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Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach

Patricia Maguire

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Dedicated to David Kinsey
CIE Faculty Member

1930 -- 1998

Mentor, Friend, Teacher

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FOREWORD

For those of us familiar with Pat Maguire's, <u>Doing Participatory Research</u>, the appearance of this new edition confirms that good works have a life of their own and reminds us that some books really can make a difference. For newcomers to this work, the new edition can be the start of an exciting journey into the intersections between feminism and action research.[1] My purpose in this foreword is to make the case for the significance of the book and also to advocate the further development of the ideas Pat Maguire so masterfully put before us in 1987.

<u>Doing Participatory Research</u> does not begin with a pretentious clarion call to action but with a personal narrative enclosing the sharp edge of her critique of male chauvinism in participatory research. As graduate students, we often see the inconsistencies in the theories and practices of the current generation of respected scholars and activists, but we rarely find the courage to own these criticisms fully. In Pat's case, she was astonished that the great "men" of participatory research could simply ignore women's voices while claiming universalist and

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[1] It is a shame to have to put an academic footnote in a foreword but terminology is difficult and important here. In her title, Pat uses the term "participatory research." In most of my writing, I use the term "action research" to cover practices that go by the names of participatory research, participatory action research, collaborative inquiry, and action research. I assert that they are all variants of a larger framework in which participation (both as collaboration in a process and as a political principle for making decisions), action, and research are intimately linked. Nevertheless, they are distinct practices with different histories. Pat points out to me that responses to her work have been much more robust in participatory research and participatory action research circles than in collaborative inquiry or action research ones, even though the situation now appears to be changing. This is not surprising since participatory research and participatory action research have always focused much more resolutely on the political dimensions of research.

simply ignore women's voices while claiming universalist and humane values and liberationalist practices. She simply saw with a clear feminist eye that the participatory research, at that time, was just business as usual. Seeing this so clearly and weighing the implications of confronting so many established people in the field gave her the kind of bout of self-questioning that all committed graduate students experience at critical moments. But, characteristically, Pat forged ahead with her critique and forever changed the face of action research. She wrote a book that has given a generation of readers a model of a fairer, more ethical, and expert form of social research. Her practice is theoretically informed, politically alert, personally coherent, and the issues she deals with are among the most difficult in our society: violence against women.

Because of the way Pat elected to write this book, a new reader is not likely to realize the scope of Pat's project. At the time she wrote it, located and self-referential narratives were neither popular nor professionally acceptable. We were unaware of the notion of "voice" (other than the passive voice). So, without models to build on, she reformulated social science practice to match her feminist commitments and did so by linking feminism and action research into a single, though multi-faceted, practice wound into elements of personal narrative. She did this not by telling the reader how smart and how well read she is, though I have had the good luck to get to know her personally and to know that she is a consummate scholar. Instead, she tells a story, hooks the reader to her problem by giving an effective voice to her own concerns as a feminist scholar and her desire to be honest and decent to the collaborators in her project. And like all good stories, this one has a moral: no more male business as usual in the social sciences if we want to live up to our typically pretentious assertions that the social sciences, and particularly action research, are of value to society at large.

Because she does not use the conventional apparatus of drums and trumpets at the beginning, massive literature reviews in the second chapter, and obscurantist jargonizing, the story simply imprints itself on the reader's consciousness and invokes a dialogue between her research/action practice and the reader's. This is wonderful pedagogy in action and its impact

on so many readers is no accident. Feminist action research is not just conventional social research with some added dimensions; it is a rejection of business as usual and the adoption of new forms of narrative to convey its rejection of the past.

So why is this still news and why is the book being brought out yet again? I have no monopoly on the answers but offer my own perspectives as a way of encouraging readers to think about it for themselves.

I see three interlocked dimensions in the power of this book. First, while action research has been enjoying a modest rebirth over the last decade, it has not always been so healthy. John Dewey and the other major pragmatists advocated a view of knowledge in action that would have made action research the only form of social research in the American academy. They denied the bifurcation of thought and action that Cartesianism had made appear so necessary and did so both by argument and by example. While lionized as key figures in American philosophy and the history of education, one looks in vain for signs of any use of pragmatist thinking in most educational systems. So action research arose, became popular, and disappeared.

In the 1940's, Kurt Lewin, the social psychologist, took refuge in the United States and again built up momentum for a version of action research that linked it to social psychological experiments. There was a flurry of interest in his work and he had a strong influence in Europe (particularly in England). But Lewin's work also disappeared without a trace.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the work of Chris Argyris, Donald Schön, and William Foote Whyte on action science, action research, and organizational learning attracted a small contingent of devoted followers and built on the Dewey-Lewin legacy. But even the most optimistic supporter of their work would not say that they took the academy by storm. Between the ongoing battles between the positivists, constructivists, deconstructivists, and postmodernists, one could barely hear the voice of action research at all.

What changed this picture? In my view, it was feminism. When feminism entered the scene, among its many impacts, it reopened the space for action research. By

challenging both the objectivist canon and the politically passive posture of endless academic critique, feminism recreated the link between social research, social structures, oppression, and democracy, all key elements in the action research agenda. But most feminists were unaware of action research and certainly all but a handful of action researchers had no clue about feminism. Indeed, the writings of a number of the key southern participatory action researchers, such as Paulo Freire (until very late in his life), Rajesh Tandon (until well into his career), and Orlando Fals Borda had an uncritically male bias.

Pat Maguire stepped into the space between these two frameworks, energizing her feminism with an action research agenda and giving action research a renewed political and ethical agenda as well as an epistemological basis for criticizing conventional social research. In bringing these frameworks together in her practice, Pat created a new paradigm, one that has been building ever since, to the benefit of both feminism and action research.

At least two different kinds of implications arise from this story. First, without the feminist attack on the academic citadel, action research would have continued to be a "dead letter." Second, oddly enough, Pat Maguire deserves more help than she is getting.

Having created this linkage and having entered into an intellectual and social dialogue with thinker/activists like Helen Lewis, Mary Belenky, Michelle Fine, Patti Lather, Yoland Wadsworth, Gaby Weiner, Mary Brydon-Miller, Britt-Marie Berge, Lesley Treleaven, and others, Pat still finds herself in the odd position of being the person who too often gets the call when somebody wants a piece or a presentation on feminism and action research. The very success and importance of Doing Participatory Research seems to have turned Pat Maguire into the "go to" person any time anyone needs an article, a chapter, or a talk on action research and feminism. While, for some academic entrepreneurs this would be an ideal situation, I know it frustrates Pat because she believes, as I do, that the best form of flattery for her work would be for the readers to critique, extend, and enhance it in their own practices.

Only a few male practitioners seem well schooled in feminism generally or seem to read the work of the growing group of action research/feminist scholars. But the feminist perspective now has to "be dealt with" and so Pat gets the call.

Perhaps it is time to get past this and to realize that action research and feminism are mutually necessary. In reading this wonderful book, with the author's new preface, take on the challenge if the perspective resonates with you, and add your own vision to hers. This is vital to us all because, just as feminism brought action research back to life in the academy, the academic domestication of feminism can bring both it and action research back to the verge of oblivion in short order. The action research battles for the future of the social sciences have been described but not won.

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Davydd J. Greenwood
Cornell University

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NEW PREFACE

In a six-month period in the late 1980's, I published this book, gave birth to my first child, and accepted my first full-time faculty position in academia. In the years since I initially spoke up about the androcentric nature of most participatory action research, many things have changed. This book is in its fourth printing; the older of my two daughters is entering junior high; and I am finishing my only sabbatical in thirteen years. The transitions in my life have occurred in the shadow of considerable growth of feminism. Feminist theories, scholarship, and practices have expanded so greatly that we now commonly refer to feminisms (Kemp and Squires, 1997). The plurality acknowledges women's diverse and multiple identities, locations, and perspectives as well as theoretical richness and sophistication. Theories and practices of alternative approaches to positivist social science research have expanded as well. Participatory action research, action research, and practitioner research are now referred to as sister schools of human inquiry committed to changing the world (Greenwood and Levin, 1998).

Given the advances in both feminisms and potentially liberating approaches to human inquiry and knowledge creation, what does this book still offer? The impetus for a fourth printing came not from the changes over the past years, but from the constants. Two themes reflected in this work have served as the leitmotif of my adult life. A commitment to feminist values and a commitment to participatory processes are the passionate underpinnings of my work as a community activist, parent, and educator. The lessons I learned from the project that became this book have endured for me. I learned the importance of digging where I stand, of connecting with people, of truly listening, and of struggling to act congruently with passionately held theories and values. As you read the book, I hope these lessons resonate with you.

Just as these lessons have endured, so too has deep resistance to meaningful inclusion of feminisms and feminists in participatory action research. While many action researchers ground their work in feminist theories and practices, feminism and feminists are still quite marginalized in action research (Maguire, 2000). And frankly, feminists have not wholeheartedly embraced the action of participatory action research. I have long contended that there cannot be truly emancipatory participatory action research without meaningful incorporation of feminist theories and values. I have not argued as fervently that feminism needs participatory action research, but I should. Overcoming the resistance of action research to feminisms and of feminists to participatory action research is work that needs you.

Dig Where You Stand: My first lesson has been to dig where I stand. The long haul work to transform reality, to change the world, to empower and liberate starts with "modifying the near environment " (Morawski, 1997, 677). Those working in international development assistance, community development, organizational development, or education sometimes feel compelled to change, transform, empower, or liberate *those people, over there, in that place.* Basic as it may seem, the challenge is to change the near environment. This means the organizations, institutions, and relationships in which we live and work on a daily basis (Maguire, 1996). It includes the struggle to change ourselves in those near environments. In the face of deepening human poverty, widening economic and digital gaps, and numbing interpersonal violence, focusing on the "near environment" is not narcissistic luxury, but urgent necessity. I believe that feminist participatory researchers cannot attempt or sustain change or transformation that is not part of our daily lives, part of our near environment. This *is* the point of transformation.

For me then, one of feminism's enduring lessons, and challenges, is that feminism is a way of being in the world that intimately connects theory and practice in everyday life. For example, it has taken a small team of us over ten years to collaboratively build a permanent home for the Western New Mexico Gallup Graduate Studies Center. Our center is in an extremely poor, rural, multicultural area long under-served by

state higher education institutions. Facing everything from benign neglect to direct attacks on our work, we have prevailed in bringing higher education to historically isolated communities. Our theories of education for social justice have been tested and modified through doing in our own backyard. Dig where you stand. There is work to do right there to change the near environment.

Connect: Doing participatory action research, with its triple demands of research, education, and action was, and remains a daunting task. Feminism illuminates part of what makes PAR so demanding. PAR involves creating knowledge through participatory processes in the context of human relationships. A commitment to attempt participatory action research, indeed participatory anything, is a commitment then to "be-in-relationship" (Miller, 1986). Human relationships and participatory processes in the context of such relationships take time, across time. It takes patience, vulnerability, endurance, and a willingness to accept others, warts and all. Genuine, joyful, mutually enhancing relationships, despite differences and varied power inequities, cannot be hot-housed or faked. Perhaps this is a corollary to "dig where you stand," because relationship building and connecting takes time, across time, in a place and space.

Listening, the other side of voice: Attempting anything participatory also requires, as the Dinè or Navajo say, listening with your ears, not your mouth. As a parent, an educator, and a community worker, my chronic challenge is to respectfully and openly listen, especially to things I may not want or expect to hear. Participatory processes are messy and noisy, requiring a strong stomach for ambiguity, differences, uncertainty, and surprises. In the age of instant everything, there are no short cuts to listening, through which each person's voice and the rhythm of her story is honored. While my daughters may shout, "Mom, you're NOT listening," others may be more restrained, their cultural cues subtle and difficult to discern.

As feminist facilitators and educators, we seem to continuously be fighting for institutional procedures that create and push open space for diverse voices. We know and use techniques that celebrate such voices. Yet what's the point of

promoting and celebrating "voice" if we're not really listening? I have to remind myself to consider, whose voices are missing? Who couldn't get into the space? What do the silences say?

Newcomers to any field are hungry for techniques and "how to" recipes. But feminist participatory research doesn't need more technicians. Participatory action research is like a dance. You must listen to the music to feel the beat and get the rhythm, to sway and move with your partners (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1994). You must listen to yourself. Pay attention to the voice within you that signals something's not right here. Pay attention to your annoyances and discomforts. Periodically revisit your touchstone - what *do* I believe? Are my action choices congruent with my beliefs? This, more than any "how to" checklist will help you stay the course with integrity.

Risk Action: Finally, I have learned that at some point you have to act. As you read this work, the flaws and limitations will become apparent. I hope you take encouragement from the flaws. The final enduring lesson for me has been to risk action, with its imperfections and impurities. Engaging in PAR as one route to change the world involves a willingness to risk action. I tell my daughters that ?the measure of who you are as a person is not that you are perfect and never make mistakes. Instead, it is how you recover and learn from those mistakes. I don't mean this as license for reckless thoughtlessness or insensitivity. Instead I intend it as encouragement to learn by reflection on action as we strive for congruency between our theories and actions.

So what work remains to de done? Recently, while exploring how feminisms have grounded action research (Maguire, 2000), I e-mailed the webmaster of an internationally renowned action research web site with a plea for help: "I've been searching on-line data bases and world wide websites for anything on action research and feminism. Any suggestions?" He promptly e-mailed back: "Hmm. I can't think of any either - - that's a bit puzzling, in fact. I would have thought that feminists would have been drawn to action research." Hmm yourself, I thought. I would have hoped that action researchers would have been drawn to feminism. After all these years, with only a few exceptions (for example, Greenwood and Levin, 1998; Reason and Bradbury, 2000), feminists within

participatory action research still do the heavy lifting to bridge PAR and feminisms.

Despite explosive growth, feminisms and feminists still struggle for a legitimate place in the participatory action research (PAR) world. There remain projects, trainings, books, courses, conferences, and people in PAR that continue to marginalize, even totally ignore feminist concerns such as gender, voice, multiple identities and interlocking oppressions, everyday experience, and power (Maguire, 2000). While feminism has moved from theorizing women to theorizing gender (Kemp and Squires, 1997:11), there is still scant recognition in the PAR world that men too have gender. Maleness, its privileges and costs, are usually taken for granted. While feminists and pro-feminist men encourage, push forward, and support each other and feminist issues, too often we still have to jostle for a place at the table, to create a space in the conversation for feminist voices and issues.

Similarly, the varied schools of participatory action research still fight for legitimacy in the academy, the social sciences, and real world projects. Despite mainstreaming the term "participation" in the international and community development arenas, community and academy-based educators and researchers alike have horror stories of the battles within their institutions to offer courses and trainings or approve research and projects grounded in PAR. Even in organizations where "participation" is hip, if you dig below the surface, the terminology is often not supported by deep understanding, meaningful action, internal procedures, or structural processes to support long term participation. Wherever you are as you read this book, know that there is still plenty of work for you to do to legitimize feminisms in the PAR world and to legitimize participatory approaches to human inquiry in the social sciences, feminist and otherwise.

You are not alone however. There is an incredible network of kindred people fighting, each in their own way and context, for a more just, democratic, loving world. And if you feel alone, be that voice. Others, relieved that someone has pierced the intimidating silence, will join you.

Over the years, I have worked with hundreds of teachers, counselors, school administrators, and mental health workers. As we look around and see depressing abuse, dehumanizing poverty, and inequitably distributed resources, people often ask, what motivates you to endure, to keep going, and to keep trying? This is what I say.

In my darkest moments, I close my eyes and think of the Grand Canyon. Imagine it. That grand canyon is nothing but the result of a little pressure applied consistently over a very long period of time. Be that pressure. Dig where you stand, connect, listen, and risk actions that are congruent with your deep passions and thoughtful theories.

Pat Maguire
Gallup, New Mexico
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conducive to dialogue and debate as we struggle with the contradictions of trying to "practice what we preach." Special thanks to my dearest companeras, Jenny Campos and Gudrun Forsberg, for our provocative discussions and shared sisterhood. Appreciations to Jan Droegkamp, Nanette Brey, and Gail von Hahmann for bringing me to the Women's Movement, and special acknowledgment to my dear friend Margaret McLaughlin for bringing me to the Center.

With regard to the actual work of editing and publishing, my heartfelt thanks goes to Marilyn Gillespie for her gifted editorial guidance, but even more so for the integrity she brought to the entire process, including her willingness to work through the practical side of the political issues of "knowledge creation." I thank Helen Fox for her inspired editorial suggestions and corrections that improved the final manuscript. My appreciation also goes to Greg Thompson for his editorial assistance and support on earlier drafts.

People outside these two extended families also influenced the study. My thinking on violence against women has been shaped by Susan Schecter's work and the efforts of many community-based activists working to create a world in which men do not brutalize the very women they profess to love and cherish. My willingness to attempt participatory research was influenced by the field work of Mary Brydon-Miller, also of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

I am especially grateful to the National Women's Studies Association and Pergamon Press for their 1986 Graduate Student Scholarship. The award from the Women's Studies community provided the impetus to finish the manuscript. I owe a debt to the entire feminist movement for making it possible to recognize and raise many of the questions of this study.

I also want to thank my mom and dad, the first feminists in my life, for their love and support during my many educational and professional endeavors. Finally, I thank Cal Marshall, my lifemate and best friend, for gently pushing me when necessary and always believing in me.

Pat Maguire
Gallup, New Mexico

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Opening the door to the office we shared she found me at my desk, sobbing. She knew I'd had a meeting with one of my professors. Pulling her chair up next to mine, she asked, "What's wrong? Through tears and sniffles I blurted out, "I don't understand what a paradigm is." She laughed softly. "You're crying because you don't know what a paradigm is?" I nodded yes and continued sobbing.

Personal Journal
February 1983

When I did eventually recover from the humiliation of being torn to shreds in an intellectual debate on paradigms I began to question: How could I have gotten this far without really understanding the notion of paradigms? On the other hand, I considered, what did an understanding of paradigms matter to an educator, activist and novice researcher?

At that time I had just begun to encounter this scholarly term in critiques of evaluation research on educational reform and innovation (Paulston, 1979; Patton, 1975; Papagiannis, Kless and Bickel, 1982). The discomfort I felt led me to explore the literature of paradigms in relation to social theories and research. In turn, questioning the beliefs and values underlying traditional research brought me to participatory research and eventually to feminist research. It was only later on this path, in the midst of the field work which led to this book, that I came to realize that I really *did* understand such terms as "paradigm." But my understanding was grounded in intuition and experience rather than in a philosophical

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definition. From my own experiences, such as setting up an alternative school, working on the edge of the radical psychology movement, being a Peace Corps volunteer, and being involved in feminist activism, I knew that there were often different and competing ways to view the world of education, mental health, development work, and gender relationships. At the time I could not have said that I was exploring competing paradigms in any of these fields. Yet I know that while others seemed busy searching for, perhaps even proposing answers, I was still struggling with learning what questions to ask. Considering what questions we ask is at the core of understanding paradigms, for the questions we ask are powerful shapers of the world we "see." In debate with my university professor, I had lacked a theoretical framework and the language to talk about and conceptualize what I knew about paradigms from my life experience. Thus, my experience was held inferior. In fact, I was held inferior.

That particular debate led me to understand that there are not only competing views of society, there are also different forms of social knowledge which have come to be set up as competing forms (Habermas, 1971). In essence, the hierarchy, which has been developed among forms and sources of knowledge about social reality, carries over into a hierarchy among knowers. In part, I discovered, this hierarchy of knowledge and knowers has been challenged by researchers such as Rajeesh Tandon, who believe that a certain, specialized form of knowledge has become the single most important basis for power and control in today's world (Tandon, 1981b). Knowledge production, they assert, is nearly a monopolized industry (Hall, 1979; Tandon, 1981b). Ordinary people are excluded from the increasingly more specialized and regulated industry of research. They, like me, may intuitively understand the concepts very well but lack the terminology that confers power.

This terminology is often grounded in a way of knowing called "positivism," another obscure term with a common sense meaning. Positivism recognizes only positive facts and observable phenomena ("if I can see it, measure it, record it, it's true"), and is uninterested in the causes or ultimate origins of these facts. In quantifying human beings, it neglects

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crucial aspects of life that cannot easily be measured. In addition, it also assumes that there is the social world which exists independent of people's subjective awareness of it.

Because all facts must be observed and recorded from a distance, people are treated as objects in positivist research and are considered incapable of investigating their own social reality. This treatment contributes to people's alienation from their own decision making capabilities (Freire, 1970).

My understanding, not just of my own dehumanization as a researcher, but of that of other ordinary people, led me through a process which eventually resulted in this book. The book has two parts which reflect "praxis," a dynamic interplay between theory and practice (or reflection and action). The first four chapters describe my search through the literature to understand just what the underlying assumptions of traditional research are and to compare them with alternative systems of knowledge production. The second four chapters reflect other forms of knowledge: that knowledge gained by battered women (and by this participant researcher) during our process of engaging in participatory research together.

Participatory Research: More Than a New Set of Techniques

I first become familiar with participatory research while studying at the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts. This alternative style of research uses a three-part process of social investigation, education and action to share the creation of social knowledge with oppressed people. Rather than merely recording observable facts, participatory research has the explicit intention of collectively investigating reality in order to transform it (Hall, Gillette and Tandon, 1982; Fals Borda, 1977). By linking the creation of knowledge about social reality with concrete action, participatory research removes the traditional separation between knowing and doing (Tandon, 1981b).

This three-part process of knowledge creation is more than a new set of research techniques. It is a systematic approach to personal and social transformation. Participatory

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research aims to develop critical consciousness, to improve the lives of those involved in the research process, and to transform fundamental societal structures and relationships. Chapters 1 and 2 describe and compare participatory research with more traditional, dominant social science research approaches.

Learning about participatory research in the context of the Center for International Education was significant. Over the past fifteen years, the Center community has been one of the primary forces in the development and application of nonformal education as an empowering and politicizing approach to adult and community education. Recognizing the contradictions between our education and research practices has led many of us at the Center to examine our work from a political standpoint and to think about its implications for the redistribution or con-solidation of power.

Challenging Male Monopolies

Since the 1970s, a worldwide network of education and development practitioners and researchers has developed and used participatory research in numerous community-based research projects. Likewise, the participatory research community has stimulated debate and discussion on the dif-ficulties, dilemmas, and limitations of participatory research. Yet, it was 1981 before Bud Hall asked, "How can participatory research be human-centered, not man-centered?" (1981:17). This question has yet to be adequately addressed within the participatory research community.

In 1984, I set out as a feminist to conduct participatory research. Initially I did not set out to conduct explicitly feminist participatory research or to develop a framework for it. However, a feminist outlook allowed me to notice that women occupy a peripheral, even hidden place in most participatory literature, case studies, and theoretical debates. Eventually I recognized many androcentric, i.e. male-centered, aspects which participatory research shares with positivist social science and realized that, within social investigation, a male-centered view is usually a "given." Chapter 4 describes my search through the case studies, and the androcentric aspects of the studies I found.

Using the comparison of dominant and alternative social science research paradigms in Chapter 2 as a point of departure, Chapter 5 presents a rationale for alternative paradigm approaches to knowledge creative. As such, it attempts to avoid the androcentric aspects of participatory research suggested in Chapter 4. The chapter also includes a discussion of feminist research, including the similarities and differences between feminist and participatory research.

Feminism, as used in Chapter 4 and throughout the book, refers to a worldwide movement for the redistribution of power. Feminism is a) a belief that women all over the world face some form of oppression or exploitation, b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression and c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression, whether based on gender, class, race or culture.

Learning to Do It

The framework that I finally developed is not merely theoretical. It was deeply informed by my involvement in a field-based feminist participatory research project with a small group of battered women in Gallup, New Mexico. The process of developing a framework was one of praxis, a reflection-action cycle in which I moved back and forth between reading the literature and working in the field. As I attempted to put the participatory research approach into practice I realized most poignantly the androcentric bias of the research, and began reading with a more critical perspective. This in turn made me realize the irrelevancy of many of the case studies to my experience and motivated me to create a feminist "operating plan" or framework for participatory research. Continued movement through the reflection-action cycle enriched both my critique of the literature and the field project. I also found that both participatory research and feminism had lessons to offer. Participatory research taught me the necessity of being explicit about personal choices and values in the research process. Feminism taught me to recognize that the personal is political. These experiences made me even more aware of the role that

personal values, experiences and choices play in the research process.

In Chapters 6 through 9 I describe the field project from the preliminary phase of deciding to attempt a participatory research project, to its conclusion, which included the group members' generation of information about the problems women face when they leave the battered women's shelter and recommendations to Battered Family Services regarding the need for an agency-sponsored support group for women leaving the shelter. The actual field study was conducted over a twenty-eight month period from April 1984 through July, 1986. The description of these phases is detailed and personal. I have included these in-depth descriptions, *and* my own personal reflections during each stage of the fieldwork for several reasons. First of all, as anyone who has reviewed the literature knows, there are few detailed or in-depth examples of just how to go about embarking on a participatory field research project. Even among those, few address the issue of doing participatory research from a feminist perspective. While his book is by no means a recipe or "how to" manual, nevertheless, those who are thinking about becoming involved in a participatory research project may find reading about the experiences of another participatory researcher helpful. In my own case, I was initially paralyzed with inadequacy as I compared my novice work to case studies which sounded successful and revolutionary. Perhaps reading about the flaws and shortcomings of this project will give others the courage to learn by doing.

Those who don't plan to do participatory research may also find that the description of the field study is helpful in understanding the context of participatory and feminist theory, and deepening their understanding of the framework laid out in Chapter 5. Extensive quotes and evaluation comments by the project women are included to ensure that their voices as researchers into the problems of their own lives are more fully heard and understood.

A battered woman, in this book, is defined as a woman who is in an intimate relationship in which she is physically, emotionally, or sexually abused by her partner. Partner can refer to husband, ex-husband, common-law husband, boyfriend, or lover. In addition to verbal abuse and threats, battering may

include slapping, beating, forced sex or use of weapons. The women in the field study are former battered women who have either terminated the abusive relationship or remain in a relationship with a partner who has made and kept a commitment to stop his violent and abusive behavior.

Limitations, Language and Assumptions

This study is based on several assumptions. First, I assume that there is a political nature to all we do. Our education and research efforts always have implications for the redistribution or consolidation of power (Paulston, 1976; Hall, Gillette, and Tandon, 1982). Our work, both its process and products, is never neutral. Second, I agree with Freire's contention: I consider the fundamental theme of our epoch to be that of domination, which implies its opposite, the theme of liberation, as the objective to be achieved (1070: 93). Lastly, if domination is the fundamental theme of the times, then men's domination of women is one of the central forms of oppression. I also acknowledge that women experience oppression differently based on class, color, culture, age, physical abilities, sexual preference, and our nation's place in the international economic order (Hartman, 1981; Steady, 1981; Joseph, 1981; Cole, 1986).

In a preliminary study about socialist feminist researchers' use of participatory research, Linda Abrams noted that to get a glimpse of the researchers' human face, she was forced to become "a great reader of prologues, introductions, reference notes, and appendices" (1983:1). You will not have to do that here. The forced and false dichotomy between personal politics and scholarly research is central to positivist social science and education research. As much as possible, I try to be explicit about my values, choices and feelings and to write in the first person. I have also tried to do the same for the other women researchers by including extensive quotes.

From the outset I admit that I was never a detached social scientist. The process of doing participatory research was emotionally engaging and exhausting. I spent time with the project women and their children; I got involved in their lives. I

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cared about them, laughed with them, cried with them and worried with them. Most times I was fiercely proud of them, sometimes I got annoyed and irritated with them. I was challenged to consider the dilemmas and contradiction of my own life choices. In part, participatory research forces us as researchers to questions our roles in that social world. Participatory researchers must "be with the people." By choosing participatory research, I had to constantly examine what that looked like in everyday life. Throughout the project, I questioned myself relentlessly: "How am I choosing to live my life? How am I choosing to be in the world? Whose side am I on?" I was often disappointed with my answers.

It is my hope that those of you who read this book will be challenged to reconsider the questions you ask of yourselves as researchers and of your research endeavors. As you frame your own questions, I hope you will join me and the many others who are asking of our research: "What are the implications of our work for the redistribution or consolidation of power among and between the world's women and men?" For this very question is, I believe, at the heart of feminist participatory research.

CHAPTER II

Paradigms and Research:
Different Lenses for Viewing Reality

Knowing we shared an interest in alternative research paradigms, she frequently brought articles to me. She was telling me about some new materials she had found when we suddenly both broke into hysterical laughter, remembering together that moment when I had first realized that "hermeneutics" did not refer to a Mr. Herman Neutics.

Personal Journal
May 1983

Participatory research, as an alternative paradigm research approach, is much more than a set of research techniques. In order to understand why, it is necessary to define the concept of paradigm and discuss some of the ways paradigms shape our work. In this chapter, two competing views of the nature of society will be discussed in order to create a context in which to compare certain characteristics of competing social science research paradigms.

The dominant approach to social science research has been called "traditional", "orthodox", "mainstream", or "classical." As used here, dominant social science research refers to research grounded in positivism, the view that recognizes only positive facts and observable, "objective" phenomena. The pervasiveness and often unquestioned acceptance of positivist-informed research cuts us off from serious consideration of alternative assumptions and subsequent approaches to the production of social knowledge. Positivist social science research is called "dominant" because for most social scientists and educators it is the only legitimate way to

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create knowledge. Hence, an awareness and understanding of its underlying assumptions and values, including its assumptions about the nature of society, are essential to the consideration of participatory research as another legitimate approach to the creation of knowledge.

Participatory research is based on a set of assumptions about the nature of society and about social science research that are directly opposed to the assumptions of the dominant, positivist-informed, social science research. Participatory research offers a critique of, and challenge to, dominant positivist social science research as the only legitimate and valid source of knowledge. It provides a radical alternative to knowledge production.

What Is a Paradigm and What Does It Matter?

Thomas Kuhn (1970), who has investigated scientific progress and revolutions, is known for establishing and analyzing the relationship between paradigms and scientific inquiry. His work has since been applied to the social sciences, education, and the humanities. Researchers define paradigm as "a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world" (Patton, 1975:9). Further, a paradigm is a constellation of theories, questions, methods, and procedures which share central values and themes.[1] This constellation, which develops in response to historical and cultural conditions, provides a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world we create and live in (Popkewitz, 1984). A paradigm provides a "place to stand" from which to view reality.

Within the Western intellectual tradition, assumptions about the nature of society are sometimes categorized as two, bipolar paradigms: the dominant and the alternative world views.[2] These assumptions shape and underlie explanations of

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[1] For extensive discussion of theories within different paradigms see Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Paulston (1976).

[2] Competing paradigms have also been referred to as the dominant vs.

why society is the way it is; they influence identification of appropriate goals and strategies for societal change and influence the choice and legitimation of methods for investigating social phenomenon and evaluating social change efforts (Kuhn, 1970; Paulston, 1976; Papagiannis, Klees, and Bickel, 1982; Patton, 1975; Brown and Tandon, 1983). Some might argue that bipolar categorization in itself represents a particular world view, a view of the world as dichotomous and dualistic. Nonetheless, the common device of bipolarization, used for an introductory comparison of the key concerns of the dominant and alternative paradigm view of the nature of society, is presented in the table on the next page.

Recognizing both the dangers of oversimplified dichotomies and the instructional benefits of exaggerating differences, I include this dualistic presentation in order to provide a simple framework for comparing two different views and interpretations of the nature of society. One view is primarily concerned with unity, cohesiveness, maintenance, and evolutionary change of the status quo. The other is concerned with the emancipation of people from oppressive structures. The alternative paradigm is concerned with what is possible rather than what is (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:17). The underlying assumptions of these world views are so fundamentally different that they create different lenses, or windows, from which to observe and make sense of social reality (Paulston, 1976).

The power of a paradigm is that it shapes, in nearly unconscious and thus unquestioned ways, perceptions and practices within disciplines. It shapes what we look at, how we look at things, what we label as problems, what problems we consider worth investigating and solving, and what methods are preferred for investigation and action. Likewise, a paradigm influences what we choose not to attend to; what we do not see. Kuhn noted that the framework of a paradigm is a prerequisite to perception itself (1970:113).

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radical paradigms (Papagiannis, Klees, Bickey, 1982); the equilibrium-liberal vs. critical-conflict paradigms (Paulston, 1979); the regulation vs. radical change paradigms (Burrell and Morgan, 1979); and the harmony vs. dialectical conflict paradigms (Tandon, 1981b).

Key Concerns of Dominant and Alternative Paradigm View of Society

Dominant View of Society Concerned With:

1. Maintenance or evolutionary change of status quo

2. Maintaining social order, existing systems unquestioned

3. Greater efficiency of current systems

4. Harmony, integration, and cohesion of social groups

5. Ways to maintain cohesion and consensus

6. Solidarity

7. Identifying and meeting individual needs within existing social system

8. Actuality: discovering and understanding "what is"

Alternative View of Society Concerned With:

1. Radical change

2. Transforming social systems, analyzing structural conflicts and contradictions

3. Creating more just and equitable systems

4. Contradictions between social ideals and reality

5. Ways to dismantle systems of domination

6. Emancipation

7. Current systems incapable of equitably meeting basic human needs

8. Potentiality: providing a vision of "what could be"

[Adapted from Burrell and Morgan, 1979:18; Paulston, 1976.]

The idea of dual perspectives on a single phenomenon goes to the very heart of the dichotomy between paradigms. Two scientists may look at the same thing, but because of their different theoretical perspectives, different assumptions, or different ideology-based methodologies, they may literally *not see* the same thing (Patton, 1975:22).

Just as paradigms provide a place to stand from which to view society, they also shape the form and purpose of investigating social reality. Research paradigms are based upon different sets of assumptions about the nature of society, the ways in which society should be investigated, and the kinds of knowledge that it is possible to acquire about the world (Popkewitz, 1984). The predominant research community in a discipline agrees, often without explicit or public debate, upon a particular set of research problems, the acceptable forms of knowledge, a range of inquiry strategies, and uses and purposes of knowledge (Kuhn, 1970; Popkewitz, 1984; Fay, 1975).

As noted, positivist social science research promotes itself as the only valid form of knowing. The dominant research paradigm is, of course, not without critics. Challenges to dominant research have come from the Frankfurt School and critical theory, humanistic radical action, Black sociology, phenomenology, grounded theory and existentialism.[3] The most extensive critique, one which has been influenced by critical theory, exposes the myth of value-free social science research, openly identifies with powerless people, and calls for the researcher's active involvement in social transformation movements (Horton, 1981).

Theorists often draw upon the work of Habermas (1971) to make a distinction between three knowledge inquiry processes and forms of knowledge: technical, interpretive, and critical knowledge (Popkewitz, 1984, Brydon-Miller, 1984, Fay, 1975). Attention is also given to the relationship between the forms of knowledge and the uses to which knowledge is put (Held, 1980).

The dominant paradigm in social science research has become associated with empirical-analytical inquiry. This type

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[3] For reviews of these, see Park (1978b), Horton (1981), and Hall (1975, 1979).

the social world exists as a system of distinct, observable variables, independent of the knower. Empirical-analytic inquiry generates technical information in the form of laws and theories to account for regularities in observable social behavior (Fay, 1975). This technical knowledge is used to expand power and control over people and the environment. An alternative form of knowing called symbolic, hermeneutic, or cultural inquiry produces interpretive knowledge, i.e. the understanding of the meanings given to social interactions by those involved. Interpretive inquiry uncovers how individual and group interpretations of reality influence both social actions and the intentions which social actors have in doing whatever they do (Fay, 1975:73). The focus is on understanding how human interaction produces rules governing social life, rather than on discovering universal laws of human interaction. Interpretive inquiry, is used to create the conditions for mutual understanding and consensus between members of different social orders (Fay, 1975; Habermas, 1971) as well as producing practical knowledge.

Critical knowledge, a combination of self-reflection and a historical analysis of inequitable systems, is produced by emancipatory or critical inquiry. Critical inquiry is structured to uncover the systems of social relationships and the contradictions which underlie social tensions and conflicts. Through self-reflection, analysis of social systems, and action, people come to understand and to try to change supposed "natural" constraints (Fay, 1975). Critical inquiry is used to help people see themselves and social situations in a new way in order to inform further action for self-determined emancipation from oppressive social systems and relationships. In turn, action informs reflection, and people see themselves and their social conditions more clearly. The dialectical relationship between inquiry and action or theory and practice is explicit.

Unfortunately, positivism has often been seen as synonymous with empirical inquiry and technical knowledge. Thus, rejection of the underlying assumptions of positivism is misunderstood as a naive rejection of empirical inquiry and technical knowledge (Brydon-Miller, 1984). This is not the case. Empirical-analytical inquiry methods, while often grounded in positivism, can also be non-positivist (Brydon-

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Miller, 1984; Fals Borda, 1977). The alternative social science research paradigm is, for lack of a better term, essentially anti-positivist. It rejects the underlying assumptions of positivist research, while still recognizing technical, interpretive, and critical knowledge as legitimate forms of knowing about social reality. Likewise, the alternative research paradigm recognizes and uses empirical, interpretive, and critical inquiry methods. However, the alternative research paradigm acknowledges the degree of subjectivity inherent in all forms of knowledge and inquiry systems. In contrast, positivist social science has come to recognize empirical-analytical inquiry and technical knowledge as the *only* valid source of social knowledge. It claims this knowledge can be produced objectively, that research can be value-free.

Competition between the dominant and alternative social science paradigm research is neither about inquiry methods nor merely about which form of social knowledge is most or solely legitimate. The argument is much broader. The two paradigms are based on fundamentally different assumptions about knowledge creation and the purposes for which social knowledge is generated. The competing views of the purposes of social science reflect the differences of competing views of society. On the one hand, dominant social science paradigm research supports "politically neutral" theories about social affairs that are supportive of the status quo (Fay, 1975). On the other hand, alternative paradigm research supports the production of knowledge for emancipatory interests. It encourages ordinary and oppressed people to free themselves from the mechanisms of social domination (Brydon-Miller, 1984).

When grounded in positivism, interpretive and technical knowledge takes the political, economic, and social structures, as unconnected "givens." The importance of power in social relationships is largely ignored. In this case, both knowledge forms claim to be neutral and value free, to support the status quo, to separate theory and practice, and to adhere to the formal methodological requirements of the scientific method (Popkewitz, 1984; Fay, 1975). In contrast, critical inquiry claims no neutrality; power is a central concern. Current social systems are not taken as givens. Oliveira and Oliveira note, "No

social system is unalterable. *Today's reality is not the only possible reality.* In other words, what exists, often *can* be changed" (1982:47). Critical inquiry openly seeks to uncover and change the forms and mechanisms of domination and power.

Alternative social science paradigm research acknowledges many forms of knowing and knowledge inquiry systems. Each form helps shape a different explanation of social relations, yet none has a "monopoly on truth" (Paulston, 1979). Because each inquiry system provides a different vantage point for "coming to grips with social reality," no one form of knowledge or inquiry can meet all social research needs (Popkewitz, 1984; Patton, 1975). However, while technical and interpretive inquiry may be necessary to solve many of the problems facing humankind, neither is sufficient for human emancipation and social transformation (Habermas, 1971; Brydon-Miller, 1984; Held, 1980).

Alternative paradigm research aims at exposing the mechanisms for producing, maintaining, and legitimizing social inequities and domination (Paulston, 1979). Research is one tool for radical social change through action. From the alternative viewpoint, the purpose of research is not merely to describe or uncover interpretations of social dynamics, but to do something about social contradictions and inequities (Apple, 1980; Popkewitz, 1984; Fay, 1975).

As educators, activists, or researchers, the paradigms out of which we operate directly shape and influence our work. In addition to influencing what we "see" in the world, paradigms map out expectations or operating norms within our respective disciplines. Yet many of us operate out of alternative paradigm assumptions for our education or activist practices, while accepting dominant positivist paradigm assumptions about social science research without exploring the contradictions.

Examination of the assumptions underlying competing social science research paradigms is rare. Patton, in *Alternative Evaluation Research Paradigm*, noted his concern about this:

> My concern here is two-fold: First, I am
> concerned that practitioners and adherents of
> the dominant paradigm show little awareness

about even the existence of an alternative paradigm; and secondly, I am concerned that practitioners of the dominant paradigm seem to be insensitive to and unaware of the degree to which their methodology is based upon a relatively narrow philosophical/ideological/ epistemological view of the world. (1975:10)

Given my own experience, I agree that many practitioners and researchers are not even aware that a dominant research paradigm exists. Much of its power comes from the fact that many people don't know their research practices reflect a world view at all so they cannot consciously question underlying assumptions or actively consider alternatives. Perhaps many who understand the dominant paradigm on a feeling or gut level lack the theoretical language to conceptualize and discuss alternatives. Thus, the dominant paradigm becomes more entrenched, and is assumed to be the only way of viewing or investigating the world.

Because as social scientists and educators we live "in a world of different social visions, possibilities, and contradictions" (Popkewitz, 1984:35), we must clearly understand competing options for our practices, make conscious choices, and be able to defend our choices (Patton, 1975; Paulston, 1976, 1979; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Popkewitz, 1984).

Characteristics of Dominant and Alternative Research Paradigms

This section provides a broad-brush, rather than exhaustive, overview of the characteristics of dominant and alternative research paradigms. As in the previous section, the device of presenting characteristics as bipolar opposites is used to highlight fundamental differences rather than to suggest iron-- clad dichotomies. The differences reflect competing assumptions about the nature of society and the forms and uses of knowledge. The overall framework is adapted from Patton (1975) and Brydon-Miller (1984).

The following research characteristics will be briefly described and compared:

1. Objectivity vs. Subjectivity
2. Researcher Distance vs. Closeness to Subject
3. Generalizations or Universality vs. Uniqueness
4. Quantitative vs. Qualitative
5. Social Control vs. Local Self Determination
6. Impartial Advice vs. Solidarity and Action

1. Objectivity vs. Subjectivity

Objectivity, a central and indispensable characteristic of dominant social science and educational research, assumes the existence of a social world external to individuals' consciousness:

> . . . a real world made up of hard, tangible, and relatively immutable structures. . . . The social world has an existence which is as hard and concrete as the natural world. (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:4)

Social facts are assumed to be "out there," ready and available for knowing through observation. The search for factual knowledge requires social scientists to adhere to research procedures derived from the natural sciences. These procedures are said to enable researchers to observe and analyze data in a way that minimizes and controls their personal feelings and biases. Stone noted that scientists working independently of one another should be able to observe a given phenomenon and "see" the same thing (1978:9). Thus, researchers discover social "facts," are observable by other researchers using similar methods.

The alternative social science paradigm challenge to the concept of objectivity grows out of the critique of positivism associated with the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt and critical theorists.[4] To propose that an objective social reality exists external to human consciousness and creation is to deny that social reality is humanly and socially constructed. The positivist concept of objectivity suggests that people are passive spectators rather than active subjects in the world. From an alternative perspective, the social world is humanly and collectively constructed within an historical context. Comstock explained:

> If all social processes are products of meaningful human actors, then all critical accounts must begin with the intersubjective meanings, values, and motives of historically specific groups of actors. (1980:4)

Alternative paradigm research stresses the importance of human subjectivity and consciousness in knowledge creation. This approach maintains that objectivity is an "illusion" because it suggests that it is possible to separate the subject of knowledge, the knower, from the object, the known. Patton maintained that the claim to objectivity is actually an ideology:

> . . . it is not possible for us to view the complexities of the real world without somehow filtering and simplifying those complexities. That act of filtering and simplifying affects what the observer sees because it necessarily brings into play the observer's past experiences of the world. In the final analysis, this position means that we are always dealing with perceptions, not 'facts' in some absolute sense. .

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[4] For an extensive review of this work, see Arato and Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (1982) and Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory* (1980).

. .The scientist inevitably operates within the constraints of a perception-based paradigm with ideological and political underpinnings. (1975:22-23)

2. Research Distance vs. Closeness to the Subject

The premise that researchers can be objective demands that they remain distant and detached from the subject under investigation, another characteristic of dominant paradigm research. For example, in discussion of the disadvantages of field experiments as strategies to research behavior in organizations, Stone noted:

> To the extent that a field experiment requires the researcher to maintain prolonged contact with a system, the experimenter's objectivity in studying the system may suffer. (1978:127)

Detachment from the people and systems being studied is necessary to prevent contamination of the researcher's objectivity and the usual behavior of the subjects. The dominant paradigm researcher is trained to report research results in the same detached and dispassionate manner, using the impersonal language of the third person singular or first person plural but never the first person singular (Campos, 1985; Brydon-Miller, 1984).

Objectivity requires researchers to be detached from the researched; it may also subtly promote researchers' detachment from part of themselves. Dominant paradigm researchers, who claim to be "guardians of the scientific method" (Park, 1978:5) collude in their own dehumanization. They agree to fragment themselves by compartmentalizing their lives. Beguiled by the notion of scientific objectivity, they accept the premise that it is possible, even praise-worthy, to separate their beliefs and values from their daily research work. Researchers agree to be detached practitioners, or as Horton noted, "voyeur(s), calmly taking notes" (1981:8). The work of

those researchers, whose values and passions show, is criticized on the basis that it is subjective and unscientific.

The ideology of objective, value-free, apolitical knowledge creation can result in extreme detachment or alienation. Gouldner comments on this extreme:

> . . . objectivity is not neutrality, but alienation from self and society; it is an alienation from a society experienced as a hurtful and unlovable thing. Objectivity is the way one comes to terms and makes peace with a world one does not like but will not oppose; it arises when one is detached from the status quo but reluctant to be identified by its critics, detached from the dominant map of social reality as well as from meaningful alternative maps. Objectivity transforms the nowhere of exile into a positive and valued social location. . . . Objectivity is the ideology of those who are alienated and politically homeless. (1970:103)

Alternative paradigm researchers doubt the possibility and usefulness of maintaining distance and suggest that without close, empathic, interpersonal interchange and relationships, researchers will find it impossible to gain meaningful insights into human interaction or to understand the meaning people give to their own behavior (Patton, 1975). In a jab at detachment, Reason and Rowan observe:

> Researchers actually try to know as little as possible about the phenomenon under study - it might affect the results if they knew too much. (1981: xv)

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3. Universality vs. Uniqueness

Objective and detached observations of social pheno-mena lead researchers to establish relationships among observed data and to discover patterns, laws, and theories which explain human behavior and society. According to the dominant research paradigm, the "ultimate goal of science is, of course, ordering of facts into general, consistent laws from which predictions may be made" (Bachrach, 1972: 39). Human behavior, like the physical world, is assumed to be subject to universal laws. Patton noted that social scientists are usually not interested in particular situations for their intrinsic value, but only for "the extent to which whatever relationships are uncovered can be expected to hold true for every situation" (1980:277).

The importance which dominant social science has placed on finding or making generalizations has affected methodology decisions, according to Patton, by putting emphasis on the following:

> . . . ever larger samples, inclusion of an ever increasing number of cases in research studies, and the concomitant ever greater distance from and quantification of the data. (1975:37)

This, of course, has financial implications for conducting research. Even within dominant social science, the value of universal generalizations has been questioned (Cronback, 1975; Guba, 1978; Stake, 1978). However, often the critiques attack only one particular aspect of the scientific method rather than positivism itself.

In contrast, the alternative paradigm concept of uniqueness brings the focus of research back to individuals and groups in the particular social context being investigated. The purpose of research is shifted from constructing grand generalizations for control and predictability by detached outsiders to working closely with ordinary people, the insiders,

in a particular context. The purpose is to enhance local people's understanding and ability to control their own reality.[5]

4. Quantitative vs. Qualitative

Positivist research has come to be identified almost exclusively with empirical-analytical inquiry. Likewise, empirical research has been considerably narrowed as it allows only that data which is quantifiable. So inquiry depends on the collection of quantifiable data with analysis dependent on increasingly complex mathematical formulas. Even when interpretive inquiry is acceptable in the dominant research paradigm, it is considered second class.

Some dominant and alternative paradigm research advocates argue that both quantitative and qualitative research methods are necessary. Both groups would also agree that in its current state, the social sciences hold quantitative research in higher regard. The status hierarchy of methodology is obvious, ". . .the harder the data, the more scientific the results, and the higher the status" (Patton, 1975:12). "Hardness of data" refers to the degree to which numbers can be assigned to the subject under investigation and manipulated through statistical techniques (ibid.). In the extreme, the dominant paradigm researcher might caution: "If you can't measure it, don't study it." As a consequence of the fixation on quantitative data, important social phenomena are not investigated if they cannot easily be reduced to measurable variables and sometimes complex, social phenomena are reduced to nearly meaningless, "statisticalized" component parts.

5. Social Control vs. Local Self-determination

Objectivity, detachment, and generalizable laws about social phenomena are essential to the ultimate, though often unrecognized, purpose of dominant paradigm social science

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[5] For greater detail see Park (1982), "From Universalism to Indigenization."

research, i.e., knowledge for the explanation, prediction, and control of human behavior and social events. For example, in discussion of psychology as a "scientific discipline," Bachrach noted:

> A psychologist cannot function effectively as a scientist unless he accepts the assumption that behavior is lawful and understandable, recognizing also the somewhat chilling fact that the scientific goal is control of behavior. (1972:48)

Gouldner observed that the natural sciences presume that through scientific knowledge, people can control the rest of the universe (1970). In imitation of the natural sciences, "scientific" social science promotes the use of social science knowledge to control other humans (Popkewitz, 1984). Furthermore, only certain humans acquire and manage this control. Because they often work in the interest of dominant groups for the maintenance of the status quo, policy makers and politicians attempt to correct social problems and manage social change when provided with adequate information by researchers.

Predictability and control are closely related in the dominant approach to social science research. "It should be apparent that once we are able successfully to predict events we achieve a degree of control over them" (Bachrach, 1972:52). Concern with increased social control as an outcome of the research process is mirrored in the researcher's attempt to control all aspects of the process. In other words, to increase the quality of generalizations and predictions made the researcher uses a standard range of methods to control the research situation and subjects.

Alternative paradigm research notes the political aspects of supposedly value-free dominant paradigm research. Who benefits from the enhanced capacity for prediction and control? Much (though by no means all) research is undoubtedly big business. It becomes the "servant" of those who foot the bill. "It answers their questions" (Reason and Rowan, 1981:xv). It solves their problems or their perception of the problem. Likewise, it increases the power of elite groups to

control and dominate other social groups. Research is not a neutral tool for the creation of supposedly "apolitical" knowledge.

Alternative paradigm researchers stress collaborative or participative inquiry in which control over both the research process and product is more equally shared between researcher and participants. They maintain that research should be useful in improving the life conditions of oppressed people. Both the process and outcomes should put more power and control in the hands of the oppressed. Research should give them a voice in articulating their perception of their problems and relevant solutions. In this way, research can become a tool for self--determined social transformation rather than for the maintenance of inequitable social relations.

6. Impartial Advice vs. Solidarity and Action

Because of the assumptions of dominant paradigm research, researchers are expected to be able to produce know-ledge in an objective, impartial manner, and to remain impartial about the consequences of using that knowledge (Rowan, 1981). Application of the findings to real problems in the social world is left to policy makers, politicians, and experts. The commonly heard expression, "We just build bombs, we don't decide where to drop them," reflects the extreme case of such a separation between research and action.

Alternative paradigm researchers dispute the claim to impartiality. Researchers produce knowledge and knowledge, regardless of its form, is power. The New Paradigm Research Manifesto asserts:

> Research can never be neutral. It is always supporting or questioning social forces, both by its content and by its method. It has effects and side-effects, and these benefit or harm people. (Reason and Rowan, 1981:489)

The researcher, consciously or not, is in quiet collusion with either those who have power or those who don't. Of

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course, many researchers never question the implications of their acceptance of dominant paradigm research assumptions. Their acceptance of the status quo is unconscious. Many are well-intentioned, caring, and concerned people, attempting to live up to the standards of their discipline to produce knowledge useful to the solution of pressing social problems. Few are encouraged to "question the questions" or the philosophical underpinnings of social research. As Patton (1975) noted, they are truly unaware of alternatives.

Why Does One Paradigm Dominate?

What explains the near strangle-hold the dominant positivist research paradigm has on social scientists? Ritzer pointed out:

> One paradigm wins out over another because its supporters have more *power* than those who support competing paradigms and *not* necessarily because their paradigm is 'better' than its competitors. (1975:156-157)

Paulston aptly summarized resistance to alternative paradigm research:

> Given the potentially subversive nature of critical evaluation approaches to established privileged groups, it is perhaps not difficult to explain why this type of evaluation has been so long ignored and/or suppressed. (1979:21)

Promotion and enforcement of the primacy of the dominant research paradigm happens in varied ways. Most social scientists receive their initial training and socialization to their discipline's norms within university settings. Professors using the positivist-informed scientific method in their own work "nurture students in a commitment to that same methodology" (Patton, 1975:6). In a less-than-nurturing manner, professors often pressure students to follow dominant

research approaches without adequately identifying and understanding its underlying assumptions. Students who question the dominant approach may represent a threat to professors who don't. Anxious to produce work acceptable to their major professors, students, who have relatively less power than the faculty, fall in line.

Many social scientists are hard at work trying to attain for their respective disciplines equal status with the natural sciences. They use dominant research paradigm approaches to prove that the social sciences are real "sciences" (Filstead, 1970). Social scientists consistently using alternative research approaches have more difficulty getting their work published and finding grants and sponsors for their work (Patton, 1975). Given the reward structure in academia and other research settings, such researchers hurt their chances for promotion and tenure (Reinharz, 1981; Patton, 1975). Even radical social scientists succumb to the pressure to utilize dominant approaches in order to "have their arguments receive attention" (Papagiannis et al., 1982:269).

Some alternative paradigm theories are not easily accessible to ordinary people. For example, the language and concepts of theories such as Marxism, critical theory, and feminism often create barriers to understanding. Try asking an average college student the meaning of terms such as historical materialism, epistemology, ontology, patriarchy or hermeneutics. Even within the alternative paradigm, power and authority come from being able to understand and discuss alternatives using accepted terminology and concepts. Therefore, while one paradigm is so predominant that many hardly question it, the theories, language, and concepts of the other are not easily understood by nonscholars.

As this study suggests, promoters of alternative paradigm research do exist within university settings. Indeed, some professors who promote a direct relationship between research and social justice efforts can survive within the traditional university. More often than not, students must actively seek out such mentors and role models. Nonetheless, there is encouraging evidence of a crack in the dominant paradigm wall.

Implications of Choosing a Paradigm

Neither technical nor interpretive knowledge is, by itself, is sufficient to address the problems facing humankind. Critical knowledge is necessary. However, regardless of the form or source of knowledge, alternative paradigm research maintains that knowledge must be put to use for emancipatory purposes. The oppressed must have an equitable role in the production and utilization of knowledge .To consciously chose alternative paradigm research is not, then, a choice to validate only one form or source of knowledge. Instead, it is a choice to recognize a range of knowledge forms and inquiry systems which produce knowledge for the explicit purpose of human emancipation.

Thus, every aspect of our work is influenced by the particular paradigms out of which we choose to operate. Perhaps the most dangerous position is one of blind and tacit acceptance of any paradigm without conscious and critical exploration of the choice-making involved and implications of those choices. Making explicit choices forces us to come to grips with our own values. Who and what purposes does our work serve? As C. Wright Mills (1961) asked: " Whose problems do we try to solve through our work?" We are forced to abandon the myth and safety of neutral, value-free work, be it education, activism, or research. Becker articulated part of the challenge:

> *The question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side are we on?* (1970:15)

We must challenge ourselves further. When we know whose side we are on, how will we demonstrate that in our everyday life and work, including our research?

CHAPTER III

Adjusting the Lens:
Participatory Research

We were talking, as usual, about research proposals and dissertation research. The conversation got around to the obvious contradiction between our approaches to education and research. He mentioned something called participatory research where you did research "with" rather than "on" people. I've got to find out about this.

Personal Journal
September 1983

This chapter focuses on participatory research, one alternative paradigm approach to social science and educational research. Participatory research offers a way to openly demonstrate solidarity with oppressed and disempowered people through our work as researchers. In addition to recognizing many forms of knowledge, participatory research insists on an alternative position regarding the purpose of knowledge creation. The purpose of participatory research is not merely to describe and interpret social reality, but to radically change it. Furthermore, the intent is to transform reality "with" rather than "for" oppressed people. Participatory research places human self-determination, emancipation, and personal and social transformation as the central goals of social science research (Horton, 1981; Brydon-Miller, 1984).

The chapter defines participatory research, discusses its origins and underlying assumptions, outlines its approach, and identifies some of the issues in doing participatory research.

Defining Participatory Research

Participatory research combines three activities:

investigation
education
action

It is a method of social **investigation** of problems, involving participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and solving. It is an **educational** process for the researcher and participants, who analyze the structural causes of named problems through collective discussion and interaction. Finally, it is a way for researchers and oppressed people to join in solidarity to take collective **action**, both short and long term, for radical social change. Locally determined and controlled action is a planned consequence of inquiry (Hall, 1979, 1981; PR Network, 1982).

The direct link between research and action is perhaps the most unique aspect of participatory research. Combining the creation of knowledge about social reality with concrete action on reality removes the traditional research dichotomy between knowing and doing (Tandon, 1981b; Hall, 1981). Participatory research aims at three types of change, including the following:

- Development of critical consciousness of both researcher and participants;
- Improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process; and
- Transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships.

The investigation, education, and action components of participatory research are collective processes. The investigative component begins with collective problem posing. Ideally, a community group, working with a researcher, names existing problems which they want to eliminate or change. These existing community problems become the basis for research (Hall, 1981). Together they try to understand why and how the problem exists, particularly focusing on what Park calls

the "human-made" nature of the problem (1978b:24). By looking at the why's and how's of the problem, the group investigates the concrete and complex social reality in which they live but may not thoroughly understand.

Collective inquiry builds group ownership of information as people move from being mere objects to acting as subjects of their own research process. Research is demystified by involving people in deciding what to investigate, what questions to ask, how to gather information, and how to organize and use information (PR Network, 1982:38).

Participatory research includes an educational component to assist people to further develop skills in collecting, analyzing, and utilizing information. The educational process is potentially liberating as it provides a way for people to develop an increasingly critical understanding of social problems, their underlying causes, and possibilities for overcoming them (PR Network, 1982:1).

By learning through doing, people strengthen their awareness of, and belief in, their abilities and resources for organizing (Brown and Tandon, 1983). Having identified and investigated important problems in their lives, people can decide how to use the knowledge and skills gained. While direct community action is an intended outcome of participatory research, people may also decide not to act at a particular point in time. The important point is that those involved in the production of knowledge are involved in the decision making regarding its use and application to their everyday lives.

Collective investigation, education, and action are important to the re-humanizing goal of participatory research. By treating people as objects to be counted, surveyed, predicted, and controlled, traditional research mirrors oppressive social conditions which cause ordinary people to relinquish their capacity to make real choices and to be cut out of meaningful decision making. The collective processes of participatory research help rebuild people's capacity to be creative actors on the world.

The three-pronged participatory research process is more than a new set of techniques. It is a systematic approach to radical social transformation grounded in an alternative paradigm world view. The ideological foundation of participatory research is in open opposition to the underpinnings of dominant social science research. The core issue in participatory research is power. The objectives of participatory research include the transformation of power structures and relationships as well as the empowerment of oppressed people. Transformation not only requires a critical understanding of current and historical social realities, but it is also a vision of what a just and loving society should be (Horton, 1981; Park 1978a).

Origins of Participatory Research

Participatory research has emerged from and has been influenced by other movements which share a vision of society without domination. These movements within international development, adult education, and the social sciences communities have questioned the processes and purposes of their respective fields. They have asked whether their work is a force for the continued domination or for the liberation of oppressed and marginalized people. Participatory research emerged from the concrete experience of such people coming face to face with the politics of their work and concluding that Freire's (1970) observation was right: domination is the fundamental theme of our epoch and liberation is the goal.

The emergence of participatory research can be linked to the following three trends:

- radical and reformist reconceptualizations of international economic development assistance;

- the reframing of adult education as an empowering alternative to traditional educational approaches; and

- an ongoing debate within the social sciences, challenging the dominant social science paradigm.

(Hall, 1979; Tandon, 1981b; Horton, 1981; Vio Grossi, Martinic, Tapia, and Pascal, 1983).

Alternative Critiques of International Development

In the 1960s and 1970s, the failed policies of more than a quarter century of international development assistance came under scrutiny by both the development industry and its critics. Despite development efforts, the absolute number and percentage of the world's people living in oppressive poverty continue to increase daily. In fact, such poverty is increasingly visible in the industrialized "first world" (Tandon 1981b). Tandon observed that frustrated development policy makers and administrators "called for something new." That something new included a search by the development assistance community for ways to bring the poor more rapidly into full participation in development decisions, processes, and benefits.

Other critiques of mainstream development approaches emerged, spurred by the work of dependency theorists, such as Andre Gunder Frank (1973) and Celso Furtado (1973). Dependency theorists pointed out that unequal relationships of international trade and investment between the technically advanced and third world nations set up dominant-dependency relationships (Kindervatter, 1979). One consequence for Third World nations is their inability to accumulate the capital necessary for self-directed and controlled development. Because of the inequitable patterns of capitalist accumulation, "development in one part of the world is premised on and has generated underdevelopment in another" (Brydon-Miller, 1984:16). Critics of international development assistance observed that this assistance, termed "assistencialism," attacks the symptoms rather than the causes of poverty by ignoring dependency relationships (Gutierrez, 1973; Freire, 1981).

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Schemes aimed at integrating marginal people into development leave intact the very economic, political, and social structures which support the maintenance of poverty (Heatley, 1979; Vio Grossi et al., 1983). Development approaches of both Western powers and state socialism of the varieties found in China and the Soviet Union have come under attack (Harasim, 1982; Kassam, 1982). Rather than promote ordinary and oppressed people's increased participation in unaltered systems of domination, the critics call for radical transformation of systems and relationships based on domination.

Critics of assistencialism also recognize that people, as well as relationships and systems, must change. Goulet noted:

> All is lost, in spite of glittering appearances, if material objects and social structures are formally altered but human subjects are left powerless as before. . . . The goal of land reform, as in all developmental change, is to transform people, not merely to change structures. (In Freire, 1981:xiii)

Adult Education as a Source of Participatory Research

During this same period, both in the Third World and in the West, adult educators were also questioning traditional practices. Criticizing mainstream international development assistance, spokesmen for Third World adult educators challenged traditional education which nurtures social relationships based on dominance (Freire, 1970, 1981; Nyerere, 1969).[1] Among this group, Paulo Freire has had a strong influence. Freire emphasized the importance of critical consciousness or "concientizacao" for social change. To develop critical consciousness is to learn to perceive economic,

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[1] The use of the term "spokesmen" is intentional. See Gayfer (1980) and Yanz (1986) for a discussion of male-domination of international adult education policy making and advocacy groups.

political, and social contradictions and take action to change oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970).

Within the southern United States, as early as the 1930s, Myles Horton and those at Highlander Center had recognized adult education as a powerful vehicle for social change (Adams, 1975). The Highlander Folk School began working with poor Appalachian mountain people to use education as a tool to question and challenge an unjust society, particularly in the areas of labor and civil rights. Highlander remains a moving force in participatory research and has incorporated the principles and processes of empowering adult education into the research process. For them education is another vehicle for transforming people and unjust social structures.[2]

Another small group of adult educators which continues to have a prominent place in participatory research, particularly as practitioners, is the Participatory Research Network, sponsored in 1977 by the International Council for Adult Education. Participants in the network are united by dissatisfaction with the existing social order, their commitment to change social inequities in partnership with poor and marginal peoples, and their commitment to utilize education and research approaches which actively involve local people (Participatory Research Network, 1982:3).

A well known participatory researcher, Bud Hall has been influential in bringing knowledge about participatory research practices to adult educators (1975). Hall shared the story of his personal journey into the realm of participatory research based on four years practicing and teaching adult education research in an adult education institution in Africa. After being involved with two survey research projects, Hall concluded that traditional research methods were inconsistent with the principles of adult education. Adult education is built on a philosophy and set of techniques which treat adult learners as "whole people participating actively in the world" (Hall, 1975:28). Yet adult education researchers were using methods

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[2] For discussion of education for empowerment and social change, see Kindervatter, 1979; Adams, 1975; Wren, 1977.

which treated adults as passive objects, incapable of active involvement in the research process.

Another Third World participatory researcher, Rajesh Tandon, (1985) captured the contradiction experienced by practitioners in the field: "Adult education research still treated adult learners as children. 'We know. You don't know.'" The hidden message of research methods was similar to the hidden curriculum of traditional education (Illich, 1972; Farber, 1972). Ordinary people were considered incapable of understanding and controlling their lives. Domination by the powerful through their managers, "the experts," was legitimized.

The dissatisfaction felt by adult educators and development workers is part of the ongoing social science debate discussed earlier. Hall notes that the North American-European version of the dominant social science paradigm, including research practices, has been imposed on the Third World through a combination of scholarships, exchange programs, and training opportunities (1979). Despite this imposition, there has been a Third .World reaction to "research methods which, giving an illusion of objectivity and scientific credibility, become another manifestation of cultural dependency" Hall (1981:8).

As we have seen, participatory research builds on critiques of the domination inherent in mainstream development, education, and the social sciences. Taken individually, the premises of participatory research are not unique. Rather, as Horton pointed out, participatory research is unique in integrating the premises into a systematic approach to social change (1981:1).

Underlying Assumptions

Participatory research assumes that there is a political nature to all we do; all of our work has implications for the distribution of power in society. Given this assumption, there can be no neutral or value-free social science. Participatory research requires that researchers be clear about where they choose to stand regarding the daily struggles of oppressed people (Horton, 1981).

Participatory research begins with the premise that knowledge has become the single most important basis of power and control (Tandon, 1981b). Furthermore, one particular form of knowledge, technical or "scientific," has become the only legitimate form. Knowledge production has become a lucrative business. It is, in fact, a monopolized industry with knowledge itself as the commodity, (Hall, 1979; Tandon, 1981b).

Given this framework, ordinary people are rarely considered knowledgeable, in the scientific sense, or capable of knowing about their own reality. They are excluded from the increasingly more specialized research industry, barred by requirements of the "scientific method," and by intimidating concepts and jargon, money, time, skills, and experience. In addition to being excluded from meaningful participation in knowledge creation processes, oppressed and ordinary people are subjected to research processes which treat them as objects and things. Hence, traditional research processes are often alienating and dehumanizing. Decisions which ultimately shape the lives of the poor and even the middle class are increasingly made by experts. Consider, for example, the Reagan Administration's recent denial of the existence of widespread hunger in America. Studies documenting this hunger were dismissed on the grounds that they were based on "mere anecdotal" rather than "scientific evidence." Strict adherence to the procedures of the dominant research model becomes more important than actual social problems.

Experts' assessment of common people's inability to "know" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Taught to believe they cannot adequately understand their own lives, and deprived of participation in inquiry processes which might enhance their understanding, ordinary people simply stop trying. Freire commented on this:

> But too often, the ordinary person is crushed, diminished, converted into a spectator, maneuvered by myths which powerful social forces have created. . . The greatest tragedy of modern man is his domination by the force of these myths. (1981:6)

This "ordinary person" is not only the illiterate or the poor. Thousands of people in the most industrialized nations are immobilized by these myths. Building on the work of Lukacs (1971), Shor noted:

> As a result of this mystery, poor and middle class alike often put their energy into beating rather than changing a system which they assume is beyond their comprehension or control (Shor, 1980).

In a vicious cycle, people do often lack the information, skills, and experience to critically understand and analyze the social structures and relations which shape their powerlessness (Ellis, 1983; Tandon 1981b). Their lack of information and preoccupation with daily survival interferes with their understanding of how power structures work, and affect their lives (Tandon, 1981b). Therefore, the oppressed often share the oppressors' viewpoint, blaming themselves for their own poverty and powerlessness. Tandon commented on this:

> I've found. . . the poor farmer unaware of systematic causes of his poverty - impoverishment. . . If I agree with him blindly, the only possible explanation for his poverty is his own stupidity, ignorance, incompetence. (1982:85)

One of the greatest obstacles to creating a more just world is the power of the dominant hegemony, "the ideological oppression which shapes the way in which people think" (Participatory Research Network, 1982:43).

Herein lies a dilemma for the participatory researcher. To purposefully embark on a research approach that promotes oppressed people's empowerment as an explicit goal requires a belief that people need empowerment, or conversely, that people are oppressed and powerless. Likewise, it requires a belief that this research approach can make a contribution to social change. A participatory researcher must find a balance

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between assuming that oppressed people fully understand their own oppression and the researcher does not, or conversely, that the researcher fully understands the truth about people's oppression, and they do not.

Participatory researchers caution against either dichotomy: "They know, I don't know." or "They don't know, I know." Instead, participatory research offers a partnership: *We both know some things; neither of us knows everything. Working together we will both know more, and we will both learn more about how to know.* Participatory research requires that both the researcher and researched be open to personal transformation and conscientization. Participatory research assumes that both parties come to the research process with knowledge and experience to contribute.

Participatory research assumes that the oppressors' power is, in part, derived from their control of both the process and products of knowledge creation. Dominant groups also have the power to shape what is considered "common knowledge." For example, many battered women believe the myth perpetuated by abusers and many societal institutions that the violence women experience is somehow their own fault. Women, we are told, provoke men's abusive behavior. That myth is supported by hundreds of messages about women's "irrational behavior" and inferior status. The entertainment and pornography industries, both male controlled, lend credence to the belief that "women enjoy violence." That line of thinking asks, "Why else do women stay in abusive relationships?" Important questions, such as "Why do men brutalize women in love relationships?" and, "How does society support such violence?" are ignored. The ability to shape both common and scientific knowledge is a source of power for dominant social groups.

In order to produce and share more critical knowledge, participatory researchers abandon the dominant research tenets of detachment and unilateral control of the research process and products. When the objects of research are considered incapable of understanding their lives and reality and the researchers are considered capable of separating knowing from feeling, the detachment of researchers from the researched seems logical. However, when you start with other assumptions

about people, detachment hinders rather than helps the research process.

Participatory research assumes that ordinary people, provided with tools and opportunities, are capable of critical reflection and analysis. Given this premise, establishing reciprocal, empathic adult relationships between the researcher and the researched no longer endangers knowledge creation. Instead, it improves the possibility of jointly creating a more critical understanding of a given reality.

The principle of shared power is central to participatory research. Power sharing begins with a shift in the most basic power relationship in research, the relationship between the researcher and the research participants. Participatory research is structured to shift the power and control of decision making and decision taking increasingly into the hands of the participants.

Involving research subjects as partners in the entire research process also increases the potential to distribute the benefits of the research process more equitably. When the objects of research become subjects and partners, they benefit not only from the opportunity to learn about and understand their own reality, but also by sharing directly in subsequent policy and program decision making and control.

Participatory research proposes returning to ordinary people the power to participate in knowledge creation, the power that results from such participation, and the power to utilize knowledge. A deep and abiding belief in people's capacity to grow, change, and create underlies this democratization of research. Participatory research assumes that returning the power of knowledge production and use to ordinary and oppressed people will contribute to the creation of a more accurate and critical reflection of social reality, the liberation of human creative potential, and to the mobilization of human resources to solve social problems (Hall, 1975).

Clearly, participatory research is one tool, not a panacea, for empowering people to build just communities and, ultimately, a just world. Vio Grossi's observation helps us maintain a perspective on participatory research that avoids both extremes - defeatism or romanticism:

We know that we have two main alternatives: either to continue debating about structural reform, as if we were demonstrating that knowledge itself is able to transform reality, or, to act collectively upon reality, making use of its potentiality, and overcoming its limitations in order to achieve sooner than later, the final victory. . . participatory research has opted clearly for the second alternative. (1981:50)

Phases and Guidelines for Conducting Participatory Research

There are numerous models within the literature for conducting participatory research (Marshall, 1981; Le Boterf, 1983; Fernandes and Tandon, 1981; Park, 1978a). Each model is usually presented as one possible approach among many, carefully avoiding the claim that there is or should be only one way to do participatory research. Cautions are made that in each case, the actual model must evolve out of and in response to the unique conditions and context of the specific situation (Le Boterf, 1983; Vio Grossi, Martinic, Tapia, and Pascal, 1983).

While noting the impossibility of constructing a generalized participatory research model, Vio Grossi, Martinic, Tapia, and Pascal (1983) identified five phases common to actual participatory research projects. Likewise, Hall (1975, 1981) has identified principles or guidelines for conducting participatory research. This section integrates many of Hall's guidelines into the five phases identified by Vio Grossi et al. (1983). Note that while collective investigation, education, and action often occur sequentially, these three activities can also occur in a variety of combinations in many of the phases; they do not necessarily occur in a linear sequence. Similarly, different participatory research projects put differing emphasis on the three activities.

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Phase 1: **Organization of the Project and Knowledge of the Working Area**

The initial phase includes gathering and analyzing existing information about the research area and about the central problems faced by people. A project usually focuses on a particular group of exploited or oppressed people, for example, laborers, immigrants, indigenous people, or women. This phase may occur prior to entry into an area as well as during the initial stage in the community. The phase includes establishing relationships with community organizations, leaders, and institutions. At this point, the researchers either invite particular organizations to participate in the project or respond to a community request. A key guideline is that the research problem should originate in the community (Hall, 1975, 1981).

Phase 2: **Definition of Generating Problematics**

In this phase, numerous techniques and processes are used to enable both researchers and participants to identify and understand participants' perceptions of their most significant problems. Problem-posing continues as a dialogue over time, each phase takes the researchers and participants to a deeper and more critical understanding of reality as perceived and experienced by both participants and the researcher.

Phase 3: **Objectivization and Problematization**

The third phase attempts to link participants' individual interpretations of problems to the broader context, including the structural conditions of social reality. As noted, ordinary and oppressed people often lack the skills and information for a critical analysis of their situation. Collective educational activities can be important in this phase to help participants further examine their interpretations as well as to identify and to discuss the broader causes of their problems. By the end of this phase, the researchers and participants have compiled the

questions and themes which will be investigated. Note that in each phase, participants are increasingly more involved in controlling decision making and taking in the project. Likewise, each phase is itself an educational experience that helps participants and researchers increase their understanding of problem solving and commitment to it. Each phase strengthens the participants' awareness of their own resources and abilities for mobilization and action.

Phase 4: **Researching Social Reality and Analyzing Collected Information**

Having defined the main problem themes and posed related questions, the researchers and participants should ideally design a process to investigate specific problems together. Participants can be involved to varying degrees and through various methods in information gathering, classification, analysis, and conclusion building depending on their training and the design of the project. In this phase, participants develop their own theories and solutions to problems (Hall, 1975). However, for new knowledge to increase people's power, it should be applied to creative strategies and action for social transformation.

Phase 5: **Definition of Action Projects**

Finally, researchers and participants decide on what actions to take to address the problems that they have collectively defined and investigated. In this way, both the process and products of research, can be of direct and immediate benefit to those involved. Ordinary and oppressed people move from being objects to being the subjects and beneficiaries of research. Likewise, researchers move from being "detached extractors of information" to involved activists (Park, 1978a:9).

Difficulties and Limitations
of Participatory Research

Advocates of participatory research make no pretense that this alternative approach will, by itself, create "the revolution." Park wrote candidly about a community-based research effort:

> It is not the intent of the paper to create the impression that this modest research action achieved lofty goals of liberating the participants in the project. . . . No revolution resulted. (1978a:20)

While endorsing participatory research as one approach that can make a contribution to the long-haul struggle to create a just world, most advocates acknowledge impediments and limitations. The Participatory Research Network declared that its members "do not underestimate the obstacles to effective social change" (1982:4). As Tandon (1985) noted in reference to his personal assessment that most of his experience with participatory research had been a failure, "We simply underestimated people's passivity." Others caution that participatory research is neither the long awaited miracle solution nor an overnight magic (Horton, 1981; Kanhare, 1982). However, participatory researchers must avoid the tendency to imply that their style of research is the only research approach that can contribute to social transformation.

An exhaustive analysis of the difficulties and limitations of engaging in participatory research is beyond the scope of this work. However, a discussion of several of these drawbacks will be discussed and will suggest topics for exploration in greater depth.

One difficulty is that participatory research makes great demands on researcher. The researcher's role is expanded to include educator and activist and in this role the researcher is expected to take a value position and act accordingly (Horton, 1981). The participatory researcher is also called upon to transfer organizational, technical, and analytical skills to participants. This transfer of skills is not easy to accomplish

(Participatory Research Network, 1982). It requires commitment, teaching skill, and the ability to set up a project structure and processes to facilitate the transfer. Furthermore, the researcher must have access to financial and institutional resources. While all this is difficult enough for a research team to accomplish, the lone researcher may be overwhelmed with work and hampered by the lack of financial and institutional support. Differences between conducting participatory research as a team or as a lone researcher should be further explored.

Ideally, participatory research is initiated at the request of a community group which is involved in the entire research process. Realistically, participatory research projects are more likely to be initiated by outside researchers. Given this, transfer of project control from researchers to participants is difficult. Under what circumstances is the greatest transfer of project control most likely? This area needs further attention.

Although the research problem should originate in the community, the literature is vague about how the research problem makes itself known (Horton, 1981). The literature does note numerous problems with identifying, establishing, and building relationships with community-based groups that represent the oppressed and powerless. Park (1978b) noted that although a community may have "feelings" about problems requiring attention, it rarely articulates those feelings as "topics for investigation" There may not even be a group to voice the collective opinion of oppressed sectors as the oppressed "do not readily form groups. . . to do research to better their lives" (Marshall, 1981:3). The "oppressed" or "the people" are not an undifferentiated, homogenous mass. Therefore, even within popular people's organizations, the most oppressed still remain under represented and powerless. For example, in the Jipemoyo Project with Tanzanian pastoralist, Mduma noted:

> . . . it appears that only the rich pastoralist who had a bigger stake in getting more services for their livestock participated in participatory research seminars. (1982:33)

Organizations and leaders who act as advocates for different sectors of the oppressed may have little actual

commitment to power sharing, community-based participation, or democratic organizational structures and procedures. Instead such leadership may attempt to use participatory research projects to enhance their own power base (Vio Grossi, 1982b; Colletta, 1982).

These difficulties and limitations revolve around the issue of people's organizations. On the one hand, the importance of organizations to oppressed people's mobilization and participation in development efforts is well supported by rural development research (Uphoff, 1979; Korten, 1980). Likewise, Horton (1981) claims that participatory research requires some organizational entity. On the other hand, the most oppressed are precisely the least likely to have already developed their own advocacy organizations. For this reason, Tandon (1981d) noted that creation of an organization of "have-nots" may be an outcome of participatory research projects. In situations where an organization directly or indirectly representative of oppressed sectors does not exist prior to a project, under what conditions is creation of an organization most likely to happen? What conditions increase the chances for permanency and self sustenance of groups or organizational structures created specifically for participatory research projects?

Vio Grossi (1981) observed that there is no inherent guarantee that the practice of participatory research results in the actual increase of power among oppressed people. Power has a material base, which may include financial and organizational resources. Without a material base, increased knowledge may be insufficient for increased power and action. Vio Grossi pointed out:

> We would be naive if we asserted the idea, totally unsupported by experience, that people only have 'to know' in order to mobilize. (1981:47)

People require both the will and the resources to participate and act collectively (Elden, 1981). The development and enhancement of popular organizations may contribute to the long-term continuation of project benefits for participants.

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More attention should be given to the conditions which enhance possibilities for mobilization either short-term or sustained over the long haul.

In regard to the difficulties involved in accepting outside support for participatory research projects, the Participatory Research Network warned, "It is a strategic choice to use institutional resources for work aimed at social change" (1982:43). The choice is not between acceptance and refusal of institutional resources. Participatory research simply cannot take place without some combination of institutional resources, human, financial, and material. For example, in reference to the Tanzanian CTT Rural Education Project, Mshana and Bita wrote:

> Although the research was carried out within an existing institutional framework. . . there was still the advantage of providing an institutional base for research continuity and action. (1982:142)

In another case, the Appalachian Alliance joined forces with the Highlander Center for a participatory research project. Horton noted:

> The Center was one of the few places in the mountains that both shared the goals of the Alliance and had the support services needed for the implementation of the research project. (1981:15)

More attention must be given to the considerations necessary to team up organizations for participatory research. What happens when a group or researcher has little access to supportive institutions, or when supportive institutions are nonexistent?

One of the most underrated limitations on participatory research is simply time. While researchers may be able to invest their total work time in a participatory research project, participants continue their regular life activities. How much time is required of local people to participate in a project?

Likewise, what kind of time commitment can the researcher(s) make to an area? One time consuming aspect of participatory research is establishing the community contacts and relationships necessary to link up with a group for the project or to be requested to do research by a community group. Building trust takes time. Fordham, Poulton, and Randle wrote of the New Communities Project:

> Our first task, therefore, was not to do anything, but spend six months listening to local people, talking with them, finding out what might be possible and deciding on the things to which people might respond. (1982:133)

The time frame of a project is related to the possible emancipatory outcomes and to the transfer of project control from researchers to participants. Short cutting the educational activities, may minimize the empowering outcomes of participatory research. Mduma wrote of the Tanzanian Bwakira Grain Storage Project:

> . . . time limitations meant that the outside team could not always wait for the level of group consciousness to rise to a certain level of understanding about a particular problem before moving on. (1982:203)

Likewise, inadequate project time was blamed for limited outcome from the Jipemoyo project. Mustafa observed:

> It was unlikely during the short project time for pastoralist to develop the ideological clarity necessary to engage in protracted class struggle. (1982a:33)

Many participatory research projects conclude that a common result of time constraints is a less radical or less critical analysis and vision for action (Horton, 1981; Mustafa, 1982a).

In its totality, participatory research imposes a heavy agenda on both researcher and participants. As outlined in the literature, conducting the "ideal" participatory research project may be overwhelming, if not nearly paralyzing. Though it has not been dealt with extensively in the participatory research literature, another possible limitation is that participatory research may not be the most appropriate way to create all kinds of knowledge. This issue requires further exploration.

CHAPTER IV

Participatory Research: Another Male Monopoly? Acknowledging the Androcentric Filter

The titles of a few case studies scream out women. But what of the twenty plus other case studies I've reviewed? Gender is hidden in generic terms for "people". Without more deliberate attention to women and feminism, looks like participatory research is going to establish itself alongside traditional social science research as one more male monopoly.

Personal Journal
July 1984

Participatory research purports to be a method for "destroying the ideological base of current structures of power by giving a voice to those who dwell in what Freire calls the 'culture of silence,'" (Comstock and Fox, 1982:11). Yet, in the most widely circulated and trend setting participatory research literature, the voices and concerns of women are seldom heard. Women are often invisible, submerged, or hidden in case study reports or theoretical discussions. Sometimes you must read several accounts of the same project to piece together the experiences and difficulties of women within that project, for example on the Jipemoyo Project, see Mustafa (1982a, 1982b) and Mbilinyi (1982a, 1982b). Gender is rendered indistinguishable by generic terms such as "the people", "the campesinos," "the villagers," "the community" or simply, "the oppressed" (Comstock and Fox, 1982; Horton, 1981; Gaventa and Horton, 1981; Marshall, 1981; Vio Grossi, 1982b; Masisi, 1982; Le Brun, 1982; Swantz, 1982a, 1982b; Mustafa, 1982a; Park, 1978b). Some cases specifically, though briefly, mention

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obstacles to women's participation or their actual exclusion from potentially mixed-gender participatory research projects (Vio Grossi, 1982a; Mustafa, 1982b; Mduma, 1982; Fordham, Poulton, and Randle, 1982). We are left, then, with fewer projects reporting the successful use of participatory research with women, either in mixed-gender or all-women projects (Kanhare, 1980, 1982; Igoche, 1981; Cheong, 1981; Hudson, 1980; H.F. Smith, 1982a, 1982b; Mbilinyi, 1982b). The few success stories for women have most often been all-women projects.

Certainly there is on-going participatory research work by and with women. Reports of this work are just now beginning to be circulated through participatory research networks and publications. But to date, women and gender have not had a central place in participatory research theory or practice. This marginalization is noteworthy given participatory research's stated commitment to help people uncover and understand the central contradictions in society. Although the ground breaking participatory research case studies took place in the mid 1970's, it was 1985 before Tandon noted that the Participatory Research In Asia Group (PRIA) was beginning to look at and sensitize male participatory researchers to feminist issues, including male-female work relations within participatory research.

The peripheral nature of women and gender within participatory research is a reflection on the peripheral nature of gender in alternative paradigm social science research in general. In a major collection of "new paradigm research," editors Reason and Rowan acknowledge, in their Foreword, the androcentric bias of the work, saying that the book includes only one of forty chapters related to feminist research or feminist issues in research and retains male pronouns, "so that unknown active subjects are male" (1981:xxi). Explaining these male biases, Reason and Rowan note, "That is what concerns us: we just didn't think about it. . . we just didn't look hard enough" (1981:xxii). Feminist Helen Callaway remarked about an early outline of the book, ". . .it looked more like another version of *male* inquiry about human inquiry" (Reason and Rowan, 1981:xxii).

The marginalization of women and gender in the bulk of participatory research work and publications is dangerous. Hall observed that "new groups of sociologists, psychologists, and trade union researchers are only now coming across work in participatory research" (1981:16). These disciplines with their own histories of androcentric theory and practice are being informed by androcentric studies.

Having established that people are frequently exploited by traditional social science research, participatory researchers are attempting to develop research that has the potential and intention to empower people and transform social systems. But we must ask, exactly which people are empowered and which social structures are challenged? When participatory research claims to empower a community or group, are the women in the community equally as empowered as the men? When participatory research declares its intention to attack oppressive social structures, is patriarchy one of them? There is little evidence that this is the case.

Participatory research appears to be colluding, however unwittingly, with the predominant male bias of the social sciences. While participatory research seeks to break the positivist monopoly on knowledge creation (Hall, Gillette, and Tandon, 1982), it is in danger of becoming yet one more male monopoly in the knowledge industry. Reason and Rowan noted the larger danger of alternative or new paradigm research being appropriated by men:

> This is rather curious, because - throughout this book are references to new paradigm research being a move away from a 'male' towards a 'female' approach to inquiry. So there seems to be a real danger that in new paradigm research men will take a 'female' way of looking at the world, and turn it into another 'male' way of seeing it. (1981:xxiii)

This chapter identifies some of the androcentric aspects of the ground-breaking participatory research. The chapter addresses the question: What are the androcentric aspects and limitations of participatory research as practiced and

published to date? Some of the ways women have benefited from all-women participatory research projects are discussed. In conclusion, broad issues related to the androcentric aspects of participatory research are identified.

Androcentric Aspects of Participatory Research

If women are to use research as a tool with which to achieve their own liberation, it is necessary that they first create awareness about the male bias of existing research methods and theories. (Mies, 1982:9-10)

This section identifies some of the ways in which "man" and his power, problems, perspectives, and experiences have been at the center of participatory research efforts while "woman" has been relegated to the periphery. The indicators of an androcentric participatory research include the following:

1. **Male-centered language** - for example, the use of generic language for people, which makes it difficult to distinguish men and women's presence and experience in particular projects.

2. **Women's unequal access to project participation** - for example, the use of problem-posing forums or formats which exclude or marginalize women, such as community councils or meetings in which women have an unequal voice.

3. **Inadequate attention to obstacles to women's participation in projects** -for example, acknowledgement of machismo as an obstacle to women's project participation, but lack of action to solve the problem.

4. **Women's unequal access to project benefits** - due to their marginalization in problem posing and project activities, women benefit less than men from their participation in mixed-gender projects. Women appear more likely to benefit from the process and products of all-women projects.

5. **Unsubstantiated generalization of the benefits from primarily male project to women** - for example, due to obstacles to their participation or their outright exclusion, women often do not reap project benefits which have been evaluated and presented as accruing to "the community." Generic language makes it difficult to determine if "community" may actually mean the "male" community members.

6. **Absence of feminism from theoretical debates on participatory research** - class issues have acquired the central place in these theoretical debates.

7. **Exclusion of gender issues from participatory research issues agenda** - the agenda for future discussion and attention leaves women and gender issues invisible. The issues agenda is male determined and male centered.

These indicators are discussed in the following subsection. However, it should be recognized that many of the ways in which male bias is manifested are interrelated and overlapping. For example, language which camouflages the difference between men and women's project experience is particularly an issue when reporting project benefits. Likewise, due to marginalization of gender as an issue, obstacles to women's participation in projects and consequences of their exclusion from them are often not discussed in case studies.

The indicators do not fall into neat categories. Because of the interrelationships among the first five indicators, they will be discussed in one subsection. What becomes apparent is that women and gender as a focus for analysis have been ignored, minimized, or marginalized in the growing literature of participatory research practice and theory. Ultimately, this pattern of invisibility and marginalization suggests that women have been excluded from the full empowerment and transformation possibilities of participatory research. The pattern suggests that patriarchy is one system of domination to be left intact and unchallenged by much participatory research.

Language, Project Access, and Benefits

Most articles about exclusively women's projects are clearly titled "Women. . ." (Kanhare, 1980; Cheong, 1981; Igoche, 1981; Mulder, 1981). Yet articles about apparently all-male projects use inclusive terms such as "the peasants" or the "villagers." Male becomes equated with people. Women are women; men are people. This easily masks women's participation, or lack of it, in many participatory research projects. Because of this invisibility, it is difficult to determine how, if at all, participatory research benefits accrue to women community members. Many case studies are written without explanation of how the participatory research process is similar or different for men and women (Park, 1978b; Colletta, 1982; Comstock and Fox, 1982; Gaventa and Horton, 1981; Le Brun, 1982).

This is not to suggest that case studies should focus solely on the problems of women which must be overcome to "integrate" women into male-centered participatory research projects. This approach would reinforce the perception of women as "problems" rather than as active agents of transformation (UNAPCWD, 1979:4). Emphasis on the consideration of women's constraints ignores women's strength, resourcefulness, and courage. To date, there has been little discussion of the constraints and strengths that women bring to community-wide participatory research projects.

In case studies, participatory researchers usually describe how a particular group or community participated in project activities and how they benefited through active participation and involvement in the participatory research project. As noted, however, in many case studies the use of generic gender language makes it difficult to know how men and women fared in the project. On closer examination of other descriptions, you discover that many participatory research projects primarily involved *male* community members, therefore, the participatory research benefits accrued primarily to the *male* people of the community.

This is well illustrated by the Grain Storage Project in Bwakira Chini, Tanzania. The participatory methods used in the project are described in the *Participatory Research: An Introduction* (1982:7, 14-15). Peasant committee members and villagers are reported as taking part in group discussions and community seminars. The descriptions conclude that the group discussion format was successful. One immediate benefit of group discussions was that participation prepared committee members for handling heated debates in subsequent community seminars. In another description of the project, Mduma (1982) listed a variety of benefits gained from the dialogical approach. Benefits included raising participants' consciousness, mobilizing people, helping villagers discover and solve community problems, and creating links between villagers and support institutions. Mduma summed it up:

> Villagers now look at the collaborating institutions as theirs and very accessible to them. Regular visits to the institutions are now made by villagers. (1982:213)

The first description of project methods, which assessed the group discussion format as successful, valuable preparation for later seminars, made no mention of whether or not the methods were as successful for women villagers as men (Participatory Research Network, 1982). Likewise, Mduma's conclusion generalized project benefits to genderless participants and villagers (1982:213). Yet, before reaching the above conclusion, Mduma informed the reader:

> Another limitation which deserves mention here is that of women's poor participation. . . The attitudes and behaviors of women at the project site were (and are) of the coastal identity. It was difficult for women to participate first in the village administration for men did not give them a chance. There was only one woman in the village council by the time the project started. . . . Great efforts and special appeals were made by the committee to involve women. . . . Lack of participation by women was one of the major shortcomings of the project. (1982:208)

By overlaying two separate descriptions of the Bwakira Chini Project, provocative questions are raised. How successful is a group discussion format in which village women cannot or do not have an equitable voice? Perhaps some of the conclusions might be refined to note that the format is successful for village *men*. Likewise, a more accurate presentation of project benefits is that they accrued primarily to *male* villagers. At the very least, the case study should include a more detailed discussion of the actual mechanisms which minimized or facilitated women's participation. The discussion should also compare both obstacles and aids to men's and women's participation in the project and the benefits they received. Such discussion could help us learn more about using or adapting methods to equally benefit women participants.

Comparing descriptions of different participatory research projects in the same country also brings out gender issues. In a sixteen-page article, Mduma included one lengthy paragraph concerning women. After noting their poor project participation, Mduma commented: "The attitudes and behavior of women at the project site were (and are) of coastal identity" (1982:208). He went on to note that village men did not give women a chance to participate and that the lone woman on the village council was shy and knew little of the government's operating parameters. The implication is that coastal women's attitudes and behavior explain their poor participation. But why not ask: What are these supposedly limiting attitudes and

behaviors of coastal women? How do they differ from those of other Tanzanian women? Perhaps it is more important to further explore attitudes and behavior of coastal men. These issues are not adequately addressed.

Several other reports on participatory research projects in the Tanzanian coastal region either make no mention of gender issues or do not discuss the impact of coastal attitudes and behavior on men and women's participation and behavior (Swantz, 1982a, 1982b). Perhaps these projects developed effective strategies for overcoming the implied limitations of coastal women. If so, much could be learned by sharing the strategies. Swantz (1982a) mentions only that the female researchers have identified with the peasant women. To be included in the participatory project, must local women depend on first, the presence of female researchers and, secondly, on their raised consciousness? Such assumptions subtly imply that male participatory researchers are to be excused from the struggle against patriarchy and women's oppression.

Reports from the Big Trout Lake Indian Reserve Rural Water Supply and Sewage Disposal project indicate that it may be beneficial to combine several participatory research methods when women are not accustomed to speaking in groups, even among women, or when they lack the background to understand technical material (Participatory Research Network, 1982). However, other case studies have indicated that women are often systematically marginalized or excluded from group discussions, public meetings and group materials production on the local and regional levels, to say nothing of the national and international.

Ordinary women, like ordinary men, must be included in the problem-naming process of participatory research and reaps its benefits. If women are excluded from the problem--posing forums of participatory research, participatory research will continue to solve male problems and leave patriarchy untouched by men. Du Bois reminds us:

> The power of naming is at least two-fold:
> naming defines the quality and value of that
> which is named - and it also denies reality and
> value to that which is never named, never

uttered. That which has no name. . . is rendered mute and invisible: powerless to inform or transform our consciousness, our understanding, our vision: powerless to claim its own existence. This has been the situation of women in our world. (1983:108)

Women's exclusion is not solely explained by lack of experience with participatory skills nor implied personality limitations. There is a material and institutional base to women's exclusion. Bourque and Warren (1981) observed that men's power is partially based in political, economic, and religious organizations. To the extent that women are excluded from these, women have little direct access and control over choices, decisions, allocations, and resources. Alternative knowledge production can hardly be collective when using methods and institutional or organizational bases in which women are unequal participants.

Writing about a Chilean participatory research project, Francisco Vio Grossi (1982b) also used genderless terms such as campesinos, the farm committee, the community. He never directly specified if this included both male and female campesinos and community members. Outlining some of the important results of the project planning stage, Vio Grossi noted: ". . . the community was learning how to plan its future in a democratic way" (1982b:167-168). In an article about another participatory research project in Chile, Vio Grossi, still not explicit about project participants' gender, commented on one of the project benefits:

This opportunity for peasants to critique each other's work is a powerful tool for raising consciousness and for giving credibility and respectability to the work done at the local level. (1982a:35)

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In the next paragraph he revealed that the peasants were men:

> A definite limitation to the work in Huilean
> Llamin is the lack of women's participation
> due to the traditional machismo of Mapuche
> men. (1982a:35)

The project has only been a powerful tool for raising men's consciousness. Given the machismo of Mapuche men, were there similar obstacles to women's participation in the other Chilean participatory research project? If not, how was machismo overcome? How did machismo affect men's involvement in the project and project outcomes? Vio Grossi must be more explicit, when writing in the 1980s about an early 70s project (1982b) about the limitations of participatory research. He can hardly conclude that the community is learning to work democratically when half the community was excluded. The article should be retitled in order to clearly indicate that he is reporting exclusively about *male* peasant participation, adult education, and agrarian reform in Chile.

Examination of many case studies indicates that a major obstacle to women's participation in potentially mixed-gender projects is community men's machismo, (Vio Grossi, 1982a; Mduma, 1982; Mustafa, 1982b; Mbilinyi, 1982a, 1982b). We need more insight into how researchers have dealt with machismo.

Local men's exclusion of women may be particularly aggressive when control of financial resources is at stake. Marjorie Mbilinyi (1982a, 1982b), describing one particular village in the Jipemoyo project, noted that women worked equally with men to produce the cotton and were subject to the same production quota and fines.[1] Yet local male leadership attempted to exclude or silence women in village meetings in which decisions were made regarding the allocation of cash proceeds from village cotton production. Women's exclusion

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[1] Mbilinyi's case studies, based on a 1979-80 project, are not part of the 1980-1982 series of participatory research publications. Her work is published in *Fighting on Two Fronts: Women's Struggles and Research* (Mies, 1982).

may be due more to men's assertive attempts to silence women rather than women's shyness or supposed personality limitations. Mbilinyi observed:

> At the end of the meeting, there was a big kind of confrontation between the village leadership on the one hand, who are men, and the women on the other hand. . . . The point is that at the beginning the village leader men were always saying to me, 'you know women, the trouble is in a village meeting they do not talk, so you have to get into small groups with women to talk with them. . . .' Quite the reverse occurred, whereby the women were the first to demand the chance to speak and the chairman actually tried to interfere and to silence them. (1982a:42; 1982b:114)

After spending time living in the village and talking informally with men and women, Mbilinyi reported back in a public meeting the issues villagers had discussed with her. In the case study she noted that while women's role in village decision making about allocation of cotton production proceeds had been talked about informally, it had never been openly discussed in public meetings. Her position as an outsider gave her the freedom to repeat the issues she had heard because she "was not a 'dependent wife' who could be silenced with threats and intimidation" (1982b:111,140). Mbilinyi was careful to note that village men could easily identify the ways in which women were oppressed, "even as they are determined to defend their interests as patriarchs and potential patriarchs" (1982b:111).

In another project involving financial decision making, attempts were made to limit women's involvement. In the Dhulia district of Northern Maharashtra State in India, both rich farmers and male representatives of landless laborers were against women laborers negotiating their own wages (Kanhare, 1982). As a result of an all-women's participatory research project and a subsequent long-term organizing effort through which an autonomous women's organization was formed,

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women laborers eventually did affect wage negotiations on their own behalf. Development of their autonomous organization took five years (Kanhare, 1980).

Women's exclusion is further exacerbated by a "double day," working outside the home and carrying nearly full responsibility for domestic work and child care. For example, in the Dhulia district project, male project organizers recruiting women for educational camps ran into area men's opposition. "Men expressed their doubts. 'If women go for camps, who would cook, who would look after the children?'" (Kanhare, 1980:113). Although the organizers proposed that other women could take over participants' cooking and child care responsibilities, not a single woman from that village participated in the camp.

The Bwakira Chini Grain Storage project, conducted during the busiest eight weeks of harvest, may be another example of the effects of women's double day on their project participation. Women's harvest responsibilities may have contributed to women's low attendance at meetings and low participation in the project. Although speaking of women and agriculture in a different Tanzanian village, Mbilinyi's observations would be worth considering in the Bwakira Chini context. She reported; "Women speak of no longer cooperating with their husbands to harvest crops because the husbands do not reciprocate" (1982b: 127). Women do not have equal access to the cash necessary to pay young village men to help harvest crops nor to buy the food stuffs necessary to participate in reciprocal labor-sharing harvest arrangements among kin. Women's lack of time and cash may have limited their participation in the grain storage participatory research project.

Similarly, Mbilinyi (1982b) conducted a time analysis of both men's and women's typical working day in the village. Women typically worked 6 3/4 hours in agricultural production and another eight hours in domestic labor. Men also worked 6 3/4 hours in agricultural production. However, there was great variance in how men utilized their other eight hours. They had more leisure time which allowed greater project participation and hence benefits on their part. These factors are not explored by Mduma (1982). Women and development studies indicate that worldwide, women are burdened by a double day while

most men are not (ISIS, 1983). This pattern is a factor for consideration in planning and implementing any participatory research project.

The successful inclusion of women in potentially mixed-gender projects requires that the research team clearly understand local obstacles and actively strategize to overcome them. Describing the New Communities Project for increasing working class participation in local adult education, Fordham, Poulton, and Randle (1982) identified many factors which contributed to fewer education and training opportunities for working class women. The obstacles included geographic and social isolation resulting from being tied to the home due to poor public transportation, lack of child care facilities, work which takes men out of the community for extended periods, and the high incidence of women working the evening or midnight shift in local industry. Provision of child care at the adult education site was a key innovation in drawing local women to classes.

In addition to patriarchal attitudes and practices, women's double day, their lack of leisure time and lack of affordable child care are major constraints to women's equal participation in either mixed-gender or all-women participatory research projects, and limit their equal access to project benefits. We must be careful not to simply integrate women into male-centered projects which do not see women's experiences and issues as central. To do so only reinforces the belief that women's experiences are not the norm and, hence, not important.

Throughout the United Nations Decade for Women, the international development assistance community has been alerted to the fallacies of assuming that the benefits of development projects planned and implemented by and for men necessarily accrue to women (ISIS, 1983). Just as we cannot assume that development benefits trickle down or across to women, we cannot generalize to women the benefits of participatory research projects conducted primarily or ex-clusively with men. In fact, the evidence suggests that in supposedly community-wide participatory research projects, it is primarily men who accumulate project benefits. If this is the case, participatory research, like mainstream development

assistance projects, may actively contribute to the further marginalization and oppression of women.

While women have often been excluded from the benefits of supposedly community-based participatory research projects, how have they benefited from involvement in all--women's projects? One outcome has been women's recognition that many problems are collective, social problems rather than isolated personal ones (Kanhare, 1980; Mbilinyi, 1982a, 1982b). Another outcome has been the establishment of autonomous women's organizations (Mbilinyi, 1982a, 1982b; Kanhare, 1982; Cheong, 1981; Hudson, 1980; H.F. Smith, 1982b). Mbilinyi (1982b) noted, some situations require a strong women's organization which can represent women's demands and viewpoints to all-male leadership or male-dominated mixed-gender organizations.

Participation in participatory research projects and subsequent organizations has increased women's self esteem as well as their skills for democratic participation and organizing (Cheong, 1981; Igoche, 1981; Mbilinyi, 1982b, Kanhare, 1980; H.F. Smith, 1982). Interestingly enough, women's mastery of democratic and participatory skills seems to transfer from the project to the home. Igoche (1981) noted that after taking part in a six-month participatory research project with a major educational component, women from a Nigerian urban slum began to make their "presence felt" within their households. She noted that they began to share with their husbands household discipline, decision-making, and action-taking responsibilities. Likewise, Kanhare (1980) noted that the Indian tribal women, more confident and bold from their struggles through a participatory research project against sexual harassment at work and in public and wage issues, were later able to take their confidence into the marriage, taking action against wife-beating and alcoholism.

Based on participatory research project reports, it appears that outcomes for women in all-women projects include the creation of autonomous women's organizations, increased control of financial resources, increased self-esteem and confidence, increased solidarity with other women, and development of democratic, participatory skills with some transfer of those skills and values to male-female relations

within the household. Through involvement in all-women participatory research projects, women begin to challenge the patriarchal practices and privileges that men leave untouched.

Although preliminary evidence suggests that women, when able to actively participate in and benefit from participatory research, transfer project skills and consciousness to male-female relationships within the home, there is no evidence to date that male participants in such projects display a similar transfer of democratic consciousness to the home. While men may work to dismantle systems which oppress them as men, most appear content to leave their male privileges intact.

Absence of Feminism from Participatory Research Theoretical Debates

There is ongoing debate in the literature comparing historical materialism, critical theory, and pragmatism as theoretical frameworks most consistent with participatory research goals. The major debate appears to focus on the pros and cons of either critical theory or historical materialism as the most favored theory (Kassam and Mustafa, 1982; Conchelos and Kassam, 1981; Comstock and Fox, 1982; Park, 1978b, 1982; Brydon-Miller, 1984). While it may be argued that participatory research can integrate feminism into either of these two, this had not been the case to date. There has been little discussion of what feminist theory offers participatory research.

The theoretical debate, focusing primarily on class struggle, has essentially ignored gender oppression or patriarchy as an oppressive system to be transformed. Summarizing the positions of feminist contributors from over seventy countries, Robin Morgan indicated that they "contest a class analysis as at best inadequate and at worst deliberately divisive of women" (1984:19). Likewise, during a conference exploring the connections between women's liberation and research, Mies reported a consensus among participants, "The class reductionist stand of orthodox Marxism is no longer acceptable" (1982:v). Eichler declared:

> Here I want to argue that as far as women and feminism are concerned, Marxist analysis is not only not radical but eminently conservative, in so far as its definition of social class is a completely androcentric definition in which women have no place except as objects which link men to men. (1980:100)

Certainly women experience oppression differently based on class, color, culture, sexual preference, age, and our particular nation's place in the international economic order (Hartman, 1981; Steady, 1981; Joseph, 1981). We also experience class differently from our fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons. Despite this, women are usually assigned to a class based on our husband's or father's relations to the means of production (Eisenstein, 1979). This is one vivid example of the practice of defining women exclusively in terms of our relationship to men (Westkott, 1979). We must examine the implications of failing to perceive women as autonomous beings:

> What of the woman who earns no money at all (as housemaker) and is called middle class because her husband is? Does she have the same freedom, autonomy, and control over her life as her husband? (Eisenstein, 1979:31-33)

The categorization system of class analysis is no longer capable of categorizing women in a meaningful way.

> Class membership is seen as being primarily determined by one's relationship to the means of production. This, in turn is determined by one's occupation. If, therefore, the wife holds a paid job, whose job determines her social class? Hers, or that of her husband?...It is therefore highly probable that in two-job couples husband and wife hold jobs which are

different in nature, pay, and prestige. If we identify the class membership of each spouse. . .in most couples the wife would then belong to a lower class than her husband...On the other hand, if the wife is a secretary and the husband is a lawyer, the couple does not live in the life style of a secretary, but in the lifestyle typical of a lawyer with a 'working wife.' To assume that the spouses belong to two classes rather than to one is as problematic as to assume that they belong to the same class. (Eichler, 1980:108)

Mbilinyi (1982a, 1982b) pointed out similar difficulties with class generalizations in less industrialized or primarily agricultural economies. In the village she studied, there was a struggle over the distribution of the product of village labor and over the allocation of labor time. Similarly, male and female agriculturalists had different relationships to land, the means of production. The gender issue was not ownership of the means of production, but limits on choices regarding the use of the means of production and labor. Bound by patriarchal obligations, women are not free to allocate their land and labor in their own interests because women are first obligated to use their land to grow food crops, such as millet and maize, necessary to feed their families.

During the time available for non-agricultural production, men engage in cash-earning activities while women are solely responsible for domestic labor, including carrying water, preparing and cooking food, and caring for children, the sick, and elderly. Women do not have similar access to men's labor as men do to that of women. Likewise, women are not free to sell their grain as they wish. They are first responsible for using their grain to feed their husband and children. Not bound by patriarchal obligations to use their grain to feed the family, except in dire emergencies, men can decide to sell their maize for cash to buy a bicycle, a radio, home-brewed beer, or even another wife. Men have greater freedom to use their time in cash-earning activities while their traditional obligation to contribute materially to the household diminishes as women's

increases. As mentioned previously, village women recognized that while both men and women produced village cotton, only men controlled decision making of how to allocate the proceeds.

Mbilinyi's (1982b) study demonstrates that even with the same class there are mechanisms which reproduce gender inequity. Women often have unequal access to cash, unequal demands and use of labor time, and unequal control over allocation of the labor product. Mbilinyi pointed out that women's perception of these inequalities affects willingness and ability to participate in participatory research projects:

> Women resist demands for labor inputs into self help activities because they are aware that they have a double workload compared to the majority of men. (1982b:130)

Prior to beginning the participatory research project in the village, Mbilinyi was required to spend months reading the archives of the main Jipemoyo Project. During the first five years of this project, Mustafa informed us that "the question of women was relatively neglected" (1982b:223). Mbilinyi observed of the Jipemoyo Archives, "All material cuts across issues having to do with women, although the people have not yet focused on this thing" (1982a: 34). It is not clear if "people" refers to village participants, researchers, or both. What becomes clear is that the historical materialist framework of this project ignored women's different experience of class.

Mustafa (1982b) noted that one factor limiting the success of the Jipemoyo project was disagreement among the research staff about the appropriate theoretical framework for the project. This disagreement led the staff to conceptualize the basic problem of the project in two separate ways. The historical materialists identified conflicting class issues as the basic area contradiction. The pragmatists identified lack of communication between area leaders and villagers as the major problem (Mustafa, 1982b). Given the neglect of women's issues for the first five years of the project, you might conclude that both the pragmatist and the historical materialist frameworks blinded researchers to gender-based struggles and contradictions in project villages.

While both women and men suffer oppression as workers, women are doubly oppressed, both as workers and as women. Kanhare (1980) pointed out that women laborers not only received lower wages than men, they also suffered a double burden: working both inside and outside the home and being subjected to sexual and physical abuse inside and outside the home. In participatory research projects, the historical materialist framework has often ignored women's experience as women (Mduma, 1982; Mustafa, 1982a; 1982b; Kassam and Mustafa, 1982). While participatory researchers have been quick to point to the class blindness of traditional social science research, they often share its male-centered views.

Participatory research boasts that it begins with people's everyday experience. If so, it must recognize that women's everyday experience of class is often different from men's. Thus gender and class are inextricably woven. An androcentric historical materialist framework appears inadequate for women's struggles as women. When it has no understanding of gender issues, participatory research can actually be used as one more tool to widen the power gap between men and women. Mies noted the deficiencies of a strict class analysis, even when applied by women, to women:

> They tend to focus their struggle on general class or imperialist contradictions and to avoid the sexist man:woman contradiction, giving this expression in such statements as: 'We are not fighting against men, but together with them.' In this way, the political is neatly separated from the personal. (1982:8)

Exclusion of Gender Issues from the Agenda of Participatory Research

As practitioners have gained more field experience with the use of participatory research, an agenda for debate and future work has emerged. The agenda indicates the problems worth exploring and solving in the future. However, this review

of six summaries of the issues, debates, ambiguities, and controversies within participatory research has revealed that women and gender issues are not a central part of participatory research's future agenda (Carasco, 1983; Comstock and Fox, 1982; D.L. Brown, 1982; Conchelos and Kassam, 1981; Tandon, 1981b; Hall, 1981). The most frequently discussed issues include the following:

> 1. Debate over the most appropriate theoretical framework for participatory research, usually comparing historical materialism, pragmatism, and critical theory.

> 2. The role and relationship of the researcher to participants, with particular focus on the class interests and differences of the researcher.

> 3. The balance within participatory research between theory building and action.

> 4. The potential for misusing participatory research, so that it is manipulative rather than liberating.

> 5. The position of popular knowledge, e.g., links between people's analysis and translation of everyday language into the jargon of expert policy makers and vice versa.

> 6. The debate over methodology, including to what degree methods are collective and participatory and the rejection or use of traditional social science methods, particularly quantitative methods. Methodology debates include discussion of the cultural appropriateness of methods.

7. Debate over balancing micro and macro analysis, including how to link local actions to broader struggles.

8. Debate over the terms, labels, and concepts of participatory research, including the degree to which semantic debates strengthen or divide participatory research.

Of the six reviews of issues worthy of debate, only Hall (1981) mentioned that part of participatory research's future work agenda is to strengthen the link between feminist studies and participatory research. He asked, "How can participatory research be human-centered and not man-centered?" Tandon (1985) indicated that participatory research is just beginning to pay attention to gender issues. Clearly, gender has yet to be sufficiently addressed.

The issue receiving the most attention within participatory research is class. The ongoing debate concerns the appropriateness of the methods and theory of historical materialism, defining social transformation in terms of the progressive development of class struggle. Likewise, the class interests of the researcher, including the researcher's educational and organizational background, have been worthy of discussion (Kassam and Mustafa, 1982; Horton, 1981; Brown and Tandon, 1981; Conchelos and Kassam, 1981). Implications of the researcher's gender interests have been almost ignored. How did Vio Grossi (1982a), Mduma (1982), or Mustafa (1982a) actively work against or quietly collude with machismo and local patriarchal structures? Freire talks of the need for liberation workers to commit class suicide. What would it mean to commit gender suicide?

We need discussion of the difficulties that concerned male researchers face in working with women and of the strategies for dealing with those difficulties. Cheong (1981) made no mention of what it was like for a male residential field worker, a graduate student, to work with rural, primarily illiterate women in South Korea. Kanhare mentioned that the Dhulia women's educational camp was planned by male activists who were unclear about who should control camp

decisions and proceedings. "And so it is possible that the male activists were actually controlling the process" (1982:36). A similar situation could exist between same-gender researchers and participants. Nonetheless, it is important to explore further the possible pitfalls and benefits of different gender researchers and participants.

Participatory research claims that close, empathetic, reciprocal relationships are necessary to gain meaningful insights into people's lives as well as to help people better understand the contradictions in our lives. What would best facilitate this between researchers and participants of different genders? How can participatory research best help women understand our experiences and realities? Such questions have yet to be adequately addressed.

The relationship between methods and women's participation should be one of the issues on participatory research's future agenda. Comstock and Fox noted:

> . . . the call for maximum participation is necessary to avoid recreating the conditions for domination by scientific or technical experts. (1982:11)

Participatory research must be alert to methods which recreate and nurture continued local domination of men over women. Debates within participatory research have focused on the degree to which methods have actually been collective and participatory as opposed to manipulative. Similarly, there has been much debate over the use or rejection of traditional social science quantitative methods. Debate regarding how methods facilitate exclusion or inclusion of women and our concerns has been minimal.

The cultural appropriateness of methods is another issue on the agenda. The Participatory Research Network cautioned that it is important for participatory researchers "to become aware of indigenous patterns of communication, decision-making, indigenous technologies, and other local resources" as foundations for the research process (1982:39). Cultural sensitivity of participatory researchers and their methods is no doubt critical. A possible contradiction exists

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between participatory research's intention to be culturally sensitive and its intention not to collude with systems of oppression. One would be hard pressed to identify a contemporary culture in which women are not held inferior to men. How can participatory research be culturally sensitive and yet not collude with oppressive sexist policies and practices which are frequently defended as culturally appropriate or traditional? This is a complex issue, particularly when it is men, not women, who most often define what is culturally relevant.

Another issue which has yet to be explored concerns the possibility that conducting participatory research may have different consequences for male and female researchers of the same class, for example, professionals in academia. Horton proposed that to commit ourselves to the participatory approach meant dispensing with most of our professional baggage and dispensing with "...subsequent efforts to obtain recognition, promotion, and tenure" (1981:30). Likewise, Brown and Tandon claimed that participatory researchers are more motivated, than action researchers, by commitments to social justice than by "hope of professional and institutional rewards" (1983:290). They claimed that action researchers, some working from the security of university positions, "seek knowledge to impress professional peers and problem solutions to impress future clients" (1983:286).

These statements require discussion on several levels. On one level, I find myself uncomfortable with the wholesale assigning of "evil" motives to one group of researchers and, by subtle omission, suggesting that participatory researchers are the "pure of heart." One has only to work on the political Left to know that "political correctness" does not exclude selfish motives or petty behaviors.

On another level, the call to dispense with efforts to obtain tenure and professional and institutional rewards may ask women participatory researchers to pay a different and higher price than men. In fact, women rarely have the privilege of tenure to dispense with.[2] Asking women to give up the fight for

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[2] In 1981 less than 10 percent of all tenured professors in the United States were women. At the most elite bastions of knowledge dissemination and production, women fared worse. Women were only 3.4 percent of the 353

tenure is asking women to leave intact the almost total male domination of institutions of knowledge production. Asking women to give up the struggle for professional and institutional recognition is asking women to give up promotions to positions from which to affect policy and programs, including knowledge utilization. Are women again to be required to choose between our own interests and "the revolution" as defined by the men in control?

The commonalities and differences of participatory research issues for men and women, researchers and participants, need more attention. The issues identified here are only a beginning for more extensive dialogue within the participatory research community. Clearly, women and gender must become a central part of the participatory research issues agenda.

Implications and Priorities

Gender interests may have far-reaching and as yet unexplored implications for participatory research. Certainly the argument could be raised that an individual participatory research project cannot attack all injustices simultaneously. However, by examining patterns of the injustices chosen for attack, an argument can be made that men and women may chose very different injustices and oppressive systems of domination to dismantle. For example, as initially defined by the male organizers, the purpose of the Dhulia women's educational camps was to increase women's participation in the "general" labor strikes and movements (Kanhare, 1980:112). For "general", read male-dominated or male-centered. The women eventually formed their own autonomous organization and tackled local sexist structures and practices, including rape, wife-beating, sexual harassment, and the male-controlled elders systems. Imagine a project in which men's camps were organized to increase male participation in the general women's movement. Have men ever chosen their own oppression of

tenured faculty members at Harvard and just 4 percent at Yale (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1982:14).

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women as an injustice to investigate and act on through a participatory research project? When will men use participatory research to uncover their own modes of domination over women?

Apologists for women's exclusion from many case study reports, if not projects, might argue that the bulk of project descriptions finally available in current literature actually occurred in the early and mid 1970s. They might contend that many projects were implemented prior to, or at the beginning of, the international development assistance community's awareness of women, the so-called "forgotten 50%" in development. While this may be accurate, the most widely circulated and available participatory research literature was written or rewritten explicitly for inclusion in the 1982 series of participatory research network publications (Participatory Research Network, 1982; Hall, Gillette, and Tandon, 1982; Kassam and Mustafa, 1982). Many other published case reports are available from the 1980 International Forum on Participatory Research (Callaway, 1981; Dubell, Erasmie, and De Vries, 1980). At best, one could say that a serious lapse in editorial judgment occurred in publishing accounts with minimal, if any, up dating and reference to gender issues. At worst, the reports reflect a discipline dominated, however subtly, by a male-centered world view.

Tandon (1981b) maintained that participatory research has clearly aligned itself with efforts to shift power from the haves to the have-nots. The effort to shift power to the female have-nots has been less clearly made. Tandon failed to mention that male power structures, regardless of their place on the have-have not continuum have a less than stellar record of voluntarily sharing power with women. Robin Morgan (1984) claims that the alleged worldwide redistribution and equalizing of power and wealth may in fact be taking place only between men. Likewise, without attention to its androcentric aspects, participatory research will be one more tool primarily concerned with transforming oppressive conditions among men.

Many participatory research project case studies use male-centered language, for example, use of terms such as "the people" which upon closer examination refer only to the *male* people. Case studies use generic terms for people which make it

nearly impossible to determine whether "the campesinos" included men and women. At times, this can only be determined by comparing different accounts of the same project.

Case studies which identify obstacles to women's participation in participatory research project activities and benefits often offer incomplete and perhaps inaccurate explanations. Use of male-dominated forums and formats often exclude women from equal access to problem-posing and analysis, and, therefore, unequal access to project benefits. In addition to women's frequent exclusion and invisibility in participatory research practices, other than in all-women projects, the preferred theoretical frameworks marginalize or distort women's experience.

A major question raised by participatory researchers has been, "Power for whom?" (Hall, 1981). However, while power is the core issue of participatory research, its practice has yet to aggressively attack the power inequities between men and women. Goulet (1981) noted that it is necessary to transform people as well as structures; yet participatory research is not pushing men to uncover, analyze, and transform their patriarchal attitudes and practices.

The movements which influenced the emergence of participatory research have been male centered and male dominated. It is not surprising that participatory research mirrors their male bias. As a result, women are marginalized in the majority of participatory research practice and theory. Participatory research may challenge the class biases of dominant social science research, but to date, much participatory research leaves its patriarchal filter in place.

CHAPTER V

Toward a Feminist Participatory Research Framework Challenging the Patriarchy

Reading most of the participatory research literature and critiques of positivist social science, you'd think only men created alternative paradigms research approaches. Surely feminist research has something to offer participatory research, and vice versa.

Personal Journal
October 1984

Although participatory research is set within the alternative paradigm, it shares many of the male biases of the dominant paradigm's androcentric view of social reality. Feminist Research (FR) adds another dimension to the alternative vs. dominant paradigm debate, i.e., a feminist vs. patriarchal paradigm. Feminists propose changes to make research theory and practice reflect the diversities of *both* female and male realities (Millman and Kanter, 1975).

This chapter examines feminist research, including its most recent origins and characteristics. In addition, it analyzes the commonalities and differences between feminist and participatory research. The intent is to construct a framework for feminist participatory research.

Feminist research, it should be pointed out from the start, consists of no single set of agreed upon research guidelines or methods. Nor have feminists agreed upon one definition of feminist research. The feminist community, instead, is engaged in dialogue around questions such as those raised by Coyner and Brooks (1986):

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> What is "feminist scholarship?" Can we arrive at consensus on a definition or description that will be unifying rather than divisive? How much of a definition is necessary or desirable?. . . If we want to encourage and support discussion of the criteria and characteristics of specifically feminist scholarship, how should we go about it? (1986:2)

Although there are no unanimously agreed upon answers to these questions in the feminist community, a review of feminist research literature suggests that the varied approaches called feminist research have evolved through several stages and that these approaches share certain concerns and characteristics. The themes and concerns common to the feminist research approaches are synthesized within this chapter. However, I do not intend to propose "the" feminist research nor outline a "feminist orthodoxy."

Getting to Feminist Research: A Personal Perspective

You might wonder why this section on feminism appears so far into the literature review. Why wait until now? In fact, this mirrors my own journey as a researcher interested in alternative approaches. From my experience, it is possible to read the major arguments for alternative paradigm approaches to social science research, including participatory research, without encountering substantial feminist arguments or theories. Reading the mainstream literature alone, I would never have known that feminists have played a major role, in fact, any role in challenging the dominant social science paradigm.

Clear examples of the absence of feminist research as an issue in alternative research exist in academia. My own experiences reflect this. In the spring of 1984 I took a graduate course on alterative research methodologies and skills. Although one of the areas covered by the course was "the range

of alternative paradigms and issues," the entire course passed without any planned mention, readings, discussion or exposure to feminist research. A male-centered view of social reality was taken as an unexamined given. The course content, implying that only *men* created alternatives, was essentially about male-centered alternatives to dominant research models.

During that same time period, I was rewriting a paper using both the dominant and alternative paradigm frameworks to review evaluations women in development programs sponsored by international development agencies (Maguire,-1984) These also gave scant attention to feminist research. Yet, in spite of these indicators, in fact, it was only when I began my own attempt to utilize participatory research in a field study with former battered women that I truly became critically aware of the absence of a feminist perspective. Quickly I found myself asking, where are the women? I am indebted to feminism for adding the feminist vs.patriarchal paradigm to the alternative vs. dominant paradigm concept.

The literature that helped me to understand the concept of paradigm as a "way of seeing the world" did not alert me to the dangers of seeing the world through male eyes only (Paulston, 1976, 1979; Patton, 1975, 1980; Papagiannis et al., 1982; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Gouldner, 1970; Kuhn, 1970). I had to dig elsewhere for that. Earlier I had berated myself for having gotten so far along in academic life without understanding paradigms on a conceptual level. But I did understand feminism and male domination. Feminism allowed me to see the male bias common to both dominant and alternative paradigms.

I did wonder, however, how was it that this group of male theorists, probably representative of progressive scholars and certainly more knowledgeable than a practitioner and graduate student in her thirties, did not appear to know about feminism and male domination. In the same way that dominant social science and education had for years kept me ignorant of their alternative paradigm, so too had the patriarchal paradigm blinded them to a feminist perspective. For most male scholars, an androcentric world view appears to be an unquestioned given. If it is not presented as the only way of seeing the world, it is certainly presented as the superior way. Within the

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alternative critique of social science and research, feminist critiques are marginalized, if not totally excluded. The mainstream of both the dominant and alternative paradigms is a "male-stream" (Duelli Klein, 1983).

Origins of Feminist Research

First and foremost, feminist research emerged from the women's liberation movement of the 1960s. The women's movement legitimized the questions that many female scholars had previously only dared to ask privately and provided political support for such questioning both inside and outside academia. The women's movement provided the fuel for uncovering the often unquestioned male bias in many aspects of contemporary life, including research (Millman and Kanter, 1975; Acker, Barry, Esseveld, 1983; Bernard, 1973). Many female social scientists began to support each other, perhaps force each other, to examine their own lives as women. Acker et al. noted that female researchers recognized similarities between their own position as women and the women they studied:

> As women, they too may have husbands and children; they too keep house as well as work; they too have to cope with sexism in their daily lives. (1983:424)

As they came to recognize that the study of women was absent or marginalized in their respective disciplines, they also came face to face with their own marginal positions as professionals within those disciplines. The women's movement turned previously private, personal concerns into political, public ones for researchers and researched alike.

Certainly not all female social scientists are feminists. Some do not view the world from a feminist perspective; others avoid the label. Sherman and Beck observed:

> Often, those few women who do achieve
> positions in the scholarly world do not see as
> women, but as men have taught them to see -
> through the prism of the male sex. (1979:5)

Not all feminists have come to challenge the positivist underpinnings of the dominant paradigm research approach. Unless stated otherwise, in this section when I refer to feminists, I mean avowedly feminist social scientists who are challenging the male bias shared by dominant and alternative paradigm social science research and working toward an intentionally feminist, antipositivist research approach.

Just as participatory research emerged in part from the alternative critique of the social sciences, so too, feminist research has emerged in part from that critique. Feminist research has also been strongly influenced by feminists' own critiques of both dominant and alternative paradigm social sciences. While many feminists acknowledge a debt to the male dominated alternative critique, most alternative male theorists make no reference to feminist theory or practice. In other words, while the androcentric alternative paradigm critique has influenced feminism, feminism has yet to have similar influence or recognition within the male alternative paradigm circle of theorists and practitioners. Similarly, while many feminist researchers acknowledge a debt to Marxism, critical theory, or the Frankfurt School, only a few are informed about participatory research. There are few, if any, references to participatory research literature in the majority of feminist research literature. Participatory researchers rarely draw on feminist theory or research. As emerging radical approaches to social research, feminist and participatory research are parallel but as yet unconnected approaches, largely ignorant of each other.

Before discussing the influence of feminist critiques of the natural and social sciences in shaping feminist research, the definition of feminism should be repeated. Stanley and Wise (1983b) maintain that the most fundamental problem with feminist critiques of social science research is their failure to be explicit about feminism and its implications for conducting research. About feminist critiques, they claim:

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. . . none of them go back to contemporary feminist theory as the basis for what they say. They either fail to discuss what `feminist research' might look like or, where they do, they do so without examining what they mean by `feminism'...their own understanding of feminism remains largely implicit...We want `feminist research' to be constructed out of 'feminism.' (1983:32)

To the contrary, in my own reading of various feminist critiques, I found many efforts to explicitly, although broadly, define feminism. However, I think their criticism is well taken in that how we define feminism clarifies our goals and has implications for the role of research in attaining those goals. Many writers who define feminism in the context of feminist research are careful to offer the definition which guided their own work without suggesting that it is the only one, true, and correct feminist perspective (Acker et al., 1983; Jayartne, 1983; UNAPCWD, 1980; Spender, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1983b). Nonetheless, the definitions share features common to the definition of feminism which guides my work.

As used here, feminism is a worldwide movement for the redefinition and redistribution of power. Feminism is: (a) a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; (b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms and (c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression. Given this definition, the ultimate goal of feminist research is the emancipation of women and the creation of a just world for everyone (Duelli Klein, 1983; Mies, 1982; Deles and Santiago, 1984; Acker et al., 1983). How feminist research can best reach this goal is open to exciting discussion. In fact, the "how" of feminist research is its most poorly developed aspect (Duelli Klein, 1983). I explore one route, a feminist participatory research approach; not the only route but one that makes sense to me based on direct experience. However, in my opinion, as a minimum, feminist research must claim women's liberation as a major purpose.

Among feminists there are certainly many differing opinions about the origins, primary causes, and mechanisms of women's oppression.[1] Reviewing or settling those debates is not the purpose of this work. Nor do I believe that feminist research will settle those debates.[2] However, I have no doubt that as many different feminists advocate and attempt research that actively contributes to women's liberation, they will encounter first hand the need to challenge both dominant and alternative male-centered intellectual traditions. They may, like myself, take many different roads and time schedules to "get there." The journey of feminist research ultimately causes us to encounter the dilemmas of trying to liberate women within the constraints of intellectual paradigms that take man and his power, perspectives, experiences, concerns, and problems as the norm.

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[1] In a previous work (Maguire, 1984), I advocated a socialist feminist position. Socialist feminism offers an integrated analysis of the interdependent, yet at times contradictory, effects of gender, color, class, sexual preference, and the international economic order on oppression. I agree that women experience oppression differently based on these factors. However, like many feminists, I acknowledge that in its many current manifestations, including national liberation efforts, socialism has not liberated women (Mies, 1981; Scott, 1982; Molyneux, 1981). The power of the patriarchy persists despite socialist revolutions. I am not yet satisfied with my own or others attempts to explain, or explain away, this contradiction. As Hartmann (1981) suggested, perhaps men and women are not struggling for the same socialist transformation. Thus my own feminism continues to evolve. I appreciate Stanley and Wise's declaration: We're first, foremost, and last, feminists; not feminist-phenomenologists, feminist Marxists, or feminists hyphen anything else" (1983b:8). While I currently do not identify myself as a feminist-hyphen-anything, I acknowledge that the power of feminism can be fulfilled only by an inclusive feminism which embraces diversity, including the agendas of the many "hyphenated" feminists.

[2] For an introductory overview of the feminist debate, see Maguire (1984). For more extensive discussion, see Jagger and Struhl (1978); Eisenstein (1979); Sargent (1981); Barrett (1980).

Feminist Critiques of Social Science Research

Feminist critiques acknowledge many of the same limitations of dominant social sciences paradigm research as male-dominated alternative critiques.[3] For example, feminist critiques dispute the dominant social science tenets of objective, value-free, detached research. Like participatory researchers, feminists claim that knowledge is socially constructed (Spender, 1981a) and argue that knowledge is power (Bowles and Duelli Klein, 1983). They too have exposed the power relations inherent in the production of knowledge. In fact, the control of knowledge is one of the most critical arenas of feminist struggles (Spender, 1981a, 1983).

Although participatory research has highlighted the centrality of power in the social construction of knowledge, only feminist research has highlighted the centrality of male power as a factor in the construction of knowledge. Barbara Roberts, in an article about "machothink" observed:

> Men and women generally have different experiences of power. . . . It is usually men who exercise power over women (and others). Most men can appropriate or benefit from women's labor, by marriage or other means (granted this also serves the state. . ..). Most men can 'own' a woman. . . . Thus for men, their lived experience of exercising power is power over women. Men as a group are allowed and sometimes encouraged to express and enforce that power by physical force against women. . . .
>
> Any view of the world that ignores these factors will inevitably be skewed. . . and an ineffective basis for positive social change. (1984:195)

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[3] Feminists have also critiqued the natural sciences. For an extensive introduction, see Harding (1986); Bleier (1986).

Initially, many feminist critiques criticized the content of social knowledge without challenging the underlying positivist paradigm itself. That is, early feminist critiques revealed that women and our experiences and perspectives were ignored, omitted, misrepresented or actually distorted within the social sciences (Westkott, 1979; Spender, 1981a). This initial stage has been called the "female critique" (Stanley and Wise, 1983b) and "feminist empiricism" (Harding, 1986).

Essentially, women were "not seen as a central part of the human landscape" (Spender, 1981s:14). A *male* perspective of the social world was presented as the *human* perspective (D. Smith, 1974; Du Bois, 1983). Millman and Kanter noted:

> When male sociologists. . . look at a meeting
> of the board of trustees and see only men,
> they think they are observing a sexually
> neutral world rather than a masculine world . .
> . Women are the bearers of sex. (1975:xiv)

Millman and Kanter (1975) identified the following indicators of androcentrism in social inquiry. First, as a result of male bias, many key areas of social inquiry have been overlooked, for example, the role of emotion in social life. Thus male bias enters into the selection and definition of research problems. Second, social inquiry has focused on public, visible, and official players and situations while marginalizing the equally important private, unofficial, and less visible domains, i.e., those usually assigned to women. Third, social inquiry has assumed a "single society." Generalizations from all-male research are routinely applied to women without consideration that men and women often inhabit different social arenas. Fourth, gender is often ignored as an explanatory factor of behavior. Finally, certain methodologies, especially the quantitative, and research situations systematically prevent uncovering certain kinds of information relevant to women. For example, male anthropologists often have little direct access to women's perceptions. What has been learned about women in different cultures is often based on men's perceptions as told to other men.

Feminist critiques illustrate how a male view of the social world has become *the* view. For example, Stanley and Wise (1983b) advise us to consider the origins of the social sciences as "male professions." The founding fathers and recognized leaders in most disciplines were men. Thus the problems worth studying, the frames of reference, the issues in the field, the interests, and the views of reality mirror their view of the world *as men*. Dorothy Smith (1974) identified the "circle of men" and the "circle effect" of knowledge creation. Dale Spender discussed it further in *Women of Ideas (And What Men Have Done To Them)*:

> All human beings are constantly engaged in the process of describing and explaining and ordering the world, but only a few have been, or are, in the position to have their version treated as serious, and accepted. These few Dorothy Smith aptly terms the 'circle of men' - who are the philosophers, politicians, poets, and policy makers - who have for centuries been writing and talking to each other about issues which are of significance to them. . . .Men have excluded women from the circles in which society's meanings are constructed, where they have deprived women of the possibility of defining or raising to social consciousness the problems which concern them. (1983:9-11)

In essence, men dominate problem-posing processes and forums, hence research addresses men's problems or men's perceptions of problems. Men talk amongst themselves, even about women's problems. They treat what other men, not women, say as significant. They check with each other to validate their theories of the social world, even those about women. They legitimize each other's view of the social world. They generalize conclusions from all-male studies to all people. They trivialize or exclude women, and our experiences and perspectives, from this circular process. Then, they call what they have constructed human knowledge instead of male

knowledge. The male stranglehold on knowledge production and legitimation is maintained through this circle effect (D. Smith, 1974; Spender, 1981a, 1983).

The circle effect is alive and well, even within the alternative paradigm. For example, review the bibliographies of the major works in participatory research. Few participatory researchers, male or female, refer to feminist literature. The absence of women and feminism has major implications. As Spender noted, not only do we inherit a view of the social world in which women's perspective and reality is absent, we also inherit a sense that women's perspective is absent "because women have nothing worthwhile to contribute" (1983a:12). In this way women and men alike are socialized into accepting the myth of male superiority and female inferiority.

The work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1981), often quoted and central to participatory research, presents an example of the field's male bias. In the foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Schaull lists the philosophical positions which influenced Freire, i.e., a circle of men:

> ...Sarte and Mounier, Eric Fromm and Louis Althusser, Ortega y Gasset and Mao, Martin Luther King and Che Guevara, Unamuno and Marcuse. He made use of the insights of these men...(1970:11).

Consider the drawings used by Freire for cultural circle discussions (1981:62-81). The drawings, used as the basis for group dialogue about "man in the world," without doubt, suggest that *men*, not women, create culture. These drawings encourage men and women to focus on men's contribution to culture. Freire (1970) maintained that domination was the major theme of our epoch, yet his conscientization tools ignore men's domination of women.[4]

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[4] For another example of a male-centered conscientization tool, see the drawings in W. Smith and Alschuler, *How to Measure Freire's Stages of Conscientizacao.* 1976.

Duelli Klein observed that Freire, like other non-conformist male thinkers:

> ... does not depart from taking androcentricity as the norm, and consequently, feminists need to do the work for women that he did for men. (1983: 102)

While Freire stresses man's alienation in the world, feminist research includes women's alienation from a man-made world (Westkott, 1979).

Participatory research merely reflects what is happening within academia, international development, national liberation struggles, and the world at large. Men are largely ignorant of women's issues or women's scholarship (Evans, 1983; Eichler, 1981; Mies, 1982; Stanley and Wise, 1983b; Duelli Klein, 1983). The circle effect shields men, in and outside academia. However, women are beginning to break into the circle, and, as Spender (1983) notes, we are creating circles of our own.

Feminists are contributing to the alternative critique of the dominant social science paradigm. We recognize that while women have been peripheral and misrepresented in the social sciences, we are peripheral and misrepresented within the alternative paradigm as well. Referring to male alternative paradigm thinkers, Bowles points out:

> Significantly, what they do not say, these male writers, is that they are leaving behind a world of male thought to enter the province of female thought. This is the link which feminism provides . . . but so far, none of them have been able to analyze their own sexism - and I mean sexism in its many guises, from the denigration of women in prose and in public to a complete ignorance or an appropriation of the enormous advances of feminist scholarship. (1984:188)

If androcentric bias is to be abandoned, what should replace it? Spender proposed the following:

> When both sexes can describe their own experiences and when those two versions can coexist without division into superior or inferior, right or wrong, norm or deviant, then part of the mechanism for women's oppression will be removed. (1981a:18)

Harding (1986) observed that feminists have not yet outlined a clear strategy for eliminating androcentrism from research. Nor, she maintains, have feminists "given adequate attention to envisioning a truly emancipatory knowledge-seeking" (1986:19). As we have seen participatory research presents a comprehensive approach to emancipatory knowledge creation without giving adequate attention to its androcentric aspects. Perhaps participatory research and feminist research can join forces to eliminate androcentrism from research while constructing a truly emancipatory approach to knowledge creation for both women and men.

Feminist and Participatory Research: Similarities and Differences

This section compares feminist and participatory research, not only to highlight the differences, but to illustrate the commonalities. When it identifies differences, this section indicates areas in which the two approaches can learn from each other. The intention is to strengthen the creation of knowledge as a force for truly radical social and personal transformation which equally includes and benefits both women and men.

1.Objectivity vs. Subjectivity

As noted in Chapter 2, objectivity is the cornerstone of dominant social science and educational research. The dominant paradigm proposes a concrete social world, external to individuals' consciousness of it, composed of hard, tangible, relatively permanent and unchanging structures. Participatory researchers challenge this concept of social reality, claiming instead that social facts are subjective constructions (Vio Grossi et al., 1983:19). To understand social reality is to understand how people construct reality and, through consciousness, appropriate and interpret it.

Many feminists have also come to challenge the dominant conceptualization of social reality and the tools that investigate it. Early feminist critiques, intent on documenting women's absence from all disciplines, did not necessarily question the underlying positivist framework of those disciplines (Spender, 1981a; Stanley and Wise, 1983b; Westkott, 1979). However, feminist critiques are increasingly denying that there is only one view of reality and only one way to investigate it. In particular, feminists are exposing the patriarchal construction of a so-called objective reality in which women, based on supposedly scientific evidence, are held inferior to men. Joan Roberts observed:

> Strangely, the 'objectivity' of science has sustained a subjective bias that maintains, against the woman's experience of her own life, the myths of female inferiority. (1976:5)

Feminists explore an aspect of objectivity untouched by participatory researchers. The notion of objectivity has not only been appropriated by an elite group of knowledge producers, the appropriating group is the male elite, the male circle. When the world of social science is divided into objective and subjective, the "prestigious capacity to be objective is a distinguishing feature allocated to men" (Spender, 1981a:4). Men are said to be rational, logical, cool, detached, intellectual, and non-emotional. Women, on the other hand, are considered irrational, illogical, intuitive, emotional, attached,

and even hysterical. Women's capacity to be reasonable, we are cautioned, is affected by monthly hormonal changes. This argument suggests that men, by virtue of biology, are more inherently capable of objectivity than women. "Rational" man has become the legitimate source and guardian of objective information on irrational woman (NFC, 1983).

> Women have come to realize that knowledge men constructed about women (from women's "deviant" psychology to the definition of women as nonworkers) was frequently rated as 'objective' while the knowledge women began to construct about women (which had its origins in the role of a participant rather than spectator) was frequently rated as "subjective". The hypothesis arose that legitimacy might be associated with gender rather than with the adequacy of explanation. (Spender, 1981a: 5)

Recognition of this pattern led Adrienne Rich (1979) to surmise that "in a patriarchal society, objectivity is the name we give to male subjectivity" (Spender, 1981a:5).

It is not enough, however, to be suspicious of men's concept of objectivity. Recognizing the bogus objective-subjective dichotomy, feminists are also legitimizing other ways of knowing; in essence they are changing the criteria for what counts as knowledge (Spender, 1981b). For instance, feminist scholarship is proposing and using experience, intuition, and evaluation as alternative modes of knowing. Of course, male theorists and researchers have also proposed recognizing many forms of knowing and inquiry as valid. Intuition and acting as ways of knowing gain credibility from their masculine connections.

In addition to legitimizing other ways of knowing, feminist critiques are also legitimizing other things to know about. Specifically, feminist research, with women's experience at its center, has of necessity begun to investigate women's everyday life experiences. By focusing on the everyday realities of ordinary women, feminist research acknowledges those

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experiences, however diverse, as valid (Du Bois, 1983; Duelli Klein, 1983). The approach goes beyond adding women to the male account of social reality; "it is necessary to look through women's eyes" (B. Roberts, 1984).

Feminist researchers are exposing the patriarchal use of objectivity as a means for legitimizing women's inferiority and male supremacy. Similar to participatory researchers, feminists are also expanding the legitimate ways to know about social reality. And finally, they too are challenging the concept of value-free, objective knowledge production. However, Ruth Bleire observed:

> No doubt as feminists. . . (we) will continue
> to be accused of promoting (our) own biases.
> It is a pity that the sensitivity to bias comes so
> late. (1978:162)

2. Researcher Distance vs. Closeness To Subject

Critiques of objectivity by both feminism and participatory research cause questioning of other dominant research tenets. The detachment of the knower from the known is a methodological safeguard of objectivity. Challenging the pretense of objectivity requires reconsidering the necessity of a detached, distant relationship between researcher and researched.

The required distance between knower and known in dominant social science research supposes a kind of schizo-phrenic researcher. The researcher is asked to compartmentalize herself by maintaining a distance from the research subject. That is, the researcher is told to separate feeling from knowing. To strive for a detached stance puts the feminist researcher in a contradictory position. As a researcher, she shares some privileges of the male academic elite; yet as a woman, she shares sexist oppression with other women. Dominant social science expects her to describe other women's oppression while ignoring her own. It requires her, as a researcher, to do nothing about either.

The personal dichotomy between feeling and knowing is further reflected in the separation of knowing from doing, the separation of theory from practice, and the separation of theorists from practitioners. One set of experts is required for knowing, another set for doing. According to D. Smith (1974), the separation of theory and practice is a result of men's domination of the social sciences. Stanley and Wise discuss this further:

> Men, as men, tend to be alienated from the physical facts of their existence, from the world of concrete physical activities, including domestic labor and child rearing... Because women do their shit work for them, male social scientists can more easily become absorbed into the world of theory and divorced from the everyday. (1983b:164)

While I am as leery of generalizations about men as about women, I do think it necessary to more closely consider the research implications of men's nearly universal abandonment of domestic responsibilities, including care of children, the sick, and the elderly.

If the researcher must no longer remain distant, then what relationship is best suited for constructing more critical knowledge of the realities of people's lives and for directly involving people in the reconstruction? Both participatory research and feminist research are restructuring the researcher-researched relationship. In particular, both groups are experimenting with ways to change a previously hierarchal, detached relationship to a horizontal, reciprocal one. Likewise, within both groups there is much discussion about the obstacles to a truly reciprocal and equitable relationship.

Currently, participatory researchers have a better record, and the explicit intent, of designing and implementing projects which actually involve the researched in meaningful power-sharing within the research effort. Although those same projects often more effectively share power with and empower local men, the principles have been successfully used with women, particularly in all-women participatory research

projects. A major lesson which feminist researchers can learn from participatory researchers is how to move from theorizing to utilizing genuinely participatory practices which have the potential to liberate and empower those involved.

Hierarchy Among The Knowers

Feminist critiques have focused on one aspect of the separation of knowing and doing largely ignored by participatory researchers. Participatory research is often critical of dominant paradigm research's division of labor and power between the researcher and participants. Within many participatory research projects there is often a team of researchers. Participatory research fails to mention that within these research teams, there is often a hierarchy of knowers and doers. Ignoring this arrangement, past researchers have rarely discussed the hierarchy and division of labor, including the sexual division of labor, within participatory research project teams and publications.

Feminists researchers, however, have begun to openly discuss the issue of exploitation *within* research teams. They have paid particular attention to the hierarchal nature of research teams and the sexual division of labor (H. Roberts, 1981b; NFC, 1983; Acker et al., 1983).

Although a relatively high proportion of research team members are women, women crowd the less prestigious and less financially remunerative positions, including those of research assistants, interviewers, secretaries, data processors and key operators, and even helpers and spouses mentioned in publication acknowledgements (NFC, 1983; H. Roberts, 1981a). Men, mirroring their dominant position in the larger society, more often fill the powerful posts, such as project director and principal investigator. Women are more often the front line workers or the behind-the-scenes doers. Men are more likely to be the public voices of a project and so their names are more likely to be on project reports.

Women provide much of the underpaid, undervalued, unseen, and uncredited work of the knowledge industry, as they do in the rest of the working world.

Examining research as a patriarchal enterprise, the Nebraska Feminist Collective observed:

> Male researchers also consistently and coercively rip off wimmin's *[sic]* energy as they assign the typing, coding, keypunching, etc. to wimmin and then claim the credit for gathering data themselves. At the same time, they invalidate wimmin's contribution to the process by defining this work as 'shift work' (and paying wages in accordance). . . . To what extent are wimmin exploited on the ground of enlightened academic self interest? (1983:537)

This is not meant to imply that female researchers, feminist or otherwise, have never exploited other women's or men's labor in the research process. Nor does it imply that feminists have neatly solved the problem. But, feminist researchers are trying various approaches to equal sharing of low status work and to working in collective, non-hierarchal ways. For example, feminist researchers noted that, rather than hire a tape transcriber who cannot be adequately compensated for the labor, the research team decided to share transcription work, "one of the most oppressive tasks in research" (Acker et al., 1983:430). Feminists have by no means successfully solved the contradictions of sexual and hierarchal division of labor on research teams, including the division of intellectual labor. Acker et al. (1983) noted that their commitment to work non-hierarchically meant that the research simply took longer. While the problems are not resolved, feminist researchers are raising the issue and actively exploring solutions.

The practice of exploitation *within* research teams has gone largely unnoticed within participatory research. Participatory research is full of case studies in which the project director and principal investigator are getting public credit, via publication, for what is essentially the work of a research team. No doubt, the practice is inherited from dominant social science research. Most case study reports give no account of how work, power, and credit are shared within a team. As a graduate

student, I did not solve the problem either. I earned **my** doctorate by writing about **our** women's group. This contradiction merits more public discussion within participatory research.

3.Universality vs. Uniqueness

Generalizations and Control

Dominant social science research emphasizes the search for generalizations about the nature of human behavior and society. Researchers concern themselves with the extent to which relationships discovered in one particular setting can be expected to hold true in every other such situation (Patton, 1980). The importance given to generalizations is reflected in an obsession with statistical research methods and procedures, including sampling procedures. Central to the concern with the discovery of generalizable and universal laws of behavior is the goal of control. Social science research is based on a premise that man (and I do mean *man*) not only has the right to control nature and society, but that social science research is one tool that is used to enhance that control. The desire to increase social control is reflected in research techniques which require the researcher to control as many variables as possible. Control within research and control of society are mirror images, based on interdependent processes. However, control is not every man's right. The researcher, not the researched, is in control. Likewise, social control is the privilege of only a few.

Exploring the value placed on generalizations, feminist Jessie Bernard (1973) argued that the value placed on control within social science research is a masculine value. Men are taught the ideal of having control and being in control. Yet, in hierarchal social systems, not all men have equal control. Even within a patriarchal society, the condition of "being male" varies greatly according to class, color, and culture (Westkott, 1979:-427). B. Roberts concluded that patriarchal society attempts to compensate for the variation among men:

> The 'right' to control a woman is given to a man to substitute for the right to control his own life. Men do have power-over, if only over women. (1984:197)

In male dominated social science, research methods reflect the value of control. Bernard (1973) argued: "... the research procedures which have appealed to them, which have been more highly valued, are those in which they, as scientists, exert control. . ." (Spender, 1980a:73). The social scientist uses methods to create, manipulate, and master his reality in research. Bernard (1973) called this the machismo element in research. The machismo element is not limited to quantitative approaches:

> Qualitative methodology and ethnography after all has its own brand of machismo with its image of the male sociologist bringing back news from the fringes of society, the lower depths, the mean streets, areas traditionally 'off limits' to women investigators. (D. Morgan, 1981:86)

Feminist and participatory research have both uncovered the hidden relationships among researcher control, research generalizations, and social control. However, feminists alone have explored the androcentric roots of control.

Language, Generalizations, Control

Androcentrism in the English language plays so powerful, yet subtle, a role in sustaining the male bias in social science research that it deserves special attention. Feminists have exposed the way in which the language of generalizations and research facilitates elite control, specifically, elite male control. Although women have been frequently left out of research, results with all male subjects are nonetheless often generalized to all people. Results from mixed-gender research are reported as conclusions about "man." Minnich warns us, "We need always to ask, 'Is the whole included, or is this once again simply the part claiming to be whole?'" (1982:8). The *universal*

has frequently been only men's studies (Du Bois, 1983; Spender, 1981a; Minnich, 1982). The androcentric language of research, in fact of society, not only reflects women's exclusion from social power, it has helped construct that exclusion (Spender, 1980; D. Smith, 1974). According to Spender:

> The use of term man to 'embrace woman' has disposed us to devise explanations of the world in terms of men, not women. The use of man is often cited as a key factor in constructing the invisibility of women. (1981a:6)

Dorothy Smith pointed out the circle effects on language construction:

> ...women have largely been excluded from the work of producing forms of though and the images and symbols in which thought is expressed and realized. (1978:28)

The importance of this exclusion is supported by Whorf's (1976) contention that language shapes ideas and mental processes; it shapes our world view. Language is not neutral.

Spender (1980) demonstrated that the English language is male controlled and male-centered. The male monopoly on language construction and usage is one of the primary mechanisms for protecting the myth of male supremacy and women's inferiority. The use of "man," "mankind," and "he" as synonyms for human, including women, is a mechanism for rendering women either invisible or less-than man (Minnich, 1982). Spender's development of this thesis in *Man Made Language* is so convincing that I quote her directly:

> ...one of the crucial factors in our construction of this reality is language. Language is our means for classifying and ordering the world: our means for manipulating reality. In its structure and in its use we bring our world

into realization, and if it is inherently inaccurate, then we are misled.

Human beings cannot impartially describe the universe because in order to describe it they must first have a classification system. But, paradoxically, once they have that classification system, once they have a language system, they can see only arbitrary things...This makes language a paradox for human beings: it is both a creative and inhibiting vehicle.

One semantic rule which we can see in operation in the language is that of the male-as-norm. . . While this rule operates we are required to classify the world on the premise that the standard or normal human being is a male one and when there is but one standard, then those who are not of it are allocated to a category of deviation (1980:2, 139, 3).

One strength of Spender's argument is her careful documentation of the historical development of the practice of using "man to embrace woman." According to Spender, in 1553, Thomas Wilson, in *The Arte of Rhetorique*, claimed that it was *natural* for "man" to precede "woman," for example, in husband and wife, Adam and Eve, or brother and sister. He implied that man came first in the natural order. By 1646, the grammarian Joshua Poole argued that it was proper for "man" to precede "woman" because the male gender is the *worthier gender*. Finally in 1746, John Kirkby gave the male-created supremacy of men in language the support of one of his grammatical rules. Rule Number Twenty One of his "Eighty Eight Grammatical Rules" declared that the male gender is *more comprehensive* than the female. This represents a move from "man is more important" to "man is the norm" for human. By 1850, "he" for "she," as opposed to the common use of "they"

for "he and she," got the support of English law. The 1850 Act of Parliament mandated the use of "he" for "she" (Bodine, 1975). Spender concluded:

> The introduction and legitimation of he/man was the result of deliberate policy and was consciously intended to promote the primacy of male as a category. (1980:150)

While the historical development of the generic use of man for human may not be common knowledge within the social sciences and education, its effects have been well documented. Young children and college students interpret the meaning of generic "man" as strictly male people (Nilsen, 1973; Schneider and Hacker, 1973). Despite this evidence, the practice of using "man" to mean all people continues to dominate. Suggestions to change the practice are trivialized (NFC, 1983). Charol Shakeshaft suggests:

> Those who argue that gender-exclusive language is unimportant should change all their 'he's' to 'she's' and see how important it really is. If the issue of language were truly irrelevant, there would be little resistance to changing it. (1986:501)

The use and role of language in the maintenance or redistribution of power has been raised as an issue within participatory research. Hall, Gillette, and Tandon (1983) noted that the language of research serves to separate social investigators from the poor they are investigating. Park (1978a) noted the irony of referring to research participants as subjects in a process that treats them like objects. There has been some discussion of the need to translate popular knowledge into the jargon of public policy makers and vice versa. Reclaiming the power of naming one's own reality and oppression is a central theme in participatory research (Freire, 1970). Paradoxically, tools created by male researchers facilitate the naming of man's oppressive reality while leaving woman's oppression as woman invisible (Freire, 1981; W. Smith and Alschuler, 1976).

The link between the male-dominated social construction of language and the male-dominated social construction of knowledge and power is not well articulated within participatory research. In particular, participatory research has missed the powerful implications of the use and misuse of gender-exclusive language. Specifically, there appears to be little comprehension of the effects of using the generic "man" for all humans. While participatory researchers have exposed the dangers of research generalizations, they have totally ignored the dangers of their use of generic "man" and the subsequent practice of generalizing the benefits of participatory research projects with men to excluded women. They have ignored the effects of their own sexist use of language, the only tool for naming reality. It may be difficult to use participatory research to create a world in which both sexes are equally valued when the language participatory researchers use helps construct and present a worldview in which both sexes are not equally valued.

Re-examining Man as Man

The language and androcentric aspects of social science research promote the image of single gender or genderless society (Millman and Kanter, 1975). When gender is not taken into account in research design or conclusions, the effect is one of subtly promoting man as the norm. At the other extreme, there is the practice of taking only gender into account as a causal factor when differences are discovered. That is, gender may be used as the major explanation or cause of difference (Jayartne, 1983). Bernard noted that even as a variable, gender variables are:

> . . . usually ones that interest men more than women, such as aggression, achievement, and others having to do with power and control. There are far more studies on aggression and achievement than on love and tenderness. (1973:22-23)

We have two extremes: research conclusions citing no gender differences or those citing gender as the primary, perhaps only, causal factor of social phenomena.

Feminists have also demonstrated that when gender is taken into account, particularly as a causal factor, primarily refers to women. Patai noted one of the subtle rules of research:

> Men's maleness is irrelevant in most encounters, while women's femaleness follows the rule of relevance. . . Beyond the simple assumption of male supremacy, men's gender is simply not attended to . . . This is why men are taken as 'persons,' as the model of the human. (1983:187)

Such research promotes an image of male as human, and female as less-than or not-quite human. While it contributes to the invisibility of women, it also contributes to the invisibility of men as men (Howe, 1982).

Just as feminist research promotes making women visible as women and fully-human people, it must also promote making men visible as men. Patai concluded, "Then we can begin to separate the generally human from the merely male" (1983:184). D. Morgan calls for "bringing men back in" to the research endeavor (1981:108). If dominant research has distorted women's experiences, it has also produced distorted information on men and maleness (Howe, 1982).

Feminist research is causing each discipline to re-examine its assumptions and conclusions about women and femaleness. It must also cause us to rethink our assumptions about male and maleness. For example, while Vio Grossi (1982a) briefly noted that the machismo of Mapuche men excluded women from project participation, he did not examine what machismo meant for the men in the project. Similarly, Mduma (1982) implied that something about the coastal identity of Bwakira Chini women explained their project exclusion. What did the men's coastal identity mean for men in the project, in relation to their behavior toward women and to their behavior toward each other as men?

5. Social Control vs. Local Self-Determination, and
6. Impartial Advice vs. Solidarity and Action

Initially, the most common purpose of feminist research was to create more extensive and authentic knowledge *about* women. Recognizing the invisibility and distortion of women's experiences within the social sciences, feminists intended to produce knowledge to "fill in the gaps," make women visible within the social sciences, and "set the record straight" (H. Roberts, 1981a). Knowledge creation for these purposes left the underlying paradigms unquestioned.

Stanley and Wise (1983b) argue for a feminist research which challenges the underlying positivism of both dominant social science research and, in their opinion, most feminist research. While saying little about the marginalization of feminist theory within the social sciences, they chide feminists for being oblivious to the contemporary debate within the social sciences regarding objective, value-free, positivistic knowledge production. Paradoxically, they then claim, "Knowledge for its own sake, we believe can be useful" (1983b:172). However, the literature indicates that many feminist researchers have moved beyond "knowledge for knowledge sake" to embrace the purpose of creating knowledge *for* women, and more specifically, knowledge which contributes to women's liberation (Daniels, 1975; Duelli Klein, 1983; Du Bois, 1983; Acker et al., 1983).

Westkott (1979) pointed out the dangers of promoting research about women for the sole purpose of producing information to make up for past exclusion. Noting that knowledge about women was becoming a faddish, profitable, marketable commodity, Westkott warned that the fad might fizzle without anything substantial having been accomplished to end women's oppression:

> We have much to learn from the academic social science exploitation of the poor, especially the Blacks, in the sixties. In the name of academic liberal concern and compensation, the Black ghetto was

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measured, analyzed, processed, dissected - in short, reduced to manipulable data that advanced the career interests of the investigators but did little to improve the plight of the investigated. The fact that research on the black ghetto is now passe, although black ghettos continue to exist, and that research on women is 'au courant' should give us pause. (1979:427)

Feminist researchers caution against documenting and analyzing the causes and consequences of women's oppression without doing anything to end it (Mies, 1983; Daniels, 1975; UNAPCWD, 1979). Our research must go beyond documenting "what is" to proposing an alternative and imaginative vision of what "should be" (Westkott, 1979).

While many feminists maintain that the purpose of feminist research is to contribute to women's liberation and emancipation, there are various opinions of what that means. For some, feminist research should be instrumental in changing and improving women's daily lives (Daniels, 1975; Duelli Klein, 1983; Deles and Santiago, 1984). For others, research for women should influence public policies and opinion.

Feminists are grappling with changing the role of the social scientist from expert, detached adviser to involved activist. The role of expert adviser has been particularly limited for feminists conducting research about women because feminist research conclusions are often under utilized. In regard to under utilization of research findings relevant to social problems and issues, Jayartne points out difficulties feminist researchers face in trying to influence policy makers. Building on the work of Weiss and Bucuvalas (1977), Jayartne noted:

...decision-makers are responsive to recommendations of social scientists when those recommendations support their own views of social issues. The fact that there are a minority of policy makers who hold values which are consistent with a feminist perspective is not promising for the

implementation of policy...which supports
feminist goals. (1983: 148)

Previously there was a lack of relevant information
about women. Now we are finding that even when it exists,
public policy makers and programs respond slowly and reluc-
tantly to feminist pressure.

This raises the issue of more direct involvement and
action on the part of feminist researchers. There is ongoing
dialogue concerning questions such as: How direct should the
contribution of feminist research, and the feminist researcher, be
to liberation? Who is the research "for women" actually for,
exactly which women? If it is for the most ordinary, the
poorest, the most excluded women, how will they will be able to
use it? Among feminist researchers there is no agreement on
what position to take on the expert adviser-activist continuum.

The most urgent argument for an immediate and direct
link between feminist research and action comes from Third
World women and First World women working in Third World
contexts (Deles and Santiago, 1984; UNAPCWD, 1979; Mies,
1983). In the face of extensive poverty and oppression,
producing knowledge for knowledge sake or for some indefinite
future application is an exploitative, unaffordable luxury. Mies
(1983) states that research must be pursued in order to act now.
Feminists most closely linking knowing and doing promote self-
emancipation. This is contrary to an image of feminist scholars
producing knowledge and imposing enlightened results on op-
pressed women (Bowles and Duelli Klein, 1983).

Participatory research is clear that the social scientist
must stand "with the people" and err on the side of action for
social justice. A lesson that feminist researchers can take from
participatory research is that the feminist researcher cannot
study women's struggles from a safe distance. Instead, she must
be a consciously partial and passionate frontline participant in
the work to construct a just world.

A Major Difference:
The Research Process

Participatory and feminist research both validate people's perceptions of their reality. Both urge research that helps ordinary people understand the connections between their individual experiences and the broader social, economic, and political struggles. However, participatory research outlines and utilizes explicit processes to facilitate ordinary people's reflection on and analysis of their reality. Participatory research advocates involvement of participants in the entire research process, including involvement in an action phase. Feminist research offers no comparable processes.

If you are convinced by the feminist critique of both dominant and alternative androcentric social science research and want to consciously create knowledge in a feminist way, the question still remains, exactly how do you go about doing this? Unfortunately, the **how** of feminist research is not as well developed as the **why** and **what** (Duelli Klein, 1983).

Perhaps as a backlash to the strict rules of the traditional scientific model, feminist research is determined to remain open. Many feminists protest any suggestion of "a" feminist methodology. In her article, "How do we do what we want to do: thoughts about feminist methodology," Duelli Klein warned, ". . . the reader should not expect detailed 'how-to-recipes' for feminist methodology" (1983:89-90). In the same anthology, Du Bois declared:

> What I'd like to be able to do now, of course, would be to propose some radical new method of feminist social science. But I do in fact not hold that there is or ought to be a distinctly feminist scientific method. (1983:109)

Stanley and Wise conclude their book on feminist research:

> We might provide a series of pointers and exemplars for 'doing feminist research' which would add up to a recipe for other women to

follow. But we're suspicious of other people's attempts to specify what, exactly, 'research' should be... (1983b:177)

I was left disappointed, wondering, now what? The feminist who wants to move beyond *talking about doing* feminist research to actually *doing* it, has only the most vague and sketchy road maps to follow. Descriptions of research described as feminist can be found, and they are helpful. Yet, many offer slight variations of very standard and traditional methods. Few case studies describe the use of innovative and creative methods in which the process was as empowering as the results. There is no work which presents a comprehensive picture of what feminist research processes, guidelines, or methodologies includes. Although it is beyond the scope of this work, a collection of such strategies, similar to the presentation of the variety of methods used in participatory research projects in *Participatory Research: An Introduction,* (1982), would be a major contribution to feminist research literature.

Feminist research calls for research grounded in women's everyday experiences. The actual research problem is more commonly determined solely by the researcher or research team. Once the research problem is posed, the most commonly used data-gathering technique appears to be the individual interview, structured or non-structured (Oakley, 1981; H. Roberts, 1981; Woodward & Chisholm, 1981; Acker et al., 1983). Feminist researchers have suggested numerous alterations of the traditional interview which allow for dialogue, mutual exchange of information, and the development of a trusting and personal relationship over time. These adaptations are often connected with attempts to reduce the inequitable power relationships inherent in the traditional interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Acker et al. (1983) go further than most feminist researchers to involve participants, however, their research is typical of the very individualized nature of most feminist research. The research team continues to interact with individual participants who have no opportunity to discuss and share their experiences with each other. Feminist research has barely made use of the empowering possibilities of bringing

women together to share their experiences in a group setting. This is paradoxical, given the development of the women's movement's development and its use of consciousness raising groups as a liberation strategy.

While making a plea for research reports that make feminist researchers' procedures "visible to each other," feminists have not made a parallel plea for methods which make research *participants* visible to each other (H. Roberts, 1981a; Oakley, 1981; Du Bois, 1983; Duelli Klein, 1983). Feminist research has not promoted methods to involve participants as a group in actual problem posing, data analysis, or conclusion building. Feminist researchers maintain much the same power and control of knowledge creation as dominant social science paradigm researchers do. Duelli Klein advised that feminist researchers need to be clear on "how we want our research efforts to differ from patriarchal scholarship" (1983:88). Yet, the research process remains the weak link in feminist research. Feminist researchers are not clear on how to create knowledge in a way that is emancipating and empowering to the participants involved.

The most promising examples of such research come from feminist researchers building on action research and participatory research (Mies, 1983). Mies (1983) suggested that feminist research, intended for liberation, must actively include participants in the research process. Her call for a research process that is a conscientization process for both the researcher and researched is promoted by others involved in research and action related to international women and development assistance programs (UNAPCWD, 1979; Casal, Joseph, Pala, Seidman, 1976). They promote research as a collective experience in which women talk and act together. The collective aspect is critical to overcoming the isolation women experience in their families and workplaces. In the research process that Mies has actually used, the researcher openly states her biases and acts as a feminist committed to change and active involvement in the women's movement. The researcher's knowledge comes from the position of an activist rather than a spectator.

In reference to Mies' use of participatory methods, Duelli Klein (1983) claims that while feminist action research

may be useful, it is not suitable or applicable to many topics and situations. She does not give examples of such unsuitable topics, however, Duelli Klein further argues against embracing feminist action research by noting the dangers of creating a supermethodology, "We risk paralyzing our work because our methodology would become too complex to be applicable in practice" (1983:96).

Obstacles to collectivizing knowledge creation and to linking knowledge creation and action have been recognized by feminist researchers (Deles & Santiago, 1984; Duelli Klein, 1983; Mies, 1983). The benefits of collective and participatory research approaches are hardly recognized or championed. Until feminist research more actively experiments with ways to make the process, not merely the products, empowering for both the researcher and researched, the goal of producing knowledge for women's emancipation may not be fully reached.

The call for a collective, empowering, participatory approach to knowledge creation *with women* is not wholeheartedly received by some feminist researchers. For example, Stanley and Wise (1983b) state that they are not in favor of research *with* women, because increased participation in traditional social science techniques is camouflaged exploitation. Instead of the researcher speaking for the researched, they recommend that the researcher's experience become the central focus of the research. Curiously, they never suggest ways to directly include the experience of both the researcher and the researched. As a remedy for the inequitable power relationship between researcher and researched, they propose that the researcher become more vulnerable, while ignoring the possibilities of empowering the researched. Liberation will come when ordinary women share power rather than when powerful women share vulnerability. Feminist researchers are apparently unaware of the many innovative and creative methods of participatory research. This reflects the lack of communication and exchange between feminist and participatory research communities.

A Framework for Feminist
Participatory Research

Previous chapters identify many indicators of androcentric bias in both dominant and alternative paradigm social science research, including androcentric bias in participatory research. The question remains, what would feminist participatory research include?

The final section of this chapter suggests a framework for feminist participatory research. The framework was developed concurrently with a participatory research project with a multicultural group of ex-battered women in Gallup, New Mexico. That is, the framework is an example of praxis because it was developed through interaction between the literature review and the field-based project experience. The purpose of the framework is to provide a planning and evaluation tool to help create participatory research projects more likely to recognize and meet women's emancipatory needs. The framework will be used in the final chapters to assess the field study. The framework is intended to stimulate dialogue among participatory researchers and feminists. It is not intended to advocate feminist participatory research as the only acceptable approach to feminist research.

Feminist participatory research (FPR) would include or consider the following:

1.   Feminist participatory research would be built on a **critique of both the positivist and androcentric underpinnings of dominant paradigm social science research** as well as on the **exposure of the androcentric aspects** of participatory research to date.

2.   As a comprehensive research approach, feminist participatory research would give discussion of **gender a central place on its issues agenda.** For example, within the participatory research community and network, there has been much discussion about the role and relationship of the

participatory researcher to project participants. Feminist participatory research would expand the discussion from exclusive focus on the class interests and differences of the researcher to an inclusive focus on gender, race, culture, and class.

3.	Feminist participatory research would give an inclusive feminism, which recognizes and celebrates diversity, a **central[5] place in the theoretical debates** within the participatory research community. Feminism, with its intent to expose and end all forms of oppression, would be the central theoretical basis from which to integrate other theories, such as critical theory or historical materialism. It would not simply try to integrate feminist concerns into male-centered theories.

4.	Feminist participatory research would give **explicit and equitable attention to gender issues in each of the five phases of participatory research projects** as identified by Vio Grossi et al. (1983). For example, the first project phase (organization and knowledge of the working area) includes information gathering and analysis of the central problems faced by local people, and establishing community relationships. Explicit and equitable inclusion of gender issues would mean asking questions such as: How are the central problems similar and different for local men and women? How do area men's and women's perceptions of central problems overlap or differ? What

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[5] The term "central" in this case means "at the center" but is not meant to imply that it is the only issue of importance or that other issues should be excluded.

voice, role, and power do local women have in community organizations and institutions? How are women and women's issues represented by community leadership? In the second phase (defining generative problems), what role, voice, and power do women have in problem-posing forums? In the third phase (objectivization and problemization), what linkages are made between patriarchy, one oppressive structure, and the named problems? In the fourth phase, the researchers and participants jointly design and implement a process for investigation the named problems. How is access to project participation similar and different for women and men? How does women's double day minimize or affect their participation? What mechanisms are instituted to offset participation obstacles? How are women and men's unique strengths built upon within the project?

5. Feminist participatory research would give **explicit attention to how men and women, as a group, benefit from the participatory research project,** including benefits from participation in the process itself, as well as benefits from the final product or action. If project benefits accrue to only one gender, what does that mean for the gender which does not directly benefit?

6. Feminist participatory research would **pay attention to gender language use.** For example, case study reports and descriptions would clearly indicate who participated in the project. Benefits from all-male projects would not be unquestionably generalized to women in the community. Project evaluations and reports would clearly

determine and state how women and men, included or excluded, were affected by a project.

7. Feminist participatory research would pay attention to **composition and issues of the research team, equally including gender, class, race, and culture**. Case study reports would explicitly discuss the sexual division of research team labor and power. Project planning and evaluation would consider gender in staffing decisions. What are the limitations and strengths of the research team based on, among other factors, gender composition?

8. Feminist participatory research would include **gender as a factor to consider in overall project evaluation.** For example, how has power, based on gender, been redistributed or maintained by the project? If gender oppression did not have a central place in the project as designed and implemented, how did that happen? If all-male projects continue to ignore or minimize men's oppression of women, project reports would explain how this occurred.

9. The feminist participatory research community and networks, would **purposefully review and track all participatory research projects with gender in mind.** Do women and men consistently choose different problems and oppressive systems of domination to challenge via participatory research? If so, what does this mean for participatory research as a tool for social transformation?

These suggested considerations for planning, implementing, and evaluating feminist participatory research are by no means an exhaustive and complete list. Instead they are a beginning for dialogue and experimentation in a participatory research community committed to strengthening the creation of knowledge as a force for radical social and personal transformation which equally includes and benefits women and men, as well as naming patriarchy as a system to dismantle.

CHAPTER VI

Participatory Research as a Feminist: Learning by Doing

Participatory research claims to be an approach to knowledge creation available to even the most oppressed people of the world. Yet I find myself, a white, middle class, college educated, North American, feminist doctoral student, obsessively questioning: Can I really do this?

Personal Journal
March 1985

This chapter and the following two chapters describe a feminist participatory research project conducted with a multicultural group of former battered women in Gallup, New Mexico. Discussion of the project is organized according to the five phases of participatory research projects identified in Chapter III (Vio Grossi et al., 1983). My intention is to share with you the mechanics of "what happened" and more importantly, many of the struggles, choices, dilemmas, and joys encountered along the way. As I have mentioned, one of my own difficulties in getting started was the fact that so few descriptions of how to "do" participatory research exist. For this reason my descriptions are detailed and personal. I hope they will encourage you to try your own version of feminist participatory research.

There is a step preceding the phase of organizing the participatory research project and gathering information about the working area. This chapter begins with discussion of the pre-project phase and how I decided to attempt feminist participatory research. The chapter also discusses the first phase of project organizing. This phase includes gathering and

analyzing information about the research area, both before and after entry into the community, establishing relationships within the community, and organizing the actual project design and agreements.

The Preliminary Phase

In the fall of 1983 I was in limbo, that frustrating period in a doctoral program when one is looking for a topic for a research proposal. For months I didn't even know where, geographically, I was going next. While my husband, Cal, negotiated for a position with the U.S. Indian Health Service, I hung around the university, trying not to get too desperate. At last word came that Cal would be an emergency room nurse at the Gallup Indian Medical Center, in Gallup, New Mexico. Finally I knew that I would be moving to a small, southwestern town, one which bordered the Navajo Nation and the Pueblo of Zuni. Cal had been invited to Gallup to work for the Indian Health Service. No one was inviting me to come to Gallup to do anything.

The paperwork for the move took six months. While waiting, I audited the graduate course on Alternative Research Strategies and Skills which I mentioned earlier. Prior to the course, in informal hallway discussions with members of the Center for International Education, I had begun to learn about participatory research. The excitement of that semester's dialogue about alternative approaches to knowledge creation was to have a powerful impact on the next two and half years of my life.

The fact that the course was set within the context of the Center for International Education is significant. Over the past fifteen years, the Center community has been one of the primary forces in the development and application of nonformal education as an empowering and politicizing approach to adult and community education. The Center community of faculty, students, and support staff have struggled to practice internally what we advocate externally. That is, the Center has struggled with the contradictions of creating and maintaining a nontraditional, nonhierarchic, participatory and democratic

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learning community in the midst of a primarily traditional, hierarchical university.

The commitment to empowering education, both in theory and practice, has led many of us at the Center to examine our research practices from a political standpoint. We particularly looked at the contradictions between our education and our research practices and the implications for the distribution of power. Of course, our questions are set within the context of the broader debate in the social sciences and education. While they were only a small part of this larger debate, our concerns, both within the alternative research class and within the Center were nonetheless disquieting. That winter visiting speaker Ira Shor observed that once we uncover the contradictions in everyday reality we will never again be comfortable.[1] As many of us explored the contradictions between our approach to education and research, we were indeed uncomfortable. Could our research processes and products be as empowering and liberating as the educational practices we espoused? It was a heady winter to consider a dissertation proposal.

With little information about Gallup, and even less information about what I would do there, I made a commitment to try a participatory research approach for my dissertation research. The choice was, in part, a response to the challenge set by the Center community to struggle for increased congruity and consistency between our personal politics and public practices. The choice was also part of a challenge to participatory research. The more I read and discussed the participatory research literature and case studies with colleagues, the greater were my doubts about participatory research as an approach to knowledge creation truly available to "the people," (who surely did not spend hours reading Habermas or Horton) or even to a graduate student who did. My reading and discussion of participatory research was filtered through my concern, could *I* do this?

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[1] Ira Shor was a guest speaker along with Paulo Freire, David Magnani, Juan Aulestia, and Johnetta Cole, for the panel discussion, "Education as Social Transformation," February 27, 1984, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Making the decision to try participatory research was doing things backwards. Standard research textbooks advise the social scientist to first identify a research problem and then select an appropriate method. Instead, I had an approach in search of a problem. Horton (1981) noted that participatory research literature is vague about how the research problem makes itself known, and how participatory research projects get initiated. The literature is also limited in regard to the initiation of small scale projects without the support, resources, and credibility of government ministries, universities, or international development agencies. I began asking, "*How* could I do this?"

Participatory research is intended to be a collective endeavor, but I had not yet identified a specific group in Gallup with which to work. I might have asked, "Can *we* do this?", but my focus was on myself as the participatory researcher-to-be. I was intimidated by the revolutionary rhetoric of participatory research. This research approach aims to create personal and societal transformation. What role could I, a lone graduate student on my way to a small, southwest town play in "the revolution?"

Phase One: Organizing the Participatory Research Project

Organizing the Project and Information Gathering Prior to Community Entry

In the alternative research strategies course we reviewed numerous models for conducting participatory research (Marshall, 1981; Le Boterf, 1983; Park, 1978a; Fernandes and Tandon, 1981). Practitioners that we were, and hungry for details, we continually asked, "But how did they actually do it?" Several of the participatory research models began with, either implicitly or explicitly, "Request from actors in problem situation" (Fernandes and Tandon, 1981; Marshall, 1981). How do you put yourself in a position to be "requested?" Perhaps this happens easily for experienced and well-known par-

ticipatory research advocates. How does it happen for an individual unknown in the field? I joked that no one would knock on my door and ask me to be their participatory researcher. Just how would I begin if I had not been requested?

Marshall (1981) and Fernandes and Tandon's (1981) models assume that a community-based group has formed and has begun to identify at least a preliminary definition of their problem or concern. Yet pre-formed, organized community groups do not always exist (Park, 1978a). Both models are ambiguous about how the researcher is requested, and about how a relationship is developed with a pre-formed community group who are intent upon investigating a problem situation in their lives. Each model is unclear about the extent to which the social scientist is promoting participatory research or waiting to respond with participatory research upon request by a community group. Nonetheless, in these models, the social scientist either responds to a request by a community group or, after exploring a community, determines whether or not to make a commitment to a community-identified problem (Fernandes and Tandon, 1981; Marshall, 1981).

Le Boterf's (1983) model begins with the "promoters" of participatory research working with organizations representative of the population to set up both institutional and methodological frameworks for participatory research. While Le Boterf is unclear about how that institutional relationship is initiated, he is clear that the social scientist is "promoting" a participatory research approach.

I was headed to a community in which no particular group had invited me, either as an educator or researcher. I knew only in a generic sense from literature on the Southwest and Native Americans what some of the community problems were. I did not know which problems were "owned" by which groups of people or what organized community groups existed. A step prior to "Request from Actors in Problem Situation" appeared missing. I modified the Fernandes-Tandon (1981) participatory research model to begin with the step: "Entering, Experiencing, Establishing Relationships With Actors in Situation" (Figure 1). This step includes the process of beginning to gather information about the community and building relationships and commitments within the community.

Participatory research maintains that the specific context of the research community is critical to knowledge creation. As I organized a tentative model for conducting participatory research, I envisioned the steps in the process set within an historical and material context. The context can be explored from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. The quantitative perspective includes understanding aspects such as socio-economic, demographic, geographical, and political data (Le Boterf, 1983).

Collecting this data helps place the community within a regional and national perspective. The qualitative perspective includes beginning to understand the meaning people give to their experience of that reality. One focus is discovering the discovering the range of ways various segments of the population experience that world.

Revised Model: **Steps in Participatory Research Approach**
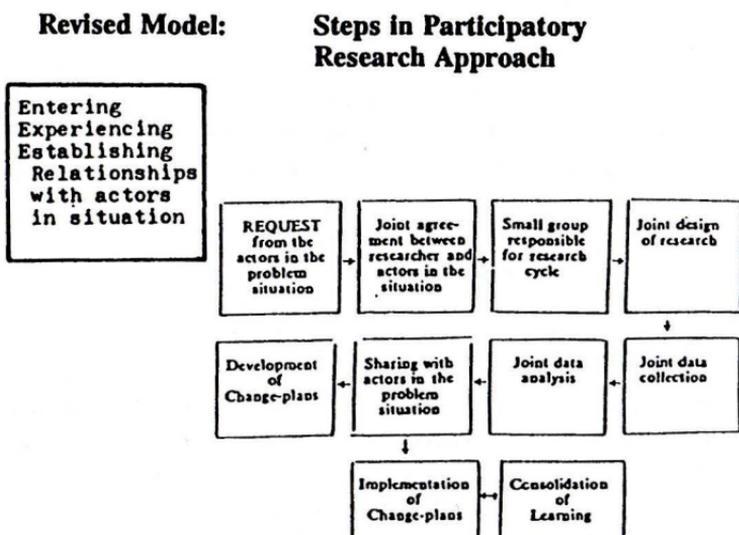
[Adapted from Fernandes and Tandon (Eds.) *Steps in "Ideal" Participatory Research Approach*: 1981]

Figure 1

While in Amherst, Massachusetts, I began gathering information on Gallup and the surrounding area. I found that Gallup is called a border town because of its proximity to the Navajo Nation and the Pueblo of Zuni. The Navajo Nation is the largest Indian reservation in the United States, both in area (2,500 square miles) and population (160,000). Zuni, with a population of 7,500, is the largest of the nineteen Pueblo Indian groups in the southwestern U.S

I began to explore Native American issues, looking first at the conditions of life for Native Americans in general and then, as much as possible, about the groups who lived in the area to which I would be moving. Some of the statistical data about Native Americans found in the 1980 U.S. Census illustrated the poverty of Native Americans. For example:

> Sixty-five percent of all Native American housing is substandard; only 55% of the people have high school diplomas (compared with 68% of the white population); Native American college graduates can only expect to make 75 cents for every dollar their white counterparts make. On reservations the unemployment is 39%, four times the national average; the median family income is only two-thirds that of white families. (Webster, 1984:17. Quoting 1980 U.S. Census Data.)

Many Native American tribes did not survive the early U.S. government policy of genocide, forced removal from their traditional lands to confinement on reservations, or later attempts at forced assimilation. All Native Americans face contemporary policies and practices which continue to threaten their survival. U.S. economic and political domination of Native people and their land has been compared to the power relationships causing underdevelopment of Third World countries (Ruffing, 1978; 1979). In fact, the Navajo Nation has been described as an "internal colony" of the United States in that it is geographically isolated, its people are discriminated against racially and culturally and its economy remains

underdeveloped. Lorraine Ruffing observed that the Navajo people are subjected to deprivation unmatched by any other minority group in America (1979:25).

Native American women, as represented in the reading, suffer triple degradation: oppression based on race, gender, and class, both within the broader U.S. culture and frequently within their own tribal cultures whether or not men in various tribes oppressed women prior to European contact. The status of Native American women within tribes has rapidly declined in recent years (Allen, 1986; Wittstock, 1983). Allen (1986) noted that Native women confront the same central issue as their men: the issue of sheer survival. For Native American women, the struggle for survival includes fighting alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, or alternatively, affluence which erodes traditional values, rape, incest, battering, forced sterilization through the Indian Health Service, health problems, high infant mortality rates, poor educational employment and economic opportunities, suicide, homicide, and violent and racist attitudes and behaviors against Indian people (Allen, 1986:408).

Native American women acknowledge many similarities between their problems and those of other non-Native women. However, Green maintains, "For Indian feminists, every women's issue is framed in the context of issues pertinent to Native peoples," (1983:14) for example, issues such as tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

As I gathered information, the alternative research class set aside a session to flesh out the initial step of "Entering, Experiencing, Establishing Relationships with Actors in Situation." Working in small groups, the class brainstormed lists of questions for my consideration in entering Gallup and strategies for answering them. Using the same format, each group discussed entry considerations in one of four areas: the community, local resources, constraints, and myself, as adult educator and participatory researcher to be. I sensed a collective excitement in the participatory planning as the class assisted one of "their own" who would soon enter another community with participatory research intentions.

Entry into the Community and Continued Information Gathering

On a trip across country a few years ago, a friend drove through Gallup, so I asked for his impressions.

Friend: *It's not exactly a metropolis. It's run down and dusty.*

Me: *Did you go through the downtown area?*

Friend: *Well, I think so, but we kept right on driving. Sure were a lot of Indians.*

Then I talked to friends from our Peace Corps training group who now teach in Ramah, a smaller part of the Navajo reservation south of Gallup. I asked what Gallup was like. After a long pause, one of them said, "Well, you wouldn't say it was a beautiful place."

From a letter to a friend
April 1984

After six days driving across country, my husband and I arrived in Gallup on a late April afternoon. Gallup wasn't beautiful. We dropped off Interstate 40 to famous Route 66, which runs the length of town. Route 66 was cluttered with mud splattered pickup trucks, fast food restaurants and motels, Indian trader and art stores, and an area of sleazy bars and the plasma donor center. Everything looked dusty, dry, and brown. Spring had not yet come to the high plateau. Immediately noticeable were the many and varied faces of Native Americans. Perhaps in town to shop, Navajo grandmothers, traditionally dressed in velveteen blouses, calico skirts, and their trademark silver and turquoise jewelry, could be seen with small grandchildren in tow. Some of the children, not so traditionally dressed, wore combat fatigue pants, "Motley-Crue" (a heavy metal rock band) T-shirts, and Nike running shoes. Gallup may not have been beautiful, but the people were.

A surprise late April snow followed an afternoon of fifty-five mile an hour winds. When my husband Cal called to report to the Gallup Indian Medical Center, the hospital official who had recruited him sounded apologetic for the winds and snow, "Look, April is the worst month in Gallup. Please, don't pack up and leave. May gets better." Later we heard stories of newly arrived Indian Health Service personnel who did indeed drive into Gallup, take one look around town, and, without so much as taking one suitcase out of their trunk, get right back on the interstate to head home.

From the time we drove into Gallup on April 28, 1984, a full year passed before I wrote an acceptable dissertation proposal for a participatory research project (April 1985). Another two months passed before I officially started the project by requesting formal permission from the Board of Directors of Battered Families Services, Inc., to conduct research with current and former clients (June 1985). Finally, another few months passed before I modified my proposal and project to purposefully combine feminist and participatory research.

It would be tedious to describe in detail how I spent that year. However, using the format developed by the alternative research strategies class, I will describe my initial observations about the community and how I established a relationship with Battered Families Services and battered women.

The Community

Gallup, with a population approaching twenty thousand, is the largest town in McKinley County. The county, larger than the state of Connecticut, is primarily rural. It is among the poorest counties in New Mexico; 33.2% of its families are below the poverty level. Unemployment, often higher than the national average, hovered near 11% in late 1984. The last of the area uranium mines shut down in the summer of 1984. The formal educational level is low, less than 30% of the

population over twenty-five years of age have high school diplomas. Not quite 11% are college graduates.[2]

The county is racially and culturally diverse; Native Americans, primarily Navajo and Zuni, compose 66% of the county's 56,000 people. Another 26% of the population are Anglo, 6% are Hispanic, 7% are Black, 3% are Asian American, and the other 1% include those of East Indian and Middle Eastern origin. While the county is racially diverse it is not necessarily racially mixed. That is, although some area residents celebrate and respect cultural diversity, others live their entire lives without having a meaningful personal relationship with someone of another racial or ethnic group. Racism, subtle and overt, individual and institutional, is pervasive.

Gallup is the service center for a 15,000 square mile market area of 95,000 people. On pay weekends, Gallup may swell to over 100,000 people, all in town to shop for food, clothing, and other necessities, to receive medical care, to use laundry and car wash facilities, and to seek entertainment.

Gallup struggles with a poor self-image. When I arrived, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored "Think Positive" (about Gallup) campaign was in full swing. It was followed by the "We've got it good in Gallup" campaign. Many of the people I met my first few weeks in town said of Gallup, "People either love or hate Gallup. There's not much middle ground. And quickly you'll figure out where you fall."

Gallup also suffers from a poor image within the state and perhaps even the nation. In particular, alcoholism and alcohol abuse are extensive and visible. Much of the public concern and discussion is about the visible features of alcohol abuse. In a several block radius downtown, there is a concentration of bars and package stores. With alcohol sale or consumption illegal on both the nearby Navajo and Zuni reservations, Gallup is one of the border towns where Native Americans purchase and consume alcoholic beverages. The highly visible concentration of a small group of Native

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[2] Statistics in this section are taken from the McKinley County Community Mental Health Services Grant proposal for Special Non-Unit Community Services, Gallup, New Mexico, 1985.

Americans in the alleyways and parking lots surrounding the downtown bar and package store zone supports racist stereotypes and perceptions that Gallup's drinking problem is an Indian problem. Local non-Indian residents are more likely to drink in less visible groups in other bars, hotels, restaurants, private clubs related to men's fraternal organizations, and their own homes. There is probably no less alcohol abuse among area non-Indians; it merely manifests itself differently within the community.

High levels of alcohol abuse, among both the Native and non-Native population take a great toll in personal and family trauma, including related emotional and mental health problems, unemployment, spouse abuse, assault and battery, rape, motor vehicle fatalities and accidents, child neglect and abuse, and child sexual assault. This is not to imply that the above problems are caused by alcoholism. The relationships between alcohol abuse and these problems are complex. It is conservative to say that most of these problems are exacerbated by alcohol abuse.

In the spring and summer of 1984, the local newspaper and radio news were filled with discussion about a local Task Force on Alcoholism, the continued closing of area uranium mines, and the upcoming local and national elections. Within this context I began to establish relationships and commitments within Gallup.

Resources, Constraints, and Me

Although alcohol abuse was obviously a major community problem, I chose to explore issues related more closely to my interests. These included progressive or feminist women's organizations, nonformal education and university teaching, and social activist organizations.

Through the Chamber of Commerce I obtained a list of community organizations. A local chapter of the American Association of University women, whose meetings were suspended for the summer, represented the major concentration of area feminist-identified women. No other mainstream or radical feminist organizations exist. Other women's

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organizations included service sororities, church affiliated groups, and women's auxiliaries of men's fraternal organizations.

Likewise, no social justice oriented or activist organizations existed. There are individuals with progressive, even radical politics, but they are not organized and form no visible, vocal critical mass. For example, the local Quaker community was composed of a core of two women.

With the 1984 New Mexico primary and national elections in mind, I attended a county Democratic Party Committee meeting. Of the nearly 14,000 registered county voters, over 11,000 are registered Democrats. At the meeting I was elected to be a delegate to the state convention. This may sound impressive after only four weeks in town. However, McKinley County qualified for fifty-nine delegates and only forty-six people attended the well-advertised meeting. As New Mexico has only four electoral votes, there was little local enthusiasm for campaigning for the Mondale-Ferraro ticket. I worked on the campaign of a progressive Democratic State Representative, Judy Pratt, who was challenging Republican U.S. Senator Pete Domenici. The Democratic County Chair wrote her off as "that radical." Pratt's local campaign, with little support from county Democratic committee regulars, was headed by an activist Navajo university student, home for the summer. The campaign couldn't afford to buy voter registration lists for phone banking. If the county Democratic committee or other candidates owned the lists, they were not shared with the Pratt campaign. Pratt accompanied the national Democratic ticket to defeat in November.

The Gallup Branch of the University of New Mexico is a two-year junior college which includes vocational-technical programs. Many of its 1,400 students are part time "worker-students," who juggle jobs, families, and studies. Eventually I began teaching women's studies and communications courses there. Because of the part-time, worker-student nature of the student population and the conservative local context, UNM/Gallup is not a hotbed of student activism.

Making these discoveries and contacts and exploring other dead end ventures too numerous to mention took two months of phone calls, visits, discussions, of reading the phone

book cover to cover, studying the newspaper for meeting announcements, and likewise checking community announcement bulletin boards at the branch college, the city library, grocery stores and laundromats.

I first came across information about Battered Families Services (BFS) on these bulletin boards. BFS pleas for volunteers were visible all over town. It was the only agency with an activist orientation toward women's issues that I saw advertised. Initially I called BFS because, dissertation research aside, I was hungry for something concrete and meaningful to participate in within the community. I had never worked with battered women. I got involved with BFS because they were literally the only organization or agency to return my interest. After several phone calls and a few false starts, BFS staff were the only ones to say "We can really use you. We're desperate for help." At the time of my initial involvement with BFS, I continued making contacts with other organizations and people.

In describing my first few months of exploration, it is difficult to convey the frustration of the agonizingly slow pace, the countless unreturned phone calls, and the dead ends. The contacts that eventually worked out took nurturing, persistence, and just plain nudging on my part.

Establishing a Relationship with BFS

The Agency

Battered Families Services, Inc. is a non-profit organization which provides twenty-four hour services to victims of domestic violence and offers public education about domestic violence for McKinley County. In 1984, there were no shelters on the entire Navajo Nation - the size of West Virginia - nor in the Zuni Pueblo. BFS provided shelter and services to these areas, primarily the southern and eastern areas of the Navajo reservation. The 1983-84 U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence labeled BFS as one of the shelters, if not the only shelter, serving the largest rural area in the U.S.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1984, the Office of Navajo Women, part of the tribal government structure, and the Council of Navajo Women, an advocacy group, unsuccessfully lobbied the Navajo Tribal Council for funds for shelters on the reservation. While at one point $250,000 was promised for that purpose, the funds were never officially allocated or released. As of this writing, there are still no tribe or state funded shelters on the Navajo reservation. Battered women on the vast reservation often travel great distances under extreme circumstances to use shelters in the off-reservation border towns of Farmington, NM, Flagstaff, AZ, or Gallup. In mid-1985 a shelter was started in the Pueblo of Zuni.

In addition to operating a "safe house" shelter for battered women and their children, BFS offers crisis intervention, counseling for clients in and out of shelter, advocacy, and community education. At that time the paid staff consisted of an executive director, a counselor, a shelter manager, and a part-time child counselor. A small volunteer corps handled evening and weekend phone calls and shelter admissions. Between December 1983 and December 1984, its second year offering full services, BFS, according to its annual report, sheltered 141 women accompanied by 140 children, and provided out-client counseling to over 200 women. Of those women and children, 73% were Navajo and 47% lived on the Navajo reservation.

BFS staff recognized the unique nature of providing services for a large, rural, culturally diverse population. In a grant application, BFS wrote about its service area:

> (it provides). . . interesting cultural and physical challenges to victims and the program alike. As much of McKinley County is rural, transportation and communication are often crude, at best, or unavailable. Phone communication is typically non-existent with our clients; the closest phone may be several miles away at a trading post. It is not uncommon for one of our clients to be completely unable to flee after an attack . . .

Many Navajo people find themselves in a
struggle in finding a balance between the
traditional and acculturated; this dilemma is
also present for the battered woman. When
exploring options to leave a   violent
relationship, frequently a choice will include
leaving a life style which is familiar. . . .This
decision on their part usually means leaving
family, culture, and their primary language
behind. (Forster-Cox 1984:3-4)

The BFS Family and Myself

I started out doing volunteer office work for BFS.
Overhearing office phone conversations such as the following,
quickly exposed me to battered women's problems:

When was the last time he hit you?

Friday? Ah ha.

*And when were you in the hospital for a beating
before that?--Oh, I see, you lost your second baby
after a beating --a miscarriage?*

Soon I was spending time in the shelter talking with
women and transporting them to various appointments. Only
10% of BFS clients have private vehicles and within Gallup
there is no public transportation. Private taxis are beyond most
clients' budgets.

My involvement with BFS was a tremendous personal
lift. The warm family atmosphere created by the small staff
impressed me. While providing professional quality services,
the staff managed to avoid the distant, bureaucratic social
service attitude characteristic of many public assistance
agencies. They were committed to helping women help
themselves. At that time, the shelter was in an old run down
house near my house. I often walked there to spend informal
time with women and their children. Being with the women and

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the staff helped meet my personal needs for camaraderie and meaningful activity. I became an on-call volunteer, which involved being available to meet battered women, often in the middle of the night, at safe places to bring them into the shelter. In July 1984, BFS received a small grant from the Chicago Resource Center to hire a part time coordinator of volunteers. The position entailed recruiting, training, and managing the volunteers, writing a volunteer training manual and handbook; and doing community education. Several of the staff asked me to apply. At first I was reluctant. At that time I did not see BFS as a group with which to do participatory research. Satisfied with my volunteer status and doing other paid consulting work, I was hesitant to be tied down to forty hours a month for a low hourly wage.

I soon changed my mind. One afternoon I was in the BFS office, which was located in a family health clinic. A clinic volunteer started up a friendly conversation with me. She asked if I played bridge "No." "Oh, do you play golf?" "No." "Do you play tennis?" "No." Exasperated, she asked, "Well just what do you do?" Explaining my consulting work was often awkward. It did not fit the quick, one-word title that easily identified jobs. People often gave up if they couldn't understand my explanations of training, nonformal education, or human resource development. I avoided describing myself as a graduate student, not wanting to be perceived as a not-quite-total-adult person. In part, I took the BFS Volunteer Coordinator position so I'd have something to say I did. My husband said it would have been worth my paying BFS five dollars an hour so when people asked, "And what do you do?", I'd have an understandable answer. Besides the satisfaction of being a part of an agency and group of people whose work I philosophically agreed with, the BFS job gave me an identity in the community. I held the one year, grant-funded volunteer coordinator position from August 1984 to August 1985; and continued working as an on-call volunteer until December 1985.

The personal relationships and social aspects of the job were as important as the actual work. In my BFS position, I did not do the same formal counseling and advocacy as other staff.

However, like other staff, I chose to spend time being with and talking with the women in the shelter on a very personal, woman-to-woman level.

Over the course of BFS's work in the community, a number of women who had left the shelter ended abusive relationships and settled in Gallup. A small informal network of former clients built up. Many of these women and their children dropped by the shelter to talk, to ask for continued advocacy assistance, and to stay involved with social activities. Having left their abuse partners, many women no longer struggled with surviving a violent relationship. Instead they struggled with being single parents with few financial resources.

Obstacles to Initiating the PR Project

As my involvement with BFS grew, I talked informally with staff about doing some type of participatory research with former clients as part of my graduate work. Staff were enthusiastic and encouraging. However, I identified two obstacles to initiating a research project. The first was that there was no organization of battered or ex-battered women with whom to negotiate a project. The second obstacle was peculiar to attempting participatory research as doctoral research. In participatory research, the problem to be investigated and acted upon is ideally identified by the community or a particular people's group. Yet, no popular organization of battered or former battered women existed. At that point, I wasn't sure how to write a dissertation proposal problem statement unless I did it unilaterally - the antithesis of participatory research.

In my desire to do participatory research with oppressed women, I was reluctant to work directly through BFS. BFS is a non-profit social service agency serving the needs of battered women and their children; it is not an organization of battered or former battered women. Its clients and former clients do not have any power base or organized voice in the agency. At the time I became involved with BFS, the opinions of clients were certainly respected; but no structured channel existed to obtain their collective input into organizational decisions on a regular basis.

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One member of the BFS Board of Director's was an ex-client. Her input represented one battered woman's perspective; it did not represent a collective view. This is not meant to invalidate BFS's effort to include her, but her opinion was not a substitute for a structured approach to obtain a range of clients' input into organizational decisions.

The lack of power and collective voice of battered women within BFS is not an isolated issue. Schechter (1982) observed that within the battered women's movement, a loosely organized coalition of people and organizations working with abused women and their children, battered women themselves have little power and participation in comparison to that of professionals and advocates. A battered woman from Minnesota observed:

> You talk about empowering women but how many residents do you include in the power developing through the unity of the shelter network conference?. . . . How can you decide how to run a shelter without including battered women, women who need and use shelters? Exclude us from your organizing, your unity, your conferences, and you will lose us. You are then only sheltering yourself from our pain, our reality, our growth. You are only using us, capitalizing on our pain and needs (Schechter, 1982:91).

It seemed to me that a participatory research project which held empowerment, liberation, or social transformation as long range goals would have to directly involve a group of battered or ex-battered women. Since no group existed, the project could begin by determining local interest in starting a group. The informal network of battered and ex-battered women was a preliminary indication that clients were interested in some type of relationship with each other and BFS. BFS staff indicated that several clients had expressed interest in forming a client support group. Limited agency personnel and other priorities prevented staff from responding to this interest. In addition, after nearly two years with a stable staff, BFS was

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undergoing numerous personnel changes. Interviewing, hiring, orienting, and training new staff occupied considerable agency time and attention. Between December 1984 and December 1985, BFS had four different Executive Directors. Under those conditions, organizing a client support group and follow up services was not an agency priority.

In the meantime, I struggled with writing a dissertation proposal for a participatory research project. A year into the community and into my relationship with BFS, I was stuck. Two things helped me to move forward. The first was a critical reading of participatory research case studies. The literature is full of the rhetoric of revolutionary change and social transformation and outlines an extensive agenda for the novice. I paralyzed myself with doubts about my ability to meet that agenda. Only when I gave case studies the same attention I'd given theory did I begin to recognize the gap between idealism and the realities of participatory research projects.

The second thing that helped was spending several weeks in April 1985 at the Center for International Education talking with my dissertation committee members and members of the current alternative research strategies class. The committee and class provided encouragement, dialogue, tough questions, and a chance to critically reflect on what I had been doing for the past year. Luckily, Rajesh Tandon, a pioneer in participatory research, was the main speaker at a small, three-day conference on participatory research held at the Center. Among other things, Tandon said:

> Participatory research principles are not purist. You can't sit and wait for the ideal situation. Waiting to do it right is paralyzing.(1985)

Indeed, I had gotten to a point of being paralyzed by waiting and wanting to do participatory research perfectly. Tandon gave me encouragement to err on the side of action rather than inaction. After being stuck for nearly a year, I wrote a dissertation proposal within ten days. I identified the main problem to be addressed by the dissertation research, but the former battered women's group would collectively determine

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the problems to be investigated, analyzed, and acted upon in the actual participatory research project.

Implying that I had to travel over 1,500 miles to hear someone say "don't be paralyzed by perfection" in order to move forward sounds absurd. It was a combination of encouragement, dialogue, and distance that made a difference. BFS staff and friends in Gallup were interested in my work. But I was isolated from ongoing and critical dialogue with others who were struggling with similar political and philosophical issues in research.

Initiating the Project

Immediately upon returning to Gallup, I rushed to translate the dissertation proposal into a project proposal to present for discussion to the BFS Board of Directors. At their June 12th meeting, I sought official permission to conduct research through BFS. As I prepared for the Board meeting, many of the dilemmas of doing participatory research without being invited or requested by a community group or popular people's organization became apparent. For example, as I prepared the project proposal and description, I had to remind myself to make the wording tentative and to present points for joint discussion rather than to present points which sounded like accomplished decisions. I was asking BFS's permission to work with their clients and area battered women rather than going directly to battered women themselves because there was no identifiable battered women's group. This pointed out the difficulty of using a research approach aimed at working with oppressed people when they are not a cohesive, identifiable, formal group.

For the Board of Directors presentation, I prepared a handout as the basis of discussion and negotiation (Appendix A). In addition to requesting formal permission to work with current and former BFS clients, I sought agreement on the terms of the working relationship between BFS and myself. The presentation and discussion was divided into two parts: (1) description and discussion of the proposed research project, and

(2) discussion and agreement on conditions of our working relationship. I described the proposed project, included a time line, defined participatory research, and established a rationale for using a participatory research approach with battered women.

The first part of the proposed project involved individual dialogue and interviews with former clients of Battered Families Services. The interview was based on Freire's (1970) problem posing format. Women were asked to discuss the problems they faced in their everyday lives since leaving the shelter and question why those problems existed and what could be done about them. I ended each interview by asking if the woman was interested in forming a support group with other battered women to look into those problems and see what we might do about them. In the second part, I worked with interested women to form that support group. The group decided which of their problems they wanted to learn more about and act on. The final part involved group members in evaluating and analyzing what we had done and what we should do next. After an evaluation, I was willing to continue working with the group in whatever way best met their needs.

Following a description of the project, I proposed a number of areas for discussion regarding my working relationship with BFS. The areas for discussion included:

- safeguards for the women involved;
- what I needed from BFS;
- what the project could contribute to BFS;
- what BFS needed from me;?
- what BFS was willing to commit to me;
- final agreement of where we would go from here.

In addition to the BFS Executive Director, eight of the ten Board members attended the meeting. The Board consisted of nine Anglos (two men and seven women) and one Navajo woman. Having been involved with BFS for a year, as both a volunteer and volunteer coordinator, I knew all the members and they were familiar with the other work I was doing with BFS. Halfway into the presentation and discussion, one Board

member said:

> I hope you don't think our questions are too
> hostile. You know, if you were some stranger
> coming in here and asking to do this, we'd be
> even more suspicious and probably hostile.
> But because we know you and all your good
> work, I think you deserve our full vote of
> confidence and support.

Her comment was surprising because I had not per-
ceived any of the questions as hostile. The questions indicated
interest and enthusiasm for the project as well as concern for the
clients and BFS. The same member asked, "What's in it for
BFS?" We discussed the following ways the project might con-
tribute to BFS:

- Additional insights and information on the
  problems faced by battered women once they
  leave the shelter;

- Implications of those problems for BFS follow-up
  services. (The information generated might be
  useful in seeking funding for follow up programs
  or additional BFS services);

- Pilot of support group format for out-of-shelter
  clients; and

- Ideas for greater inclusion of clients in BFS
  organization and decision making.

Board members raised a number of issues and ques-
tions. What would happen to the group "once you get what you
need?" They wanted women to know that I could not have
access to their BFS client file and that their future access to BFS
services was in no way related to their project participation. In
addition to many questions, board members offered
encouragement. The President said that he had always wanted
to see an on-going client advocacy group, not connected to BFS,

which would "throw stones at us." The board member who was a former client was most supportive; she had on several occasions encouraged BFS to have a client support group.

The Board agreed to all of the items related to what I needed from BFS. The Board President asked me what I needed next. I asked for written permission to conduct the research and agreement on the conditions of our working relationship. He suggested that based on my outline and the evening's discussion, I draft a memo of agreement and release of information forms for clients. I circulated these to all Board members for modification and approval. The final copy of the memo of agreement and release forms were approved at the next month's meeting. Logistics for making initial contact with women were worked out with BFS staff.

Within two weeks I drafted the memo of agreement and consent forms and received board feedback. I met individually with the new BFS Director who had several logistical suggestions. She was concerned that the initial contact letter from BFS might endanger women who had returned to their partners. To ensure against this, BFS sent out the introduction letter and consent forms in envelopes without the BFS logo and address. She had helpful ideas about bringing new women into the project after the initial group was contacted. The attention that all staff gave the process and written agreements indicated support for the project. The final agreement was signed at the July BFS Board of Directors meeting (Appendix B).

CHAPTER VII

Uncovering Generative Themes: Learning Through Dialogue

The Navajo have a saying, "You listen with your ears, not your tongue." I am listening to the most incredible stories of violence and poverty; triumph and courage. I don't think I can separate knowing from doing anymore. I feel compelled to take action, but the action I'd like to take is to track down every one of those bastards and . . . I guess that's hardly the kind of action participatory research advocates.

Personal Journal
August, 1985

By living in the community and working with Battered Families Services and battered women for over a year, I came to many of my own conclusions about the problems women faced when they left the BFS shelter, either in setting up household with their children or returning to their partner. However, the next phase of the project was to provide an opportunity for women to explore their own perceptions of the problems they faced and to determine the level of interest in starting a group to look into and act on these problems. This chapter describes the second phase of the participatory research project in which women defined their most significant problems and came to an initial decision to join together to share and act on those problems.

Phase Two: Defining Problems and Generative Themes

Setting Up a Problem-Posing Process

After the BFS Board of Directors gave its permission to work through the agency, BFS staff organized the logistics. The counselor wrote the agency's letter of introduction about the project. Having been with BFS for two years, she suggested that the letter go out under her signature rather than that of the new director. She thought women would more readily recognize her name and be more likely to respond. The BFS letter went out with two copies of a "Permission To Be Contacted" form and a stamped return envelope, addressed to BFS (Appendix C). Women who agreed to be interviewed returned a signed form to BFS giving BFS permission and directions on how to put me in contact with them. Women could also contact me directly.

The introductory letter stated that I would like to talk with women after they left the shelter about the kinds of problems they faced and, if any of the women were interested, I would work with them to form a support group to work on their problems. Both the BFS letter and the "Permission To Be Contacted" form stated that the interviews and potential support group were part of research that I was doing for graduate work. It further explained that I was trying to learn about a type of research, participatory research, which might be of direct practical use or value to the women involved.

The BFS Counselor and Shelter Manager went through BFS clients' files and decided whom to contact. The counselor explained that in deciding whom to include, the criteria were threefold. In addition to trying to ensure a racial mix, they identified clients who lived in the Gallup area as opposed to many former clients who lived a great distance from town, and weeded out clients who "had burned BFS" by doing such things as coming back to the shelter drunk, revealing the location of the shelter, and threatening staff or other clients.

On Friday, July 19, BFS mailed forty-three letters. I told the Counselor that sending the letters made the project finally seem real, which made me nervous. I speculated, "What if no one responds?" She asked, "What if everyone responds?" We laughed about our different perspectives on the same situation. By Monday I had two responses, one by mail and one directly by phone. I made appointments for interviews. The project had really begun.

The Individual Interview Process

Initially I had reservations about beginning with individual interviews. I wondered if there was really a difference in the purpose or process of interviews in traditional research as opposed to dialogue within participatory research. Patton (1980) stated that the purpose of an interview in qualitative research is to find out what is in someone's mind, not to put things in their mind. He cautioned against the use of "why" questions, which presuppose that there are reasons why things occur and that those reasons are knowable (1980:228).

Within the context of participatory research, dialogue encourages people to look at the "whys" of their lives. Why do problems exist? What causes these problems? Participatory research assumes that reality and history are human-created, thus knowable. In participatory research, the researcher might not "put ideas" in someone's head, but the researcher certainly encourages people to reflect on parts of their lives that they might not ordinarily question or pay attention to. People are encouraged to begin to look at "reality" differently, that is, more critically.

Although I called the process "interviews," the underlying purpose and format was based on Freire's (1970) concept of dialogue. I began with individual instead of group discussions for several reasons. By talking with individual women, I could find out if women were interested in forming a group to look at and work on their problems as battered or former battered women. Individual interviews would give me a chance to get to know them better as well as give them a chance to check me out. At one point when BFS was experimenting

with weekly discussion groups for women in the shelter, several Navajo social workers warned BFS staff that they would never "get Navajo women to talk in a group."

Starting with individual interviews rather than a group meeting might be less threatening. I wanted to hear from a range of Navajo women whether or not they would find a group format useful and appropriate. Individual interviews would give women a chance to begin reflecting on their daily realities in a structured way. In Freirean terms, they could begin naming their reality. Many of the women who had left the shelter and settled with their children in Gallup were lonely for adult company. Talking with another adult about the problems in their lives might demonstrate to them the usefulness of breaking through their isolation to work with others.

In response to the 43 letters mailed, 19 women replied and 3 envelopes were returned with no forwarding address. The other 21 women never replied. Only one of the 19 replies declined an interview. She stated that she was presently busy with family commitments but would like to be contacted again if the project was repeated.

I eventually interviewed fourteen women, eleven of whom I personally knew prior to the interview. I knew ten of them from my work at the shelter and one from the women's studies course I taught. While it is difficult to say how knowing or not knowing me affected a woman's willingness to participate in the initial interview, I would speculate that the year of laying groundwork by building relationships and credibility with battered women through the shelter made a difference.

After a woman mailed in the permission form or contacted me, there was still a lot of work setting up the interview. Because few of the women had phones or private transportation, I usually made several trips to their homes before we set up a time and place for the initial interview. Even after agreeing to a time, the women were often unavailable. In several instances, women who hadn't returned the form saw me in town and initiated conversations about their willingness to be interviewed.

The majority of interviews took place between July and October 1985. Each interview followed the same format. I began by describing how I had gotten involved in working with battered women and my interest in participatory research. I

briefly discussed what I was trying to learn about participatory research. I noted that BFS did not have much information about the problems women faced when they left the shelter and that such information could be useful to BFS. After describing the interview process, including another consent form (Appendix D), I asked if they had questions or concerns before we started. After each woman read over the consent form, I verbally reviewed it.

The basic interview format included the following questions for discussion:

> Having been a battered woman, what problems do you face in your daily life since leaving the shelter?

> What problems do you think other women face when they leave the shelter?

> Why do you think these problems exist? What causes these problems?

> What are some things that can be done about these problems? What is being done about these problems?

> Would you be interested in getting involved with a group of women to work on and deal with these problems?

> What would you want or need from such a group?

After several interviews I noticed that women talked about similar experiences that I did not specifically ask about. For example, although I did not ask women to describe their abusive relationship, in the early interview, women described their abuse. I modified my approach and asked women to start by talking about the abusive relationship before asking them to talk about the problems they experienced in their current lives. Likewise, using the problem-posing format, I did not initially

ask women what was going well in their lives. Many talked about it anyway.

The initial interview typically took between one to one and a half hours. Transcribing each taped interview took six to eight hours. I hand delivered a transcribed interview copy to each woman and asked that as she read over the interview, she consider the following questions which we would talk about in a follow up interview:

> Are there any changes you would like to make? For example, is there anything you would like to add, take out, or clarify?

> How did you feel about the interview?

> What have you been thinking about since the interview in regard to things you said or new things you would like to talk about?

> As you read through the transcript, what insights or learnings did you get?

I asked that she contact me when she was ready for the second interview. Typically, women did not contact me. I learned to say that if I had not heard from her in a week, I would contact her to set up a second interview. Several of the first women interviewed suggested that it would have been helpful to have the interview questions in advance to have time to think them over. I started doing this. However, even then, most of the women said they never found time to look over the questions.

I was able to conduct a follow-up interview with eight of the 14 women I had initially interviewed. One woman moved with no forwarding address; several seemed reluctant to schedule a follow-up and I stopped asking, feeling that I was being intrusive. The follow-up interview typically took an hour, with an additional four to five hours to transcribe the tape. Again I gave each woman a copy.

Following the Freirean problem-posing approach, I reviewed the interviews for generative themes. The major

themes are outlined and supported by the women's own words. Instead of a brief description of each woman and a summary of her interview, I chose to present anonymous quotes grouped around themes in an attempt to protect confidentiality. However, many of the people associated with BFS and most of the women who subsequently joined the support group are very familiar with each other's life circumstances. Even if each woman was given a fictitious name, it would be all too clear who "Christina," a 28-year old Navajo woman with four children, a fifth grade education, and receiving public assistance, really is.

A brief group profile will give some sense of the fourteen women, who included nine Navajos, three Anglos, and two Hispanics. Only four women were living with their partners. However, three of the four partners had not recently been physically abusive at the time of the interview. One woman, I believe, was motivated to respond by a very recent violent episode. The interview turned into a crisis counseling session. Because of my experience with BFS and my counseling background, I felt comfortable allowing the interview to meet the woman's immediate needs.

Regarding formal education, five women had dropped out of school; four had graduated from high school; four had some college; and one had a Master's degree. At the time of the interview, six women were employed and one woman was with her employed husband. For the other seven women, their only means of income was a combination of public assistance programs, including Food Stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), commodities for pregnant or lactating women, infants, and children (WIC), low income housing, and energy assistance for heat. During the course of the interviews and the support group, two of the employed women went back and forth between employment and public assistance programs. All of the women had children. Nine women did not own or have access to private vehicles; six did not have telephones.

In Their Own Words:
"The Violence We Survived"

Before presenting the generative themes which emerged from the interview series, I will share a glimpse of the abuse these women survived. The quotations, taken directly from interviews, will help place their lives and problems in context. (In order to highlight the voices of the battered women participants in the research project, direct quotes from them will appear in bold face.)

It started out as just a slap across the face. Or grabbing the arm, grabbing the wrist. That's where it started. As time went by it did get worse...It got to the point where I couldn't take it anymore. I just finally convinced myself that I'm a person too. I kept trying to convince him of that. He kept telling me, "No, you're not. You're nothing but a woman."

It didn't matter if he's drinking or not. It could happen any time, just over little things. It was so ugly. I'm ashamed to talk about the things he would accuse me of. He would say things, even about the way I dressed. He tore up so many of my clothes, so many of my clothes he burned.

His involvement with the Native American Church was a point of contention, not in and of itself, but the fact that often the violence would come after he had been to a meeting the night before, sitting up all night, extremely fatigued, uncomfortable. And the peyote itself. He'll often get cold and uncomfortable when he's coming off its influence. Maybe it lowers inhibition some.

It was very degrading, I felt useless. And every time he hit me he came up with some excuse as to why. The last couple of months he'd come in and the first thing he asked me was, "Did you water the plants?" So when he went out and I knew he was going to come home drunk, the first thing I did was water the plants. Because if I didn't, he'd come home and immediately he'd start throwing water on the plants and slap me around. I also got it real good one day for making mashed potatoes. It was just the strangest, dumb little things. And that's when I realized, I'm not doing anything wrong. But when it was going on, I thought, "Well you idiot, you know better. Why did you make mashed potatoes? Why didn't you water the plants?"

I'd be sitting in the rocking chair with the little one. He'd come up with a gun in his hand and hold it to my head and say, "Now talk. Now say something."

I got to the point where I didn't care. I didn't care to live. I don't know if he knows that I felt like that. I just got on the road and thought, hell with it.

What ended his life was me. I had to fight back. He started coming at me. Well, first, he banged my head against the wall. There were three holes in the wall where he banged my head, you know, just holding me. I ran to the kitchen. I was going to call the cops. He started running after me. He ripped the phone off the wall. And that's when I got the knife, and I, you know. I don't know how, why, or what made me. But I stabbed him.

The stories of these women are similar to the stories of the two to six million women who will be battered in the United States this year alone. As one woman said of her experience in the BFS shelter:

> **We'd be talking, the women who'd been through similar situations, not everything was the same, but it seemed like we were all talking about the same man.**

Similar to millions of others, the fourteen women interviewed suffered physical, mental, and sexual abuse at the hands of their partners. Some suffered miscarriages; many feared for their children's safety. Most feared for their lives. For some who tried to leave, or did, their partners threatened suicide. Others considered suicide themselves. In the most extreme instance, one women killed her husband in self defense. Not represented among the women interviewed are the thousands of women who are literally beaten to death by their husbands or boyfriends.

Generative Themes:
Problems Faced in Everyday Life

Just as these women's experience of degrading and brutal violence is similar, so too is there similarity in the problems they faced in their everyday lives upon leaving the shelter. Battered women and their children are allowed to stay up to thirty days in the BFS shelter. The typical stay is ten days. During that time, a woman works with staff to consider alternatives to her violent relationship. Of the fourteen women interviewed, ten did not returned to their abusive partner upon leaving the shelter. Many women had been separated or divorced from the batterer for over a year at the time of the interview. Two of the four who did "go home" did so only after negotiating conditions with their partner, which included his participation in counseling.

The following list is a summary of major problems women faced upon leaving the shelter. The list of generative themes begins with the most frequently named problems.

Problems in Everyday Life
Since Leaving the Shelter

- Responsibilities and difficulties raising children;
- Financial difficulties;[1]
- Difficulties finding employment and lack of education;
- Lack of trust and fear of new love relationship;
- Loneliness and needing someone to talk to about problems;
- Low self confidence;
- Continued fear of ex-partner hurting woman and children;
- Difficulties with public assistance programs;[2]
- Lack of support from family or extended family;
- Personal alcohol abuse;
- Lack of transportation.

The women's own words give meaning to the problems they faced daily. Again, anonymous quotes are used to bring the problems alive. The following quotes were chosen because they are representative of the problems named by most women interviewed.

Difficulties raising children:

It's hard raising four kids. Having a job, having a big responsibility here (at work).

---

[1] Those women who were separated from their partners all indicated they had financial difficulties. The four women who were still with their partners gave it as one reason for remaining in the abusive relationship. Many believed violence was related to financial stresses.

[2] The most frequently mentioned difficulty was their allotment for AFDC, which was inadequate to live on. The second most mentioned was trouble getting into subsidized housing.

I also take care of my mother. She can't drive... Then go home and feed the kids and do dishes. By that time it's ready for bed. The same thing over and over; it's hard. You wonder, there should be more to life than this.

The girls really miss their dad. They like being with me but they kept saying they wanted to see their father. They want to be with him. They want us together. I felt real bad. I felt like I was denying them their dad and I didn't want to do that. They want to see him, and he won't call them. I don't want to push the girls at him. I want him to make an effort to see them. They don't understand why we're not together.

Financial difficulties:

When I left the shelter I had no income. I was AFDC approved but I had no check yet. I worried about money. How was I going to pay for the apartment? I worried about that the whole time. I couldn't sleep at night worrying about money.

I probably could separate for awhile. But at this point, financially I can't. I haven't totaled up the whole thing, how much we've got in bills. But most of it is in both our names. I don't want him to leave me saddled with everything. I just don't want to be responsible for everything. I'll do my share. I don't want him to just walk away and leave everything to me.

Difficulties finding employment and lack of education:

> I want to look for a job, but my education, well, I don't have enough. I just went up to fifth grade and then I got food service training. So I don't know. I can do anything. I can work with my hands. Just my education is too low.

> One difficulty trying to set up on my own is finding a job. I stayed in Gallup just to try to find a job. There's no jobs out that way (on the western Navajo reservation)... If I don't find anything, I guess I've just got to go back...

> Sometimes I lay in bed at night wondering what would happen if my AFDC check stopped. I was thinking, I should at least get on the ball and start looking for something. I never graduated. I was thinking, I wonder if it would be alright if I start going for my GED. Then I thought, how about transportation. And what about babysitting. Sometimes I think, oh, I'm never going to do it, so why waste my time thinking about it.

Lack of trust or fear in new love relationships:

> I still don't trust him, my new boyfriend. He was very nice when I first met him. I thought, oh gosh, there is somebody out there that can treat you really good. But once I found out about his lies, I started having my doubts. Am I gonna go through the same thing? Like now he might raise his voice to me and I get real scared. I feel like I better shut up or else I might make him mad. It's

> hard to put trust on anybody again. I just don't trust anybody anymore.
>
> I don't want to start a new relationship with anybody. But my mom taught me marriage, marriage, marriage and happy home. I've already been through two marriages. My God, what do I want to go through another marriage when I could just live with them? It's just something about "This is my husband" instead of saying, "This is my shack up." You know! This is my husband has a better ring to it.

Loneliness:

> When you were living with a man and now you're on your own, loneliness can get to you. You can't forget somebody over night and go on with your life...
>
> I would like somebody to really communicate with. Somebody I could tell my problems; somebody I could trust. This is really the first time I'm communicating with somebody else since I left the shelter nine months ago.

Lack of self confidence:

> At first, being on my own, I was scared. My husband never used to let me do anything. I had always been stuck in the house. Can't go anywhere, can't do anything; can't work. I guess living like that for five years, it was like, I just stayed that way. So at first I was scared to be on my own. I almost went back. I just thought, I can't make it. I don't think I'll be able to make it. I don't even know what I'm doing.

Continued fear of ex-partner:

> Something else that I think is real unfair is, he is an alcoholic and I was real nervous about letting my oldest go with him. He has visitation rights. He's so unpredictable. But the laws don't look at that. All they see is that he is their natural father. The only time they look for their welfare is they wait until something has happened. He never abused the kids but that's not to say he won't. After all, he didn't abuse me at first. It scares me that he might do that.

Difficulties with public assistance programs:

> Almost everything I own is in hock. There have been screw ups on my welfare and food stamp payments. My check was supposed to be sent out, but they misplaced the paper work. Right now I have no food in the house. I had to send the kids to school hungry this morning. I'm supposed to get a waitressing job in three weeks. I can't wait. I can tell welfare to shove it. That's my goal. To tell welfare to shove it!

> We only get $313 from AFDC and the rent is $200. Gas is over $80 and the electricity and water is about $40. So the $113 doesn't cover everything. Sometimes we have to live without one or the other. Right now I can't afford both electricity and gas, so we have no heat. Even if I worked at minimum wage instead of collecting AFDC and food stamps, I couldn't make it. I budgeted it out. I couldn't make it with baby sitting costs and losing medical coverage. They really have you stuck.

Personal alcohol abuse:

> **I know how it is to be down. You're by
> yourself and you don't know what to say.
> You don't know what to do. It is hard. A
> lot of times I felt like that. When you're
> down, you're down. One day I felt like
> that. I thought, how do you cure it when
> you feel like this? I don't know. That was
> stupid. I just felt like going to a bar and
> getting drunk.**

Regardless of their race or culture, all women experienced many of the problems named. The group was too small to make any definitive statements about differences in problems experienced by Navajo, Hispanic, or Anglo women after leaving the BFS shelter. However, I believe patterns emerged which warrant further investigation. While all women experienced problems with finances, housing, child rearing, and self confidence, they differed, often by race, in their resources to handle the problems. Navajo women often had more access to extended family support, traditional healing ceremonies, and a support system of elders and area leaders. Of course, many Navajo women did not avail themselves of these resources. On the whole, the Navajo women were poorer, had fewer material resources, such as private transportation or telephones, and had less formal education and fewer job skills.

In the interviews, women were open and explicit about naming the problems they faced after leaving the shelter. However, few women had answers to the questions, "Why do you think those problems exist?" or "What causes these problems?" The most common response was either "I don't know" or self blame. To minimize self blame, I tried rewording the question to move the analysis from an individual to collective focus. For example, after discussing financial difficulties, I asked why women seemed to have more financial problems than men after a separation or divorce. Again, they could rarely name causes of their individual problems. They made few linkages between their individual problems and structural causes of sexism, racism, or classism.

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Many women did, however, have answers to the question, "Why do you think men beat up women in love relationships?" The following answers are representative of their responses:

> **Men beat up women to feel in control and to feel that they have some kind of power. That's what I would hear during an incident, when I was pushed against the wall or pushed down on a bed. The monologues were always about me wanting to control him and he was not going to allow a woman to control him. I was able to realize that there was something going on there much bigger than just my relationship with him. But in our case anyway, it was a method of control.**

> **It's mostly being jealous and being insecure that they're going to lose somebody to somebody else. I don't know what other reasons.**

> **That's something that has always been hard for me to understand. It's been a big question with me. Why? I don't understand, except that history repeats itself basically. He was raised that way. He was abused by step fathers, his mother was abused. I think that had a lot to do with it.**

> **I think a lot of times, men take it out on women for their hard day. It just builds and builds and they've got to have somebody to take it out with. So it's their mate...**

When describing their personal situations, the women identified many reasons for being beaten by their partners, including: "he was jealous," "he was possessive," "he wanted to control me," "he needed to feel superior" and "he needed to take out his daily frustrations on me." Yet when asked the general question, "Why do men beat up women?," many initially said, "I don't know... I don't understand." Many women could not translate their direct personal experience into abstract theory.

The value of dialogue instead of a standard interview format became apparent. Through dialogue, women began, however tentatively, to examine and analyze issues they thought themselves unable to understand. For example, one woman described her husband's jealous behavior, yet initially said she didn't know why men battered women. She began to explore causes through our dialogue.

> **Most of the time he was drunk. He was very, very, very jealous. I would be getting ready in the morning for work and he would tell me, "How come you're getting all dressed up? Who calls you at work? Going to lunch with somebody?" He knew darn well that every day at noon I go home and I straighten out the house and I put a roast in the oven or something. And that takes a whole hour. By the time he gets home dinner's all ready. But still, he accused me of that.**

Pat: Why do you think men beat up women?

> **I don't know. . . Maybe they learn it from when they were growing up. I don't know.**

In the follow-up interview, I asked her again, "Why do you think men beat up women? We didn't really talk about that very much."

> **I would say they're. . .I don't know. That's what I don't understand.**

Pat: Any ideas?

Maybe it makes them feel like a man.

Some women thought more about the question between the first and second interviews. They struggled to make connections between why their particular partner battered them and why men in general beat up women in love relationships. Often, they did not trust their experience. Experts, not battered women, explain why men beat up women. None of the women ever used the term "feminist" to describe themselves, yet many were formulating a feminist analysis of violence against women based in personal experience. That is, almost every woman had her own way of saying that men are abusive in order to control women and to enforce man's dominant status in society. Many indicated that the abuser, on a conscious level or not, accepted the societal norms of male supremacy. He believed it was his right as a man to control and dominate his partner, using violence when necessary.

One woman observed:

> **He'd bring his problems home to me. He'd be mad at someone else and take it out on me because I was an easy target. It was pretty obvious I couldn't fight back like another man. He was very insecure. . . It seemed like if someone made him feel inferior, if someone gave him a hard time, then he'd take it out on me. It seemed like it would build him up to put me down. The worse I'd look the better he felt.**

Many women were examining the contradictions they experienced between their society or culture's definition of women's status and their own beliefs. For example, one Navajo woman explained:

> **In our church we had this seminar about women. A lady came from Flagstaff. She**

told us what it means to love a husband.
Loving your husband is caring about how
he feels or his needs. So I was thinking.
I've known of several cases where the
couple breaks up because the woman
doesn't tend to her husband's needs. Like
maybe he'll be hungry when he comes
home from work and she just doesn't care
to fix supper for him. She said if we took
the time to see to our husbands' needs and
respect them, if we did that, especially as
Christian women, then our husbands will
notice that we love and respect them and
they'll return the same things to us. She
said a lot of it is our, well, she put the
blame on us because she said sometimes we
get all grouchy and we snap at them when
they're tired.

Pat: Sounds like a lot of the responsibility's
put on the woman.

Yeah, I wasn't sure if that was really the .
way it was. But I thought about it, and it
seemed to me like it was a lot of the
woman's responsibility. So I think a lot of
it has to do with the woman, the way she
responds, reacts to different things.

Pat: Are you saying that you're not sure that it
should be all the woman's responsibility or. . .

I wasn't sure. I thought some of it had to be
the man.

Another Navajo woman responded:

Why men beat up women? If he sees his
wife doing better, job-wise or children--
wise, or his wife is much smarter than him

or something like that. Or if he couldn't hack it at his job, he'll be taking it out on his family that he can't be head of the household like he thinks he should. My husband's situation was that he couldn't get a job and he couldn't do much better for us. He felt like he wasn't worth anything and he couldn't provide for his kids. He lost a job he had for many years because of his drinking. I don't know, it's probably just their excuse. Sometimes I kind of blame myself for getting ahead of him.

Pat: So are men supposed to be ahead of women?

Well, in our Indian custom, something like that. Men have to be the head of the household. He's supposed to be the provider. The woman is supposed to just take care of the kids and cook and stuff.

Pat: What do you think about that?

Hogwash! (*laughter*). Hogwash! I don't want to be in the corner where I think the man has to be by me all the time to pick up stuff. I don't want to be that kind of person. I want to be myself. I have to do for my children. Navajo custom is changing. A lot is changing. I hate to say this, but Navajo women are out-smarting the men I think in some certain ways. Well really, women are tougher than men. That's the way I think.

As mentioned, none of the women identified themselves as feminists. In fact, two women stated their belief that "the man should wear the pants in the family." During discussion, they acknowledged that in order for the man to be the dominant head of the household, the woman had to be held in an inferior position. After their experience in abusive relationships, they wanted their next relationship to be an equitable partnership. They began to examine the inherent contradiction: how could a marriage be an equitable partnership if one person was held inferior?

The final part of the interview included asking women what were some things that could be done about their problems. On a personal level, nearly half the women had no answer. Of those who did, the most common response was to seek further education. Other responses included seeking additional counseling, finding the internal strength to "get tough," and doing something useful. In response to the question, "What could the community do about battered women's problems?", nearly half the women said the community should advertise BFS shelter and services more. They thought that many women were still unaware of Battered Families Services. Twelve women did not know about the shelter when they left their partner. They were referred by others. A third of the women suggested offering more counseling, formal and informal, to women and their children as well as conducting more community education, especially for teenagers. When asked what could be done to change men's abusive behavior, many said, "Nothing." After further discussion, several women suggested offering more counseling services for abusers and demanding stricter enforcement of laws against battering.

No women suggested starting a group for former battered women to deal with their problems. A woman from a small Navajo community south of Gallup said that she had tried to start a battered women's group there. She noted:

> I tried to form a group. Our community is real sensitive. Everybody knows each other. Everybody knows what goes on with the other people, even when the other person is 25 miles away, they still know. One way or

another, people are related to each other. So it's real hard to form a group because you can't guarantee the confidentiality within that group.

However, when I asked each woman if she would be interested in joining a group of former battered women to work on some of those problems, eleven of the fourteen said yes. The three who weren't interested either lived too far out of Gallup or had evening jobs. Of the eleven who expressed an interest, nine eventually attended meetings. The two who did not either had no transportation or a conflicting commitment on the night that the group decided to meet.

Women said that the purpose of the group should be to get together to talk, support each other, and share ideas for handling their problems. No one said, "Let's do research." But they did say, in so many words, "Let's share and legitimize the knowledge and experience we already have. Let's explore solutions to our problems." Several women suggested using the group to help other battered women, particularly those still in abusive relationships. They wanted such women to be able to talk with women "who had made it on their own" and to see "success" stories of women who had escaped abusive partners. Another common suggestion was for the group to have social activities which included their children. The desire for social contact reflected the isolation and loneliness some experienced as single mothers, many of whom were separated from their extended families on the reservation.

Reflections and Outcomes

Had I utilized a standard interview format instead of a dialogue approach, much critical information would have been missed or lost. For example, if I had not pursued several women's statements that they did not know why men battered women, the opportunity to begin exploring more critical understanding of their reality would have been lost. Each interview influenced the next person's interview, as well as follow-up interviews. When one woman mentioned a problem,

for example, fear of getting involved in another love relationship, I later asked others, after they had identified their problems, how they felt about beginning another love relationship. If women did not experience a problem I asked about, they quickly told me so. Rather than "putting ideas in their heads," we had an opportunity to collectively build a broader knowledge base about the problems women face. My prior relationship with many of the women influenced the interviews. I knew many of the problems individual women were experiencing, and I could focus attention on problems like alcohol abuse which otherwise some women avoided, perhaps for fear of being judged. The composite picture that emerged about the problems women face when leaving the shelter was much richer as a result of dialogue.

The dialogue process was also beneficial to the women themselves. In the interview process they cried, laughed, questioned, and evaluated their lives. Many shared the positive aspects of their lives since leaving their abusive partners. They praised themselves for courage and strength.

In the follow-up interview, I asked women what they had learned or gotten out of doing the interviews. Many said that it felt good to be able to talk to someone about things. Equally as many said it made them feel good to see how much they had changed. A mother of five children noted:

> **I read it two times. I thought, I must have really needed to talk to somebody. It's my own private way of saying what I want and what I feel. I learned that I had a lot of guts to do that! I learned that I can make it on my own. I noticed that I can accomplish something whenever I really want to do something instead of just sitting back and expecting people to do something for me. That's what I noticed about myself. And I'm proud of myself too!**

Another woman commented:

> **I liked having a copy of it because I think I
> really got to know myself, the way I talk,
> the way I answer questions. When I read
> over it, it didn't seem like I was the one
> that said all those things. It was like
> someone else!**

Throughout the interviews, I thought a lot about what the interviews meant for me, the participatory researcher. I was amazed at the intimate information women shared. I often wondered how anyone could hear this information and then just disappear with the data. Having initiated a problem-posing interaction, I felt moved to work with the women on problem solving.

The interviews also touched me deeply. I reflected on my own relationships with men. While I am not a battered woman, I recalled relationships in which I had feared men's anger. I was outraged about the degrading abuse they described. Given the brutality and terror these women and their children had experienced, what would value-free research look like in this project? What would it have been like for a male researcher?

The majority of interviews stretched from July to mid-October when the women's support group met for the first time. In the meantime, I kept in contact with most of the women to keep them advised on how the group organizing was progressing. I was afraid if too much time elapsed between the interviews and the first group meeting, they would lose interest.

As I spent more time with many of the women, I got involved in their lives. They continued talking with me about the problems they had shared in the interviews, and problems they had not shared, such as alcohol abuse and unplanned pregnancies. I got involved in their job hunting and dealings with social service agencies. I got involved with their children. I cared about them, laughed with them, cried with them, and worried with them. I got annoyed and irritated with them. I was not a detached and distant social scientist. I was, however, aware of developing limits on my involvement.

I decided that I would never lend money to any of the women. While certainly I had more monetary resources than all of them, I did not want to be seen as a source of money, nor did I want to complicate or confuse our relationships. Exchange of money has a way of interfering with the possibility of equitable interpersonal relationships. I willingly shared other resources, including transportation, telephone, time, and access to and knowledge of community resources. For example, I connected women with Legal Aid for divorce and landlord problems. Periodically I drove women and their children to doctor or social service appointments. I went as an advocate with one woman to a court hearing on child neglect.

On occasions I broke my own rules. In one interview I learned the family had no food until their first food stamp allotment began, nearly two weeks away. The mother was trying to work through friends as well as church and community organizations to get emergency food. I thought about their situation all afternoon. If I took them food would it be out of "liberal guilt"? I knew it would be a short-term reformist rather than long-term revolutionary response to their destitution. Finally I decided that their dinner could not wait for "the revolution" or the resolution of my intellectual dilemma. I took them food.

The process was beginning to affect me as much as, or even more than, it affected the women. On the one hand, I felt tremendous excitement about what I was learning and felt relief that the group would really get off the ground. On the other hand, embarking upon a participatory research project was emotionally exhausting in that I found myself constantly evaluating my daily actions and relationships. How am I choosing to live my life? How am I choosing to be in the world? I was often disappointed with my answers. Participatory research does not allow you to hide from yourself or to hide behind rhetoric, radical or otherwise. When deciding to be "with the people" you are forced to continually examine what that looks like in everyday life. Intellectual theorizing and radical structural analyses are not enough.

Finding a way to do research which attempts to close the gap between theory and practice, or thinking and doing, was difficult. Many times I had to choose between staying home to

read or write and going over to the shelter or to women's homes to hang out and talk. Reflecting on my work, I often thought, this is not enough. I often fell into the trap of either apologizing for the scale of the project or minimizing its importance. I'd compare the group we were trying to start with the trend-setting participatory research projects, and I'd think, "Big deal, big revolutionary deal. Trying to organize nine or ten women in a small, dusty southwest town. Surely the real revolution is elsewhere." The participatory research case studies in the literature sounded so much more important and successful.

I struggled with my own need for professional accomplishment and achievement. A BFS Board member asked me what I would do for my dissertation if the group failed to materialize. I confidently replied, "I'll just write about a flop." That would have been hard to do. I wanted the project to work. Organizing, particularly without the support of other organizers or an organizational base, was lonely work. Progress was slow, hard to measure, and certainly not flashy. Part of what sustained me was other work I was doing, primarily, teaching part time at the local branch of the University of New Mexico and consulting.

Teaching and consulting met another need: the need to earn money and contribute to the household. This was both a material need and one of self-esteem. I hated feeling like a parasite on my partner. Establishing relationships in the community required that I physically be in the community. This meant cutting back on consulting work. Doing participatory research, at least for a novice, was very time consuming. BFS could not afford to pay for the work I was doing with former clients, nor had they offered. I did not apply for outside funding because the application process itself was time consuming. Applying for funding before the group was established would have given me more power and control over the project than I already had.

The Participatory Research Network wrote, "It is a strategic choice to use institutional resources for work aimed at social change" (1982:43). From my perspective I could not figure out what other choices existed. To do participatory research requires human resources and at least a minimum of financial or material resources. These resources are usually

associated with institutions, mainstream or alternative, large or small. Even social scientists must earn a living. The institution that was partially supporting my work was the institution of marriage. I would have found it difficult to support myself while limiting my consulting work in order to be in the community, teaching for low wages, and facilitating the participatory research project for free.

The interviews initiated a dialogue process in which the women and I began to identify and examine the problems and contradictions in their everyday lives as former battered women. The process also caused me to examine the contradictions and dilemmas in my life.

The interviews and subsequent talk of starting a support group excited many of the women. Each time I saw women, they asked, "How many women do we have now?" Momentum built out of the interview dialogue process to start the group project.

CHAPTER VIII

In the Midst of
Feminist Participatory Research:
Learning Together

I'm in deep.

Personal Journal
November 1985

      This chapter describes the last three phases of the project: objectivization and problemization, researching social reality and analyzing the information collection, and definition of action projects (Vio Grossi et al., 1983). These phases did not occur in linear, sequential fashion. Because they often occurred concurrently, they are discussed together. The nine months of meetings and actions are categorized to reflect the group's evolution. For each set of meetings, content themes are described, as well as trends in group control as reflected in participation, leadership, decision-making and decision-taking, and action-taking. I discuss my role as facilitator and participatory researcher, and the balance among the investigative, educational, and action components of participatory research. The relationship between Battered Families Services and the group is also discussed. The chapter begins with an overview of the Former Battered Women's Support Group.

Phases Three, Four and Five:
The Support Group

By mid-October, seven of ten women interviewed were interested in forming a group which would have two major purposes. As defined by the women, the purposes of the group were to provide an opportunity for problem sharing and solving, and to do outreach to potential and current battered women. Women wanted support and a sense that they were not alone in their struggles. According to my agreement with BFS, the group would eventually provide information about the types of problems women face upon leaving the shelter and the possible roles a support group could play in helping women deal with those problems.

Both the women and BFS knew that my work with the group involved research on two levels: the more formalized investigation of my dissertation, and the less formal investigation of the group, i.e., women examining the problems in their own lives and considering the possibilities of a support group as one way to deal with the problems.

I acted as a negotiator to set up our first meeting, going back and forth to interested women as we agreed upon a convenient meeting day and time. We took into account women's work, school, and child care commitments. One woman volunteered her home for the first meeting. I volunteered transportation.

We met biweekly over a nine month period, except for holiday breaks. Overall, thirteen different women participated, including nine Navajo, two Anglo, and two Hispanic women. In addition to myself, six Navajo and two Anglo women formed the core of the group. Another five women attended meetings during their stay in the shelter.

The formal education of the group ranged from a Master's degree to completion of the fifth grade, with the majority of women having a high school degree or less. Three women were employed full time, eight received public assistance, and two women were back and forth between employment and public assistance during the course of the

group. Only one woman received sporadic child support payments. All of the women, except myself, had children. All but one woman was separated or divorced from her abusive partner. At the first meeting, in response to "Why are you here and what do you hope to get from the group?" she announced, "The group is going to support me through a divorce," and we did. Many of the women already knew each other from being in the shelter at overlapping times.

Getting Started

Meeting 1: Why Are We Here? Organizing the Group

The first meeting began with excitement and laughter among seven of us. A joke about our BFS "Alumni Group" evolved into a lively discussion of what to name the group. A member said she envisioned the group's name on the back of softball jerseys; another woman added, "And it says 'The Avengers'."

I opened the meeting, welcoming the group and outlining the evening's agenda of getting to know each other, discussing why we here, and deciding how to organize the group. Women's reasons for joining the group were similar, i.e., getting support, sharing problem solving, and knowing "I'm not alone." One member began the problem solving discussion by asking for help on dealing with in-laws and family during her divorce. Each woman made suggestions. The Navajo women identified a common pattern of family involvement in separations, in particular, their mothers and mothers-in-law often tried to negotiate the couple's reconciliation. One woman made us laugh when she recalled, "I told my mom, if he's so good, you take him!"

The first half of the meeting was taken up with introductions, reasons for being in the group, sharing background information, and discovering commonalities. In addition to discussing how to handle in-laws, members shared information on legal aid, divorce, and job hunting. They acted as information resources for each other. Besides myself, two women took leadership, asking questions of other members and

initiating topics and discussion. To varying degrees, everyone participated.

The second half was devoted to organizational decision-making. Everyone participated in deciding to meet every two weeks, rotate homes, and set the next four meeting dates. My role was primarily to pose questions, encourage participation, summarize, and manage decision-making. Decision-making was informal as different women shared ideas and I checked for group agreement.

The issue of child care was raised when I noted that one woman, known by many in the group, could not attend the meeting because her babysitting arrangements fell through at the last minute. When organizing the group, I knew that child care would affect women's ability to attend. After volunteering transportation for many women, I didn't want to unilaterally solve the child care problem. Everyone was concerned that no one be excluded by lack of child care or money to pay for it. The group started a child care fund. Each woman paid fifty cents per child per hour or what she could afford. One woman agreed to be treasurer and arrange for the next meeting's babysitter.

In response to my question regarding how we should structure meetings, one woman said that having a topic would be better than "jumping around" like we had tonight. Another suggested that we divide the time, half to be on a topic and half to be open-ended, to talk about current problems. Everyone agreed to that format. I asked how to decide on topics. Several people said, "You decide." When I expressed my reluctance to do that, someone said, "Well you interviewed all of us" implying that I knew the common themes. Another person joked, "Besides, it's your dissertation." I agreed to choose topics for the next four meetings based on interview themes, with the understanding that the next time, the group would decide.

The meeting ended on a festive note. Over refreshments, we continued laughing and talking. I was excited and relieved. The group had taken on problem-solving about child care and decision-making about the meeting purpose, format, schedule, and settings. Although everyone participated, some members demonstrated more skill at involving others. A few women participated only when asked a question or when their

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turn came. A group sense was developing of "being in this together."

Getting Comfortable

Meetings 2, 3, and 4: Effects of Abuse, Raising Our Children, Independence

Our meeting pattern fell into place over the next six weeks. The first half was spent on a topic, which I introduced, and the second half was spent talking about our current lives. When new members joined the group, we shared introductions and reasons for being in the group. Eight different women were participating. The problems we discussed varied greatly, including difficulties with school, sexual harassment at work, obstacles to getting a high school equivalency diploma, loneliness, and current love relationships. Women shared ideas for problem solving. Two women said they got very specific help from the group during this time. One woman openly discussed her struggle with alcohol abuse. At the fourth meeting, during a closure exercise on what people had gotten from the group to date, she said, "I've really gotten something for me and my kids, I decided to go to alcohol counseling." She did. The only woman with her partner initiated divorce proceedings. She told us, "I never could have done it without the group."

Members demonstrated increasing investment in the group. Several women tried to recruit new members. Additional women expressed interest in joining, but lack of transportation remained an obstacle. The group continued to organize and pay for babysitting. We developed a pattern of sharing refreshments with the children when the meeting ended. Although the group took increasing control of logistical arrangements except transportation, members were slow to take leadership in discussions.

Before starting the project, I'd thought about how I wanted to work with the group. I was afraid that acting too much like a "trainer," using flip charts, magic markers, and standard facilitation techniques, might intimidate some group members. Instead, I paid attention to group process and used

questions and paraphrasing to include everyone and to encourage deeper discussion, but I neglected to help the group reflect on our process. I often went the intention to take time for group reflection on our process and progress, but in the rush to close on time, the intentions got lost. My reluctance to utilize my full range of training skills and techniques was a mistake. Out of fear of intimidating people, I lost many opportunities to introduce structures and activities that would have made equal and meaningful participation more possible. Few members had experience or skill as group members. Their struggle to be comfortable speaking out paralyzed their potential to help others participate. During this time, I was the organizer and mover of the group. I reminded women of meeting days. Because few women had telephones, this often involved driving to their homes. I provided transportation to meetings for many women and their children. One of two women with a vehicle had volunteered only once to pick up people for the meetings. Occasionally, the two women with vehicles drove others home after the meeting. Although the group solved the child care problem, they did not take on the transportation issue. I hesitated to push the issue, fearful of embarrassing those without vehicles. Perhaps I did not trust the group enough to deal with the issue. I had too much personal investment in the group at that point to risk a confrontation over transportation.

Between meetings, I had to be careful not to make unilateral decisions for the group. For example, after the first meeting, a member talked with great enthusiasm to two new BFS staff members about the group. She said they could learn about battered women from the group. After a meeting not related to the group, one of these staff said to me, "We should be flies on the wall at the meetings." I wasn't really sure what she was suggesting, but I was uncomfortable with encouraging a revolving door at meetings, fearful that it would interfere with the development of group trust and solidarity. In retrospect, it was not my place to make decisions about BFS staff involvement in group meetings. I should have said that I would ask the group.

Several weeks later, I invited the Director of the Office of Navajo Women to speak at the Women's Studies class which I was teaching. In the course of making arrangements, I told her

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about the group. She invited us to make a presentation at the annual Conference on Navajo Women, several months away. I said I would ask the group.

I was excited about our first opportunity for group action. The group was not as excited. Many of the women came from the area of the reservation where the conference would be held. They expressed fear of talking in front of a large group where they might be recognized, see in-laws, or be the subject of gossip. Several said it would be easier if the group's first public speaking engagement was with a smaller, less intimidating group, such as high school students. One women said, "It's like being invited to speak at the White House your very first time in public." The group declined the offer; a small piece of evidence that a participatory researcher cannot make people do anything they are not ready for.

After meeting for two months, the group's participation in discussions was increasing and being more equally shared, although leadership was not. Members were taking responsibility for babysitting arrangements and funds and trying to recruit more members. I had the major responsibility for transportation. I was increasingly better at sharing decision-making, as was the group.

Our relationship with Battered Families Services was changing. Between the summer Board of Director's meetings and the first group meeting in late October, the BFS staff underwent an almost complete turnover. Only one of five staff remained. The new director had been a Board member and was aware of the support group project from the beginning. With the exception of the "flies on the wall conversation," BFS rarely asked me anything about the group. When talking with the Director in particular, I often brought up the group, suggesting various ways BFS might be able to utilize the group as an agency resource.

Nothing came of the suggestions. BFS was not referring clients to the group as they left the shelter, as had been our arrangement. In the transition between staffs, information on the group had fallen through the cracks.

During this time, I got second hand feedback that certain BFS staff thought I was "doing too much for" the women, as BFS did not want to "create client dependency." I

was aware of the agency's commitment to foster independence; I had helped write the agency policy statements for a volunteer handbook. The new BFS administration and myself agreed on the basic philosophy of not creating client dependency. We disagreed on what working "with" rather than "for" women looked like in everyday life.

My approach, which I believe matched their policy, was to help women identify resources. I agreed to be a resource when I could help a woman get access to or utilize community services. For example, two group members were being threatened with illegal eviction and lockouts by their landlord. One woman asked me for a loan to pay her overdue rent. Instead, I encouraged them to go to Legal Aid Services about the illegal lockout threat and I drove the women there. I initially spoke with the Legal Aid Director to ask if they handled such issues; but I neither spoke for them in the meeting nor did their follow-up work. I wondered if providing transportation encouraged dependence or independence. I decided that helping the women access a resource which they did not know existed and were then scared to approach promoted independence in the long run. Transportation was a means to a more important end. A strict interpretation of having people "do for themselves" could, at times, actually interfere with advocacy work.

When I heard about the comment made by some BFS staff, I scrutinized my interactions with the women. I balanced concerns about whether or not I was building dependence, making excuses for women's inaction or unkept resolutions, with what I was learning about the struggles faced by these women.

Many battered women develop low self-confidence after years of being told, "You're stupid. You're nothing. You can't do anything right." Even when pointed in the direction of resources, some lack the confidence to reach out, afraid of failure or appearing stupid. Overwhelmed by the confusion of what to say and how to get there, and fearful of getting no result, some women simply give up. For women not of the dominant class, color, or culture, there are additional obstacles to utilizing community resources. For example, in one interview, a woman talked about her reluctance to approach a school principal about a problem her child was having. We spent time strategizing

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how she might talk with the official. Finally she shrugged her shoulders and said, "What's the use. Some people, well, they look at you coming and they think, `It's just another Indian.'" Her experience of racism was an obstacle to utilizing resources many take for granted.

I knew that women would not always keep their initial resolutions to work on their diplomas, go to Legal Aid, or seek alcohol abuse counseling. They were not going to change, develop, "be empowered," or "be liberated" on my time table. I tried not to blame or judge women for "asking for too much." That's not to imply that I always did what they asked or that I was never annoyed, irritated, or disappointed with the women. I was. I learned to be comfortable saying "no" and helping women work through options which might not include my direct assistance. I came to admire women's varied attempts to get their needs met. I also came to recognize a double standard for women of different colors, classes, and backgrounds. Poor, uneducated women, trying to aggressively utilize the system, are judged harshly as "manipulators" and "advantage takers." College educated women are applauded for assertive attempts to make the system work for them.

Most of the women were actually reluctant to ask for help. They feared the embarrassment of being turned down. Often, I was at the end of the list of those asked for help. When it came to transportation, my own prior experience of living without a car in a U.S. town made me particularly sensitive to requests for help. Transportation became the symbolic battleground for what I eventually recognized as philosophical disagreements between myself and new BFS staff. The staff never directly confronted or challenged me on my relationship with ex-clients; instead, it was indirect. In conversation with me, staff criticized previous staff for "doing too much for women," or criticized clients, including those in the group, for "asking for too much."

Of course I didn't want to be an "easy mark," but I was determined not to operate from a position of being afraid of being taken advantage of. I set limits and I gave from my heart, not out of obligation or guilt. My priority was to help women help themselves, including getting access to community resources. I worked with some women even when I didn't per-

sonally like them or agree with their choices. I confronted them on contradictions and inconsistencies. Working with the women was often inconvenient and aggravating. It was never textbook perfect. If you are very leery of being taken advantage of by people, than participatory research is not for you.

Eventually, I realized that more was going on in the current relationship between myself and BFS staff than a disagreement over transportation and how to best help people help themselves. I began to realize that group members and I were perceived as threats by current BFS staff. Initially, all of the group members were women who had been clients under previous BFS staff. They thought highly of the prior staff and genuinely cared for them. I had worked for almost two years with BFS in various capacities. Perhaps we were feared to have allegiance to previous staff, when actually our allegiance was to BFS and battered women.

In fairness to current BFS staff, their time was stretched thin and they worked in the way that they felt was most appropriate. Dealing with over a dozen women and twenty children in the course of a month at the shelter is more demanding than working part time with a support group. Managing a public agency requires setting different limits, both organizationally and personally. Nonetheless, we should have been able to complement each other's work in a less threatening way.

Increasing Ownership

Meetings 5 and 6: Personal Planning for 1986 and Spirituality

During December and January, the group gathered momentum, i.e., increasing participation, leadership, and decision-making in meetings and taking more control over recruiting new members. The topics moved from discussing the past to considering the present and future. Members continued to use the group for personal support and problem-solving. They took over child care arrangements.

At the December 16th meeting, the group brainstormed meeting topics for the New Year. One woman suggested that members take responsibility for facilitating the discussion when the meeting was at their home. When we scheduled the next four meetings and places, only two women volunteered to lead discussions. Nonetheless, it represented increasing group leadership and control in content and facilitation. As we scheduled meetings, I told them that I would be away during the first week in January and encouraged the group to meet without me. No one wanted to. I suspect that the two women with vehicles did not want to take over transportation. Meetings were not scheduled in my absence.

A group member facilitated the January meeting. Everyone participated in the structure she set up of taking turns by moving around the circle. Members asked many questions of each other. We had an exciting discussion in which each woman discussed what spirituality meant in her life, which ranged from involvement in organized Christian religions, traditional Navajo ceremonies, and the Native American Church (NAC). Among Navajo members, there was great variation in religious activities. An Anglo woman also had extensive NAC experience.

Particular attention was paid to women's status in spiritual activities. For example, several women spoke of the duties which women had to assume in NAC meetings, noting the double burden of participating in all night meetings while also having full responsibility for child care and cooking. One woman said, "I learned that peyote was originally found by a woman and it helped her problems go away. So how did men get control of peyote?" The relationship between peyote use and some members' battering experiences was discussed. We discussed the hypocrisy between religious dictates and religious leaders' behavior. Several women noted hypocrisy in Christian congregations, "You go to Church services and everyone gossips about you and how you `fell backwards.'" We discussed the great personal strength drawn from both Christian and Navajo religious ceremonies. A woman shared a poignant story of the ceremonies performed for her by a Navajo medicine man during an abusive relationship. Members agreed that it is important to non-judgmentally accept each others' beliefs.

During discussion of current problems, one member shared her sadness over her teenage daughter's unplanned pregnancy and her subsequent dropping out of high school. "She's back where I started. No electricity, no running water, no heat, no education." When the mother said her daughter wanted to come to our meetings, the group approved. Someone said, "She doesn't have to talk if she doesn't want to." The daughter began coming.

Inviting the daughter to attend reflected the group's increasing investment in, and control over, membership. In early December, a group member's alcohol treatment counselor called me, having heard about the group through the member, to ask if the group was open. The counselor had another client who was in a battering relationship and might benefit from the group. I said that I would ask the group. When I brought up the request, members expressed concern about bringing in new people through channels other than BFS referral or personal invitation. One woman said, "What about confidentiality? And we want control. We want to keep to our own agenda." The group didn't appear open to new members referred through secondary sources.

Although the group was taking increasing control and ownership in many areas, I was still the primary organizer. I reminded women about meeting dates and provided the majority of transportation. My involvement in group members' lives outside meetings kept increasing. For example, I spent a lot of time with one member when she was feeling suicidal. I responded to another member's request to accompany her to court appearances for child neglect charges.

The court experience was intimidating. The Assistant District Attorney went to great lengths to ensure that the women, whose first language was not English, understood both the charges and proceedings. However, the Judge, Assistant DA, Child Protective Service worker, and court appointed attorney for the neglected child all spoke the same official courtroom language and were familiar with the proceedings. The woman did not yet have a court appointed lawyer. The information on how to obtain one was buried at the bottom of legal documents she had been sent. She lost custody of her child until the formal hearing, three months later. The child was

placed with the extended family and she was given visitation rights. The arrangement ensured the child's safety, but I was heartsick.

Returning home, I sobbed for hours. Surely this woman was a casualty of another kind of abuse - the abuse and degradation of poverty, racism and sexism. What about the hundreds of women just like her with little formal education, few job skills, a substandard monthly income, no transportation or phone, and a violent partner? I was fed up with talk of creating client self sufficiency and independence. It takes resources to be independent. I found little comfort in my work with the group. Why wasn't I out lobbying for public transportation, something, anything? Emotionally, I was in deep.

Establishing New Direction

Meetings 7 and 8: Education and Group Planning

The next two meetings were a turning point in the group, representing a major low period out of which came new direction and momentum. There was also a change in our relationship with Battered Families Services.

After the exuberance of the last meeting, I looked forward to the February meeting. I was disappointed to learn that only three women planned to attend. Several women had sick children and others had vague excuses. After going to pick up two women who backed out at the last minute, I came home to call the two members who had phones to cancel the meeting. My husband literally pushed me out the front door, saying "Go with what you've got." I drove to the meeting repeating Saul Alinsky's organizing motto: "Never cancel a meeting. Never cancel a meeting."

The woman who had agreed to facilitate the meeting was not prepared. Instead, we discussed a request to provide information to the BFS Board of Directors in relation to a pending agency decision to allow men to be volunteers.

The next meeting was nearly as disastrous. Again only three women attended. The same woman who agreed to host

the meeting was again unprepared. The other two members who came were typically quiet, assuming no leadership roles in the group. The core of more active members did not come that night, even though one was scheduled to report to the group on the BFS Board meeting at which she had made a presentation on the group's behalf.

We plunged ahead with the scheduled topic of planning where to go next as a group. One woman said that it seemed like all we did was talk in circles and we were not accomplishing anything. She was the same woman who had not kept her commitment to facilitate the group or host two meetings. Another woman disagreed, saying the meetings had been very valuable to her. I kept coming back to the question: "How do you want to use the group?"

They finally began generating ideas for group activities, including going to the shelter to talk with battered women. Plans were made for the three of them to go to the shelter that weekend. One woman suggested that the group elect officers to take more responsibility for things. They were annoyed with the absent member who was supposed to report on the BFS Board of Directors meeting. They complained that she was the only one who had attended the Board meeting. I confronted them with their refusal to accompany her. It was a tedious night of putting decision-making responsibility back on members. The major outcome was that these three members wanted the group to move in the direction of more action and less talk. They realized that if that was going to happen, all the group members were going to have to share responsibility for it.

Occurring concurrently with this development was a change in the group's relationship to BFS. I realized that I was pushing the group on current BFS staff, who rarely responded. I decided to back off. I thought that BFS saw the group as a possible drain on agency energy rather than as an asset or resource to BFS. After the disappointing attendance at meetings seven and eight, it was clear that in its current form, a group might require more attention than BFS could spare. We were learning that there could be other ways to organize the group. I was not sure that the agency was committed to involving clients in decision-making; I was particularly doubtful that current staff wanted to involve these specific clients.

While I was ready to abandon building a relationship between BFS and the group, another door opened. One group member was also on the BFS Board of Directors and the Board's Executive Committee. At the January Executive Committee meeting, before our seventh meeting, the BFS Director proposed that BFS allow men to be on-call volunteers. On-call volunteers take shifts at night and on weekends to handle crisis calls from battered women and screen and escort battered women to the shelter. Sometimes volunteers go out in the middle of night to meet battered women and drive them and their children to the shelter, a secret location. Our group member suggested that the Board get the support group's opinion on the matter, particularly because all of the women in the group had been battered and had been escorted into the shelter by a volunteer. None of the other board members were battered women nor had experienced being escorted into shelter. This request was the group's first opportunity to affect agency policy. In fact, it was the first opportunity for any client group to have a voice in BFS. In part, the voice was possible only because our small client group existed. It is impossible to determine if the Board request would have materialized if a support group member had not also been on the Board of Directors.

Our member on the Board was to bring the request to our next meeting. I was annoyed when she called the afternoon of our meeting to say she would not attend. I asked what she wanted to do about the request. At first she suggested postponing it until she could attend our next meeting. However, a postponement meant missing the next Board meeting. I agreed to take the request to the group.

The group responded to the Board's question: "Should men be allowed to be on-call volunteers for BFS?" The group consensus was "no." We brainstormed a list of reasons substantiating the group's opinion (Appendix E). The next few days, I went to absent members to get their opinions. I was careful not to influence a woman's answer by the way I phrased the question, nor did I disclose the other members' opinions until I had heard her response. The members' opinions that men should not be on-call volunteers came out of both group discussion and individual responses. With the exception of our

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member on the BFS Board of Directors, no other member volunteered to help with the presentation to the Board.

The morning after the Board meeting, which I did not attend, I talked to the group member who presented our information. She said:

> **It was weird! I thought it made sense but they seemed offended. They didn't know what to do with it. Some thought it was sexist. It was crazy. I think the director was disappointed because we disagreed with her. It was really -strange. I whipped out our list and after explaining it, they were sitting there with blank expressions.**

I asked why she thought it got that reaction. She said:

> **I think it's the diversity of where we're coming from. The women are coming from actual experience. We should keep at it. If our voice drops, there will be no voice. I was surprised. It didn't convince anybody but it got attention. It's a place to start. Now they'll have to grapple with us. Maybe we should get more of us on the Board.**

Prior to the meeting in which the group heard and discussed the BFS Board response to their input I talked with six Board members, including the BFS Director, to get their reactions to the meeting. Reactions were mixed.

The BFS Director noted, "It was good to hear from the group. But I don't think their views were representative." She felt that the group's information was biased, yet she noted that BFS welcomed their input and saw the group as a resource. I got off the phone feeling that the official line was to respect and seek out clients' input, while discrediting the information with standard disclaimers: their opinions were not scientifically gathered, group members biased each other, or it wasn't representative.

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Several other Board members felt that the information had been listened to and taken seriously. One Board member observed:

> There was one comment we could definitely relate to. The comment about a strange man showing up in the police station to take you to the shelter. "Would *you* go with him?" We could all relate to that!

Several board members also reported discussion regarding whether or not a policy of no male on-call volunteers constituted sexual discrimination. Several members were uncomfortable with one person's comment that some of the women's reasons "represented neurotic thinking." In reference to that comment, another Board member said:

> That's just part of the human services mentality, you know, clients don't know enough to make their own decisions. The trouble with asking clients' their opinion is they might have one, and it might not agree with yours!

Reactions were strong and varied. Yet among those board members I talked to, there was agreement that client input into agency policy decisions was important and valued. The immediate outcome was that the decision to allow male on-call volunteers was never brought to a vote. It was agreed that more information would be sought. To my knowledge, the issue has never been voted on. Without changing individual board members' opinions, the group input effectively killed the move to allow male intake volunteers when the vote was postponed.

Collecting More Information
and Taking Action

Meetings 9, 10, 11, 12: Preparing to Meet BFS Staff, Meeting With BFS Staff, Easter Celebration for Shelter and Dealing With Depression

During March and April the group hit its full stride, taking group actions and more control. They continued generating information from their experience as battered women in attempts to influence BFS programs and policies.

Eight women, including two new members, attended the March 3rd meeting. After our member reported her perceptions of the BFS Board's reaction to the group's input, three women blurted out nearly the same comment: "It's because they don't know how it is. They've never been beaten up." Group members were disappointed by the Board's reaction. I reminded them that they had temporarily halted the move to allow male on-call volunteers. After discussing the importance of having more battered women and group members on the BFS Board, two members expressed interest in joining. One subsequently joined.

We continued the previous meeting's discussion about the group taking more action and more responsibility for the group. One member led a discussion of "how to get the work off Pat." Members agreed to help more with transportation, treasurer responsibility was rotated to another woman, and the group talked of holding meetings while I would be away in May and early June. When the idea of electing group officers was raised, no one wanted to. "Maybe when we have more members." The most active member commented that she was reluctant to take on much of the organizational responsibility for the group. "I like having something I can just come to and get something for myself without having to worry too much about it." Others agreed. They talked about their responsibilities of child raising and working. They implied that because I had neither children nor a full time job, I had more time to do organizational tasks. I think they were also saying that control

and participation take time and the benefits may not always be worth the time costs.

The group agreed to take more action. First they brainstormed ideas for a meeting they were requesting with BFS staff. The group wanted to exchange information with BFS on two topics: how could the group be a resource to BFS and how could BFS best help clients after they left the shelter. They felt they could help orient police, emergency room staff, school students and others to the problems of battered women. They also had a concern for current clients and felt they could help them look for housing, provide day-care and involve them in recreational outings. They also felt the BFS staff could provide more follow-up with women once they leave the shelter and offer more opportunities for clients to meet with ex-clients.

The group decided to host an early Easter celebration for women and children in the BFS shelter because holidays in the shelter are often lonely and depressing. The dinner and celebration would also give them an opportunity to talk with battered women. They felt it was important for women in the shelter to meet former battered women who had been able to build a violence-free life. Finally, the group decided to begin inviting guest speakers to meetings for information exchanges. Speakers would offer their expertise on a particular topic and the group would offer suggestions on how to respond to battered women. The group asked me to invite a speaker to talk about ways to handle depression.

It was an exciting meeting. The group had made plans to share their knowledge with other battered women, BFS staff, and community workers. Taking more control and leadership over group actions and topics, members also set limits on how much control and responsibility they were willing to take in exchange for the benefits derived from the group. Members varied in their willingness to take responsibility in the group. They varied in their follow-through on commitments. For example, the member most vocal and committed to electing group officers was the same member who had twice not kept her commitment to facilitate meetings.

The next three meetings and group actions were the highlight of the project. The meeting with two BFS staff, the Director, and Child Counselor was positive. Fourteen women

attended. Members indicated that they felt listened to by the staff and were encouraged by their openness to group suggestions. I think the Director was surprised and put at ease by the non-threatening presentation of ideas. Dialogue took place between BFS staff and the group. Members told BFS that the initiative to reach former clients would have to come from BFS. Once women left the shelter, some felt ashamed to go back for counseling or advocacy assistance. A woman might think "I should be on my own now; BFS should be helping the recently battered women, not me."

The group was pleased that two shelter residents attended. During the presentation to BFS staff, members talked about what the group meant to them. Several said that the group helped them "move beyond being battered women." They now had the problems of single mothers.

One recently battered shelter resident shared her reaction to the group:

> **It's so good to see support for women. Men always try to turn women against each other. It's just so valuable to see women supporting women. You can begin to believe again that you are somebody.**

I think members took pride in being role models who were making it on their own. BFS staff had a chance to see the group in action, particularly to see the valuable resource the group could be to shelter residents. It was the second time the group made input into BFS programs or policies.

The early Easter celebration put on by the group for shelter residents was also a great success. We fed forty-four people: fifteen women and twenty-nine children. Group members brought the food for a turkey dinner and BFS provided Easter candy. Small groups of women talked and shared their stories and problems. One BFS staff member came to talk with several group members about the possibility of working with BFS on a domestic violence workshop for the Navajo Police.

Seven members came to the final meeting in this series, including a shelter resident who was now out on her own.

The guest speaker proved to be a disaster. Despite two briefings, the speaker failed to recognize that none of the women were currently in battering relationships. Even after two interventions, she talked with evangelistic fervor, cheering the women on to leave abusive relationships and discussing her own history as a battered woman. We had a good laugh after she left and tried to sort out what had been useful. Members never had the opportunity to exchange information with her.

This series of meetings was the most productive for the group. Members shared responsibility for group actions and decision-making. No one member took a consistent leadership position, instead, group leadership varied from week to week. Membership expanded and attendance increased. Members continued taking responsibility for babysitting and helping with transportation. The group was gaining experience generating and sharing information about battered and former battered women. Their actions included the following:

1. Input into BFS decision making on agency policy regarding male on-call volunteers.

2. Input into BFS programs for out-of-shelter and former clients.

3. Informal peer counseling with shelter residents through weekend visits, group meetings, and a group-sponsored celebration.

4. Meeting with guest speaker.

The group's relationship with BFS went through several changes. After the Board meeting about male volunteers, I asked for a meeting with the Director to reinstate BFS's involvement in referring and recruiting new members to the group. BFS sent out another series of letters to clients about the project. This yielded two more women interested in the group. However, information about the group did not seem to filter down to all BFS staff members, nor did BFS ever directly refer anyone to the group.

After the meeting between the group and BFS staff, the relationship seemed to improve. One BFS staff member aggressively sought out member's participation in a BFS-sponsored workshop. Several of the suggestions for joint BFS-Group activities fell through, sometimes because of miscommunication, other times because few members followed through. BFS might have thought the group members were unreliable or uncommitted. Besides their staff had many other demands on their time. Building agency commitment to, and mechanisms for, meaningful, ongoing client inclusion in agency decision making and programs takes sustained effort. Organizing battered women and building a democratic agency are long-term processes.

Ending The Group

The Final Meeting

At the end of the twelfth meeting, the group agreed to meet twice during the seven weeks I would be away. After deciding on discussion topics, two women volunteered to host and facilitate meetings. Two other members agreed to provide transportation. A third meeting was scheduled the week after I returned to Gallup.

Neither of the meetings scheduled while I was away took place. One volunteer facilitator with serious job and housing problem cancelled a meeting. The transportation volunteers later said they "had other things to do" the night of the second scheduled meeting. They called the host and facilitator to cancel. The other members, without phones or transportation, waited in vain.

Upon arriving back in Gallup, I called one of the transportation volunteers to find out how the meetings had gone. Disappointed to hear about the cancellations, I thought it might be time to end the group and evaluate what we had been able to accomplish. Realizing that I was unilaterally deciding to end the group, I instead asked for a meeting to evaluate how we

should continue as a group. I knew, however, that I would not push for continuation.

The core group of eight came to the final meeting. After sharing a fried chicken dinner, we discussed whether or not to continue. Several of the most active members thought it was a good time to stop, even if only for the summer. A few quiet members offered no opinion. Two other women, neither of whom had transportation nor offered active leadership, were adamant that we continue. They accepted the end of the group but hoped we could continue in some form in the fall. After deciding to end the current group, we evaluated what the group had accomplished to date. We discussed what the group had meant to each woman. We ended by discussing what recommendations we should make to BFS about the value and format of a support group for women once they left the shelter. There was consensus that a support group would be a valuable resource to women once they left the shelter. Most women felt that BFS should sponsor and institutionalize the group as an ongoing program. Suggestions were made that group meetings should be held at the shelter; that way, in-shelter clients could benefit from discussions with women who were handling post-shelter life. Various recommendations were made regarding provision of child care and transportation, both critical to most women's group attendance.

The atmosphere was not as festive or upbeat as usual. Having been apart for nearly two months, we struggled to recapture a group spirit. Nonetheless, many women expressed appreciation for the group's contribution to their lives. Our support group ended.

Reflections on "Research"

Early in the group's development, I was disturbed by a phone conversation with my dissertation committee chairperson. He asked me, "Are they doing *research* on anything?" Using traditional research criteria, you might conclude that the group was not doing "research." They did not formulate a problem statement nor design a formal investigation. Instead, they identified problems in their lives and explored ways to solve

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those problems. Several times they generated information, from their experience as battered women, to offer to BFS policy and program decision making. Out of the group experience came information regarding the problems battered women face after leaving the shelter and information about a support group format as one mechanism for addressing those problems. In the final group meeting and through a series of final interviews, group members provided recommendations to BFS regarding a support group format. Collectively and individually, members analyzed and evaluated their experience in the support group. Their analysis is presented in next chapter.

CHAPTER IX

Assessment of Feminist Participatory Research Through the Reflection-Action Cycle

I learned a lot, that I'm not alone. When I was going through all that, it seemed like I was just cooped up in my house alone with my problems and that was it. Talking about it to people, it makes you feel good to get it out. You get different solutions and ideas. It helped me realize a lot of things: what other ladies were going through; what their problems are. It built up my confidence a little more. Whereas before I thought this was the way life should be, now I realize that I don't have to go through life as a battered wife.

Support Group Member
Final Evaluation
July 1986

This chapter assesses the Former Battered Women's Support Group Project. Using the components, difficulties and limitations, and goals of participatory research identified in Chapter 3, I assess the project and reflect on the process. These basic components, phases, difficulties, and goals are relevant to all participatory research projects, feminist or otherwise; the last chapter will look specifically at the feminist aspects of this participatory research project, using the framework developed in Chapter 5.

The group members participated in the project assessment through an evaluation discussion held during the last meeting and through individual interviews conducted between one week and two months after the final June 1986 group meeting. Their comments are woven throughout the chapter. Members had a voice in the assessment, although they did not design it.

Group Self-Assessment and Recommendations to BFS

The group had two major purposes. The first purpose, established by members, was to provide an opportunity for collective problem sharing and problem solving regarding the everyday difficulties they had experienced since leaving the shelter. Most hoped that in addition to feeling less isolated, they could reach out to local battered women through educational and social activities. The second purpose, established by myself in conjunction with BFS, was to provide information to BFS about the problems women faced after leaving the shelter and to assess a support group as one mechanism for dealing with those problems. Through group discussion and individual interviews, members had a direct role in assessing both purposes.

Every woman agreed that we should recommend to Battered Families Services that BFS sponsor a support group for women leaving the shelter. The group should be an ongoing BFS program. The consensus was that by offering support and problem-solving opportunities and resources, the group experience could help decrease the number of women who returned to unchanged violent relationships and help minimize the difficulties of struggling in isolation. Members' comments included the following:

> **BFS should have a group for women once they leave the shelter because everybody needs to talk. You don't know what to do, like your mind goes blank. You feel stuck.**

> **You need meetings. Somebody always gives you a way out. They keep you going.**

> **I think (you need a group) especially when you're first getting out. It's so important. I think a lot of women get discouraged the first couple of months and tend to block out how bad it really was...**

> **Individual counseling afterwards is hard; it's hard to ask for it. You feel like you've had your turn; like they should be helping women in the shelter. But the group, it's like a little family. If we don't have support from anywhere else, at least we've got it from each other. That's important.**

Members thought that the group could be a valuable resource to BFS, both by talking with current shelter residents and by participating in community education activities. Members especially wanted to participate in educational activities with high school girls and boys. In terms of being a resource to BFS, one member observed:

> **It would really work out for ladies that are in the shelter when the ones who are out come in and talk about what has happened to them. That way the ladies in the shelter won't have to go back to their partners. They'll realize they could do it on their own. They think they can't handle it; that's why a lot of them go back.**

In addition to recommendations regarding the purpose, format, and value of a support group, members generated information about the kinds of problems women face upon leaving the shelter. The first set of information was generated through individual interviews prior to the initiation of the support group. Based on the experience of nine months of meetings, group members concluded that the major problems

women faced immediately upon leaving the shelter included learning to be on their own, securing affordable housing, adequate finances and employment, and, because many women lacked the confidence and resources to deal with these problems, wanting to return to their partner. After being out of the shelter for a while, the major problems included child rearing difficulties, particularly those related to single parenting, and problems with finances, loneliness, and alcohol abuse.

The problem of alcohol abuse was identified more strongly through the group experience than through the initial interviews. Many members acknowledged that alcohol abuse was a topic often avoided in the group due to embarrassment. Members recommended that BFS do more to help clients, both in and out of the shelter, deal with alcohol abuse. Recommendations included increased acknowledgment of the potential for alcohol abuse while coping with the strains of post-shelter adjustment, and increased referral to and liaison with local alcohol abuse counseling services.

The group generated information regarding the use of male intake volunteers, the ways BFS could better meet client's needs, and the ways the support group could be a resource to BFS and they presented this information to the BFS Board of Directors and Executive Director. Information regarding the types of problems women face upon leaving the shelter and recommendations related to a BFS-sponsored support group was be reported to the BFS Board of Directors in November, 1986 (Appendix F). Although the group had ended several months previously, a variety of circumstances, including the hiring and transition to a new BFS Executive Director, have prevented scheduling a Board report prior to this time.

Most members indicated that the group accomplished its initial purpose of providing an opportunity for collective problem sharing and solving. Due to group support, many members realized that they were not alone in their struggles. Members reported a variety of ways that they personally benefited from participation in the support group project and ways that involvement influenced their lives. Most members felt that the group did not adequately meet its goal of reaching out to current and potential battered women through educational

and social activities. Members wished that the group had taken more action in this area.

Member-identified benefits from project participation included learning that they were not alone in their struggles, concrete problem identification and problem-solving, increased self-confidence, increased self awareness, increased understanding of the problems other former battered women face, increased appreciation for women's strength, courage, and mutual support, and help with current relationships. The following comments reflect the variety of benefits identified by members:

> **I got a lot of things out of it because it was a time when I was going through bad times. I think it really helped me that I'm not the only one who has problems like that. The other ones have their problems and I'm not the only one going through hard times with my children. I didn't have to be ashamed. It really helped me.**

> **I realized that I've changed in the past two years; it made me aware of those changes. When the group started, I was feeling kind of down, thinking, I'm not worth a whole lot. I had stopped looking in the past, just put it behind me. It made me more aware of the changes I had been through. I realized I'm not so bad!**

> **The women weren't jealous or possessive. They were supportive, easy to laugh with about problems. Just being able to hang out a little. I think it's a type of therapy or counseling in itself just to be with other women. I learned that nobody has to put up with battering. Especially seeing some of them with so many children, no education, no job; the courage I see in them really impressed me.**

Only one woman interviewed said that, other than listening to women discuss their problems, she did not benefit from being in the group. She said:

> **I guess sometimes I didn't really deal with what was happening to me. I kind of let it slip, just go by. I didn't really think about it. After I started going to group meetings and then people talk, then you remember things that happen to you. I don't know, sometimes I feel better when I don't talk about some stuff that happened to me. I just let it go by.**

Several women mentioned that going to the group benefited their children. During meetings, the children played together under the supervision of two teenagers.

> **My little girl used to like the group, going over there. She could play with other kids. Here she was alone. She came back happy.**

> **My kids loved it. They really had a good time. I think it was good for them. For them, that was just a fun playtime. They had a really good time. It's nice for them to get around new kids.**

Group meetings were one way to minimize the isolation experienced by children of single mothers raised away from their extended families. Although structured activities and counseling for children were beyond our resources, several women suggested that if BFS sponsors a group, their children's counselor should provide activities and group counseling for the children of mothers who attend support group meetings. One mother said, "The children really need support and counseling, not just the mothers."

Based on members' evaluation, the support group project met its member-identified goals. The group gathered information and provided it to Battered Families Services about the types of problems women face upon leaving the shelter as well as discussing the feasibility of an agency-sponsored group. Their conclusions will be officially shared at an upcoming Board Of Directors meeting. How the agency responds to and utilizes the information remains to be seen.

Assessment as a Participatory Research Project

The next part of the assessment steps back from the specific project purposes to evaluate the project from the perspective of the general participatory research components, goals, and difficulties identified in Chapter 3. Group members contributed to this section through group evaluation at the final meeting and individual interviews.

Components of Participatory Research

Ideally, participatory research is composed of three components: social investigation, education, and action. Review of case studies indicates that realistically, projects put varying emphasis on the three components. This section assesses the Former Battered Women's Support Group Project using these components.

The primary problem of the dissertation, investigating the androcentric aspects of participatory research and constructing a framework for feminist participatory research, was not identified by the group. Nor did local former battered women collectively determine on their own what problems should be investigated. Initially, women posed problems related to their everyday lives upon leaving the shelter, but this was done on an individual basis through interviews. However, once interested women responded to an invitation to establish a support group to further identify and explore their common

problems, group members did have a collective voice in naming the problems the group explored. In that sense, existing problems faced by former battered women were the basis of the project.

The group collected information based on their direct experience as battered women. They collected, summarized, and contributed information to an agency investigation into whether or not to allow men to become intake volunteers. The information collected by the group, even though on a very small scale, presented the first opportunity for the voices of battered women to be included in a structured way in agency decision making. The group information had the effect of preventing an agency decision to allow male in-take volunteers. The group did not rule out other active roles for male volunteers in the agency. When assessing the group's accomplishments, one member noted:

> **And if we did stop men from being on-call volunteers, then we accomplished that. It seems like the whole group should be on the Board of Directors.**

Initially, the group perceived their contribution of information to BFS as a defeat rather than an accomplishment because they felt their opinions were not enthusiastically received or valued. Although the group did not assess their first venture into investigation as a success, the collective inquiry did contribute to the group's belief that as battered women, they could be important subjects rather than objects of research. They understood that their knowledge was valuable and valid because it was based in experience. They recognized that those who devalued or dismissed their information did so from the position of observers. Several group members, upon hearing the Board's reaction, noted, "That's because they're not battered women." The next time the group collected and contributed information to the agency on the ways BFS could better support women and the ways the group could be a resource to BFS, the group did so from a position of confidence. They knew they had valuable information to contribute.

On the whole, the support group project did not demystify the research process for members. Insufficient attention was given to involving group members in all aspects of a research process and teaching related skills. As a group, we rarely referred to our investigation activities as "research." Although members would say that I conducted research through the group, I doubt that one member would say that the group itself "conducted research." However, I believe that the group did collect, analyze, and summarize information related to problems and questions already mentioned, and it did draw conclusions and make recommendations based on small-scale "investigations." Many group members also felt ownership of what we were doing together: trying to learn about starting a support group based on, and responsive to, women's needs. One member commented about the project:

> **Everyone was excited about it; all of us were trying something new. We were all sort of in on the experiment.**

The educational component was the weakest area of the project. This is particularly curious in that my professional strength is in education and training rather than research. During group sessions, members identified and discussed both individual and common problems and possibilities for overcoming them. However, as facilitator, I did not focus adequate group attention on exploring the underlying causes of these problems. I did not want to take too much control of group meeting discussions. I could have provided an ongoing meeting format of naming problems, identifying causes, and discussing possibilities for solution, and used the format.

The women did not gain a structural analysis of capitalism, patriarchy, or racism. However, group members gained greater understanding of the relationship between problems they faced "as women" and sexism, and, a better understanding of battering as an expression of male control and domination. They gained an understanding of how isolation contributed to their problems and to their sense that they could not always solve those problems. Although they did not gain a structural analysis, they did gain experience and some skill in problem

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identification and solution building. They gained appreciation of the value of collective problem posing and solving. The group experience built their feeling of confidence that they could be active problem-solvers and decision-makers in their own lives, both individually and collectively, as well as contributors to group and agency problem solving. Perhaps the strength of the educational aspects of the project was actually learning by doing. By beginning to try to affect agency policy and programs, as well as solve everyday life problems, women strengthened their belief in their collective and individual abilities and resources. The final educational aspect of the project involved educating BFS Board members and staff about the problems women face and the possibilities of an agency sponsored group.

Many members indicated in the final evaluation and interviews that they would have liked to take more action, yet I think that the action component of the project was its strength. The very first action which came out of individual problem-posing was the creation of the first area support group for former battered women. In part, the group's creation was a response to women's identification of isolation and loneliness as problems they faced. Once the group existed, it was able to take the small scale actions of investigating various issues and presenting information to BFS in attempts to affect policy and program decision making. Group activities, such as peer counseling, organizing an Easter celebration, and inviting shelter members to meetings, were a direct outcome of the ongoing problem posing which they were doing based on their experience as battered women. Group activities responded to problems they had named, such as loneliness, lack of self confidence, and needing support from women who had been in similar situations and triumphed. The final group action of providing information to BFS on women's problems and the support group experience may have important impact on agency program and policy decision-making.

Support group members' comments indicated that the collective investigation, education, and action met the re-humanizing goal of participatory research. Members made comments such as:

I no longer felt alone.
I realized I had courage.
I learned that I could go on.
I felt supported by others and I supported them.

Difficulties and Limitations in Conducting Participatory Research

Participatory research, a demanding approach to knowledge creation, is not without difficulties and limitations. This section assesses the support group project in terms of the difficulties and limitations identified in Chapter 3.

Role Demands on the Participatory Researcher

I had great difficulty juggling the demands of the participatory researcher roles of researcher, educator, and organizer. At times, the roles appeared to be in conflict. For example, in the organizer role, I motivated women to attend meetings and to increasingly participate in decision-making, discussions, and group actions. Yet, I often questioned this role. By motivating women, was I trying to make the project, my dissertation, a success? As researcher, I felt the need to step back and see what would happen when I did not play the motivator role. It was confusing at times to balance somewhat conflicting roles.

Self-censorship was a problem. Afraid of being pushy, overbearing, intimidating, or culturally inappropriate, I initially refrained from utilizing many trainer skills, techniques, and exercises which would have contributed to group skill development. I struggled with the educator role. No one in the group asked to explore structural analyses of racism, sexism, or

classism. In that sense, conscientization was my agenda, not theirs. This raises a basic issue with participatory research in that it assumes that people are oppressed and need to develop critical consciousness. Participatory research begins from a clear values position. It was sometimes hard to differentiate between facilitation and subtle "preaching." Clearly the issues I chose to raise in discussions were based in part on my feminist belief that certain issues needed to be addressed. It was initially my agenda that battered and former battered women have a structured voice in Battered Families Services. Neither the agency nor the women initiated exploration of mechanisms for democratizing BFS.

As a result of the triple role demands, I often felt incompetent in all roles. By trying to manage all three roles simultaneously, many details and intentions fell through the cracks. This points to the value of a team approach to participatory research and finding ways to increase members' involvement in project management. Although I worked closely with the women and have remained involved in many of their lives, at times I longed for another participatory researcher, particularly a feminist-identified researcher, with whom to discuss project issues and events. A commitment to try participatory research, feminist or otherwise, is really only one of many ways to make a commitment to the long-haul struggle for social justice. We must find ways to sustain and nurture ourselves in the struggle. I had many nurturing relationships, but none with any other feminist participatory research-oriented person in the immediate environment. Such support is important to any alternative researcher, particularly a novice.

In addition, I struggled with doing research on a part-time basis. That is, I could not financially afford to involve myself full-time without other work to generate an income. Just as the material context of participants' lives is an important aspect for consideration, so too is the material context for researchers. I needed to feel that I was making a substantial contribution to my household. Although my partner was supportive and generous, I simply did not like feeling like a parasite or unequal contributor to my household.

Some of the difficulties might have been overcome through an earlier group evaluation which focused on my role in the group. During the final evaluation, members suggested that the group could have used more structure during meetings and, as facilitator, I should have been the one to provide that structure. Many members suggested that the times I facilitated discussions so that we "went around the circle" provided the greatest opportunity and structure for equal participation. In another project, I would provide greater structure and facilitation, and, spend time on explicit training activities to help members build and practice group member skills. The responsibility for facilitation could then be more effectively shared.

Members indicated that I was perceived as a caring, involved, equal in the group. They offered comments such as the following:

> **Your presence was really positive. We needed a facilitator. I don't think you were ever put up above us. I never picked up on that. I didn't see any difference or separateness between you and the group. I really felt like you were a part of it.**

> **I think you did real well with the group as far as the meetings, asking questions, laughing with us, and joking with us.**

Transfer of Project Control

One of the major difficulties in conducting participatory research, particularly when the project is not initiated by a community organization, is transferring increasing control to project participants. Based on my experience, I think a variety of factors influence the degree of control obtained by participants. These factors include the project structure and processes, time, researcher facilitation and commitment to participant control, resources, participant skill, and participant commitment.

I made a commitment to share project control with participants. I worked hard to maintain an atmosphere and create project structures conducive to participation and shared control. This included trying not to get trapped by group members' expectations that I make most group decisions and solve group problems. As the group progressed, I tried to avoid being the sole group spokesperson or representative to BFS. During joint meetings this was easy. For example, I didn't volunteer to attend the Board meeting in which one group member made a presentation on behalf of the group. When BFS staff came to our meeting, I was not the spokesperson. Between meetings this was more difficult. In addition to the fact that few members had telephones, the group had refused another member's suggestion to elect officers or representatives. The few times that BFS wanted to communicate with the group, they went through me.

Participant control manifests itself in decision making and taking in all aspects of a project. In our project, participants took increasing control over decision-making about the format, topics and issues, schedule, membership, actions, and the logistics and resources for child care. Participants took only minimal control in group leadership as displayed by co-facilitating and organizing meetings or assuming spokesperson positions in interactions with BFS and the Board. In part, many members lacked the skills, experience, or confidence to assume facilitation and leadership duties. This might have been addressed through more structured training for group membership and leadership skills. I could have helped the group focus more clearly on our working process as well as helping them to identify and practice skills for improving it.

Shared control requires members' time commitment, resources, and willingness to assume responsibility. In terms of taking more leadership for organizing the overall group, some members indicated that they simply did not want to. Even though they planned to have meetings while I was out of town they never held them. Many members also lacked resources such as transportation, gas money, free time, and a telephone, which were necessary to organize the group. Members reflected on this:

> We all looked to you as the organizer to handle some of the logistics. None of us had the energy or circumstances to do it. I felt like I took on as much as I wanted to. You get tired of responsibility. Maybe everybody else feels like that too. You know, you're taking care of kids and in my case, I'm also taking care of a job. I just don't want to make any decisions about anything. Sometimes it's nice to go somewhere you don't have to be totally responsible. I could just get something for myself.

> I think it would have been good, trying to put up a treasurer and secretary, etc. It would have been good but most of the ladies weren't interested in it. Why didn't they want to? I guess they were lazy (laughter). They didn't really want to get involved. On my part, I really wanted to be one of those involved. Seems like a few of us were really pushing; the other ones wanted to sit back and let somebody else do it. We should have given a little bit more.

Maintaining the Project Organization

Related to the difficulties of transferring control to project participants is the issue of establishing or working with a community-based or people's organization. As mentioned, the most oppressed groups are often the very groups who lack the skills and resources to establish their own advocacy organizations. Yet participatory research is dependent upon working with an organized group or helping establish an organization as a part of the project. In our case, no local group or organization of battered or former battered women existed. The project attempted to first establish and maintain a women's group as a stepping off point for a possible independent battered

and former battered women's organization. This was not possible. In part, women simply lacked the skills and resources, particularly material, to sustain an independent organization at this point. Many also lacked the determination and commitment to try. It is important to recognize material constraints. Schechter noted:

> Without material resources (housing, jobs, sufficient incomes) empowerment as a universal goal is unreachable. If women are not aware of this, there is a danger that self help can turn into self blame, as women fault themselves for being unable to control their lives. (1982:252)

Material resources are necessary for organization building. Certainly many groups of poor women have been able to overcome material constraints to organizing. Nonetheless, our support group was unable to sustain itself.

Given the lack of material resources and organizing skills, it may have been a poor choice to try to begin the project by starting an independent group. Although BFS gave formal permission to contact clients, BFS was not expected to contribute any organizational resources, financial or human. It might have been a better choice to work through BFS so that the project would have been formally BFS's project rather than the women's and mine. BFS would have had more ownership and investment, and it would have contributed its organizational resources. In addition, by actively sponsoring the group, BFS might have established an ongoing formal mechanism and channel for client input into agency policy and program decision-making. An agency-sponsored group might also have been a common thread throughout agency staff turnovers and transitions. There have been five Executive Directors since I became involved with BFS in June 1984, three of whom were appointed since the Board gave project approval in July 1985. There has also been an almost complete turnover in Board members. An agency-sponsored group would have been an internal memory bank. Managing the group would also have been an added staff responsibility and time commitment.

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However, at this point, given the resource and skill constraints of area former battered women, I recommend an agency-sponsored and organized group which also focuses on building participant facilitation and organizing skills, perhaps as a sub-project. An agency-sponsored group could provide women the opportunity to gain skills and collective strength without being perceived as a threat to the agency. It would require, however, a commitment to women's empowerment and to democratizing the agency.

Time

Many case studies identify time as a critical factor in meeting overall participatory research goals of empowerment, conscientization, and long term change. In our case, women had competing time commitments for paid employment, family responsibilities, child care, household maintenance, and in some cases, educational pursuits. Members could only commit to meet every two weeks for two hours per meeting so there were limitations on what we could accomplish in a particular meeting and over time. A more structured meeting format may have allowed us better use of meeting time. We might also have benefited from establishing a definite, rather than open-ended, time frame for the project. Members might have been able to sustain a stronger commitment for a definite time period, at the end of which we could have scheduled an evaluation of our progress and a discussion of future directions. Considering where we started -- without any organized group or experience with group process -- I think we can be proud of our accomplishments. Nonetheless, there were project areas, such as the educational component, in which we made only minimal progress.

Conducting participatory research demands a considerable time commitment from the researcher. In my case, moving to a new community, it took a year to establish relationships which led to a participatory research project. I often felt discouraged and annoyed at my slow pace. I wondered whether or not it was necessary for me to take so long getting established. However, the preliminary year's activity, both working directly with battered women of many cultures

and producing a training manual for BFS shelter volunteers (Maguire, 1985), helped me better understand battering and the problems women faced. It also led me to consider that a support group, and eventual battered and former battered women's organization, might contribute to solving those problems and to making long-term community and agency changes. My involvement in the community and BFS gave me credibility with the BFS Board, clients, and staff at the time of the project. Recall one Board member's comment: "You know, if you were some stranger coming in here and asking to do this, we'd be even more suspicious and probably hostile."

Neither the empowerment process nor personal and social transformation can be hurried. Participatory research takes time, and demands a time commitment on the part of the principal players. Experience with this project leads me to believe that the most effective participatory research projects should be an integral part of a long term, community or organizationally based change effort. Perhaps short-term projects are effective when conducted through already established people's organizations, or through agencies with specific research needs. In these instances, organizational structures and processes are already in place. Otherwise, I doubt the long-term effects of short-term projects which do not work towards, or leave in place, a functioning organization, with the structure, personnel, and resources for continuation.

Assessing Accomplishment of Overall Participatory Research Goals

By linking the creation of knowledge with social change, participatory research ultimately aims at three types of change, including the following:

- development of the critical consciousness of both the researcher and participants;
- improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process;
- transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships.

Developing critical consciousness involves learning to perceive economic, political, and social contradictions and taking action to change oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970). In a very minor way, the project contributed to increasing the critical consciousness of some participants and myself. In particular, women began to examine the contradictions inherent in society's blaming of battered women as both provocateur and victim of male violence. One woman ended a previously violent relationship and many women finally let go of lingering self blame for the violence which they had survived. Some women began, however tentatively, to look at the contradictions in male and female status, particularly within marriage and love relationships. How can there be an equitable sharing relationship in which one partner, who "wears the pants," is held superior? Some women began to explore the contradictions of public assistance programs which effectively keep single mothers stuck in the cycle of poverty and dependency. The group scratched the surface on examining the differences between an advocacy agency's commitment to work for or with battered women. Some women began to realize that although they had been battered, they were valuable and credible informational resources. In fact, some recognized that their knowledge was valuable, not in spite of their experience, but because of it.

The actions taken individually and collectively could not be said to be revolutionary or contribute to major social change. However, group members began to challenge the oppression of isolation and silence. The very act of coming together as a group and engaging in collective and individual problem solving was a small but necessary step.

My critical consciousness was enhanced through the entire project experience. I explored contradictions, subtle and bold, in the judicial system, public assistance programs, and educational and employment systems, which preach a message of self sufficiency and independence without making available the necessary resources. I was forced to continually confront the contradictions in my own life choices. For example, to what extent am I willing to live out my values and philosophies in concrete daily actions?

Women reported minor ways in which the involvement in the project improved their lives, none of which were material. Most of the improvements and benefits related to self confidence, camaraderie, and self awareness. It is only a very modest beginning. Perhaps I gained the major material improvement, that is, the information for a doctoral dissertation.

To quote Park (1978a:20), "There was no revolution." We did not transform any fundamental societal structures or relationships. However, transformation is a process, not a one time event. We did challenge the traditional power relationships of the research process. We pushed at the power relationship between an agency for battered women and its clients. Depending on the agency response to the project recommendations and information, we may start a very small change process of creating a mechanism for battered women's input into agency policy and program decision making.

If the core of participatory research is indeed about power relationships, then we made the smallest of beginnings to shift power in a particular research project and to empower ourselves through collective reflection and action. To sustain and increase the effort over time will take resources and an organizational and personal commitment, on the part of BFS and area battered and former battered women. Unless BFS takes the next step, then the small movement we made in the direction of change will not be sustained. It will have been one small project by one group of women at a particular place at one point in time.

Whether or not the potential of the project beginnings are followed up, the project has demonstrated that participatory research has the potential to liberate human creative potential and mobilize human resources to solve social problems.

Implications

On a very small scale, this project demonstrated that our research practices, like all our work, have implications for the redistribution or consolidation of power in society. Provided with tools and structured opportunities, ordinary people are

capable of increasingly critical reflection and action. Perhaps not surprisingly, even self-identified progressive people, while dedicated and caring, often doubt the value and validity of ordinary people's knowledge when it is created outside of dominant social science approaches. Likewise, while sharing power with ordinary and oppressed groups may be professed and intellectually accepted it may also be threatening and hence blocked.

While participatory research, as one more approach to knowledge creation, has the potential to redistribute power, there is no guarantee that it will increase power on more than a temporary, basis. Resources and organizational structures are necessary to sustain collective reflection and action over time and to link up the hundreds of small scale efforts underway in the world's communities. It appears that the most effective participatory research projects work through established organizations or groups. Otherwise resources and commitment are necessary to sustain people's organizations created for, or as a result of, participatory research projects.

Participatory research is time consuming, demanding, and troublesome. The accomplishments and rewards are often small in scale. Perhaps the primary lesson for me is that redistribution of power and empowerment of people are not events, but rather long haul struggles. These processes require both tangible and intangible resources, including determination, respect, and a profound belief in people's ability to grow, change, and create change.

The temptation is to dismiss or underestimate our efforts because they do not appear long term, transformational, radical, or important enough. The challenge is to celebrate our collective accomplishments, however small, and nurture ourselves as we move, however slowly and imperceptibly, in the direction of change for social justice.

CHAPTER X

A Feminist Participatory
Research Framework

I think our experiment was successful. It really was. It seemed all positive. I really appreciate just being with a group of women. I have few instances in my life to be with a group of women. One benefit of the project was that I appreciate women far more. I never had this much contact with different women. I have far more respect for women now than ever before.

Support Group Member
Final Evaluation
July 1985

This chapter continues the assessment of the Former Battered Women's Support Group Project using the framework for feminist participatory research which was developed out of a critical review of the literature and the early phases of the field study. In this way, theory and practice inform each other. Conclusions are drawn regarding feminist participatory research. The chapter ends with recommendations for the further development of feminist participatory research (FPR).

Assessment of the Project
Using the Framework

1.   Critique of Social Science Research

While the project did begin from a critique of positivism, the feminist and joint critique emerged from the interaction between the field experience and the literature review. Although the feminist participatory research project has certainly increased my own critical understanding of both positivist and androcentric social science research, my understanding is still very rudimentary. The rationale for participatory research that I initially shared with the BFS Board of Directors and interviewees was very limited. That was somewhat appropriate given the familiarity and interest level of board and group members in the topic.

2.   Central Place for Gender in the Agenda of Participatory Research Issues

Gender had a central place in the literature review, field study, and overall theoretical base of the support group project. The degree to which this particular project helps raise the issue of gender and androcentrism within other participatory research projects and the larger participatory research community remains to be determined. This will depend on dissemination and publication of the case study results within the various participatory research networks.

3.   Central Place for Feminism in Participatory Research Theoretical Debates

Feminism had a central place in this project. My understanding of feminism is what led me to see the androcentric aspects of much participatory research to date. Again, the degree to which the project helps feminism to move into a more central place within participatory research theoretical debates remains to be determined. The project, both the

literature review and the field experience, can make a contribution to these debates if the study is able to reach a wider audience. The theoretical base of the study draws heavily on critical theory in addition to feminism. Thus, the study provides one example of the potential for integrating other theories into feminism as a basis for participatory research.

None of the project participants identified themselves as feminists, nor did I ever ask the group members whether or not they considered themselves feminists. However, as noted in a previous chapter, many women were exploring an analysis of male violence congruent with an explicitly feminist analysis.

**4.   Explicit Attention to Gender Issues
in Each Phase of the Participatory Research Project**

One of the strengths of the project was consideration of gender issues in each phase. More attention was given to gender issues regarding women than men. This is primarily a result of an all-women project.

In the first phase (gathering and analyzing information about the project area) attention was given to how problems differed for community men and women, as well as for native and non-native people. My specific interest in community organizations, services, and leadership relevant to women was based on my feminist interests. Similarly, area attention to woman-battering has focused more heavily on the problems and resources for abused women rather than problems and resources for male abusers. This is partially a reflection of the "blaming the victim" mentality which considers battering the woman's problem and subtly absolves men of responsibility for their abusive and violent behavior. It also reflects the limitations of the area resources and expertise to provide appropriate and innovative programs for abusers.

In the second and third phases of the project, during which the participants and the researcher attempted to develop increasingly deeper and more critical understanding of participants' problems, more attention could have been given to an analysis of the relationship between patriarchy and former battered women's problems. Attention was given to group members' analysis of male violence against women, but this

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happened primarily during individual interviews and was not adequately dealt with throughout the project.

Although the project did not significantly increase members' understanding of a structural analysis of sexism, classism, or racism, the project did increase women's awareness and understanding of how male domination was manifested in their immediate lives. Members often explored connections between male domination and the meeting topic. Several women also indicated that they were finally able to let go of lingering self blame regarding their experience as battered women. In terms of how they benefited from the group or what members viewed as the group's major accomplishments, many women observed that they had gained a greater appreciation of women's strengths and their own ability to live without dependency upon men. One member made the following assessment:

> **As a group, one of the things we should feel best about is that we're strong. We don't need men there to abuse us. We don't need men there to put us down and say we're worth nothing and say because of us they're like that (violent). We were strong enough to stand up for our rights, on our own two feet and keep our kids the best we can.**

Similarly, while members did not gain a sophisticated structural economic analysis, some members began to explore connections between economic factors and their problems as women. For example, in the final interview, one woman noted that she was going to seek counseling at the community mental health center. However, she wanted to find a counselor who understood the economic situation of mothers receiving public assistance. In reference to finding a counselor, she said:

> **I'd like to have an idea of who I'm talking to before I go down there. I want to hear it from someone else that they know what they're doing. A friend of mine took her**

daughter in. The counselor talked to the daughter first. She complained that her mother wouldn't let her have pickles. So the counselor tells my friend, "Well, don't you think we could have a compromise here? Maybe half a pickle a day?" Well, this is going to sound crazy, but on our budgets, if we have pickles, it's for a specific reason, like potato salad (*laughter*)! It's crazy, but when you're on a fixed budget, there are just some things you can't afford that some people take for granted. You just can't do it.

In the second phase (defining problems and generative themes) I thought that in addition to gender, the connection between race and the problems women experienced upon leaving the shelter should be explored. The majority of support group members were Navajo. My perception of the project area was that racism was connected with many of the problems which the women faced. In an initial attempt to focus on how women's problems were affected by, or differed by, race or culture, I asked numerous questions in the individual interviews. Typically, most of the women, regardless of race or culture, denied any connection between racism or cultural discrimination and their problems or problems experienced by other battered women. Instead, women implied that class rather than race contributed to women's differing experience of post-shelter life. Typical of others' comments, a Navajo woman explained that she saw no differences, based on race, of the problems women faced:

I think it's the same if they don't have any money or any place to go. They all face the same problems, financial. It takes about $400 to $500 to start off when you leave the shelter. If they have money saved, they don't have much of a problem when they leave.

Several of the Navajo women explored connections between the discrimination and changing roles experienced by Navajo men and women and male violence against Navajo women. One Navajo mother of four children explained:

> **The Navajo male has been dominant over women for quite some time. . . It's changing, at least within our community. That's the way I see it. Women are the ones who are providing. There's just a number of jobs that are available to men out in the community, not something that is promising for them, just temporary jobs. There is a lot of domestic violence. I think it's frustration. Women that are providing do get battered every now and then. Men are still trying to hold on to that superior role their father held. And the changing role of women, it's like force, women are forced to do it. And men are not taking it well.**

Racism and cultural discrimination were not adequately examined within the group. As the group worked to develop mutual trust and confidence, members seemed more comfortable and willing to focus on the similarities they experienced as battered women rather than the differences they experienced because of race or culture. Women examined racial and cultural differences in safe contexts, for example, in relation to their experience of spirituality and religion. Similarly, we did not explore racism or cultural bias between group members. This is due, in part, to my facilitation choices based on the continued resistance I got to raising issues related to racism or cultural discrimination. The group may not have felt enough trust to discuss these issues. The fact that I am an Anglo may have affected women's willingness to respond to questions and comments exploring racism.

During phases four and five, in which participants created a support group, investigated various individual, collective, and agency problems, and took a variety of small actions, gender issues were central. For example, participants

paid close attention to the effect of child care responsibilities on women's ability to participate in the project. Members took immediate collective action and responsibility for initiating a child care fund and organizing babysitters. Members were concerned that women's child care responsibilities and the lack of monetary resources for women on public assistance should not become obstacles to anyone's involvement. Meetings were scheduled to accommodate some women's "double day" responsibilities of work both within and outside the home. Social time was built into meetings because isolation was a problem for many women who had no private transportation, spent long hours alone with young children, and had few social activities outside the home.

Some attention was given to members' inexperience and lack of confidence with group discussion. More attention might have been given to the relationship between being battered and lacking confidence in talking in a group. One member made the following observation about women who were typically quiet in meetings:

> **A lot of times they really want to talk, but some of it comes from the situation they've come out of. If you're told to shut up and you're told not to talk, well, my ex-husband told me not to laugh! And I didn't for a long time! I think that happens with a lot of quiet women too. They're told not to talk; they're not going to talk. I didn't laugh. So if they're told it's O.K., go ahead, even then I think it takes a little while to get back.**

Consideration could also be given to the relationship between culture and group participation. The two Anglo women appeared more at ease and more skillful at group discussion, even when they were in the minority in the group. Most of the Navajo women stated in the follow up interviews that they wanted to participate more frequently in discussions and that they benefited from participation.

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More structured facilitation and periodic reflection on our group process may have encouraged more equal participation.

When asked to contribute to the BFS decision of whether or not to allow male on-call volunteers, gender was the primary issue considered by group members. Women were not against the use of male volunteers in other agency roles, rather, they were against male volunteers conducting intake duties with recently abused women. Their reasons came out of their direct experience as battered women. Interestingly enough, Board members also considered gender in this discussion. However, lacking direct experience as hurt, confused, and scared battered women seeking entrance to a safe and secret shelter, several Board members were more concerned with the issue of sexual discrimination if men were not allowed to be in-take volunteers. Thus, how gender is taken into consideration is dependent upon many factors, including direct life experience.

5.   Attention to How Men and Women Benefit from Project

All support group project members were women. In this case, any benefit to men, either to those in relationships with project members, or men in general in the project area, would be secondary and speculative. Several members noted that their growth and development through the project affected their relationships with men. Project involvement also affected members opinions on the type of future relationships they were willing to have with men. Few members noted any direct benefit to men from the project. One member observed:

> **My boyfriend's father battered his mother. So he's listened to it. It's hard for him to deal with it. Maybe that's a benefit of the group for him... In a way it's helped him because I don't think he's ever really discussed it with anybody before.**

During the initial interviews, several women noted that there should be more area resources for abusers who are willing to work on changing their violent behavior. Members suggested additional counseling services and a support group for abusers.

Nationwide, a growing number of men's counseling programs are reporting success in decreasing and changing men's violent behavior in intimate relationships. All-male abuser groups promote learning non-sexist, non-violent behaviors and attitudes (Brisson, 1982, Emerge, n.d.; Brygger, Long, and Morse, 1982; SANE news, 1983).

Both the group and myself lacked the resources to tackle programs for abusers. However, one potential long-term outcome of follow-up programs for women who leave the shelter might be the impetus for BFS to team up with other community resources to initiate programs for abusers. Many women do not want to end their relationships, they simply want the violence in the relationship to stop. They might eventually advocate for programs for their abusive partners.

6.   Attention to Gender Language

I have attempted to be specific about gender when writing and speaking. The case study language clearly indicates that this particular participatory research focused on former battered women. In the introduction a rationale was provided for referring, in the context of this project, to batterers or abusers as male and abuse victims as female.

7.   Attention to Composition of the Project Team

In this case I acted as an individual researcher without benefit of other team members. Perhaps my familiarity with area battered women and many project members prior to the interviews was as important as my gender. When project members generated a list of reasons why they were not in favor of male volunteers, many women indicated that they would not be comfortable talking to a man about the abuse they experienced (Appendix E). I did not ask all the women how they might have felt about working with a male researcher. However, in one interview, I mentioned that I had been wondering how women would have responded to a male researcher. The woman replied:

> **You know, for a while, it was hard for me with the male counselor I went to. I was able to trust him and that was somewhat of a relief. But I noticed that I did have some feelings like that. Is this guy trustworthy? I'd had an instance with a counselor years before where he propositioned me. I had no desire to go through that bullshit again.**

In this study, my race was probably as potentially important an issue as my gender. Although I was not Navajo and the majority of women were, mutual trust and confidence developed because many members and I were familiar with each other based on the relationships we established through my work with BFS and the group.

8.   Overall Project Evaluation Attention to Gender

Gender is a central focus of this evaluation.

9.   Track and Review Project with Gender in Mind

Because the project involved only women, no direct comparison can be made within the project between problems identified by men and women. The Former Battered Women's Support Group Project adds to the pool of information available about the kinds of problems women name, chose to investigate, and take action on through participatory research projects. In this case, women named problems related to isolation and loneliness, finances, parenting, education, employment, and lack of self-confidence resulting from the battering that they experienced. In particular, women explored these problems in the context of surviving and ending abusive relationships.

The Former Battered Women's Support Group Project included all of the considerations for conducting feminist participatory research. An overall strength of the project was attention to issues specific to women in every phase of the project and, in particular, issues specific to this group of women.

Attention to how issues affected, and were relevant to, project women was a result of the underlying theoretical base of the project, an inclusive feminism which embraced women's diversity.

Observations on Feminist Participatory Research

As it stands, participatory research is built on a critique of positivism which often ignores and, hence repeats, many of the androcentric aspects of dominant social science research. Without recognition of, and attention to, its male biases, participatory research cannot be truly emancipatory for all people. By combining feminist research's critique of androcentrism with participatory research's critique of positivism, a feminist participatory research provides a powerful approach to knowledge creation for social and personal transformation.

Most participatory research projects begin with the researcher's rather than participants' commitment to an alternative approach to social science research. A secondary goal of participatory research or feminist participatory research may be to increase participants' critical understanding and analysis of social science research, however, this rarely happens on a sophisticated, structured basis. Even without a detailed analysis of research practices, participants can develop a more critical social analysis. In this case, it was possible to conduct feminist participatory research with participants who were neither explicitly committed to feminism nor to alternative paradigm social science research, and yet, increase their consciousness regarding gender oppression.

Within the participatory research community to date, there has been little discussion of what feminism can offer participatory research. An inclusive feminism acknowledges the diversities and the commonalities of women's experiences. Feminism can offer participatory research a broader, more inclusive analysis of all forms of oppression.

The challenge for feminist participatory research is to simultaneously put gender, class, and race or culture at the center of its issues agenda. It is important to recognize the commonalities and diversities of people's experience when all these factors are kept in focus. For example, attention to cultural appropriateness and sensitivity must be balanced with attention to who speaks for and represents a particular cultural viewpoint. When acting as a spokesperson for a specific culture, what gender and class interests are represented? There is danger in assuming homogeneity in any gender, class, race or cultural grouping.

Feminist participatory research would encourage attention to the differences and similarities of perceptions of issues among women and men. For example, feminist participatory research would pay as much attention to how machismo affects men in a project as to how it affects women. Feminist participatory research suggests that for participatory research to equally benefit both men and women, and to challenge the patriarchy, attention to gender must be included in all planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of a project. When attention to gender in the early phases of a project is ignored, there is little chance that men and women will benefit equally from a project.

Because of limited resources, many participatory research projects will continue to focus more explicitly on one gender than another. Perhaps no single project can successfully juggle simultaneous attention to injustices based on gender, class, race, and culture. Regardless, project evaluations should specify how men and women, whether included or excluded from the project, were affected by the project, even if this requires declaring that one gender did not reap any immediate or direct benefits. Likewise, project evaluations should declare whether or not community men may gain power at the expense of community women. The only way for women to gain more power is to share in the power and privilege that men already enjoy.

Attention to gender-specific and clear language is particularly important in case study and project reporting. Generic gender language easily obscures who was actually involved in, and benefited by, a project. Challenging

androcentric language is critical to challenging androcentric power structures, assumptions, and values because language helps shape our viewpoint.

Although project staffing and case study reports should pay attention to the composition of the research team, this is not to imply that only female staff are best suited to work with women participants nor male staff with men. In fact, in most instances, the most effective staff may be the most diverse. Limitations and strengths of a research team based on gender, class, and race should be included in staffing decision making and planning. Of course, other factors, such as areas of expertise and relevant experience, would also be considered in staffing decisions. When few options for diversity exist, project staff should explore the possible consequences of staffing choices and strategize to minimize negative outcomes. Projects should take a close look at the sexual division of labor and power among project staff members. An approach to knowledge creation can hardly be emancipatory if staff experience differing levels of privilege and power based on gender. All participatory researchers may have to assess their willingness to take a public stand against male oppression of women.

The participatory research community should devote extensive and explicit attention to reviewing the collection of past participatory research projects with gender in mind. To date, how has participatory research challenged patriarchy? Since men and women appear to consistently choose different problems and oppressive systems to investigate and act on, what does this mean for participatory research as a tool for radical social and personal transformation? A feminist participatory research would open up extensive dialogue on this issue within the participatory research worldwide community, including dialogue at conferences and through publications. Explanations such as Reason and Rowans', "We just didn't think about it" (1981) are no longer adequate.

Conclusions

This study has developed, utilized, evaluated, and modified a framework for explicitly feminist participatory research. The framework was developed in response to the androcentric aspects which participatory research shares with dominant social science research. The framework responds to the need to shift participatory research away from its male center to equally include women's perspectives, issues, and insights. In actuality, feminist participatory research increases the emancipatory potential of participatory research for both men and women by constructing a participatory research which challenges all forms of oppression, not merely those experienced among men.

The suggested framework is presented as a place to begin dialogue within both feminist and participatory research communities rather than as a finished product. The framework provides considerations for all participatory researchers to include in planning, conducting, and evaluating a project. Based on the individual and collective experience of more participatory and feminist researchers, of course, the framework should be further examined and modified.

The Former Battered Women's Support Group Project has demonstrated that it is possible to utilize the framework with non-feminist identified women of different colors, cultures, and classes. Because the framework was utilized in an all-women project, it remains to be determined how the framework might be applied to an all-male project. The framework did help project members and myself explore the oppression women experience as women. It should also help men explore the privilege they enjoy as men and the roles they play in the oppression of women. As defined, feminist participatory research intends to analyze oppression based on class, race, and culture. In fact, feminist participatory research does not put gender, class, color, or culture analysis in competition but rather in cooperation.

The study has answered and raised questions about feminist participatory research and the androcentric aspects of much participatory research. Feminist participatory research

challenges participatory researchers to evaluate what personal and public stance we are willing to take on all forms of oppression. Feminist participatory research challenges us to build an approach to knowledge creation which seeks to explore and change all forms of oppression, not only those experienced among men. Feminist participatory research promises to further radicalize participatory research. The potential of both feminist and non-feminist participatory research is influenced by organizational, personal, and programmatic factors. Feminist participatory research requires human, material, and organizational resources to achieve specific and immediate project goals as well as to sustain accomplishments over time. This study does not maintain that participatory research, feminist or otherwise, is the only tool for social change, nor that it is the only possible approach to knowledge creation for social justice. Feminist participatory research simply provides one more tool in the long struggle for social and personal transformation.

Recommendations

To further develop feminist participatory research, several recommendations are offered.

1. *Participatory researchers must further familiarize and educate ourselves about feminist theories and practices.* Participatory researchers, both male and female, must critically examine our own position on male domination and women's oppression. It is important to initiate greater dialogue regarding the tensions between cultural traditions of gender oppression and women's liberation, particularly when cultural traditions are evoked to defend injustice and degradation based on gender. Across cultures we must consider who is defining what is culturally relevant and appropriate. Do women have an equal voice in this? Are

there instances in which participatory researchers are willing to defend or ignore gender oppression because of cultural traditions?

I maintain that feminist participatory research can be respectfully conducted across cultures when local women have an equitable voice and power in participatory research projects. To further develop feminist participatory research in a variety of cultural settings project staff should give serious attention to the considerations outlined in the feminist participatory research framework. In particular, this requires listening to how women in a specific setting define their unique problems, needs, and strengths. It requires listening to local women's own brand of feminism.

2. *Participatory researchers must expand the circle of colleagues with whom we share and debate our research theories and practices.* This will require participatory researchers to aggressively seek out opportunities to attend a broader variety of community-based and professional conferences and to present papers at them, as well as conduct workshops and facilitate discussions. In particular, participatory researchers will have to increase dialogue and exchange with the feminist research community and the more grassroots feminist activist community. My reading of both feminist and participatory research literature indicates that there has been little formal exchange. Both groups are still largely uninformed about the other's work. Perhaps a series of regional conferences sponsored and initiated by the various worldwide participatory research networks

would be a bold step toward instituting dialogue on what feminist and participatory researchers can learn together.

3.   *Participatory researchers must challenge each other to give serious attention to the feminist participatory research framework in project publications and case study reports.* Editors of participatory research publications can have important impact by requiring articles to address the questions raised in the framework. Similarly, participatory researchers should initiate dialogue to continue to modify and apply the framework. Initially, even if actual projects do not change in any significant way, at least the information available on projects will change. Consideration should be given to reviewing and reporting past participatory research projects using the framework.

There are, no doubt, many feminist participatory research projects which have not yet gained wide exposure or circulation in participatory research publications. Priority should be given to greater exposure of this ongoing work within the participatory and feminist research communities.

4.   *Participatory research project team members must challenge each other to include the feminist participatory research framework in project planning, implementation, and evaluation.* In particular, we need experience utilizing the framework in all-men projects. I maintain that men, both as researchers and as participants, can conduct feminist participatory research. However, the premise requires testing through actual field projects.

Participatory research emerged in part from people like ourselves struggling with the contradictions of our work, including our research practices and our politics. What are the implications of our work for the redistribution or consolidation of power? Whose problems do we try to solve through our work? Which systems of oppression do we openly seek to transform? Feminist participatory research expands our challenge to create a world in which women have a central role and voice in determining what that transformed world will include. Feminist participatory research challenges us to refuse to allow participatory research to become yet another male monopoly.

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4. *Participatory research project team members must challenge each other to include the feminist participatory research framework in project planning, implementation, and evaluation.* In particular, we need experience utilizing this framework in all-man projects. I maintain that men, both as researchers and as participants, can conduct feminist participatory research. However, the premise requires testing through actual field projects.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.
Presentation to BFS Board of Directors

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

To: BFS Board of Directors, June 12, 1985
From: Pat Maguire
RE: Request for permission & agreement of conditions for conducting doctoral
        dissertation research through BFS.

The presentation and discussion are divided in to 2 major parts:
1 Description & discussion of proposed research project.
2 Discussion & agreement on conditions of working relationship.

1. Proposed research project

A. Project
- Exploratory study of participatory research: a relatively new approach to social
  science research.
- Purpose: through field application of PR method with battered women, what can be
  learned about the issues of initiation. Implementation, outcomes, strengths and
  limitations of PR approach.

B. What is participatory research?
- Alternative to philosophy & methods of traditional social science research
- Traditional social science research
  - "Experts" produce knowledge: describe, explain, measure, predict social reality.
  Other experts utilize that information.
  - People treated as passive objects to be "investigated;" they get no direct/planned
  benefits from research product or process.
- Participatory research
  - Researcher and participants collectively investigate agreed upon problem
  situation to be able to understand and change it.
  - Argues that research/researcher not neutral or value free, i.e., research can be a
  tool for social justice & people's empowerment.
- PR is 3 fold, cyclical process
  - Collective problem-posing and investigation.
  - Collective analysis of problem.
  - Collective action taking to address problem.

C. Why attempt to use PR with battered women?
- In early social science research on battering, questions & methods, affected by
  researcher s & social biases, subtly blamed victim. For example, asking "why does
  she stay?" vs. "why does he stay?"- or "why do men beat up women ?"
- In more recent research, affected by various social movements, referring research
  questions & unit of analysis has produced more accurate & useful information. By
  looking at the abuser, victim & social conditions, research has connected unequal
  power relations & structures to women-battering, But research continues to use
  methods which maintain victim's inequitable power position.
- Potential of PR: BW may benefit from both products & process of research.
  Connect our philosophy of empowerment w/our practice.

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TASKS & TIME-LINE OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECT

Summer 1985   Phase I: Dialogue and Interviews with BW

- Through individual interviews/dialogue with 15 to 25 women, begin initial discussion on problems faced by battered women who have left shelter
- Dialogue/interviews use "problem-posing" format
    - What problems do you face in everyday life as a battered woman?
    - (Note: she may or may not have returned to her partner)
    - What problems do you think other women face?
    - What are some of the reasons these problems exist?
    - What can be done about these problems?
    - Would you like to get involved with a group of women to continue talking about and dealing with these problems?

Fall 1985   Phase II: Formation of Support Group

- If interest generated through initial discussions, form on-going support group of 8-12 women. Continue problem-posing format to determine what problems this particular group of women want to discuss and deal with. Use 3 fold PR process.

Winter 1986   Phase III: Assessment of PR Project

- Group may continue, but for purpose of dissertation, collectively assess PR project to that point. Look at issues in project initiation, implementation, outcomes, and over all strengths and limitation of PR approach. Group may also want to look at other aspects.

Spring &   Phase IV: Writing, Presenting, and Defending dissertation
Summer 1986

NOTE: Complete dissertation proposal available to any of you upon request

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2. Some areas of discussion on conditions of working relationship

A. Safeguards for women involved:

- Written/oral explanation & consent form for participation in initial interview & subsequent group activities: includes agreement to taped interview and groups as necessary.
- Written release of information consent forms, includes right to read/hear/affect final product.
- Privacy and confidentiality of actual women through disguising names in dissertation/articles.
- Others:

B. What I need from BFS:

- Official written permission to conduct research through BFS
  - able to publicly say I have BFS permission/ support.
  - permission to approach battered women & assistance identifying women to initially talk with.
- Continued access to BFS resources, e.g.: typewriter, xerox machine, office, and shelter (as potential place to initially interview, then meet with forming group of women).
- Permission & support but BFS not responsible for opinions or conclusions in final product (so stated in final paper).
- Agreement on conditions of any subsequent use/publication of research material.
- Set up chain of command: who do I get permission from for daily decisions. How often/ what form to report to board?

C. What project might contribute to BFS:

- Additional insights/information on problems faced by battered women once they leave the shelter.
- Implications of problems for follow-up services of BFS; information may be useful in seeking funding for follow-up programs or additional BFS services.
- Pilot of support group format.
- Ideas for greater inclusion of battered women in BFS organization /decision making.
- Other contributions:

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D. What BFS needs from me:

E. What BFS will commit to me:

F. Where to go from here?
Decisions taken: Decisions pending?   Necessary Action?
                                                      (Person responsible
                                                      and time frame)

APPENDIX B
Memo of Agreement with Battered
Families Services, Inc.

𝔅attered 𝔉amilies
Services, 𝔍nc.

July 10, 1985

TO: Pat Maguire
FROM: BFS Board of Directors

RE: Memo: of Agreement on conditions for conducting dissertation research through
Battered Families Services

Battered Families Services, Inc. gives its official permission to Pat Maguire to conduct
her doctoral research project through BFS. On behalf of BFS, the Board of Directors
agrees to the conditions stated in this memo of agreement. These conditions were
discussed and verbally agreed upon at the June 12, 1985 BFS Board of Directors meeting.
This letter constitutes both official permission to conduct the research project and
agreement to the conditions outlined below.

1. Pat Maguire may publicly state that she has BFS permission and support to conduct her
research through the agency. This includes statement of BFS official permission in
applications for dissertation support grants or fellowships. Although BFS gives its
permission and support, BFS is not responsible for any of the opinions or conclusions
stated in the final dissertation or any subsequent publications on the project. Pat will give
a copy of the final dissertation to BFS for its records and use.

2. BFS and Pat will work out a mutually agreed upon method of referring potential
participants (or the initial individual interview phase of the project. Before any contact is
made, clients will give their permission to BFS to be referred, thus client confidentiality
will not be compromised. Clients will be fully advised that their decision of whether or
not to be referred as a potential participant in the initial individual interview in no way
affects their eligibility for continued BFS services.

3. BFS gives Pat continued access to BFS physical resources, such as the typewriter,
xerox machine, office and shelter. Pat will pay (or use of the copier at the rate BFS has
established for employee use.

4. In accordance with the law, BFS does not grant access to clients' files. Release of
client information will be given only upon their written consent to release of information.

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5. BFS gives Pat access to annual reports, including statistical information about the organization -and general clientele served.

6. Pat will seek permission on day-to-day project decisions from the BFS Executive Director. At the Director's discretion, decisions may be referred to Board.

7. Pat will keep the Board informed of the progress project. Progress reports will be made either upon the request or at Pat's initiation through discussion with the Executive-Director.

8. Any direct monetary profit from payment on published materials will be divided among BFS, project participants, in a manner determined by all parties involved or their representatives.

9. Potential project participants will sign a consent form allowing BFS to refer them to the project.

10. Interview participants will sign a consent form to agree to participate in a taped interview and agree to release of interview information to be used in the dissertation and subsequent publications. Participants will be informed that their privacy and confidentiality will be protected through disguising their names and identifying information. Participants will be informed that they have a right to receive, review, discuss a written transcript from the taped interview. Any suggested modifications will be incorporated.

11. Subsequent participants in the support group will sign a consent form to participate in the group and agree to the release of any discussion information used in the dissertation. Group participants will be informed of their right to review material written about the group experience. Any suggested modifications will be incorporated in the final product.

On behalf of BFS and the Board of Directors, the BFS Executive Committee authorizes agreement to these conditions.

Douglas McMillin

Mary Anne Allen

Cyndi Simpson

Charlene Cain-Tholund

APPENDIX C
BFS Project Letter and Consent Form

Battered Families
Services, Inc.

July 19, 1985

Dear Former Clients of Battered Families;

Ms. Pat Maguire has been given permission by Battered Families staff and Board of Directors to ask former and present clients to work with her on her research project. Your names will not be given to her unless you sign the enclosed permission form (this form only allows her to get in contact with you -she will not be given your file, or any other information about you). We feel strongly that her type of research will be very helpful to those of you who agree to go along with it. Pat will be trying to see how groups of former clients can best help each other and themselves.

Pat has been our Volunteer-Coordinator for a year now, as well as having put in many hours working with women in the shelter. Battered Families feels that she has done wonders for our program, and with her new ideas and incredible energy, has really improved many of our services to help battered women.

If you agree to work with her, the first will be Pat wanting to interview you. Let us know where you would like Pat to talk with you; she is willing to go to your home (as long as your partner is not there), or any other place that would be comfortable for you. Pat is interested in you, mainly just for the fact that you have had some contact with Battered Families because of domestic violence in your life. Whether you are on your own now or with your partner does not matter. Your ideas may really help out other people in your position.

Please fill out the permission form whether you are interested or not, so that Pat will know whether we need to contact more clients or not (we made it easier by putting in a self-addressed stamped envelope). Make sure you keep one of the copies of the permission form.

Thanks so much for reading over this and considering it.

Sincerely,

Kim

Kim, Counselor at Battered Families

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APPENDIX D
Interview Consent Form

participatory research project

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVEW
and
RELEASE INTERVIEW INFORMATION

I agree to participate in an initial interview about the problems faced by woman once they leave the Battered Families Services Shelter or any other shelter for battered women.

I will participate in the interview under the following conditions.

* I will allow the interview to be tape recorded. I understand that the interview is being taped so that nothing is missed and so my words are not changed or misunderstood. I can turn off the recorder anytime during the interview.

* I agree to allow Pat Maguire to use the information from the interview in the research project, report, and publication. However, I understand that my privacy and confidentiality will be protected by disguising names and any other identifying information.

* I understand that I have a right to receive and review a written transcript of the interview. After reviewing and discussing the transcript with Pat, I can suggest modifications for accuracy, clarity, or net information.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
"Should Men Be Allowed to Be BFS Volunteers?"

participatory research project

Should men be allowed to be on-call volunteers for BFS?

Opinions of formerly battered women, generated in group meeting and through individual discussion.

NO __7__   YES __O__

✱   FEAR, CONFIDENTIALITY and PARANOIA

First thing I would wonder: Does he know my husband?
-     Will he tell my husband, especially if he meets my husband, who is crying and "So sorry I lost my wife...."
-     At that point, you are so paranoid, you think everyone is spying on you for your husband.
-     He might be employed with a lot of other men. What if the subject comes up at work and he says, "Oh yeah, I took so and so to the shelter..."
-     What if he has a few drinks, some other time at a bar and starts talking?

Feel like men less likely to keep confidentiality.

Men stick together.

✱   TRUST and SAFETY

Would I be able to talk to a man?
-     Whether you like it or not, at that point in time you just don t want to be with, see, or talk to a man.
-     I would feel "at risk" alone with a man, a stranger at that.
-     Don t want to be alone with a man at that point.
-     I wouldn't feel safe. You have to be alone with a volunteer for awhile.
-     Imagine yourself being met at the police station by man you never saw, never met... and he says, "I m here to take you to the shelter.- Would <u>you</u> go with a total stranger?
-     Police men and men in the emergency room have on uniforms, are identified in a role. The volunteer is total, unidentifiable stranger.

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✱   THE CHILDREN

Sometimes the kids have been abused. They might be scared of a strange man.
-    Kids might wonder: "Why did mom take us away to <u>another</u> man?
-    Imagine kids telling your husband later: "This man picked us up." You'd get beat
     up again!!

✱   MORE FEAR

Someone who knows you or husband might see you driving around with "a man. " Might
gossip or start rumors. "See it was her fault. He had a right to beat her. She's going off
with another man."

✱   EMBARRASSED, UNCOMFORTABLE, ASHAMED TO TALK WITH MAN

It's hard enough to talk with a woman about things. If I was met by a man, I might even
change my mind about going to the shelter.

-    I wouldn't go into detail about my situation, especially if sexual abuse involved.

-    Would feel like a woman would be more understanding. Would feel more
     comfortable with a woman.

-    Some things might be embarrassing to tell a man.

-    Right then you hate men; don't want to talk to a man.

-    Man might be sympathetic, but never totally empathetic. He doesn't know what it
     fends like to be beat up by your husband.

-    If he hears your story, he may think, "I would beat her up too in that situation."

-    At that point, you need to feel like volunteer is totally on your side.

-    Better to cry in front of a woman than a man.

-    I would be embarrassed for a man to see me all bruised up.

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APPENDIX F
REPORT TO BFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

participatory research project

<u>FORMAT FOR REPORT TO BFS BOARD OF DIRECTORS. 11/11/86</u>

WHAT	What was the Former Battered Women's Support Group Project?
SO WHAT?	What did we learn about:
	- the problems women face in post-shelter life.
	- group recommendations to BFS about an agency sponsored support group.
	- other contributions to BFS.
NOW WHAT?	Discuss possibilities for BFS to respond to and incorporate Group's learning's and recommendations into agency policy and programs.

Former Battered Women s Support Group Project

* Fourteen women (Navajo, Anglo, Hispanic) involved in individual interviews and support group to identify and work on problems women face in post shelter life.

* Core of nine women, 7 Navajo and 2 Anglo, participated in 10 month, biweekly support group. (14 women participated total)

* Group Accomplishments:
 - Started and ran area's first former battered women's support group for 10 months.

 - Group in-put into BFS Board decision regarding male on-call/intake volunteers.

 - Group meeting with BFS Director and Child Counselor:
   * How Could Group be a Resource to BFS?
   * How Could BFS Better Meet Client Needs?

 - Group sponsored Easter celebration for women and children in shelter.

 - Group members talked with women in shelter (peer support).

 - On occasion, women from shelter participated in meetings.

 - National Award for research with group from National Women's Studies Association - Pergammon Press, 1986.

From original proposal:

What Group Could Contribute to BFS

* Additional insight into post-shelter problems women face.

* Implications of problems for BFS services/ programs.

* Pilot Support Group Format as one way to address problems.

* Ideas for greater inclusion of Clients in BFS organizational policy and program decision-making.

** ******* ********* ***** **

Post Shelter Difficulties Women Face

* Single parenting difficulties.

* Financial difficulties (especially with public assistance programs: obtaining subsidized housing; existing on AFDC, Food Stamp allotments).

* Obtaining employment/ pursuing education.

* Alcohol abuse.

* Fear and lack of trust in new love relationships.

* Loneliness/ lack "trusted" adults to talk with.

* Low self-confidence.

* Lack of resources to handle problems (Examples: lack of transportation; lack "know how" to utilize existing community resources; racism as obstacle to access to community resources.)

Some Implications of Problems for BFS:

Possible changes/ additions in in-shelter programs for client skill building in ways to deal with problems.

Group suggests that increased skill/ confidence/ resources to deal with post-shelter problems would cut down on number of women who return to unchanged, violent relationships.

        Examples: -parenting skills
                     -greater liaison with area alcohol abuse counseling

Initiative for follow-up, out-client counseling and advocacy must come from BFS.

Group suggests women often ashamed to ask for "more help".

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Implications (continued)

* Consider ways to increase organized agency advocacy and lobbying rile for community services to battered women.
    Examples: Work with housing agencies; local programs for displaced homemakers).

* Agency sponsored on-going support group for post-shelter women.

Pilot of Post-Shelter Support Group

* Total group consensus (14 women) that BFS should sponsor and facilitate peer support group; at this point, women lack resources to run group independent of agency.

* Suggest weekly, same-night meetings, held at the shelter with drop-in format.

* Variety of suggested formats:
    - Guest speakers, films and discussion topics.
    - Combine topic with part of meeting reserved for discussing what is currently going on in women's lives.
    - Mail out schedule to women on periodic basis.
    - Discuss/give schedule to women as they leave shelter.

* Be patient with development of group, i.e. organizing is a time consuming process.

* In addition to on going, drop in, support group, hold periodic workshop series on sign up basis. (Examples: Five session parenting skills workshop)

* Recognize and provide resources necessary for women's participation in group. (Examples: Transportation, childcare, facilitation team.)

* Group suggested that BFS child counselor organize children's activities concurrent with weekly support group.

Ideas for Greater Inclusion of Clients in Agency
Program and Policy Decision Making

*   Develop on going, structured channels for "voice" of clients in agency.
    (Example: As support group develops, agency has access to client group to involve
    in decision making.)

*   Post shelter support group can be valuable peer resource to in-shelter women.

*   Acknowledgement of clients as valuable/ knowledgeable resource.

*   Support Group Members can be Resource for community education activities.
    (Example: Group members were very interested in working with BFS high school
    education programs.)

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Prepared by Pat Maguire, 11/11/86

Based on group evaluation of support group project and series of taped, individual
interviews with battered women and support group members.

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