselves and for your children. You were looking for a way to earn an income that would be more stable in order to be able to move forward in life. Besides this, some of you were motivated by the opportunity to learn something new.

The majority of you were thinking of the future when you spoke about your motivation to continue working in the cooperative. You wanted to have an stable “assistance” for the future with a view to the house or simply for yourselves. For some the cooperative offers the excuse to leave the close confines of the house.

But, why do you need a steady income? What is it that you consider important? According your responses your priorities, the things most important for you, are training and personal education, housing, the ability to save and the education of the children.

Let’s talk about the cooperative and how it is functioning. What is it that you believe is the objective of the cooperative? You believe that the cooperative should offer you several things. These are: the cooperative should be a source of income, it should offer you food at less cost, you should receive some training as a result of your

involvement in the co-op, and that your involvement will teach you to become more responsible and committed.

As you know, every member has a responsibility in the cooperative. The leaders maintain the accounts, make the purchases and keep an eye on the cooperative. The others have a schedule in which they attend to clients and package food. The truth is that there are problems with the obligations of every person. The leaders, due to lack of training, have not managed the money with complete security and have not called a meeting to make decisions. At this time, the others are not completing their schedule for various reasons: some are disillusioned because sales are very limited and they have nothing to do when they are there, another has serious illness in the family, others don't want to leave the house and the children unattended and for another the cooperative is far away from home.

The cooperative has helped you have an experience of working as a group but as you have not had a meeting, this experience is incomplete. Your concept of "working as a group" hasn't changed. One could look at this response in a positive or negative manner. Positively speaking we could say that you haven't withdrawn despite your disillusionment. But the fact that you haven't had meetings, that there isn't a lot of help and collaboration between you and that each person is walking down her own path without considering the others suggests that there is still a lot lacking in the experience of working together. At any rate, you say that the cooperative is an experience that you have never had before and that it has been pleasant. You say that the cooperative gives you the opportunity for self-development and to learn something new. Additionally, it is a place in which you can amuse yourselves.

Some of you offered ideas about how to improve the cooperative. Firstly, it can be improved with more collaboration and union between all of you and also with a better understanding regarding what the cooperative is about. What are your concerns? That the cooperative isn't profitable, that there are few things for sale, that more attention should be put on the requests of customers so we know what to add to the cooperative, that we should take a look at the location of the cooperative as it is quite hidden, and finally that

we should re-evaluate the prices because they don't seem to be better than what you can find in other shops.

What effect has the cooperative had on your personal lives and the life of the home? For some, the cooperative has changed their life, for example, in providing an environment in which you can develop, in helping you defend yourself as a person and in teaching you how to work toward a goal. But for the majority, the cooperative hasn't changed your life at all. Some people are discouraged because the cooperative hasn't offered you better opportunities.

Let us speak, finally, about your ideas regarding saving. Each one of you live in a very difficult situation. It is not easy to save when you do not have a stable income. But, three of you said that it was possible to save a portion of the money you receive but that the money was spent on the emergencies that arose. The others do not believe that it is possible to save, that the money received is barely sufficient for food and that it would be better if your husbands had a stable job.

But, the truth is, that it is possible to save in the home and that people from countries much poorer than Colombia have demonstrated this. Martin will speak about this subject in a few minutes.

It is also true that the mothers of the world, more than the men, think about the situation within the house such as the nutrition and the education of the children. For this reason we asked you about the communication between you and your husband regarding the finances of the house. We wanted to know if you could count with the help of your husband or whether you were alone in your efforts to improve the lives of your children. These were your responses: Some talk with their husband about the finances of the house saying that the house needs this or that or that the salary that he has isn't enough to meet the needs of the house. Others receive what their husband gives them without comment. Others act as the person in charge to pay the bills and to make the decisions regarding the children. Apparently, no family deals with the subject with any degree of depth.

Regarding your personal dreams, your responses were to take a course in sewing, cooking or to learn how to knit. Those with small children would like to do something in the house that would allow them to supervise the children and to work at the same time.

Are there comments?

Appendix 4

Mother's Stories

One Mother's Story

(Transcribed from audio tape Sept. 8, 1999)

When I was a little girl, my mother left me as a gift to a woman. I was 4 years old because I still remember her. She left me in that house and I ran after her crying to not leave me there; I cried and she hit me; she hit me with a piece of brush wood so I had to stay there so she wouldn't hit me again.

I suffered a lot in that house. The lady of the house punished me and so she wouldn't punish me I did chores in the house. I did them to her liking so she wouldn't punish me because I was punished every day. The other children, her children, told her that I damaged things in the house but those were lies. I didn't damage anything. They did it and blamed me. My childhood was filled with bitterness; I didn't have a mother or a father. I spent my childhood in that house and never saw my mother again. I grew, suffering the whole time. I looked for my mother but didn't find her. The lady told me that she had gone far away and never returned.

Suddenly, when I was 20 years old I fell in love with a man who took me to Cucuta. We had 4 children but as he started to mistreat me I left him. I took 2 children, the other 2 having died.

My current husband proposed marriage to me but because I couldn't get my baptismal certificate we weren't able to. So we live like this. But, the truth is that we will be married December 8th, if God wills. We already have the marriage patrons. I met Don R. when I was 24 years old. After one year we had the oldest son, Jesus, then the 2 girls, and finally Julio. Regarding the 2 girls from the first marriage, one lives in Regaderos and the other lives far away in the country. She calls me every 15 days or so by telephone but almost never comes to visit.

I passed my youth in Boyaca in a small village called Corachia working in small towns nearby. And when I was 20 I went to Cucuta; we went to Venezuela, then to Lebrija, and later to Bucaramanga. I have been a day worker all my life. Here in Bucaramanga I worked as a maid. When I lived in the country I cut pasture, cultivated yucca and coffee, harvested coffee – and all those jobs of the country. I watched over the children, sent them to school, and stayed in the house when I didn't have work. I have worked outside of the house most of my life.

I never went to school. The lady deceived me saying, “Do this and on Monday I'll send you to school.” So I went to draw water far away and when I returned with the water she had already sent the children to school. “Ah no, my little one, you can't study because I need you to help me cook.” And she never sent me to school. And now my head is not right. I set myself to do a task and find I am doing something else. My head is not right.

Have you been happy with Don R.?

I have been happy with Don R. because I have the freedom to leave the house - to work, to attend meetings – and he stays at home to look after the house. He doesn't get upset with me. In the 30 years we have been together, the only time he hit me was with J.. I hit J. because he cried and cried. I gave him the breast; I gave him the soother, but nothing! He wouldn't be quiet so I hit him; I gave him three strikes with my hand. He was 2 months old. So he (Don R.) hit me, he hit me with the handle of the machete on the back but never hit me again. I thought, if he is going to continue to hit me, I'll have to learn how to keep this child quiet because he's a fussy baby and he will have to learn how to shut up. Yes, he stopped crying and was never fussy again. He was a fussy baby.

Have I been happy with Don R.? Yes, at least I have someone who respects me because it is very difficult to live alone. If, for example, a person comes to visit me at home I have to be able to defend myself when the neighbors say, “No, it is her lover”. Now I have someone who backs me up. Yes, it is gossip. And it happens when my son-in-laws arrive and the lady in the next house doesn't know they are my sons-in-law and thinks that they are my lovers and begins to talk. I had to call her, my neighbor, and

introduce my sons-in-law to her before she would shut up. I have 4 sons-in-law who come to visit me at home. And now, I introduce them to my neighbor and say, "Look, look. These are my sons-in-law. They aren't lovers as you claim". "And so, why do you say that"? "Because you claim they are my lovers because they come to visit me". And so I introduced them because at least Javier who works in Piedacuesta comes frequently. He works in a farm and may arrive late and stay for night. These people are tiring. They begin to talk. But now that she has seen that they aren't lovers, she has shut up.

A Second Mother's Story

Transcribed from tape. Sept. 13, 1999

Tell us about your childhood. As a little girl, I lived in the country. Really, what does one do in the country? Starve, work, study a little, and receive little affection because the parents are also working. The children have to work carrying yucca, fetching water, collecting wood. There is little opportunity to study and little to eat because there just isn't enough to go around.

We left the country to live in a small town where we had to pay rent. But we weren't much better off because my Dad worked cutting pasture and my Mom worked as a laundry woman. There was little opportunity to study and not much to eat. Life wasn't any better. Things were cheaper then, but salaries were also lower. It was the same as it is now. Now the salary is higher but so is the cost of food. Everything is more expensive. It is the same!

Do you have any special memories? Special? When we came to the city I already knew how to work, so I started to work and was able to buy some clothes for myself and my little brothers and sisters. And I was able to pay for my first communion by baby-sitting and washing dishes. That's how!

I studied on the night schedule in Comuneros while we lived in the neighborhood of San Raphael. When we left to live as squatters I quit my studies out of fear because there was hardly any transportation and I didn't feel safe going by bus. By this time we

could no longer afford to pay rent and we had to move into a squatters house. But we were slowly able to organize ourselves and the time came when we were able to have our own home (with her husband). That is my history.

How many people were in your family? I had 6 brothers and sisters in my family. As a young child we served the older children who were working in the pasture. We brought them their food while they were working. The little ones delivered food and my mother washed other people's clothes to help out with the food. And so? How many people in the house? My Dad, my Mom and the smallest children. And everyone was working to pay for the rent. My Dad worked in a rice business but his salary was not sufficient. One thing impacts another.

What was the happiest time of your youth? The nicest time was when we had boyfriends. We were permitted to have some fun; we had the liberty to take a walk with our brothers and sisters and the members of our boyfriend's family. No, while one is not burdened with children, the time of courtship is very nice. I was about 16 or 17 then because I left home when I was 27 when I had my first child.

Contribution by Third Mother: As a young girl I wanted to be grown up. I didn't know what men wanted. I grew up at my parents' side and I asked my mother about everything because I trusted her a lot and I would ask, "Mother dear, why does a woman want a man; why does a man get a woman? What purpose does it serve?" "Little child, men want a woman to cook for them, to do their washing, the ironing, to sweep the house and to make the beds". I didn't know. When she came to turn off the light, "Mother dear, how does a baby come?" "My little child, the stork brings it and throws it in through the window". I sat in the doorway when my mother was inside to see when the stork would arrive. When I heard the baby cry I asked when the stork had arrived because I didn't see where it had come in. One didn't know about those sorts of things. Not like now when there is so much corruption that a child aged 11 knows everything.

Second Mother Continues: They told me, “You’d better not go out with a boy! You shouldn’t talk with boys! You shouldn’t go out by yourself! All this fills one with terror. Fearful. Also, an error committed by the parents was that they didn’t know when one was coming to maturity. The parents didn’t tell one anything. I saw my mother get up from her bed one morning with everything soiled. “My mother woke up sick!” and I cried and I told my little brothers and sisters, “Mother woke up sick because everything is soiled with blood”. Perhaps she had a fight with my father and she burst. They never told anyone anything. I matured at a time when one didn’t even know one’s date of birth or when it was your birthday because no one knew a date. Therefore they didn’t know when one was about to mature. I almost died from it! I matured at about 13 or 14 years of age. I was studying and I put the blame on jumping up and down on a school wall and the fights. At night I washed everything. I didn’t say anything to my Mom because perhaps she would think that someone had hit me or that I had been in a fight with other children and they really got a hold of me. I was quiet in order to avoid being scolded, took a bath and changed my clothes. They said it was good to eat lemon to stop bleeding. I ate and ate lemon and drank lemon juice in order to not tell my mother what had happened and to tell her that it was not blood that I had lost, just water. I bled for 8 days, loosing blood and becoming swollen and my mother asked, “What happened to you”? because by that time I was practically dying. I told her that this and that had happened, that I was jumping up and down while playing and had been fighting and I woke up soiled. I didn’t know if I had burst or what had happened. So my Moms said, “My God, child”. What has happened is that you have matured.” But neither did my 3 older sisters tell me anything perhaps out of embarrassment because we had a lot of respect for each other. It isn’t like it is today when one tells a five-year-old and throws in a little extra. So my mother said, “This girl is going to die on us”, so as there was a doctor in the town, he said that he’d have to give me blood. By this time I had lost the blood that I had and I became as yellow as a light bulb. So to bring me back to life they gave me blood by intravenous. I tell my children how it is before they confuse them in the school.

Appendix 5

Progress Report Submitted to the FANDIC Committee

Written by Marlene Wiens, January 2000.

Purpose of the Report

This report on the participatory research project conducted by Marlene Wiens and FANDIC will be presented the Board of Directors and Committee Members of FANDIC in February 2000. It is intended to serve as a critical analysis of the activities of the first phase conducted in August & September 1999 and to provide strategic direction for phase 2 in February & March 2000. The analysis is based on two systems of thinking, that of Goldratt, 1984 and Hara, 1998. The action plans resulting from the analysis are highlighted in Italics.

Introduction

The broad intention of the research project was to facilitate the integration of the families affiliated with FANDIC into the Foundation, that is, to achieve a closer working relationship between the families, and between the families and the committee. The committee recognized that to achieve its mission of integration of disabled children into the community, they needed to address the issues present at the family and community levels. As eloquently stated by Anthony A. Kennedy, UNICEF Representative for Central America and Panama,

If we solve the problems of childhood, we will surely have a better world tomorrow.

But the child is not an island. The child is an integral part of a family. Therefore the problems of the child are a consequence of family problems. The family, on the other hand, is an integral part of a community and many of their problems have their roots in the problems of the community. Child, family and community,

therefore, form an indivisible trilogy (Toledo, 1982 (pp. 1) (translated from Spanish)).

The first phase of the participatory research project took place between August 4/99 and September 27/99. During this time 9 workshops were held with the mothers of the disabled children and 2 meetings were held with all of the parents. Seven of the eight families affiliated with FANDIC participated.

1. Committee Objectives and Participants' Needs

The FANDIC committee established the following objectives for the research: 1) To stimulate discussion regarding the reality of disability in the home; 2) To encourage organizational and communication skills basic to group formation; 3) To develop the ability to reflect and analyze; 4) To take action leading to greater self-reliance; 5) To integrate the family members into FANDIC; 6) To build community awareness re disability. Objectives 1 & 6 were not addressed to any great extent, but considerable progress was made on objectives 2 to 5 due to a process of natural selection by the mothers.

The objectives established by the committee were general and abstract in nature. They were developed in the theoretical context of Participatory Action Research and Popular Education. The needs expressed by the mothers were concrete in nature and emerged from their daily reality. They were expressed indirectly by means of the activities of the workshops, that is, they were rarely expressed as a result of reflection and analysis. The list of the mothers' needs, in no sequence of priority, were:

- Permanent housing
- Education for their children
- Physical progress in their children
- Personal education
- Leadership skills
- Self-confidence and self-esteem

- **Training**
- **To gain greater independence through work**
- **Recreation or fun**
- **Freedom to form personal relationships**
- **Security**
- **Correct information**
- **Steady income**
- **Advocacy**
- **Ability to save**
- **Respect**
- **Legitimacy**

This list of needs will be validated and prioritized by the mothers in the second phase.

This exercise will help both the families and the committee to evaluate their strategic direction especially in regards to the new initiatives taken in the first stage, the cooperative and the housing project.

2. Motivation to Participate.

The mothers' initial motivation to participate was gratitude towards FANDIC and curiosity. In my opinion, the factors that helped them to continue their involvement were the shift from the abstract to the practical and the decision of the committee to address high priority needs, namely housing and greater financial independence. *Confirmation through individual interviews in phase 2 is required.*

3. Achievements of the group.

A significant achievement was the mothers' decision to work together as a group to form a cooperative. This decision stands in contrast to their initial 'individualistic' behaviors such as lack of attention when others were speaking and lack of trust to share personal histories. *The degree of shift from individualistic to relational type of behavior as a result of working together in the cooperative will be studied in the next phase. The*

cooperative is an important achievement because it addresses the mothers' needs for personal training and greater independence through work. *An evaluation of the cooperative will be conducted in phase 2.*

Other achievements were:

- The monitoring of daily expenditures of the household. This formed the basis of *budgeting which should be encouraged in phase 2.*
- Basic nutritional information was gained from the expenditure exercise. This should form the basis of *nutritional talks to the families.*
- Basic training of the cooperative leaders in making bulk purchases, keeping inventory, and basic accounting procedures. *Phase 2 should encourage further training in business planning and management.*
- The raising of self-confidence gained through the practice of addressing concrete issues
- The initiation of analytical and organizational skills

Achievements of a personal nature were also noted especially in two of the mothers. R. developed leadership and analytical skills as she took on her new role as cooperative leader. C. who became activated, motivated and assertive.

4. Difficulties within the Group.

The difficulties noted within the group were the lack of attention to others within the group, the reluctance to participate in some of the exercises, and irregular attendance. The most notable contradiction noted was a lack of coherence between what the participants said and did. There was a tendency toward imitation and repetition especially in the initial workshops demonstrating either a lack of trust to say what they really meant or poorly developed analytical skills. Popular Education literature indicates that lack of coherence between thought and deed, and the adoption of concepts that do not reflect reality is common, as is inexperience in expressing deep or profound needs (Leis, 1989). *The concreteness of the cooperative can be utilized to develop the skills of action based on reflection and analysis in phase 2.*

5. The Activities Generated by the Project

The two most significant activities generated were the cooperative and the housing project. They addressed the need for permanent housing, security, personal education, leadership skills, self-confidence and self-esteem, greater independence through work, steady income and ability to save. Both projects are very fragile and *need to be affirmed and strengthened in stage 2.*

6. Stages Emerging within the Project

Two distinctive stages emerged within the project - before and after the first general meeting regarding the housing project. Before the general meeting the workshops were exploratory and abstract; following the meeting they became progressively more practical and concrete. This latter had a noticeable effect on the participants' level of motivation, trust, and desire to work together. This is not a criticism of our participatory methodology but a confirmation that the open-ended approach used to help foster ownership of the project must be so. Experience in a practical endeavor now opens the way for us to explore a new range of topics such as *the discipline of saving and the development of a strategic direction for the cooperative and the housing project*, both of which require the skill of reflection, analysis and action.

7. Critical Interpretation

In phase 1, the means chosen to achieve the goal of integration of disabled children was the founding of the mothers' cooperative. How are the two related? A system of inquisitive thinking provided the answer.

Why form a mothers' cooperative? To learn skills related to business.

Why? To become more economically independent.

Why? To be able to improve family nutrition, security and education.

Why? To raise children who can defend themselves in society.

Why? So their children will be able to advance economically & educationally.

Why? So they are freed from some of the constraints experienced by their parents.

How does this lead to integration of disabled kids? Improved education and economic level gives people more options when faced with disability; it is also helpful in terms of prevention of primary and secondary disability.

Constraints identified in achieving the goal of improved education and economic level were:

- **Disability of the children**
- **Elderly age of some of the parents**
- **Poorly developed skills of the parents BOTTLENECK**
- **A culture that values (to a variable degree) the submission of women**
- **Insecurity – financial, housing, health BOTTLENECK**
- **Learning difficulties in the children**
- **Poor functioning of FANDIC committee**
- **Social discrimination**

The two constraints labeled BOTTLENECK are the most critical at this moment in that failure to address them will lead to incomplete solutions that do not have the fundamental or sustainable impact desired. That is, the partial solutions already in progress such as admission to school and therapy will not achieve the overall goal of integration of the children into the community without dealing first with these two constraints. It was therefore appropriate that the Foundation addressed the issues of skill training in the mothers and security in terms of housing in phase 1 and is imperative that it continues to do so in phase 2. *Working through this process with the families will help us establish strategic direction or to confirm the strategic direction outlined below.*

Although learning difficulties in the children was not labeled as critical at this time, it still is a matter of concern. There are disturbing indicators that not all is well with the children in school. One child has failed his first year twice and although the others are making progress it is unlikely that they will “catch up” to their peers. It is also of concern that they do not appear to be comfortable or ‘natural’ while in school. Lastly, there seems

to be some discontent amongst the teachers in the integrated program with the lack of support and direction given by the Specialized Team. *The issue of education should be explored with the mothers of the children going to school on an individual basis.*

There are likely several factors involved in the children's difficulty in learning. Some areas for exploration are: the influence of cerebral palsy on learning; the influence of poverty on learning; the influence of early childhood stimulation and play on learning; and the influence of a public system of education that values banking information instead of creative thinking. *The involvement of our children in the integration program of disabled children in the regular school system should be evaluated.* Learning in children with severe disability and living in poverty could become the theme of another research project and it is *recommended that the Foundation seek links with universities or NGOs who would be interested in working with the community and FANDIC to study this topic in depth.*

8. Strategic Direction

The primary issues that need to be addressed by the Foundation in phase 2 are:

- The employment of the men. More stable and better paying jobs would improve the economic situation within the family provided that the men are committed to the goal of saving.
- Further training of the women in business planning and management. Exercises that help the women to analyze the performance of the cooperative and to create solutions would help them develop skills that are transferable to every day life.
- Encourage a culture of saving. It has been demonstrated that people living in poverty can learn to save and that savings help reduce dependency on others in times of emergency (Otero, 1990). Savings coupled with small business activity provides a vehicle to realizing objectives related to improved nutrition, education, and health within the family.

The secondary objectives are:

- **Encourage the development of a social net between parents with disability.**
- **Investigate the possibility of enhancing skill level in the parents through local training courses**
- **Instruction on the preparation of nutritious food for families with limited resources.**
- **Investigate the impact of the educational program on the children going to school.**

9. Action Plan

- a) **Conduct individual interviews with the mothers to validate and prioritize the list of needs, to seek confirmation of motivation, to inquire about the impact of the cooperative on the family's economic level, to inquire about the functioning of the cooperative etc. This information would be collated and returned to the participants in a group meeting to serve as the basis for analysis and to establish a strategic direction not only for the cooperative but also for the project as a whole.**
- b) **An evaluation of the cooperative assessing issues such as viability, use of earnings, location, customer base etc.**
- c) **A general meeting to confirm the direction of the cooperative and the housing projects, to address the issue of saving and to discuss options for employment/income of the men.**
- d) **A talk to the parents on nutrition.**
- e) **Investigation of options for enhancing business training of the women.**
- f) **Conduct personal interviews with the mothers who have children in school.**
- g) **Continue to seek links with universities giving priority to education and health.**

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