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Stern, Susan Parkison, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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SOCIAL SCIENCE FROM BELOW:

GRASSROOTS KNOWLEDGE FOR SCIENCE AND EMANCIPATION

by

SUSAN PARKISON STERN

VOLUME 1

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1994

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

SOCIAL SCIENCE FROM BELOW:

GRASSROOTS KNOWLEDGE FOR SCIENCE AND EMANCIPATION

by

Susan Parkison Stern

Adviser: Professor Frank Bonilla

This dissertation elaborates a "people's" or grassroots model for critical social science that develops the potential of oppressed and marginalized groups to become active producers of knowledge that contributes both to their own emancipation and to social scientific understanding. The model developed from extensive field experience with two such groups and consideration of how their knowledge-production processes can be integrated with those of academic intellectuals committed to emancipatory social science.

An ethnographic narrative and analysis of the author's six years of experience as a non-academic participant in a group of male Latino prisoners reveals that this group's praxis integrated four emancipatory processes: research, education, therapy, and action. The prisoners' knowledge-production process is distinct from academic models in its almost exclusive peer-directedness and its conception of research as a part of life rather than an activity to be relegated to "experts" with specialized knowledge. The group used dialogue as the primary method for generating, testing,

and validating knowledge that emerged from its standpoint from "inside" and "below," from everyday life, and from struggle. The group developed a democratic methodology for research that carried with it a methodology for bottom-up social change; it sought knowledge both for critical understanding and as the basis for taking emancipatory action. A problem with the prisoners' praxis was its self-imposed insularity: it allowed no input from substantive critical theory and no participation by academic intellectuals or others who might introduce knowledge from outside.

The author attempted to replicate the prisoners' model and overcome its insularity in the context of a local struggle against institutional racism in a suburban public school system. An ethnographic narrative and analysis of about six years' work with a network of African-American parents shows both the possibilities and problems of implementing a strongly peer-influenced emancipatory participatory research process that includes a role for an academic intellectual and academy-based research. The parent group developed new knowledge that added to academic theories of how race and class are reproduced through schooling: it showed how race and class relations are perpetuated through the differential treatment of parents whose children attend predominantly Black schools. The methods used to generate this knowledge included critical reflection on past and present experiences through a dialogic process; experimental action research; the appropriation of substantive critical academic theory about race, class, and schooling; and standard positivist data-gathering techniques.

The prisoners' and parents' processes demonstrated the possibility and the value of a peer-based knowledge-production process among oppressed, marginalized social groups. Extensive comparison of the model that emerged from these two groups' praxis with a variety of academic models for critical, feminist, emancipatory, or participatory research shows that many of these models can be seen as parts of a common emancipatory project. The peer-based approach can make several important contributions to this project, including: (1) helping overcome the alienation that usually characterizes relations between critical academic theorists and the groups in whose interests their theories are intended to work; (2) democratizing the process of critical social research; (3) advancing understanding of oppressive social relationships by adding insights from popular research methods such as story telling and interpretation, and friendship-based dialogue; (4) pointing the way to a critical epistemology that uses a dialogue of standpoints, including those of critical academics and of marginalized social groups, to critique each other and produce more valid knowledge; and (5) overcoming alienation between the practices of knowledge production, education, consciousness raising, social support, and action, all of which must be integrated in successful emancipatory efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is now almost twenty years since I first met Professor Frank Bonilla, as we began working together on behalf of the Latino prisoners in New York State on the Ad Hoc Committee for Hispanic Inmates. I first want to express my gratitude to Dr. Bonilla for taking such great care over the years to stimulate and nourish my thinking. His diligence and commitment to my intellectual guidance continues to be invaluable in leading me to new understandings about my work. I am especially grateful to Dr. Bonilla f· supporting me in my decision to do all of the projects of the dissertation as a whole piece even though this to~k me a very ·ng time.

But above all I appreciate th· orms Dr. Bonilla'r guidance took; his style of mentorship exemplifies the kind of relationship between the trained academic intellectual and ~opular intellectuals developed in the grassroots-based framework for emancipatory participatory research that I describe in this dissertation. For example, he respected the many kinds of critical knowledge I had developed without formal academic training, and helped me bring that knowledge into dialogue with academic critical knowledge within a non-authoritarian pedagogical relationship. He had a way of entering my conversations and contributing to my thinking in ways that met me on my own grounds, yet provided counter-points and asked kinds of questions that would help me develop an ongoing critical perspective on my own work. Dr. Bonilla's personal and intellectual commitment to understanding and addressing social and

economic inequality in the many forms oppression takes has been an inspiration to me.

I have also been extremely fortunate in having been inspired, nurtured, and guided by Professors Hylan Lewis and Robert Engler. Each has contributed to this dissertation in numerous and important ways. First, like Dr. Bonilla, both Drs. Lewis and Engler have non-elitist definitions of who intellectuals can be: they confer intellectual or cognitive authority on people who participate intelligently in critical social theorizing and action whether or not they hold academic degrees. But, like Dr. Bonilla, they also value specialized knowledge that can be developed by intense and concentrated empirical and theoretical study. All three have brought many different kinds of knowledge and perspectives to bear on my work through the years, and much of that knowledge came from their own experiences working as critical intellectuals on concrete social problems in the community.

Drs. Engler and Lewis have provided invaluable help to me in numerous ways. Some of these ways are more elusive and hard to describe. For example, Dr. Lewis's eye is always on a multi-layered analysis: his observations always reveal wonderful layers within layers of understanding, and interesting side-tracks. Insights from his long and interesting life experiences have permeated and become so absorbed into this dissertation that even I would have trouble sorting out where Dr. Lewis's insights end and my thoughts begin. Often these insights came from "personal" rather than "sociological" conversations: Dr. Lewis provides a most wonderful model of a person who truly merges his sociological and friend personas in ways that make him a

very warm and valuable friend. His great story-telling ability in which he merges humor with social critique has been a real gift to me especially at times when I was feeling discouraged about my lack of ability to accomplish very much social change despite all my work. Dr. Lewis's perspective on social relations coming from his own experiences with racism "got me through" in many, many ways for which I will be eternally grateful.

Dr. Engler brought energy, excitement, a strong sense of purpose, and perhaps surprisingly to at least some sociologists or political scientists, some artistic presence to how I view my work. Dr. Engler's visions about my work, or perhaps all intellectual work, have included a sense of the connections of political and intellectual work to art. Or, perhaps, more accurately, of life to art. This connection has been hard for me to grasp, but I think there is something very valuable about his vision. For me it has meant thinking about people, especially myself, in another way--as a whole person, both intellectual and political, with an artist within--although I am far from having worked out all that this might mean. From this perspective, I think about my sociological work in terms of creativity, sensitivity, insight, vision, and tryirg to articulate old forms into new ones from fragments.

As well as emphasizing the artistic vision of my work, Dr. Engler has also provided invaluable help by asking the kinds of questions that helped me pull my thoughts together into a more organized whole. (Perhaps this is an expression of his ability to act as artist in a mentoring relationship.) Although I have mainly emphasized the artistic element of his contributions here, I also want to make clear

the importance of all of the substantive ideas Dr. Engler has given me, especially about power relations and democracy.

Above all, it has been important to me that all three people on my committee have an intellectual open-mindedness and an ongoing critical perspective on their own thinking. Their interest in the need to continually rethink the way systems of power are related has been immensely helpful to me. In addition, all three encouraged my inclinations to focus broadly rather than narrowly and to approach my project from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Finally, I deeply appreciate all of the personal interest and kindness, and support each has shown me over the years.

I want to express my appreciation to Professors George Fischer and Eleanor Leacock (now deceased) for reading and giving extensive comments on earlier papers contributing to my work.

To my husband, Paul, I owe a debt of gratitude that includes, but goes far beyond all of the hours he has spent copy-editing my manuscript. In a sense, I began working on the project that became the dissertation even before we were married twenty-five years ago. Paul recognized I was involved with a larger project long before I did, and even though it wasn't clear exactly what this project was at first, he encouraged me to pursue it, for which I am very grateful. Paul has shared my experiences both with the prisoners' group and the parents, and we have had a wonderful life together working together in both situations. I have been fortunate to benefit from Paul's broad knowledge and ability to think from an interdisciplinary

perspective about social problems. I want also to thank Paul for all of the personal encouragement, love, and support he has given me through the long years I took to finish this work.

My daughter, Sarah, has also participated in my project for virtually her entire life. Her insights as she was growing up, especially as she attended school in the mostly African-American schools in Maryland, provided much food for thought about the nature of racism. Sarah has long demonstrated considerable ability to be a social theorist, and she has made an extremely important contribution to this dissertation through her knowledge of feminist theory and her ability to think from a feminist standpoint in some ways more easily than I. She has contributed to my further development as a feminist (for me, within a perspective of race and class relations), and has helped me re-view my own life from a more complex understanding of a feminist perspective than I had before. This has been an exciting experience for me, as I hope it has for her.

I would like to acknowledge two of Sarah's professors at Wesleyan University, Ruth Ginzberg and Ann DuCille, who indirectly contributed to my dissertation by guiding Sarah to some feminist theory which I in turn used in my work.

I want to give special thanks to Nancy Naples both for reading and commenting on many of my drafts, and for all of her encouragement and support especially over the many years during which I stayed in her apartment in New York. Nancy's interest in all of the broad issues in my work (democracy, racism, class relations, feminism, praxis, activism, the challenge of creating a method to overcome

oppressio that is consistent with the society we wish to create, etc.) has provided me with a sense of intellectual and personal community even when social movements were lacking to bring more of us together in larger wholes. Our conversations have deeply riched my thinking about all these issues as well.

To Richard Hofrichter, Julie Barnett, and Julie Carran I express my thanks for many substantive conversations about my work.

I want to acknowledge the many Latino prisoners on whose work the prisoners' model is based. This was a most extraordinary group of people who, although faced with enormous obstacles and few material resources, created an exciting form of emancipatory praxis based on research. Edgar Guerra contributed a great deal of his time to the development of the group's model. He also read some very early drafts of my descriptions of the model, for which I would like to thank him and acknowledge the helpfulness of his comments about my project in its early stages.

Finally, I express my gratitude to all the African-American parents who contributed their theorizing to this project. The chapter on the parents' group is built on the work the parent network did. The theoretical work about how "low expectations" operate at many levels is a testament to the parents' work and the participatory nature of our research project. Mrs. Romaine Sterling, my dear friend, neighbor, and fellow social theorizer has made a particularly enormous contribution to this work first of all by contributing her insights, and secondly by helping sustain me

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL CRISIS AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF OPPOSITION

As I write, the sun glitters in through a grove of slender tall trees around our house. The daffodils that opened my eyes to spring a couple of weeks ago are now fading, but the azaleas in their deeper and brighter purples, oranges, and reds carry forward the promise of warmth, growth, and renewal that comes with summer. My house is in a secluded, wooded area, and from my window it is possible to imagine I live in a colorful, harmonious, and peaceful world. My home is in Maryland, right over the line from the District of Columbia. I live in a multiple reality. Today when I opened the Metro section of the Washington Post, the headline read, "Family Loses a 2nd Son to Violence It Fled" (Meyer, 1994). The family in the news lives "on a tranquil street of well-kept lawns and pink dogwoods" in a neighborhood near mine (I live in a sort of backwater where a few small ramshackle bungalows are occupied by mostly lower-income whites, while the bereft family lives in a much larger, more affluent suburban tract of modern single family homes occupied by African-Americans). Yesterday's is only one of many violences in my mostly African-American middle-class suburb so far this year. The paper reads, "This morning, the Hickmans will bury a son, Corey, shot last week in Seat Pleasant. He will lie next to

his older brother, Edward Jr., killed during an attempted robbery in the same neighborhood on New Year's Eve 1991." The two surviving Hickman brothers mourn that in addition to their two brothers, their friends John, Stanley, Scottie, Erick, and Tremaine have also perished.

The paper reports that the Hickman family members had a variety of ideas about what should be done: "Their oldest son, Christopher, 26, advocated more gun control and blamed the courts and politicians. Edward favored curfews and truancy laws. Their youngest son, Adrian, a member of the Nation of Islam, was for neighborhood patrols. Brenda wanted to bring back the draft and prayer in the public schools. 'It's not about us anymore,' Edward said. 'It's about the future generation. If we don't do something, there won't be any future.'" The azaleas' promise of a beautiful summer to come is suspended by this tragedy, and each time a daisy, gladiolus, or rose opens its petals this summer, its glory may be interrupted by another death.

Arriving with spring's flowers and the murder of the Hickman's second son comes more news about the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosnian Muslims, further fragmentation of the former Soviet Union into ever smaller groups of ethnic minorities claiming rights to autonomy, and terrifying Black on Black violence in South Africa as the first election nears. Women not only in Bosnia but throughout the world are being raped, and poor people are starving in Somalia. Perhaps a woman is being beaten or raped and a family is going hungry just around the corner from my home among the dogwoods.

These events near and far bring to consciousness the urgency of many crises at hand. The Hickmans' array of proposed solutions beg the question of where the causes are to be found for their losses and those of other mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and spouses. The unexplained violences press us ever so urgently to better understand and address the complicated matrix of power relations that leave such a dismal future for our children.

Problems of Defining "We" and the Source of Our Problems

But in evaluating how, as Mr. Hickman poses the problem, we might preserve a future for our children, how we might address the causes of the profound social problems in our communities in the United States and elsewhere, we must at the outset come to some common definitions of who "we" are, what the nature of "our" problems is, and how those problems are interrelated. Communities that suffer under these problems are in obvious desperate need of knowledge that might help them better resist the sources and mechanisms of their oppression and interrupt the reproduction of relations of domination.

Separations From Each Other

It is difficult to produce this knowledge because "we" are separated from each other in so many ways. We who might produce the knowledge live in racially and class divided communities. Some of us are community activists or labor organizers,

others professional educators, therapists, social workers, legal advocates, or people who work for nonprofit advocacy organizations. Many of us work at a variety of jobs to earn a living, but devote considerable time addressing the large scale social problems that express themselves in daily interactions within our families and local communities. Still others of us are social scientific researchers and social theorists who do research and create theory that we hope will illuminate the nature of social inequality and provide a guide for emancipatory social action. Those of us who are social scientists are internally divided by disciplinary boundaries and subdisciplinary specializations, and work in a social world separate from the grassroots groups whose struggles we hope to inform and participate in.

As communities of knowers as well as communities of resistance, we are divided in all these and other ways. Our identities, experiences, discourses, and the forms of praxis that have engaged our bodies, emotions, and minds in efforts to effect a more equal and just society shape the way we define ourselves in relation to social oppression and inequality. Our definitions of the "we" who are oppressed and the "we" who should struggle together, and our ideas about the nature of social oppression and inequality, are molded by how our standpoints--our particular positions within social reality--predispose us to view that reality, by the range of view that is available to us from our particular standpoints, by what we experience in our praxis, and by the discourses of the communities we participate in.

Those of us who are engaged in various forms of critical praxis are marginalized by the very sources and mechanisms of domination we seek to resist.

Not only are we separated from each other, but the contexts for critical political discourse and action have been circumscribed and defined in ways that limit possibilities for our meaningful collaborative democratic participation in creating emancipatory knowledge and a more just and equal society. Social spaces for critical discourse and action shrink as neighbors and neighborhoods become increasingly fearful of each other, economic and social pressures limit the free time working people have to interact with each other, and conglomerates gobble up small publishers, further "massifying" our culture.

Separation Between Grassroots Groups and Academic Intellectuals

Especially problematic is the separation between grassroots groups of people directly experiencing oppression and "committed" academic intellectuals studying oppression with the intent of producing knowledge for the struggle against it. On the one hand, oppressed grassroots groups, though they function as communities of knowers (e.g. Nelson, 1993) seeking to understand their situations and thereby to empower themselves, are largely left out of the loop in the production of emancipatory knowledge that enters academic discourse. On the other, such groups do not for the most part have the benefit of the knowledge critical researchers and theorists produce. Oppressed grassroots communities, especially those whose privacy has formerly been invaded, who have previously been objectified, or who have been subjected to various forms of duplicity by social scientists doing research on their communities (e.g. Nash, 1979) are often skeptical, fearful, and resentful of people

from the "ivory tower."

The academic theories of "committed" intellectuals seem far removed from events taking place in everyday life; academic studies of oppressed communities often present an incomplete and/or distorted picture of them (e.g. Harding and Hintikka, 1983); critical academic researchers further disempower already disadvantaged groups by objectifying them (e.g. Grosz, 1988), speaking for them, and thus standing in the way of their becoming active subjects (e.g. Harding, 1986); academics view reality from standpoints alien to the grassroots groups (e.g. Bar On, 1993), engage in discourses that alienate popular intellectuals (e.g. Stanley and Wise, 1993), isolate themselves in academic settings and social spaces that discourage mutual participatory dialogue with lay intellectuals (e.g. Russell, 1981), and claim cognitive authority (Addelson, 1993; Code, 1991) on the basis of specialized training--a practice with vanguardist and elitist implications. As both a cause and result of this separation between oppressed grassroots communities and academy-based critical researchers and theorists, academic research and theory are left unanchored by the perspective and praxis of disadvantaged groups. Academy-based critical emancipatory research and theory suffer by being disengaged from people's real struggles and uninformed by grassroots knowledge. But in turn, grassroots disadvantaged groups are left without the benefit of general theories and specific concepts that might provide useful guidance at a time when they need every possible resource to address their communities' social problems. Anti-intellectualism on the part of community activists contributes to the separation, as pure activism without benefit of theory can easily

reproduce or exacerbate the very problems it seeks to overcome.

Separations Embedded in Postmodern Conditions

Compounding the separations are newer developments emanating from the postmodern condition in which multiple voices from the margins are claiming the right to be heard, to define who "we" are, and to name and define the nature of social problems. The oppositional or critical emancipatory discourse and the potential community of opposition is further fragmented by these developments. Marginalized voices now compete with each other for the cognitive and political authority to define the parameters of social issues like affirmative action, educational equity, and environmental justice. For example, much of emancipatory-oriented academic feminist discourse continues to ignore other forms of oppression--the need for emancipatory projects other than those aimed at patriarchy per se makes feminist emancipatory discourse especially problematic for African-American women (Collins, 1991), and the focus on males as oppressors excludes those men who understand that patriarchy is an important part of the matrix of oppression and who wish to participate in critical feminist discourse accordingly (hooks and West, 1991). Critical theories from the margins that offer "totalizing" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991) or "universalizing" (Lather, 1991) accounts or that essentialize a particular oppressed group are being subjected to critique from other margins.

Further paralyzing emancipatory theory and practice, postmodern critique has shown how emancipatory projects are intrinsically problematic. The very methods we

employ to free ourselves from oppression are shown to have tendencies that reproduce the very forms of domination we would hope to eradicate (e.g. Fay, 1987).

Democratizing Knowledge to Address the Crises

This dissertation is concerned with the need to address the complexity of the social crisis at hand and the existing state of fragmentation of oppositional discourse and of the oppositional community that might be organized to address that crisis. At the deepest level, it suggests that democratizing knowledge production, which I conceive as a form of emancipatory praxis affecting projects from metatheory to social action, can provide a theoretical framework and some practical tools for addressing social oppressions and the fragmentation of oppositional praxes. The dissertation defines a theory and practice that relates the development of a more fully participatory cognitive democracy to a "bottom-up" and knowledge-based movement for emancipatory and justice-oriented social change. I refer to this theory and practice as emancipatory participatory research.

AN INDIGENOUS, EXCLUSIVELY GRASSROOTS PEER-BASED "PEOPLE'S RESEARCH" MODEL

My ideas about emancipatory participatory research are grounded in the praxis of a group of Latino prisoners that I describe and analyze in Chapters 2 through 7. I

focus especially on the peer-based "people's research" aspect of that praxis--a method of knowledge production that provides the foundation for creating a flexible framework for emancipatory participatory research. In the prisoners' model, people without formal education act as popular intellectuals, therapists, and activists, forming a critical epistemic, therapeutic, educational, and action community. The prisoners' integrated emancipatory praxis includes a methodology for democratizing knowledge production that carries with it a methodology for social change in which grassroots groups engage in self-determining democratic processes that facilitate the goals of cognitive democracy and substantive citizen control over political and economic processes.

I entered into the prisoners' process well before I started graduate school, and so became grounded in the prisoners' approach to knowledge production before becoming acquainted with sociological research methodology. My point of view about the role of academic intellectuals committed to emancipatory and justice-oriented social change and my views of academic emancipatory theory come from my experience participating with the prisoners' in their "people's" social science research process. This standpoint pointed me to a project that searches for ways that academic intellectuals and academic critical theory might complement a peer-based emancipatory participatory research process like the prisoners', rather than for ways to fit a "people's research" approach into existing emancipatory-oriented academic research models which might have been my approach if I had started out in academia first, and come to the "people's research" process second.

Research From The Prisoners' Standpoint

The prisoners' research process was grounded in the everyday experiences and standpoint from oppression of grassroots people. It started from the problems of everyday life, and embodied a dialectic of understanding oppression, resisting it, and creating alternative forms of life. As predominantly Puerto Rican Latino prisoners, the group's standpoint and form of struggle (their emancipatory participatory research praxis) emanated mainly from their collective experience of class, race, and ethnic (colonial) domination. Women who later became part of the group when the prisoners reestablished it as a former prisoners' group in the South Bronx forced the group to incorporate an analysis of and struggle against the oppression of women as well. In this way, the prisoners' standpoint from struggle was grounded in multiple perspectives of power relations; the group continually worked to redefine its understanding of what power relations were operative in any given situation.

The prisoners' understanding of power relations took into account both macro-structural political economic arrangements that were understood to differentially structure life chances for groups of people depending on their class, race, ethnicity, and gender, and micro-structural mechanisms of oppression that operated at the level of formal and informal local institutional rules and norms, interpersonal relations, and individual psychology. The group developed knowledge to reconstitute people's subjectivities, build group solidarity, and attempt to control local institutional arrangements, and thereby to interrupt the reproduction of oppression and inequality

at the level of micro-structural arrangements, mindful of their connection to macro-structural arrangements.

Problematizing Academy-Based Critical Research From the Prisoners' Perspective

As the following chapters show, the prisoners' model expands notions about and problematizes a set of assumptions about creating a critical social science. For example, it problematizes who can participate as critical intellectuals in the production of critical and emancipatory theory; whose burden it is to define the nature, sources, and mechanisms of oppression and exploitation; who are legitimate participants in critical discourse; whose discourse can be used to produce emancipatory knowledge; who can comprise a critical epistemic community; what epistemologies can be employed to generate critical knowledge; whose experiences grounded in what struggles are important to the development of emancipatory knowledge; what forms ideology critique should take with respect to the ideologies and sites within which ideologies reside are taken as focus for ideology critique; what standards for objectivity are required to validate critical knowledge; for which communities and in what form emancipatory knowledge should be created; what kinds of knowledge can count as emancipatory and critical knowledge; what the usefulness of specialized knowledge produced by academic intellectuals might be to oppressed groups; what interventions by trained social scientists to produce emancipatory knowledge are consistent with emancipatory goals; what relationship critical discourse bears to emancipatory action; how critical theory created by popular intellectuals in popular

discourse can enter the production of critical academic discourse and in what form; how critical theory produced by academic intellectuals can be tested and critiqued by popular intellectuals; and what spaces and contexts can be created and appropriated for doing critical research and creating critical theory.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I codify the prisoners' praxis as a model of emancipatory participatory research that can usefully be compared with academic models for emancipatory and participatory research--but other elements of their praxis are perhaps equally important. Chapter 4 treats the educational, therapeutic, and activist aspects of the prisoners' praxis.

The Importance of Cultural Elements in the Prisoners' Praxis

The sensual, artistic and cultural elements of the prisoners' praxis are not well developed in this dissertation. The terrible burdens of multiple oppressions, deprivations, and exploitation deriving from a complex matrix of domination seemed to stimulate the prisoners to call upon every resource at hand, including those that helped to produce research and integrate it into their emancipatory praxis. The prisoners also drew on some less tangible, but equally important resources, especially on their Latino culture in which life can be celebrated as an intensely colorful and rhythmic personal, emotional, intellectual, and political experience. Connection with other persons, conceptualized as "family," gave meaning to everyday life; the prisoners' ethic was to always bring something back to "family" to enrich it, whether that might be a new thought, a skill to be taught, or something for dinner. The high

school equivalency class in Spanish that I taught at the prison and that introduced me to the prisoners' emancipatory praxis was punctuated by song accompanied by pencil points tapping out rhythms on desk tops, and by hugs among students congratulating each other on their progress. When the prisoners reconstituted their group as parolees in the South Bronx, we pooled our resources, gathered our children, and ate together in the parks, such as they were, seating ourselves carefully between pieces of broken glass--singing and talking, and carrying on our "people's research" process. The group valued interdependence over independence, although the prisoners saw no contradiction between one's personal development and close connection with others.

I sometimes describe the prisoners' process in terms of a "method," but it should not be left unnoted that it is above all a form of life as a joyful yet serious intellectual and communitarian experience. Of course, violence, brutality, anger, deep depression, despair, resentment, and bitterness were also present in the prisoners' lives. However, they sought to understand these negative emotions and their effects as unfortunate corruptions of the possibilities life has to offer, and they attempted to address what they saw as the causes of these negative emotions and actions by transforming themselves, their group, and external aspects of the social system. My later experience with a group of African-American parents in my neighborhood (described in Chapter 8) confirmed my sense that marginalized groups can draw on a variety of cultural resources, if only they can be properly recognized and legitimated, to enrich collective understanding and to help resist domination.

Women's and feminist culture, Latino culture, African-American culture, and

perhaps other cultures of dominated people have ways to integrate knowledge production and a broader emancipatory praxis into shared ways of life that I believe might, if they can be made more explicit, provide important insights about how to ground social movements in meaningful and fulfilling cultural forms not so easily found in middle-class, white Anglo male-dominated culture. The cultural forms of political expression and involvement of the white male left which have often dominated oppositional politics in the United States (with the exceptions of the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement) might well benefit by drawing on cultural forms of oppositional praxis from the margins. But such a move requires rethinking emancipatory praxis from the inside out. The prisoners' process shows a way to begin reconstituting notions of a knowledge-based emancipatory praxis to ground it not only in grassroots struggle, but in cultural forms of discourse and politics, to act it from the standpoints of the oppressed and speak it in their voices. This is an argument for multiculturalism at the level of an appeal to the strengths we might find in a dialogue of our several cultural traditions and artifacts to address the material and ideological crises at hand.

Epistemologies in the Prisoners' Research

The prisoners' emancipatory research process showed how epistemologies can be used as cultural products rather than considering a single epistemology as the source of absolute, eternal, and universal truths. Systems for generating, testing, and

validating knowledge can be viewed as the cultural products of epistemic communities. The prisoners comprised an epistemic community that used various ways of developing knowledge available to them from the collective combination of their experiences. They relied above all on dialogue to generate, test, and validate their knowledge. Dialogue can be considered an indigenous "people's research" method (though the actual micro-processes of dialogue may differ from group to group, as I learned by working with the African-American parents' group later). But although dialogue embodies an indigenous epistemology, the prisoners also used it to further generate, test, and validate knowledge they appropriated from others or generated themselves by using other epistemologies at their disposal from in the larger culture, including positivism.

Research as a Part of Life: An Indigenous Epistemology

Most central to the prisoners' epistemology was their treatment of research as a natural part of everyday life and struggle. From the prisoners' perspective, research is a natural, necessary and important part of becoming a person and creating a viable collective entity capable of making progressive social change. They saw research as a search for life's meaning--for understanding of oneself, one's group(s), the nature of social relations, and the dialectical relations of all these. The prisoners emphasized the process of theorizing, the journey taken with others to discover, not just for knowledge's own sake, but for understanding power, empowerment, and taking power as well.

The prisoners' way of engaging in research as a part of life reflected their cultural origins in Latino culture, particularly the importance of interactive listening, emotional connectedness, and maintaining friendship and family relationships. Many of the characteristics of their epistemology are captured in Code's (1991) description of the second-person knowledge paradigm, an approach to knowledge production based on friendship that Code describes as feminist but that these Latino men nevertheless developed independently. In such a paradigm, which is grounded in the experience of coming to know another person, Code suggests that knowledge production is marked by a peer-based interaction that avoids exploitation and is non-hierarchical. Getting to know a person is an in-depth endeavor; there is a respect for difference; the process is not based on a motive to control; everyday discourse carries the investigative process forward; everyday local experiences and contexts form the grounds for getting to know the other person; there is opportunity to renegotiate understandings of each other in an open-ended and ongoing process (through the continued relationship); and the process is based not on an adversary paradigm, but rather a communal one.

The Prisoners' Use of Three "External" Epistemologies

The prisoners drew on three epistemologies that have origins somewhat external to the dialogic one they developed from their cultural traditions and collective experience. One was an epistemology of self-reflection that came to them from their extensive experiences in therapy groups and indirectly from the self-actualization and

encounter group movements of the 1960s and '70s. Among other things, this epistemology as the prisoners practiced it values the expression of emotion and the ethic of caring, which is also a part of African-American (Collins, 1991), and perhaps Latino ways of knowing. This epistemology is familiar from feminist theory, which emphasizes the connectedness of knowers to known (subjects and objects of knowledge) and second-person knowledge (Code, 1991). The second was an epistemology based on their understanding of Marxism as showing how consciousness and material reality are intimately and dialectically related. In doing research on what they referred to as "the system," the prisoners often used the phrase "the way the system plays on your mind," which captures a large part of this framework for generating knowledge; they sought to discover "the system" in their own subjectivities and thereby to find ways for changing their own self-understandings, their group solidarity, and their material circumstances. Finally, the prisoners drew on positivist epistemology, using standard social scientific methods that were introduced to them by a group (the Committee for Hispanic Inmates) that included social scientists from the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CUNY).

The prisoners treated these epistemologies as cultural constructions in the sense that they appropriated them, transformed them, synthesized them with other epistemologies, and tested them for their value in practice. The prisoners' treatment of these ways of knowing suggests that the production of emancipatory knowledge can not only be grounded in the experiences of oppressed groups and built with their participation, but that it can combine the indigenous epistemologies and discourses of

those groups with other epistemologies by using the groups' emancipatory participatory research processes. The prisoners' use of multiple epistemologies suggests the value of a dialogue of epistemic communities, which could together construct through ongoing cultural appropriations, negations, syntheses and resyntheses, a continually renegotiated system producing knowledge as a cultural process. The prisoners' own system for producing knowledge by integrating the products of various ways of knowing, including their own, within an indigenous dialogic epistemology shows the importance to overall knowledge production of making space for oppressed communities to participate in such a dialogue of epistemic communities.

The Prisoners' Unified Praxis

The prisoners integrated four dialectically related forms of emancipatory praxis: research, education, therapy, and action. Their unified praxis comprised a form of struggle to transform what they called "the system" at three levels: the social-structural, the level of the group as affected by macrosocial processes, and the level of individuals as so affected. All four forms of praxis were required to transform each level, and were incorporated in their emancipatory participatory research approach, as I show in Chapter 5. I present the prisoners' model as research--as an emancipatory process that incorporates the other three forms of emancipatory praxis within research--in order to make the account accessible and

interesting to readers in the social sciences. However, readers working from other forms of emancipatory praxis, especially radical therapy, critical education, and activism (especially labor and community activism), will find that the prisoners' process can contribute a "people's" approach to an elaboration of each of these praxes as well. I suggest these relationships in Chapter 4. The prisoners' analysis of the "system" as three dialectically interrelated aspects, each requiring transformation along with the others, shows the importance of reconceptualizing and elaborating radical therapy, critical education, and community and labor activism both from within and in relation to each other and to research.

The prisoners' praxis does not, however, provide an adequate response to the need for an emancipatory research praxis to address the social crises of our communities because the prisoners' group failed to resolve certain paradoxes in its praxis, as I show in Chapter 7. Although the prisoners' political goals were to join with other oppressed and exploited groups to resist race, class, colonial, and gender-based forms of domination, their practice was that of an autonomous self-help group aiming at self-determination. As such, the prisoners' praxis was self-contradictory and self-limiting; without connections to other struggles and other communities producing emancipatory critical knowledge, their emancipatory praxis remained isolated, and could not inform or be informed by other oppressed groups or by knowledge from critical academic traditions.

To proceed with a larger project in which critical social theorists and oppressed grassroots communities can participate meaningfully together to interrupt

the reproduction of inequality, "we" must find contexts, spaces, and forms of emancipatory praxis that can engage these groups in dialogue with each other in the creation of critical emancipatory theory. This larger project would also work toward overcoming the divisions among marginalized groups that the postmodernist critics emphasize and toward reconstructing an emancipatory vision and praxis.

LINKING GRASSROOTS PRAXIS AND ACADEMIC SOCIAL SCIENCE

Much of the flavor of this dissertation results from my unusual intellectual history of moving from a grassroots group's praxis to academic sociology and back again--from the prisoners' group, to graduate school, to a small group of primarily African-American parents struggling against low-quality education in our 90%-Black neighborhood school here in Maryland, to the effort in this dissertation to integrate the experiences and insights of two groups of grassroots knowledge producers with academic research and theory. The contradictions between my two groundings in academia and struggle have caused me pain in my work (and from the pain, insight), and they are one of my continuing themes. The learning process is partly revealed by my changing perspectives on my project.

My first project definition, soon after I entered graduate school, was to find ways to resolve tensions around the academic researcher's role that had become vivid as I made a transition from my initial grounding in the prisoners' research approach to my new one in academic sociology. I sought out activist research approaches

created by academic intellectuals. The literature I found first was about critical anthropological fieldwork (e.g., Huizer and Mannheim, 1979; Hymes, 1974; Schensul, Nieves, and Martinez, 1982), and I read this mainly to find examples of fieldwork research approaches that allowed the anthropologist both to do anthropological research and to contribute to a disadvantaged group's struggles. I hoped to find ways to be a sociologist that were consistent with my grounding in the prisoners' process. At the time, I did not fully appreciate the fundamental ways the prisoners' process differed from standard sociological research, as my focus was on the problem of role contradictions for the academic researcher.

In reading the literature from anthropology that critiqued existing models for research and that proposed "critical," or alternative models for fieldwork practice, I found many concrete suggestions for addressing the role dilemmas that had perplexed me. But I also found a much more far-reaching critique of anthropology as a social science. This literature, together with additional literatures I began reading as well (especially in feminist theory, e.g., Harding and Hintikka, 1983; Hartsock, 1981a, 1983b; Mies, 1983; Stanley and Wise, 1983), demonstrated to me that the problems of role that I had attributed to the differences between being a quasi-participant and co-researcher in the prisoners' research process and doing ordinary sociological research were just the tip of an iceberg. Academic research was grounded in a set of social relations of knowledge production that excluded grassroots knowledge producers. Not only was there a problem about how the academic researcher might resolve his or her role contradictions, there were much bigger problems: about the

lack of a place for non-academy based grassroots "popular" intellectuals in the theory-building process; about the need for oppressed groups' standpoint from their everyday experiences of oppression to be represented in formal theory; about the need for an approach to research that was more connected with grassroots people's real struggles both to improve existing theories of power and to empower oppressed groups; about the limits and negative implications of positivist-based epistemology and research methodologies on disadvantaged groups; about the need to problematize the concept of objectivity and work on creating new definitions and standards for objectivity, and so on.

I kept reading. I found a variety of critiques and alternative models for social scientific research that not only helped me identify some useful forms of critical praxis for a trained intellectual, but that seemed to share some basic underlying characteristics with the prisoners' process. They came from throughout the social sciences, philosophy of science, and education--works on critical ethnography of schooling (e.g., Anderson, 1989), feminist epistemology (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Bleier, 1984; Harding, 1986; Hartsock, 1983b; Rowbotham, Segal, and Wainwright, 1979), Black feminism (e.g., Collins, 1991; Hooks, 1989), participatory research (e.g., Maguire, 1987; Whyte, 1991), critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1970; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Lather, 1986b; Shor, 1980; Shor and Freire, 1987), and critical philosophy of science (e.g., Fay, 1987).

All were concerned with various aspects of the relationship between knowledge and power. The shared characteristics included: a critical view of society as unequal

and much less than fully democratic; a concern with further democratizing society, and especially with democratizing knowledge production and/or pedagogy; an emphasis on dialogue in generating emancipatory critical knowledge, especially among grassroots groups; a concern with the development of critical, emancipatory knowledge; an interest in synthesizing various combinations of the relationships between research, education, therapy, and action in producing both critical consciousness and social change; an effort to reconceptualize objectivity; a view that the alternative research process to be formulated was in part a new (revolutionary) form of society within the old; a view that critical academy-trained intellectuals occupy an important, but contradictory position in relation to movements for emancipatory social change; a call for self-reflexivity and self-criticism on the part of critical intellectuals and within the methods for producing emancipatory critical knowledge; and an effort to reconceptualize emancipatory praxis to include a research dimension and to develop forms of emancipatory research praxis that would join trained critical intellectuals with grassroots groups within critical communities where productive dialogue might take place.

Toward a Generalized Small-Group Emancipatory Research Model That Includes an Academic Intellectual

As I became acquainted with more and more of the critical research literature, I began thinking about the prisoners' approach as a "people's" research model that

embodied the resolution to many of the critiques from the literature by showing how, in contrast to the academic models, research could be a normal part of life rather than a specialized activity. The critiques and alternative models in the literature gave me a framework to conceptualize the various distinctive aspects of the prisoners' approach, and I became able to begin to codify the prisoners' research process by using these categories of analysis.

By comparing the academic models with the prisoners' process and with each other, I began noting that many aspects of the models overlapped with each other and with the prisoners' approach. Patterns emerged. Some of the major overlapping characteristics included dialectivity; a process-oriented rather than product-oriented research approach; dialogue as a basis for constructing and validating knowledge; the concern to develop an epistemological standpoint from below and within; a concern with the development of critical consciousness among the participating grassroots researchers; a variety of kinds of emancipatory knowledge needed by a group for effective struggle; and the need for an epistemology that values engagement with the object of investigation either rather than, or in addition to, detachment from it. This process of comparison helped me build a conceptual framework for a generalized small-group based emancipatory participatory research praxis that would include the participation of an academic critical researcher.

My idea of the project to construct an emancipatory participatory research model changed over time. Initially, I was concerned mainly with codifying the prisoners' approach and finding forms of emancipatory research praxis for an

academic intellectual compatible with the prisoners' model. But my idea changed when I found myself enmeshed in a local struggle against institutional racism in the schools affecting my white daughter as well as her African-American schoolmates. My situation required that I join with fellow parents whose needs for emancipatory knowledge paralleled the prisoners', as I describe in Chapter 8. I began to think of defining a model for emancipatory participatory research that would combine the praxis of a peer-based group and that of the critical academic intellectual working with the group; I was now thinking more broadly about the role of critical intellectuals in emancipatory research. I looked to the literatures to help me define an emancipatory research praxis for a group in conjunction with a practicing intellectual.

The additional usefulnesses of the academic literatures became clearer as I continued to work on these two projects. First, the literatures continued to help me identify and name the characteristics of the prisoners' process. Second, the literatures were suggestive of many ways academic researchers and theorists might contribute to the prisoners' grassroots "people's research" model. Third, the literatures, because they were drawn from several disciplines, provided a source of mutual critique, in that each approach provided a perspective on the others as well as on the prisoners' model. Each approach had its own disciplinary standpoint or perspective on what constituted the most important aspects of a critical research process. For example, some models seemed to suggest that the primary value of grassroots intellectuals becoming involved in research was that they might be empowered through development of a critical consciousness; other models suggested that formal theory

would benefit from lay critique; and still others emphasized the importance of legitimating heretofore unlegitimated epistemic communities representing marginalized oppressed groups. Fourth, the literatures pointed to certain aspects of the prisoners' process that held additional meaning beyond their superficial appearances. For example, it was easy to see that dialogue was a major feature of the prisoners' pr ~ess, but the literatures pointed to a deeper importance of dialogue in the prisoners' process--its epistemological significance. Fifth, the literatures provided a variety of theoretical rationales and justifications for what I was coming to call emancipatory participatory research and for "people's" research methods in general.

That I found in these literatures several conceptions more or less closely related to mine I took as encouraging to my project and generally reinforcing to my thoughts that a framework for emancipatory participatory research could carry within it a theory and practice for social change. The literatures provide a repertoire of concepts, practices, and theory that can enrich a grassroots and peer-oriented small group emancipatory participatory research process. They identify useful roles for academic intellectuals and a place for academic research and theory. They enrich an understanding of how knowledge production can be democratized through the participation of a small group-based process.

In Chapter 9, I present a generalized model for a small-group emancipatory participatory research praxis that is grounded first in the prisoners' approach, but elaborated by my work with the parents and my reading of the literature. I have concluded that at the small-group level, a framework for emancipatory participatory

research should be understood as a set of flexible guidelines, not a cookbook for direct application. My experience with the African-American parents' group has shown me the importance of looking for different specific syntheses of ways to do participatory research that may be effective in different conditions, as the participants bring different abilities and experiences to situations that themselves differ widely. In my experience, the framework needs to be responsive to the very different needs of different kinds of groups and circumstances. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 all discuss literatures that help inform and elaborate this generalized small-group version of the framework for emancipatory participatory research.

A Broader Project: Emancipatory Participatory Research as a Dialogue of Models

Developing a framework for emancipatory participatory research also takes place at another level. Each of the literatures and each small-group praxis has its own internal project--to redefine its own theory and practice within its own discourse. However, each of these projects can be viewed as a contribution to the development of a broader theory of emancipatory participatory research; by bringing the various projects into dialogue with each other, it becomes possible to begin to see the outlines of such a theory. In Chapter 12, I describe the implicit dialogue among projects, communities, and epistemologies and suggest what it might yield in terms of an emancipatory project on a broader scale than what small groups practice.

MY PERSONAL GROUNDING

This work depends critically on two lengthy social interactions that were deeply personal; any conclusions I draw are inevitably colored by my personal groundings. Moreover, as I make clear later on, I take the epistemological stance (shared with many of the research traditions I cite) that individual knowledge is inevitably grounded in life experience and that social knowledge is best advanced by a dialogue among people differently grounded. To be consistent with these epistemological premises, I must include here some aspects of my personal history. Doing this will make it easier to place my work in context. In addition to this short account of my personal history, I attempt, especially in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 about the prisoners' process, and in Chapter 8 about the parents' process, to write myself into the "field" description.

Family and Early Experience

I came to the sustained interactions with Black and Latino groups that are the grounding of this work as one who holds an ongoing sense of disbelief and surprise, such as you might expect in a visitor from an alien culture, about how much one's color determines the quality of one's life. Although I was raised in the United States in a family resident here for several generations, I grew up in the 1950s in a small town of about 4,000 people in the mountains of Western Colorado where there was no

racial segregation because there was only one black family in town. (A few Mexican American families did live in one neighborhood in poor housing, but amidst Anglo families.) The issue of race was rarely brought up in conversation in my home, probably in part because there was no interracial contact to force the issue. Whenever it did arise, however, both of my parents to their credit stated clearly and forcefully that people were people no matter what their color. I remember my mother, who is a singer, exclaiming about how horrible it was that Marian Anderson was not allowed to sing at Constitution Hall, and my father angrily responding to a family acquaintance who had made a remark about "Negroes belonging in trees," that he should be ashamed to say such a thing. My grandmother, with whom I spent a great deal of time as a small child, presented an allegorical lesson of equal rights in a story about robins and sparrows: while people preferred to feed the robins, they should feed the sparrows as well, because all living things had an equal right to life. This, from politically conservative white Americans in the 1950s.

I perceived a shared community value, imparted to me by my teachers in school, the Methodist church I attended from time to time, and the textbooks, which emphasized how all men (we weren't attending to gender then) were created equal. I came to believe that ages ago, there was a terrible thing called slavery, but that everyone had realized how wrong it was, there was a Civil War about it, Lincoln brought it to an end, and that was that. Everyone was equal now. Many of the townspeople must have harbored hidden racist assumptions that were just plastered over by the rhetoric of equality, but I do not remember noticing. I went to college a

the University of Colorado between 1962 and 1966, and was not aware of any Civil Rights movement on campus. If it was there, it was not very visible. It was not until I went to New York City in the fall of 1966 at the age of 21, and started working for the Department of Social Services, that I had any idea poverty or race were widespread social problems.

Whatever the explanation for my belief that race no longer mattered, it was very strongly ingrained. However incongruous it may seem that I am still today taken aback by the "simple" pervasiveness of racism, my ability to be amazed has sometimes served to help parents from my neighborhood take a different look at what ought to be. I return to this theme in Chapter 8.

My family of origin also believed strongly in the ethic of self-help and hard work--of meritocracy. No matter what your origins, they believed, you were to be respected if you worked hard. The assumption was that everyone started out on a flat playing field, and that ample opportunity was afforded to anyone who truly worked hard, was dependable, responsible, and reasonably intelligent. In fact, this principle seemed to explain individuals' success in my town: People who had been born to uneducated families with serious economic or personal problems could "make it."

Another significant aspect of my upbringing was my profound sense of my ability to move freely about the world, to do as I like; to act on the world as I chose simply because I was my parents' daughter. I was taught to think for myself and act on my own behalf. As a result, I gained some experience taking unpopular stands. Although I was not taught explicitly to question or challenge authority, I assumed I

could do so if necessary to do what I personally thought was right.

I have gradually come to understand more and more how much class, racial, ethnic, and gender-based privilege affect such self-perceptions, as well as people's relative ability to move about and act freely on the world without recrimination. My most profound experience has been living in an almost entirely Black area of Prince George's County, Maryland, where I have had the dual experience of seeing my "white privilege" (McIntosh, 1990) by contrast with others' lack of it in many situations, while in others, undergoing the surprising experience of being treated as if I didn't "count," just like my African-American neighbors. I believe that my own "can do" attitude, derived though it is from my socialization to white privilege, has come in handy when working both with the Latino prisoners and the parents' group in Maryland, because many people in both groups, the parents' group more than the prisoners', lacked the confidence they could affect their situation. This issue, however, is very delicate, and I learned how important it was for me not to assume that the experience of taking action against oppressive authority was, or should be, the same for me as for others in the group. I discuss these issues at more length in Chapter 8.

Juxtaposed against my training in individualism were two very different and opposite experiences that prepared me to understand and share the emotional ties that held together the Latino and Black groups I describe in the following chapters. One involved my closest childhood friend, Elaine Guengerich. Elaine was a Mennonite, and her large family took me into their home as if I were one of their own, and also

into their Mennonite community. Though I never became involved in the religion, I became part of their social community, and took part in many communal projects of the local Mennonite community. This experience provided a stark contrast to my strongly individual-centered home, and gave me a sense of mutuality and personal growth that can be found in working with and giving to others.

The other experience was learning Spanish through the oral method in high school from a native Italian-speaking teacher. This teacher taught much more than the technical aspects of the Spanish language; in her Italian-accented Spanish, she conveyed intonations and gesticulations as well, and helped us feel the language. Speaking Spanish in the way I was taught gave me a profoundly different way of being, a way to unlock possibilities in myself for being expressive; it gave me, as well, a new idea about the possibilities for a more emotionally laden, interactive form of social life. Gradually, Latin rhythms and colors have come into my life and enriched it. Brazilian, African, and Latin music has kept my spirits up through many a page of this dissertation.

The combined experiences of participating in the Mennonite community and speaking Spanish gave me something to search for that I found missing in the rest of my life. When I graduated from college, I was serious enough about this search that I decided to move to a place where I was certain to find a large community of Spanish speaking people. I moved to New York City. These experiences, together with later ones of living and working communally together with others in the 1970's help remind me of the importance of culture as an important resource for

emancipatory praxis.

My husband and daughter appreciatively remind me that a final aspect of my upbringing is also important, though I, like most others, often take it for granted. This aspect has to do with my training as a woman: my knowledge of interpersonal skills, and in particular, my experience generating "second person" knowledge. As my daughter remarks, such skills are undervalued and often made invisible because they are not appropriately legitimated, even though they are valuable to the creation of knowledge, community, and solidarity. Of course, some of these skills have contradictory implications for women's empowerment; being a good listener, for example, can turn one into an unassertive and passive person. Nevertheless, I think these skills, if tempered by the kinds of self-reflection that would prevent them from disempowering women, can usefully serve to facilitate our emancipatory praxes. The skills pertinent to generating second person knowledge include trying to learn what interests the other person, responding in an authentic and facilitative way to one's conversational partner, not interrupting, testing whether the other person would like to talk about one's own topic of interest before plunging into the topic, encouraging the partner's response to one's own talking rather than going on and on in a monologue, and preparing and serving food to share along with conversation.

In addition, the experience of being a woman in this society, together with always having been in somewhat close contact with working class culture despite my middle class origins (for example, my husband and I operated a farm for several years on which I not only prepared the fields for planting, but did much of the machinery

repair) has sensitized me to people's everyday problems. I was trained to sew my own clothing, repair cars, clean the house, make bread, and turn leftover fragments of all sorts into wholes. Having to develop these skills myself has made me more appreciative of others who also have them, and given me a basis to share the problems of everyday life with many different kinds of people.

Formative Experiences with Disadvantaged Groups

In the years between my move to New York and my initial contact with the Latino prisoners, I had three formative work experiences, beginning with my initial job in New York, as a caseworker for the city's Welfare Department working with Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans, mainly mothers with children and young men addicted to drugs. This experience impressed me with the ways structural conditions affected people's ability to determine their own circumstances--not only my clients' powerlessness against conditions in the community, but mine against the welfare bureaucracy.

My experience with my Puerto Rican clients confirmed my belief that speaking Spanish made me feel more engaged, but it also opened me up to a world where people could express to me in Spanish their anguish. The capacity of the language, together with my ability to interact with my "clients" in Spanish, provided me not primarily with joy, but with their intense feelings of frustration and hopelessness. When I tried to help my clients, I faced a set of what I felt were moral dilemmas. I

could not maintain the professional detachment that the Department's rules required, an attitude totally inconsistent with the social rules of my own small-town upbringing, which emphasized informality, empathetic understanding, respect, and flexibility in helping relationships. And although I understood the principle behind the AFDC (aid for dependent children) policy prohibiting fathers from the home, the policy made little sense to me when it was virtually impossible for the fathers to find work. The right thing to do according to my upbringing was to work to change the policy, but I quickly found that going to my supervisors to talk over such dilemmas was a mistake; as bureaucrats, they simply told me to "go by the book." Finally, I began to notice that many of the clients were trying to "con" me to get larger allotments of money. At the time, I felt used and a bit angry: In my experience, people expressed themselves directly, and if they did so, they got a fair hearing. I eventually came to realize that they considered me part of "the system" and did not trust our personal relationship. All of these contradictions between my initial understandings and my new experiences became unbearable, and I resigned after less than a year.

I next took a teaching job in an elementary school in the South Bronx where I was given a monolingual Spanish-speaking class of second graders. I was shocked to learn that the school was oppressive to the pupils. On the first day, my supervising teacher showed me how to control the children by hurting them in ways that left no bruises, and I soon learned that this punitive approach was the school's policy. Teaching materials were few and far between, and no provisions were made for Spanish-speaking students, who were the majority of the school. I could see that the

children who were unfortunate enough to go to that school had no chance to get the kind of education my schoolmates and I had been given; these children seemed doomed. I could see, on my daily walk from the subway to the school, that physically speaking, the community itself was in ruins. Many buildings had been abandoned or destroyed, and trash and broken glass were everywhere. I could tell that many children who came to class were sleepy, ill, hungry, and poorly clothed.

Although I tried to make small changes that would affect my own classroom, like getting better teaching materials, I felt powerless to do anything about the general conditions at the school. The teachers' union seemed interested only in improving the teachers' benefits, and the school administration was totally negative. It never occurred to me to try to organize a parents' group--that possibility was entirely outside my experience. I left these two experiences with the conclusion that Puerto Ricans in New York suffered greatly from conditions outside their control, many of them localized in unreasonable and unresponsive school and welfare bureaucracies.

My next employment, in an independent, community-controlled school in Roxbury, Massachusetts in 1968, further changed my perceptions and understandings. I was attracted to the school by a lecture given by Jonathan Kozol, which introduced me to the concept of community control of schools, a movement he portrayed as centrally concerned with providing quality education to inner city students. Kozol also described many of the new community schools as experimental, decentralized, and anti-authoritarian, which I also found an attractive alternative to the highly bureaucratic and repressive authoritarian teaching situation in the Bronx. I anticipated

that teaching in a small independent school would allow me to be more creative, and to teach more effectively.

The experience in Roxbury was both educational and difficult for me. In terms of the issues I discuss in the following chapters, a significant element of my experience concerned a conflict in educational philosophy between the anti-authoritarian approach Kozol described and I accepted and the most prevalent view among the African-American parents who presumably controlled the school. The model of a decentralized classroom with a pronounced lack of teacher authority, a de-emphasis on discipline, and a learn-at-your-own-pace-in-your-own-style approach did not fit with the African-American parents' and teachers' idea of a school that would prepare their children for the difficult lives ahead of them. I later found the same philosophical difference in Maryland, where the middle-class African-American parents there were for the most part much less concerned than my husband and I about the repressive aspects of schooling. Whereas we were concerned that the children not be subjected to a hidden curriculum of subservience (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Anyon, 1980), the African-American parents' concerns were mainly that their children learn the content they were supposed to be learning, even if that meant a strict and demeaning teacher-centered authoritarian classroom. I have come to a greater appreciation of the African-American parents' point of view, and am much less willing than I was in 1968 to argue that my educational philosophy is best for African-American children, even though I appreciate the fundamental role of authoritarian education in tracking children and reproducing disadvantage. It is

precisely such points of contention between critical theorists and grassroots people living in the midst of an oppressive society that demand collective and participatory attention.

The experience in Roxbury provided me a most dramatic lesson in how much difference one's grounding makes in how one defines reality. Though I had not yet heard the concept, I was beginning to understand that the "view from below" is quite different from the "view from above;" that I had taken a "view from above;" and that the "view from above" is often taken for granted as the only valid perspective that defines reality (e.g., Gedicks, 1979; Nader, 1974). The African-American parents' view of education was entirely different from my own or the view of the other white teachers, yet it reflected a reality that may have been more important to the pupils than the reality I saw.

The Roxbury experience also convinced me of the need to find ways to conceptualize social change endeavors as solving "our" problem rather than "theirs," a conclusion reinforced by the latter stages of my involvement with the Latino prisoners' group. Sharing the problem makes equal dialogue among co-participants more possible, and also fits well within the prisoners' concept of research as a way of life in that people who share a problem share the need to understand it. As I explain in Chapter 8, my work in Maryland benefited from the fact that I was experiencing many of the same problems as the other parents, as it was "our" neighborhood, "our" school, and "our" school system. I think that living in the community that one is working with people to study is probably the most holistic way of engaging in

participatory emancipatory research. The literature shows there are other possibilities as well--models in which social scientists or educators help disadvantaged communities do "research" in various ways. Nevertheless, my overall sense is that these efforts work best when the problem that is the focus of research and change efforts is understood to be in some fundamental way "ours"--shared between the grassroots groups and the academic intellectuals who are working together on it. A key to cooperation between grassroots groups and intellectuals, which is a central problem of this dissertation, is to find ways that more of "us" can define problems as "our" problems. Sharing a problem makes it easier to take equal responsibility for problem definition and problem solution. I am concerned that currently our social movements seem to be fragmented by what seem to be special interests and narrowly focused issues.

Working in Roxbury changed me in two other ways that prepared me for my work with the prisoners and the parents. It exposed me for the first time to the concept and practice of collective resistance. The school's very formation had been the result of the efforts of many people who had taken the initiative to do something about the racist and inequitable Boston school system by starting a school of their own. It was a powerful living (if troubled) example of the creation of an alternative model as a form of active resistance to oppression.

It also exposed me to a philosophy and practice of education that valued democratic, anti-authoritarian classroom process--a philosophy and practice widely suspect among the African-American parents in Roxbury, but one I came to see as

having tremendous value for disadvantaged groups. From the experienced "open" classroom teachers at the school, I learned how to encourage students to take initiative for deciding what and how to learn, and in this way became used to sharing some power over decision-making with the students. The open classroom process gave more respect to the students than a traditional process did, and it was much more exciting and creative for me as well. I felt more able to express myself as a whole person, rather than only putting forward a detached professional persona. I also became aware that students could participate in the teaching process, and I incorporated peer teaching into my classroom process. In these ways, I became experienced as a teacher of what might now be called a participatory education model.

These formative experiences influenced and informed my work with the Latino prisoners and the African-American parents in somewhat different ways, as can be discerned from the chapters that follow. Along with other effects on my understanding, they made me open to the idea of "doing research" as a part of life that is central to my concept of participatory emancipatory research and that I think can help connect grassroots and academic perspectives in a way that carries within it a foundation for a movement for democratic social change.

CHAPTER 2

MY WORK WITH THE PRISONERS' GROUP -- NARRATIVE

This chapter is a narrative of my experiences with a group of mainly Puerto Rican prisoners whose integrated approach to creating social change and developing knowledge became the original frame of reference for my work. The prisoners established an organization that combined features of several kinds of groups familiar to us in the outside community. One way to describe it would be as a combination of a self-help group (with many facets of self help including therapy and education) and a grass-roots political organization (with aspects such as consciousness raising, direct confrontation, and political education). Or it could be described as a hybrid of a political organization moving to change the larger social structure and a utopian community (perhaps a more familiar combination). Yet, describing the group as a "combination" of, say, a therapeutic community, a study group, a formal political class, a grassroots political organization, a utopian community, and a consciousness-raising group does not convey the importance of the configuration of these forms within the organization. Similarly, listing the kinds of activities unified in the group gives only a rough idea of the ways the prisoners combined intellectual work with concrete resistance, or developed a "praxis." As a provisional statement, though, it will suffice to describe the group's "program" as an integration of several overlapping group processes into an emancipatory group praxis, and a method of developing

emancipatory knowledge within that praxis. I refer to these overlapping and dialectically related processes as education, therapy, research, and action, and my main focus is on the research process.

My experience with the prisoners began before I became a sociology student, and I was attracted to the group's praxis in large part because it gave me some vision of ways people can work collectively in an activity that combines dimensions of our lives that are often kept separate: the intimate and personal, the intellectual, the political, and the social. When I began to identify as a developing sociologist, I saw value in placing the prisoners' overall methodology and especially their approach to research in sociological perspective, making their praxis more widely understandable and accessible, showing how it can contribute to sociological knowledge, and exploring the emancipatory implications of their research methodology in relation to other approaches that attempt to combine emancipatory social theory and the participation of social theorists with grassroots groups in emancipatory struggles.

I began a long intellectual journey that included finding approaches within social science that parallel the prisoners' process in some way, providing new standpoints from which to critique and contribute to the prisoners' model of a unified group praxis, including a model for research. I found relevant critiques and alternatives in various fields, including activist anthropological and sociological fieldwork models, critical social science as developed by Brian Fay (1987), the feminist practice of consciousness-raising, feminist methodology and epistemology, various critiques of positivism, Touraine's method of "self-analysis" (1983), and

Freirian-based participatory research models relying on "conscientização" (Freire, 1973). Each of these approaches had much in common with the prisoners' approach and with each other. Gradually it became apparent to me that a kind of common project could be articulated whose aim is to develop an emancipatory social scientific methodology that is integral to a methodology for emancipatory social change. Many voices engage in the dialogue that moves this project forward. Speakers come from different academic disciplines (e.g. sociology, anthropology, education, philosophy of science, feminist studies, political science, and psychology) and differently "positioned" subjects/actors (e.g. community organizers and activists, "radical" adult educators, other academy-based intellectuals committed to advancing the interests of disadvantaged groups, and grassroots groups). They emphasize different emancipatory goals and different needs for knowledge, as well as different aspects of the overall emancipatory project. Some see the central project as one of education, rather than the aspect of emancipatory social scientific methodology and/or research that I emphasize. But all the voices show a concern and interest in defining or elaborating flexible models for emancipatory knowledge production and emancipatory praxis. Many of these research models are also participatory, with disadvantaged groups taking a major role in the research process.

Although my project is "constructive," in the sense that I search for parallels and discover a kind of common agenda among many voices, it is also fundamentally "critical" in the sense that each perspective provides a framework for critique from which to view the others, allowing for the dialogue to produce knowledge beyond that

spoken by any single voice. As part of my efforts to hear and to join the dialogue, I attempted to implement and test an elaborated emancipatory participatory research process based on the prisoners' approach, but augmented by contributions from the literatures of emancipatory research, in a new "field" setting with middle class African-American parents who were trying to understand and change the way their school system reproduced race and class inequalities. This fieldwork is discussed in Chapter 8.

As my work with the prisoners was the starting point and initial grounding for all of my later work, I begin here with an autobiographical description of my relationship with the prisoners over several years; in Chapters 3 and 4, I present the prisoners' view, my view, and sociological views of their process. In Chapters 5 and 6, I discuss the prisoners' approach to knowledge as I believe they saw it, and then from a more academic perspective.

THE HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY CLASS IN SPANISH

In January of 1974, my husband and I were living in an upstate New York community, and I found a part time job teaching a high school equivalency (General Equivalency Diploma, or GED) class in Spanish for Spanish speaking inmates at the nearby state prison. I had earned teaching certification at the high school level to teach Spanish as a second language, but never taught in Spanish to native Spanish speaking people. I had no experience teaching the various skills needed for passing

the equivalency examination, such as mathematics or social studies, and I had never been in a prison before, much less taught prisoners. I was worried and anxious about whether I would be able to teach the class competently, and quite nervous about being in a prison with a group of male prisoners. The prison's supervisor of education seemed quite eager to hire me, however, and I agreed to begin.

The First Night

The evening of my first class, I was fingerprinted, had my purse and bags searched, was given a short lecture about how prisoners were criminals--dangerous people of whom I was to be suspicious and careful at all times--and put through a metal detector. I was then escorted with the other evening teachers by a guard to my classroom, the prison library. The guard opened the door to the enormous dark library room where my class of thirteen, seated in a circle on folding metal chairs, was waiting for me at the far end. The guard turned and slammed the heavy metal door behind me without a word, leaving me alone in the dimly lighted room with my new class.

I had expected stony faced, uncommunicative, grim-looking prisoners sitting in rows all faced forward toward a blackboard. After the orientation I had just been given by the education director, I was concerned that my relationship with the class might well be an adversarial one, and I feared that maintaining class discipline would be a difficult problem. However, the prisoners quickly dispelled these kinds of negative images and fears. A few of the men approached me, greeting me

respectfully and warmly, offering to help me with my bags. They led me to where the group was seated, and asked me to sit down with them so we could talk about the class.

Two or three of the prisoners set about putting me at ease by telling me that they knew the experience of coming into a prison for the first time and being subjected to the kinds of orientation procedures I had just gone through was an intimidating one, but that they wanted me to know how much they appreciated my having agreed to come to the prison to teach the class. I was surprised to find that the prisoners thought of the class as "their" class, and that they were so concerned about its success. Rather than my having to organize the class, taking the lead and directing it, I found myself being introduced and integrated into an already existing class which they had been teaching themselves, and into their already-existing group process.

I had assumed that all conversation would necessarily be in Spanish, and had worried about whether I would be able to conduct a class entirely in Spanish, but I found that conversation flowed easily in both Spanish and English at the same time; whenever I had difficulty finding a word in Spanish, or couldn't understand someone else's Spanish, someone would help translate. Some of the prisoners were Spanish dominant, others English dominant, so prisoners served as each other's interpreters, as well. Whatever my concerns about my Spanish speaking ability, I was given a great deal of appreciation for being able to converse with them in Spanish, and encouragement to ask for help whenever I needed it.

We began a long trust-building process by allowing each other to be questioned and revealing our experiences to each other. The kinds of conversation during that first evening exemplified what I later recognized as the prisoners' praxis and approach to research. After one of the prisoners brought me a cup of Bustelo coffee that he had brewed himself, I was encouraged to tell the group bits of my personal history, because, as they said, they "wanted to see where I was 'coming from'." Reciprocally, they would tell personal stories about themselves and each other, and the history of their efforts to get a professionally qualified teacher for their GED class so I would better understand where they were "coming from."

I talked about my past teaching experience in the South Bronx, and several of the prisoners were surprised and excited to know that the school where I had taught was in their home neighborhood. Some knew exactly which school it was, and had been grade school students there about the same time I had been teaching second grade. Because they had shared similar negative experiences, though they from a student's perspective and I from a teacher's--of lack of Spanish language materials, extremely harsh disciplinary norms, and tracking of Puerto Rican children into the lowest academic tracks--we quickly found grounds for a common understanding, at least of the educational injustices afforded Puerto Rican children and the need to address them.

Two prisoners who identified themselves as "coordinators" of the Latino prisoner organization told something of their family histories--their roots in Puerto Rico, their parents' lack of education and the struggles to support their families with

low-wage jobs, the "invasion" of drugs into their neighborhoods, and the disastrous impact heroin had had on their community. I did not feel comfortable asking what kinds of crimes they were all in prison for, but I didn't have to ask; anticipating that I would want to know, they told me that they were there for many crimes, including as I remember, manslaughter, robbery, rape, and dealing drugs, but they emphasized that whatever crimes they had committed, their efforts were now directed toward trying to rehabilitate themselves through the "program" they had created for themselves.

The Context of the Class

As the prisoners explained their "program", I learned that the GED class I had come to teach was a small but important part of the self-organized rehabilitation program that was run by the Latino[1] prisoner organization. Their organization and overall program are discussed at length in Chapter 4. The prisoners very much wanted me to understand that first night how important the GED class was to them; they told me much about the long history of their attempt to acquire a professional teacher for the GED class they had been attempting to conduct themselves. At the point when I applied for the position, the predominantly Puerto Rican Latino prisoner organization had just finished a round of sit-ins and petition drives in an attempt to force the local prison administration to grant them a teacher. A small group from the organization had been "sitting in" the education director's office. The prisoners told me that several of them had spent time in solitary confinement for having participated

in these sit-ins. Apparently I had applied at a time when the local administration had decided it would be easier to hire a teacher and appease the prisoners than to put up with their disruptive tactics. It seemed that the prisoners' point in telling me this story was in part to assure me that since this class was something they had worked and sacrificed for, they wanted very badly for it to succeed, and wanted me to work with them to make it successful.

As the prisoners told me about their efforts to establish the class, I also began to understand something about the political context that had made possible the prisoners' organization, its overall program, and the GED class. At the time I was teaching at the prison, approximately 20% of the prisoners in New York State were Latino. It was 1974, a time of heightened political consciousness and activism both outside and inside the prison system. The movement for Civil Rights still had momentum, and community-based groups were organizing for social change, including for bilingual education and the community control of schools.

The Attica prison riots of 1971 had been in part the result of the Attica prisoners' frustrated efforts to obtain rehabilitation programs and equal treatment for the growing numbers of black and Latino prisoners coming into the system. In addition to demanding educational and other rehabilitation programs and the right to meet to discuss and present grievances to the administration, "minority" prisoners had also demanded the right to establish ethnically-based prisoner organizations. In response to the Attica riots and to the public cry for prison reform, the New York State prison system had begun to institute new educational and rehabilitation

programs, and allowed the formation of new types of prisoner organizations. These included elected "inmate liaison committees," to channel prisoners' political activities and demands through formal procedures to local prison administrations, and officially sanctioned cultural groups, organized along ethnic and religious lines. There had been informal prisoners' cultural organizations for many years, but the new policy allowed them formal meeting times and the opportunity to develop their own cultural programs. The Muslims at Attica had been instrumental in formulating the demand for prisoners' rights to their own cultural organizations. At the prison where I taught, and in at least some other state prisons, there were three such cultural groups: the Blacks (at times dominated by Black or Sunni Muslims[2]), the Latinos, and the Anglos.

The correctional system's increased acceptance of rehabilitation goals, including bilingual education, and the permission to form prisoner-run organizations made much possible in terms of prisoner collective action. Bilingual education provided a focus for action through which the Latino prisoners could both increase solidarity and seek gains from the prison administration. For some prisoners, however, the ethnic organizations were the most significant "crack" in the repressive prison system through which they could press to improve their situation. The prisoners' ability to organize through the liaison committees was limited in part because the liaison committees were very small groups. In addition, their members were elected for a limited term. Both of these characteristics made them susceptible to being easily disrupted and controlled by the prison administration. The ethnic

organizations, by contrast, were the only setting where voluntary groups of more than six prisoners could meet. The ethnic organizations were far from being immune to disruption and control, however. As I soon learned, the prison administration tried to control the ethnic organizations to prevent collective actions that might threaten prison security or the administration's control. They assigned a staff member to oversee formal meetings, and required each organization to install an elected formal leadership, a rule the prisoners interpreted as an effort to make "troublemakers" easier to identify. As a former prisoner later informed me, the leaders of the Latino prisoner organization at my prison recognized the leadership rules as a sophisticated means of control aimed at subverting the new policy to increase prisoners' rights. So, the Latino prisoners' organization counter-resisted by distributing its political activities throughout its "program" and by constituting its leadership as a group of "coordinators."

I later learned that there were great differences between prisoners' ethnic organizations across the state with respect to how much prisoners used them as vehicles for organizing as opposed to purely cultural activities. Some ethnic organizations concentrated mostly on planning cultural festivals and religious holidays. At the other extreme, in one large prison, a culturally and racially mixed group of progressive prisoners organized an interconnected network of ethnic organizations that was expressly political and, despite intergroup hostility and rivalry, managed to press hard together for needed changes at the prison. As I later learned from one of the people who had been in my class, at least some people in the Latino

prisoners' organization at "my" prison conceived of the Latino "cultural" organization as a sort of political party with its own constituents acting in the prison politics that took place around the Inmate Liaison Committee. As a "party," it sometimes joined into coalitions with the Black and/or Anglo groups to press for common goals by promoting actions by the Liaison Committee.

As I learned in part the first evening but in much more detail later, the local Latino prisoner organization had been waging a struggle to implement a bilingual education program on two fronts. The first was with the prison administration, principally to expand educational opportunities for Spanish speaking prisoners. The other was with those prisoners who were "about bullshit." Years later, a former student told me that the original leadership of the Latino prisoner organization, immediately following the Attica riots, had used their positions for personal advantage such as to obtain and sell drugs. According to the same informant, the rivalry between the ethnic groups was intense in those early years, and rapes often occurred between members of opposing groups. A small prison riot caused the original leadership to be "shipped out" (dispersed to other prisons), allowing for a new leadership to emerge. The new leadership sought to prevent exploitation of members by their leaders and to stop inter-group rivalry and abuse by, among other things, offering protection to its own members and expelling anyone from the group who raped another. Success at preventing rapes gained the new leadership prestige among the Latino prisoners, other prisoners, and other prisoners' groups, which helped it gain support in its efforts to use available cracks in the system to promote changes

benefiting prisoners.

Years later, when the prisoners were released on parole and re-established their organization in the South Bronx, I learned that one of the principal functions the new leadership of the Latino prisoner organization had fulfilled was to prevent its Latino members from rival gangs on the "street" from fighting with each other. Some of the new leaders of the Latino prisoner organization had been members of the Young Lords in the Bronx, a group with a progressive activist agenda that had sought to curb the destructive and violent gang activity by attracting youth into its organization and instilling in them a sense of responsibility to the larger community--at least to the Latino community as a whole. Their participation in the Young Lords had shown them the need for and possibility of transcending inter-gang rivalries and hostilities by working together for social change. One of the leaders of the prisoners' group later told me that it was his belief that the political and activist outlook of the local Latino prisoners' organization was attributable to a combination of the particular personalities, experiences, and organizational abilities of the leaders; the prior experience of several of the prisoners with the Young Lords; the Puerto Rican independence movement which had helped politicize the Latino prisoners and given them a Latino cultural identity that included a sense of political consciousness; and the presence during the post-Attica period of a progressive superintendent at the local prison who was willing to give fair treatment to prisoners' grievances. This was, of course, in addition to the recent history of the civil rights, community activism, and prison reform movements; the attendant public consciousness of oppression, especially

racism, which created a favorable context for such activism anywhere in the state prison system; and the opportunities created for collective action by the post-Attica policies.

Although I was not aware of all of these details the first evening, I was given to understand that the prisoners who created the GED class and the program in general represented the more serious prisoners, and that many of the prisoners, including Latinos, were about "bullshit". Turning the Latino prisoners' attention away from "bullshit" activities such as fighting, dealing and doing drugs, and sexual exploitation of other prisoners required constant effort by the coordinators and other active organization participants. I was told that many prisoners would want to sign up for the GED class when they found out a woman was teaching it and that the coordinators would try to select only those people who were serious students, but that if any students sexually harassed me, I was to tell the coordinators, because they wanted me to be comfortable and the class to be understood by all as a serious place where people respected the teacher and each other and where the principal focus was on passing the GED exam.

The Prisoners' Concept of Their Class

As we continued our conversation that first evening, the prisoners referred to their class, their organization, and Latinos in general, as their "family". The primary way this very important feature of their philosophy and organization came up the first night was in their discussion with me about how they had been running the GED

class, and how they hoped it would continue to be run--on a principle of responsibility for each other. Even as we talked that evening, it was clear that the dynamic was very participatory and trusting, as class members encouraged each other to speak up, asked each other questions, helped finish each other's thoughts, smiled at each other, patted each other on the back, and sometimes caught each other up a little short by interposing a critical question like, "What do you mean by that, brother?" or a comment like, "Break that down" (i.e., provide more detail).

The group's cultural style complemented its emphasis on interpersonal dependence, mutual support, and responsibility to the group. Several former prisoners later spoke of the Hispanic culture's extended family as the model for the prisoner organization, and also mentioned the custom of "bringing home" to the family some of whatever one gains for oneself as a cultural way of encouraging responsibility to the group. The group functioned as a sort of tiny society in which members developed their emotional, intellectual, and political capacities in concert with others.

The prisoners talked about the class as "their" class, as a time for them to come together and help "advance" each other, and themselves as a family. Studying for and passing the GED seemed to be both an individual and a group effort, and the goals were similar for the individual and the group. Most remarkable to me about the prisoners' presentation of the meaning of the class was their vision of it as the means to a collective goal --each prisoner improving himself in a way that would contribute to the improvement of the Latino prisoner population and Latinos as an oppressed

people. Obtaining the GED was viewed as one way to improve the collective ability of the Latino prisoners to help "our people". The prisoners spoke of "we" and "us" and "each other," not "I," "me," and "myself" or even "ourselves."

Teaching each other and giving each other support had been integral to their class before, and the prisoners wanted me to understand why they wanted this dynamic to continue, even though I had come with special skills and abilities that the class needed. With pride, prisoners spoke about how happy they were to have finally succeeded in establishing this class, which would provide more of an incentive for the Latino prisoners throughout the prison to aspire to acquiring the GED and possibly getting into a college program. (Some of the English speaking prisoners were able at the time to participate in a college release program.) They also spoke of how getting the GED would make parole easier to attain, and would mean better job opportunities after getting out on parole.

The prisoners' description of the kind of class dynamic they had developed and hoped to continue with me fit well with experimental school pedagogies with which I was familiar and had practiced. I heard the prisoners describing a kind of "open", cooperative, and democratic classroom where peer teaching was prominent, the classroom teacher did not assume an authoritarian relationship with the class, and a real sense of community prevailed. I was surprised that I had happened onto a situation, in a prison no less, where I could find just the kind of classroom I was most comfortable with, and I expressed my eagerness to the prisoners to work with them to continue their classroom process, allowing them to go on teaching each other in a

relaxed, interactive, conversational, and supportive classroom atmosphere, but also presenting and teaching some of the subject matter myself. The prisoners, especially the coordinators, were surprised and happy to see that I had some appreciation for and experience with the kind of classroom they wanted to continue.

Having already been sensitized to the need for bilingual education for Puerto Rican and other Spanish speaking students through my experience in the South Bronx, I could fully appreciate the prisoners' position that bilingual education programs were necessary, including the GED in Spanish. For some time, I appreciated their family-interactional model of mutual support mainly as a pedagogical model that would promote a high level of motivation for both individual and group educational goals. In short, in the early days I saw the prisoners' struggle principally as one for education. And for the most part, I understood the kind of learning that would take place in my classroom to be the appropriation of those traditional skills needed to pass the high school equivalency examination--though taught by nontraditional methods. Only later as I began to teach the class did I come to understand more fully that the prisoners' struggle for bilingual education was part of a much broader struggle for economic, social, and political justice.

During my first night's orientation, I also learned that the prisoners defined themselves as a "family" constituted partly on the basis of economic class. The prisoners spoke of how it was necessary for them as Puerto Rican prisoners to understand their shared history in the colonial exploitation of Puerto Rico by the United States, whether they were born here in the United States or on the island. In

another reference to class, they told me something of their efforts to build bridges to the other ethnic prisoner organizations, especially the Black one, because culture should not come between people who needed to fight the "system" together, and the "system" oppressed all poor people, not just Latinos.

The prisoners mentioned that the GED class was only one of several classes their organization sponsored and taught; that there was a class where politics and Puerto Rican history were taught, and another one called Drug Therapy. In addition, there was a formal class taught by a professional teacher during the day that was especially for Spanish speaking prisoners to acquire basic literacy skills in Spanish; it was partly because this class had been very successful that there were several dominant Spanish speaking students ready to prepare for taking the high school equivalency examination at that point. One of the prisoners that evening was proudly introduced to me as having been completely illiterate in both Spanish and English when he entered the program, but having made so much progress that he was now a "coordinator" and was ready to prepare for taking the equivalency examination. (His and others' successes were described in language such as how much it meant to "us" that the "hermano" [brother] had "advanced" both himself and his community by his success.) I learned that several prisoners had been functionally illiterate in both languages until recently, and had been studying both languages. These included prisoners born on the mainland, in Puerto Rico, and in the Dominican Republic. Latino cultural pride was a factor in learning Spanish; some, who could have prepared just as easily for the examination in English as in Spanish, wanted to take

the GED exam in Spanish as a matter of ethnic pride.

As the approximately 2 1/2 hours came to an end and it was time for me to leave, I was feeling very comfortable and excited about the prospect of teaching this group of people. The conversation, having started out a bit formally and slowly, had become much more lively and energetic. The few prisoners who had been more reluctant to speak had been encouraged to speak up by their friends, and I felt as if I had gotten to know every one at least a little bit. I was cautioned before leaving that the administration had not wanted to start the class, and that they would most probably try to find a way to terminate it, so that I should be sure not to try to bring anything into the prison that could be remotely construed as "contraband." I was told that the administration might even try to "set me up" by getting someone to ask me to bring something in that was illegal. I should also know that the guards might taunt me and that prisoners from outside the "program" might be disrespectful to me, but my class hoped I would not become discouraged, and asked that I tell them anything negative that happened so they could "take care" of it. (I was always hesitant to find out exactly what they did to "take care" of such problems.)

The Class Proceeds

Opposition From the Prison Administration

During my second evening at the prison, I began to experience the lack of cooperation from the local prison's education office that the prisoners had warned me

about. The first problem was a lack of availability of teaching materials: some paperback workbooks were available, but the prisoners were not to be allowed to write in them; no dictionaries were available; additional resources such as mathematics books in Spanish were out of the question. From the first, then, the class and I had to work together to meet our basic needs--they put pressure on the education department from the inside, and they suggested I apply external pressure by writing memos about the problems to the education director with copies to his supervisor. The effort to acquire teaching materials was only a very small struggle, and one of many over the years that the prisoners and I undertook together. We were usually at least partially successful, and in a few weeks, each prisoner had his own workbook, which made teaching much easier.

Among the other obstacles the prison administration and guards dealt us along the way were moving us to a room too small to accommodate seating for the class, keeping members of the class locked in their cells rather than allowing them to come to class, perfunctorily removing prisoners from the class on a permanent basis, taking a very long time (sometimes up to an hour) to "process" me before allowing me to go to my class, sending "spies" (prisoner-informants) to the class to report our doings back to the administration, and sending disruptive prisoners to the class to try to instigate violence and divide the group. Only gradually did I learn about the "spies" and instigators as I became more of a trusted "insider". The prisoners reminded me that these kinds of obstacles had to be anticipated and could be overcome; that the administration had granted the class reluctantly and only under pressure; and that it

would be a constant struggle to keep the class going. I gradually became aware that the education director and the local administration and the guards truly did oppose the class. In this way, I became oriented to the prisoners' struggle, and gradually became a part of it. It was obvious that in order to teach the class effectively, the students had to be present, I had to be present, class space had to be available, and teaching materials were required. We were going to have to work cooperatively to make it possible for the class to proceed.

For me, these issues were matters of professionalism. I had accepted the job with the understanding that it was important I be a professionally qualified, certified teacher, and I wanted to be treated as such. I felt the lack of teaching materials and the interferences with my class were insults to professionalism and interferences with my professional expectations of being a good teacher. I also took seriously the concept of rehabilitation; I felt I could make a social contribution through the application of my professional expertise.

I began to realize that the prison administration did not share my expectations. The prisoners' view was that the state had instituted rehabilitation programs after the Attica rebellion not because it truly believed prisoners could be rehabilitated, but because it sought to find ways to appease the public's and the prisoners' outcry for such programs and to accomplish its principal goal at the same time, which was to prevent such riots from happening again. Keeping prisoners occupied and in classes was a way to do both, but providing educational programs with real rehabilitative purpose was not the prison administration's concern at either the state or local level.

Because I felt professionally obligated to do a good job, because I believed in the possibility and desirability of rehabilitation, and because I admired the seriousness of the prisoners, I felt increasingly committed to what became "our" struggle to maintain our class and expand the bilingual education program at the prison. The prisoners' struggle also became partly mine as I experienced some of the administration's and guards' disruptive tactics.

Group Dynamics in the Class

My class continued much as I had expected it would, judging from the first evening's encounter. The teaching and learning process was cooperative, interactive, and lively. Typically I would present some subject matter to the entire class, bringing relevant exercises on ditto sheets (reproduced at the local college, not by the prison's education office) for practice and homework. Students in the class would attempt to do the exercises, often helping each other out. Frequently the coordinators would remind the students that a good way to learn is to teach, and encourage them to teach each other as much as possible. I would sometimes help someone teach another student. As most of the students were at different skill levels, I brought in supplementary teaching materials to meet individual needs, and often kept charts for each student detailing which skills he had mastered. The students in the class liked helping each other get more checks on their skills charts, which provided another inducement to help teach each other. Often when someone could demonstrate he had learned a particular skill, he was congratulated all around, with handshakes,

backslaps, and words of encouragement, as if each small step were a major accomplishment for both the individual and the group. Some students had rather advanced mathematics skills, but were monolingual in Spanish, while others had good English language oral skills but had difficulty reading and writing. Such combinations of students often paired up to help each other in their own areas of strength.

The class was technically three hours long, but the guards took at least 15 minutes off each end, to get the evening teachers in and out of the school area, so the total class time was around 2 1/2 hours twice weekly. We often took a kind of short celebratory break in the middle of class, and sometimes prisoners who could play a guitar would play songs, the rest of us singing in Spanish or scraping pencils along the ridges of tin cans like huiras in a rhythm section. If one of the prisoners had recently received a package from home with food in it, he would often bring the food and share it during break. I was not allowed by prison rules to bring in food. Whatever could be celebrated would be acknowledged during these breaks--birthdays, holidays, anyone having accomplished something he or the group was proud of.

The prisoners used the class for more than teaching GED skills. I did not realize at first that the GED class was but a small element of the prisoners' educational approach. First, the prisoners seemed to be interested in acquiring more kinds of knowledge and skills in the classroom than the GED curriculum required. For example, frequently prisoners encouraged each other to "speak on something", or "read something" to the class. Some emphasis was placed on the content of whatever

was read or spoken, but learning to speak in front of an audience was also held to be an important skill, one to be developed as a contribution to the (Latino) community as a whole, because, as they saw it, the community needed more people to "speak up."

Drug Therapy

The Drug Therapy program, discussed at more length in Chapter 4, was also sponsored by the Latino prisoner organization. While it was a self-contained program, with its own leadership and class time, much of its dynamic spilled over into my class. The Drug Therapy class, with its principal goal of therapy, and the Political Education class (discussed in the next section), with its principal goals of raising consciousness and mobilizing its members, can be seen as ideal types of processes that were usually combined in any one of the prisoners' programs. Although only a few of the people in my class at any given time were also in Drug Therapy, its influence was extensive. I never attended a Drug Therapy class, but my husband did, as an outside "volunteer." As a teacher in a local college, he found a way to bring some of his students in, and to provide needed materials and resources to the Drug Therapy program. Through his involvement in the Drug Therapy program, he became acquainted with some of the same prisoners who were in my class, and it was with some of these mutually known former-prisoner friends that we continued a relationship when they re-established their organization in the community as parolees.

The Drug Therapy class was a self-run program, although it had a staff

counselor assigned to it. The staff person was friendly to the prisoners' way of running the class, and did not attempt to run it herself. She, like my husband, tried to acquire outside resources for the group, and mediated between the group and prison administration when needed. The Drug Therapy group was modeled somewhat on drug therapy encounter groups or twelve-step programs that many of the prisoners had attended before being incarcerated, in that the members were strongly encouraged to acknowledge their dependence on drugs or alcohol and to take personal responsibility for their recovery. However, the Latinos' drug therapy program was unlike most traditional drug therapy or twelve step programs in at least two important ways. First, it emphasized collective self-help as well as individual self-help. Secondly, the various addictions or dependencies were placed in the political context of racism, the oppression of Latinos, and the prisoners' socioeconomic position, most specifically, in class analysis, of capital's need for a surplus of labor. According to the prisoners' Drug Therapy model, addicts and society were both responsible for addiction (and for criminality), and both must be changed. The analysis is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

The group's therapeutic model emphasized mutual, interpersonal support. Individuals were encouraged to take those steps necessary toward "developing" themselves. Building confidence and skills, speaking out and helping another learn something, were all seen as positive steps. Drug Therapy emphasized the importance of going from a "defeatist" (passive) attitude to an empowered, active attitude, and all manners of finding one's voice in this positive context were encouraged. The

prisoners carried over much of these Drug Therapy-inspired processes into my class.

It was also Drug Therapy that provided important elements of the prisoners' approach to research, which took place in my class, integrated with various kinds of teaching and learning, therapeutic support, political education, and action toward social change. In Drug Therapy, the prisoners questioned each other about their experiences both before and after being imprisoned, developing a common base of knowledge. Through this method, they sought to put their personal experiences with drugs, alcohol, and crime in some political perspective by finding common threads in their past collective experience.

In my class, during which several things were typically going on at once, there were often lively interchanges between students gathered in one part of the room on the subject of a recent experience. Usually the experience was of some difficulty or obstacle--perhaps one of the prisoners had been detained in his cell for no reason on the way to class, or had not received a promised visit from a loved one, or the prisoners had discovered a "rat" in one of the Latino prisoners' classes who was reporting back to the administration. Though I cannot now reconstruct any particular conversation (I was not taking field notes), the general character of these conversations was at once personally and interpersonally therapeutic, critically investigative, educational, action-oriented, and theoretical. For example, prisoners were often detained for no ostensible reason by the guards. The detainee might well be feeling violently angry. The small group of prisoners in the classroom would first try to calm him down and remind him that if he should hit the guard, he would be

hurting himself. He would also be reminded that he would be hurting the image of all the Latino prisoners who should have enough respect for themselves and their group not to let themselves be manipulated into violent confrontation, which was just "another way of dominating you." One way the prisoners spoke to each other in such a circumstance was to remind the provoked person to always look at the "ways the system plays on your mind."

Often individuals had problems that made it difficult for them to do the class work. The cause was sometimes a deeply embedded learning problem; sometimes a more immediate personal problem. It was part of the program to provide emotional support to those having difficulty and to listen and give encouragement, whatever the source of the problem. So the class was punctuated by frequent exclamations or exhortations like, "You just think you can't do it, but you can, you just have to try," or "The teachers just did a head job on you in school, and made you think you were dumb, but you're not; we all went through this, and we are succeeding together."

I became more and more a participant in giving this kind of support. I also found myself getting support as well. For example, when I had problems explaining something, someone would come to help me, and when, after hard work, I succeeded in teaching something, I was often congratulated as if I had just won a victory not so much for myself but for the group.

The politically and personally supportive strands of conversation were interspersed with other lines of conversation. For example, much of the conversation would be an attempt to create a group dialogue on the problem by drawing out others'

similar experiences. Members of the Drug Therapy group and the Latino program coordinators were often especially skilled at this. The group dialogue gathered individual experiences as a kind of collective data and could often demonstrate that a problem was not just one particular individual's, but had been shared in similar form by others. Whatever the example, the prisoners' method was to make the incident a group discussion topic, to give personal support to the one who had experienced the incident, and to broaden the understanding of the problem from a personal to a political context (but not neglecting the personal).

At such times, it was clear that the coordinators fulfilled an important leadership role. Yet they often blended into the group dynamic in a very inconspicuous way, and other prisoners who were not coordinators often performed leadership roles, so the role distinctions between coordinators and non-coordinators were blurred such that they could not be easily divided as teachers and students, therapists and patients, or researchers and subjects.

Political Education

In Drug Therapy, political analysis took place, but the dominant goal was therapeutic. In the political education class, the emphases were reversed. The political education aspect of the prisoners' program also came into play in the GED class, in discussions such as the one above, in which the coordinators used a political framework for personal problems.

The prisoners' political education class, like Drug Therapy, was self-

contained, yet it contained the various inextricably interwoven aspects of the prisoners' overall rehabilitation process. And like Drug Therapy, its content and process spilled over into the GED class.

In the political education class, the prisoners studied Puerto Rican history, especially the historical and contemporary importance of the colonial relationship of the United States to Puerto Rico, Marxist class analysis, and theories of racism contained in the writings of contemporary Black writers. The prisoners also discussed recent historical events like the Attica revolt and the assassination of Martin Luther King, as well as the Cuban and Chinese revolutions. Many prisoners had already been politicized by events and experiences in the community, and after the Attica riots they became further politicized. Many were aware of analyses of class exploitation and racism. One of the new leaders of the Latino drug program had become familiar with Marxist concepts, and according to one of the people who was in my class at the time, this person had helped create the class's political orientation. It was about two years after the new leadership had taken over the Latino organization that I came to teach, and by that time, many of the prisoners were familiar with Marxist concepts such as the division of labor, surplus labor, the exploitation of the proletariat, and alienation of the worker. They used what they learned in the class to help draw analogies between their own experience and the oppression of Puerto Ricans on the island, Black Americans, and other Third World peoples. So "political education" was more than a subject matter--it was a way the prisoners made sense of the prison conditions and their previous life experiences.

The prisoners could produce quite sophisticated political-economic analyses of their problems. For example, they spent some effort on developing a political understanding of drug addiction in their home communities. Many of the prisoners came to believe that it was no coincidence that heroin began flowing freely in their communities at a time when young people were organizing politically, such as through the Young Lords and the Black Power movement. These prisoners saw a conspiracy within "the system" to reduce the threat of class-based struggle by focusing young people on individual preoccupations, such as obtaining drugs. That drugs and crime destroyed the local communities was, for these prisoners, more part of a plan than an indication of a deficiency in the addicts themselves or an unfortunate circumstance.

All the prisoners' Marxist concepts and terms were completely new to me. One amusing time, a completely Spanish speaking student in my class asked me if I might be able to check a book out of the town library on "el materialismo" for him to read. I completely misunderstood his meaning of "materialism," and he was at quite a loss to explain it to me.

Sometimes professors and students would come to the political education class and give lectures on Marxist theory, Puerto Rican history, or racism. It was a time when volunteer programs involving college and university people were acceptable under the auspices of the local prisons. Like other New York State prisons, our prison had a special coordinator for volunteer programs, and at our prison, the coordinator was helpful to the Latino prisoner organization, often serving as an

intermediary between the prisoners, the volunteers, and the administration, which would have preferred not to have the volunteer programs.

There was a partial division of labor among the classes, in which the political education class provided the primary context for mobilizing political action when necessary, and for learning from the group's interventions in the prison system, while Drug Therapy and my class were the primary foci respectively for therapy and GED skills. But each class did more than one thing: the political education class sometimes pursued individual and collective therapeutic goals and group processes oriented toward those goals, and the GED and Drug Therapy classes sometimes engaged in political discussions.

I came to see how my class and the other parts of the prisoners' program fit as parts of a single program with multiple goals. The most basic goal was to change the existing arrangement of power relationships that produced the prison system and other oppressive social institutions. But to accomplish this goal, the prisoners needed to educate themselves, to overcome personal inadequacies that weakened individuals and the group, and to understand the power relationships within which they had to work for change. Standard education, political education, and therapy all had indispensable places in this program, as did research, which was also a central process in the prisoners' program, though it was not based in any particular class.

The prisoners quite explicitly rejected standard models of education, therapy, and rehabilitation, which focus on improving the individual and are silent on the need for change in the political and social structure. To the prisoners' way of thinking,

welfare, standard education programs, and prison-run rehabilitation programs were all "pacification programs." Their reference was to the U.S. government's use of social interventions to defeat popular resistance during the Vietnam War. They definitely did not want their program to be a pacification program.

Our Struggle to Maintain the Class and Expand the Bilingual Program

As I continued teaching over the next several months, several students took the examination and passed it. Several more prisoners entered the class, and a few of the original students stayed to help teach the new ones. The Latino organization tried to maintain a trained leadership for all of their classes under their program so that the classes would not be subverted to the "bullshit" goals of the prison by prisoners used by or paid off by the administration to disrupt the program. At first I was somewhat skeptical of what seemed to me a paranoid belief that the administration would go to such extremes to bring an end to the high school equivalency class. The prisoners' view was that the administration would feel more and more threatened by the Latino organization the more successful the GED class was. Though the educational director's office and the security staff (guards) had continued to place obstacles in the way of our class, I continued to believe for some time that having a successful GED program in Spanish would be a feather in the local administration's cap. Yet, as more and more people passed the exam, the coordinators reported hearing rumors from their "ears" inside (friendly staff or prisoners working in offices who would report to the Latino organization) that the local administration was going to try to shut

the program down.

The prisoner group had weathered crises before, especially when they had endeavored to create their various classes, especially the GED class. They had had strong and insightful leadership, narrow and short term goals as well as broad and longer-term ones, a necessary amount of group solidarity, and a certain number of cooperative and helpful staff. As the GED program had been so successful, solidarity and support grew among the Latino prisoners for maintaining the class.

The Political Education class was the central context for planning how to prevent the GED class from being shut down by the administration, but this organizing effort spilled over into my class as well. When the rumors became stronger, the coordinators and other prisoners decided that a petition drive would be effective; Latino prisoners from throughout the prison signed a petition to save the class. The coordinators of the Latino organization presented the petitions to the prison administration, along with a letter, as I remember, to the Superintendent of the local prison, with copies to the Director of Education of the New York State prison system. The coordinators were assured that the GED class would be allowed to continue. I never knew for sure whether there was a real threat to close the class at that time or not, although later on, it became clear that the administration was eager to do so.

Meanwhile, the petition drive had been successful on another front; more interest had been generated among the Latino prisoner population in the GED class and in the need for a more extensive and permanent (daytime) bilingual education

program. The prisoners gathering the signatures had reached far out into the Latino population, and had also raised consciousness of and support for the need for other kinds of changes, such as the posting of prison rules and regulations in Spanish, Spanish speaking counselors, and Spanish speaking medical personnel.

A few of the Latino prisoners were admitted to the college release program in 1975 after passing the examination. As increasing numbers of people passed the examination, more and more saw the possibility of doing so too, and long waiting lists accumulated for entrance into the GED class. The need for an intermediate level class in Spanish also became apparent.

A few months later, rumors were again heard that the administration was going to try to find an excuse to shut the class down. By this time, it was clear not only that the evening class should continue, but also that a fulltime class during the days was needed to allow more prisoners to attend and to speed the educational process. I inquired as to a fulltime position, and learned that there was no "line" for a fulltime Spanish-speaking position. There also happened to be no fulltime female faculty at the prison. By this time, my relationship with the director of education had seriously deteriorated. I had been to see him several times about various things that were interfering with good teaching: new workbooks were often unavailable for new prisoners coming into class; the class continued to be moved into difficult spaces; the guards often kept students from coming to class on time; the entire composition of my class kept changing; prisoners were transferred around the system with total disregard for their participation in rehabilitation programs, and so on. Frequently prisoners

from my class were transferred to another prison just before they were about to take the GED, and the other prison afforded no such class. It seemed as though maybe the prisoners had been right that the administration would fear the class the more successful it became. The word from the "grapevine" was that the education director wanted to get rid of me for being a "troublemaker."

As inmate leaders received notification they were to be transferred and we encountered increasing harassment from the guards and local administration, the prisoners' personal/political discussions included more "data" and analysis garnered from their experiences of pushing the administration to make changes, and experiencing the administration's resistance. They discussed what was happening in both theoretical and practical terms. For example, their experiences had shown them that their efforts to create the GED class had generated opposition from the administration, but that the creation of the class, together with their efforts to maintain it, had generated an increasingly effective resistance to the administration's opposition. They learned that in order to mobilize resistance at the needed times, they had to constantly gather and analyze information about the kinds of support they had and the sources and kinds of opposition they faced. They could only gather this kind of information through their involvement in active resistance, and the process was a good example of what I and the prisoners eventually came to call their "research."

The second time the prisoners heard the administration might try to end our class, they decided to get political support from the Inmate Liaison Committee. The

Latino organization had purposely developed good relations with the other ethnic organizations so political coalitions could be forged in this kind of situation. Through their representatives on the Liaison Committee, the Latino organization enlisted the Liaison Committee's help in negotiating with the prison administration to maintain the class and press for a fulltime class during the day. In this way, the Latino organization broadened its base of political support within the prison.

Through these experiences, I was becoming more aware of the political context of the class. I was learning that just keeping the class going required political action, and was coming to see the problems I encountered as I tried to do my job well not so much as my own personal predicament, but as part of a political context. And unlike my situation in the South Bronx, where I tried as an individual to challenge local school policies damaging to the Puerto Rican children I was teaching, I was now in a context where others were organized to do so.

About this time, in the summer of 1975, one of the original coordinators of the organization, who had been one of the original people in my class, was released on parole to attend a fulltime college program at a nearby university. The prisoners' group felt that his release would enable him to work on the "outside" with me to try to develop some outside community support for the GED class, expand the bilingual education program, and to press the administration for other needed changes that would benefit the Latino prisoners. The grapevine of communication through prisoners transferring into our prison indicated that Latino prisoners in other prisons were also trying to establish bilingual education programs, and that a statewide

community pressure group was needed to work on behalf of all the Latino prisoners throughout the state.

WORK MOVES BEYOND THE PRISON WALLS

The Ad Hoc Committee for Hispanic Inmates

The prisoner who had been released on parole and I called the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, whose organization name we found in the New York City telephone book as we looked for names of promising-looking organizations that might help us. The Fund (PRLDEF) had recently won the case that had forced New York City to implement bilingual education programs throughout its school system. Representatives from PRLDEF put us in touch with other groups, chiefly the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at the City University of New York, which had been involved through the volunteer program with Latino prisoners at another state prison. Representatives from these two organizations and the regional representative of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, together with the recently-released prisoner from my class, a former prisoner from the Latino organization at the prison where the Centro workers had volunteered, and I, became the core of a new organization that developed into a community-based pressure group to support the educational and other needs of Puerto Rican and other Latino prisoners throughout the state.

The new group called itself the Ad Hoc Committee for Hispanic Inmates (the

"Committee"). The committee met with the Latino prisoners in the prison where I continued to teach and in other prisons, and then met and negotiated with officials of the New York State Department of Correctional Services. The Committee sought to provide the state with information documenting the need for a statewide education program for the Spanish-speaking prisoners, to advise the state of its legal responsibilities, and to lend the Committee's expertise in developing a statewide bilingual education program.

In 1976, the Committee negotiated an arrangement with the state officials to allow it, with the help of the Latino prisoner organization at each prison, to survey the Spanish-speaking prisoners to determine the needs for educational and other changes. Accordingly, the Latino organization at "my" prison devised a questionnaire and administered it to all of the Latino prisoners, as did the Latino organizations at many of the other state prisons, with some help and advice from members of the Committee. The prisoner-run survey was the first encounter of the Latino organization at "my" prison with anything that resembled social scientific research. Their questionnaire was very rough, and the conditions for administering it were not controlled. But they became very involved in developing, administering, and tabulating the questionnaires. Through this experience, the prisoners learned a great deal. They learned from the Committee's use of the data to negotiate with the state administration that sometimes a political claim can be given more legitimacy by documenting inequality through a survey instrument.

But even more importantly, the prisoners learned through the experience of

administering the questionnaires that research could be an invaluable tool for learning more about themselves as a collectivity and for organizing support for bilingual programs among the Latino prisoners. The surveys were most often conducted as oral interviews on a one-to-one basis, and were often administered to illiterate prisoners. In administering the questionnaires, the prisoners often found themselves in conversation with their "respondents" about each others' experiences (adding new "data" as more grist for the collective mill) and learned much more about how the lack of bilingual education classes was negatively affecting the respondents. The interviews gave members of the group the opportunity to explain the current status of bilingual programs and to inform "respondents" of their responsibilities to educate themselves. The survey increased the sense of community and political solidarity and generated more support for the agenda of the Latino prisoner organization. More Latino prisoners joined the organization. I discuss this survey as a technique of knowledge production in more detail in Chapter 6.

The prisoners' experience of conducting the survey at "my" prison was very positive partly because of the role of the Centro (Center for Puerto Rican Studies). The Centro was not only a Puerto Rican organization, but it was one committed to finding ways to connect its intellectual work with the very real needs of the Puerto Rican community. The Centro understood and supported the prisoners' efforts to try to understand and change their own situation through a combination of reflection and active struggle.

Helping the prisoners design their own survey instrument, then, was consistent

with the Centro's philosophy and practice of lending their expertise to people from the community, including prisoners, and of assuming that those most affected by oppressive or exploitive social conditions can (and should) be involved in social analysis. Implicit was an understanding that the prisoners, together with people from the Latino community, and not just the state administration "experts," could and should be involved in defining the nature of the problem and the proposals for its resolution (such as the specific kinds of bilingual classes needed).

The Committee began to change the way the prisoners and I saw our situation. After the Committee documented the growing real numbers and the growing proportion of Spanish speaking prisoners in the state prison system and the extremely small number of bilingual teachers and other staff throughout the system, and after it met with representatives from Latino prisoner organizations at other state prisons and aggregated the data from the questionnaires of the various Latino prisoner organizations, the prisoners in my class and in the Latino prisoner organization began to understand more concretely how their struggle to improve the "conditions" for the Latino prisoners was connected to similar struggles by prisoners across the state.

My own perspective had also begun to broaden as a result of working with the Committee. I began to see how the lack of equal educational opportunity for Spanish speaking prisoners both reflected and reinforced the Latino prisoners' disadvantaged position in the society at large, and saw my work more in this political context--of working with the Committee to help the Latino prisoners acquire more adequate bilingual education programs. My role definition changed from thinking of myself

primarily as a teacher to that of teacher, advocate, and activist (inasmuch as I had stimulated the organization of the Committee and become involved in contacting other community groups to work with the Committee).

In terms of strategies for organizing effective pressure for change, broadening the base of political support by forming the Committee seemed to hold a great deal more promise than continuing to press for changes at only the local prison. State prison officials were willing to move toward slow changes to improve the numbers of bilingual classes throughout the state, though they resisted making permanent lines available for fulltime permanent bilingual teachers. Making the GED class in Spanish a permanent daytime class, however, was not one of the changes agreed to.

My Job Ends

The local prison officials were anxious to get me out. The Committee's meetings with state officials brought unwanted pressure from the state on the local administration. It was beginning to look as though enough pressure might be created by the state administration and the prisoners' local organization to force the local administration to extend the GED class to fulltime status, and to hire fulltime bilingual teachers. As my credentials were in order (I was fully qualified for the position), and the prisoners wanted me to become their fulltime teacher, the local officials needed to find a way to avoid hiring me without provoking a direct confrontation with the prisoners and the Committee. During the height of a natural

gas shortage in the winter of 1977, the entire evening program was suddenly eliminated, with the excuse that the additional energy needed to run the programs at night could not be afforded. My class ended abruptly and without incident.

Working at the Centro

I began working at the Centro in 1978, shortly after my job teaching at the prison ended. While at the Centro, I was to work with another staff member, who was a former prisoner, on the Prisons Task Force to develop research about Puerto Ricans and the criminal justice system. It was hoped that my experience working with the prisoners and with the Committee would have provided me with the perspective and contacts with Puerto Rican prisoners that would enable me to develop some meaningful research. Although my experiences in the prison and with the Committee had taught me a great deal, I had had no experience or training in social science research. In my new position, however, I now thought of myself for the first time as a "researcher" (the Centro was clearly flexible in its definition of what a "researcher" was.)

I had a great deal of trouble understanding exactly what kind of research the Centro wanted me to do, but I did understand the Centro's hope that I would find a way to do research on Puerto Ricans and the criminal justice system that would involve Puerto Rican prisoners or former prisoners in the research process and that would somehow help them in their own struggle as well as provide an intellectual

product for the Centro. The problem for me was that I did not know how I would accomplish this task.

Meanwhile, some of the prisoners who had been in my class and who had been active in the Latino prisoners' organization were gradually being released on parole to the Bronx, in New York City. They had been coming with their spouses and children to visit me and my family in our house in upstate New York, and we had begun to develop friendships between our families.

THE LATINO EX-PRISONER ORGANIZATION

While still in prison, the prisoners had begun planning to re-establish their organization outside after being paroled. Strengthened ties to the community through contact with the Committee encouraged their plans for a community-based former prisoners' group; they planned to attend Committee meetings, and to work with the Committee from the "outside" on behalf of the Latino prisoners throughout the state "inside."

The prisoners began to re-establish their organization within the South Bronx community by contacting former members of the Latino prisoners' organization who were now out in the community on parole. The men included their spouses, children, friends, and children's friends in their new group. The new group was comprised of a nucleus of seven or eight former prisoners and their family members and friends, for a total of approximately twenty people, excluding very small children.

During this period, the many transitions involved in trying to re-establish the group in the community put new pressures on the group. A split occurred in the group even before I knew it had been organized on the "outside," with two of the original members forming their own group under separate leadership. There had been a dispute about leadership. According to a member of the group that split off, the de facto control of the original group remained in the hands of people who had been connected with the coordinators of the organization inside the prison. He felt that the succession of coordinators for the Latino prisoners' organization had become an ingrown process, with all the coordinators coming from their own "homeboy" networks or former gang affiliations. He felt it was now time to open up the leadership since the group had moved into the community. I remained primarily in contact with the larger of the two groups (the one with the "ingrown" leadership), which had more of the prisoners who had been in my class, and I refer to this larger group as the "former prisoners' group" or the "Bronx-based group" throughout.

The former prisoners' group continued to value interdependence and called itself a "family" (although as the early split indicated, who was in and who was out of the "family" had become problematic). Although most of the former prisoners lived in their own apartments with their own spouses and children, they had begun sharing food, clothing, and childcare. Creating a sense of "family" among the former prisoners' group was demanding and complicated, however. Accommodating the addition of children and spouses and friends into the group was a difficult process. My husband and I had to be integrated into the new larger group as well. Perhaps

because of the need to adjust to these changes, many of the activities of the group in its early days were social. In the prison, the group had put considerable effort into creating a social community by cultivating a context where sharing food, music, and social conversation was part of the process. Now that so many changes had taken place in their group, creating a strong sense of community became, at least temporarily, even more important than it had been in the prison. My husband and I participated in some of these social activities, which usually consisted of sharing food, conversation, and music at someone's apartment, or trips to the park with all the children. These occasions helped establish new friendships and a sense of interpersonal trust, contributing to the foundation for an enlarged group to carry on the prisoners' group process "on the street."

The group had originally organized itself in the community primarily to help the group "inside." It was hoped that the "street" group could help the Committee put pressure on the state to improve the conditions for the Latino prisoners still in prison, gather information and resources to help the prisoners' organization "inside," and provide support for others coming out on parole from the Latino prisoners' organization. However, the former prisoners were faced with the strains of life "outside"--adjustments in their personal relationships, trying to find jobs, finding ways to pay for basic necessities, dealing with the welfare system, finding health care for themselves and their children, and so on. For these reasons the group members found themselves using their "family" network of interdependence primarily to support themselves and each other rather than their "brothers" still in prison.

A major change occurred with the addition of women into the group. In the prison, the theoretical background for the group's understanding of their collective structural disadvantage was a combination of Marxist class analysis, a theory of racism, and a theory of the cultural domination and economic exploitation of Puerto Rico as a colonized nation. The former prisoners' spouses began to find their feminist "voices" through the group process which encouraged them, as everyone else, to examine the forms of oppression in their lives. The women began to develop their own critique of sexism in their personal relationships with their spouses, in the group as a whole, and in the community. During the meetings I attended, sexism was incorporated into the group's understanding of the forms of oppression to struggle against, both within the context of their everyday personal lives and in the society as a whole.

Within a few months, the group had begun to function in many of the same ways it had in the prison, having made many adjustments to its move to the community. The former prisoners sought to continue their "rehabilitation" program by incorporating the same kinds of group processes into their newly enlarged group. Doing so required various adaptations, however. The structure of the new group was quite different from the organization in the prison. The group was much smaller than it had been in the prison, and there was no longer a formal organizational structure. The group was not recognized or given legitimacy by any other outside authority as it had been in the prison, and its leaders were given no formal organizational powers. The de facto recognized leaders were the four or five men who had been coordinators

of the Latino prisoners' organization.

Overlapping Processes in the Former Prisoners' Group

Although there was no longer an integrated set of formally structured "programs" as there had been in the prison, and there were no professional staff associated with the former prisoners' group (except for myself), the group found ways to continue combining therapy, various kinds of education, action, and research into a unified group praxis. To do this, the group was obliged to convert the formally organized spheres of its activities which had formerly included Drug Therapy, the political education class, and the GED class in the prison into just two primary areas of group activity: after-school classes and group meetings. The group's program, which had been developed in the prison, survived and was elaborated in these two settings.

The former prisoners became alarmed at how little their own children were learning in school, and how they were treated with disrespect by the teachers and principals. Having become more aware while in prison of the ways the educational system had damaged their own lives, the former prisoners and their families now observed their own children suffering from the same conditions. The focus for the group's struggle was changing now that its problems were defined more in relation to institutions in the community that affected their life on a daily basis rather than to the prison, and the educational system was a key community institution negatively

affecting their lives. The former prisoners and their families did not believe that the schools alone caused poverty and crime, but saw the educational system as an important link in the way the "system" reproduced the "conditions." Although the group saw many community institutions as perpetuating existing inequalities, it decided to focus most of its collective efforts on the public school system, starting with the local schools.

The group devised a multi-pronged effort in taking on this struggle. As in the prison, it operated both as a self-help group and one to create structural change; it sought to empower its own members in various ways through a self-help process, but also attempted to put pressure on the schools to change. The overlapping group processes of various forms of education, therapy, action, and research were integral to both of these efforts. For example, members of the group visited the classes of children in the group, and observed the teachers' treatment of the children, the content taught, the books used, the appearance of the classroom, and occasionally gathered various kinds of written information such as school rules, curriculum guides, or school test results. Those who visited the school were to report back to the group, making a presentation that would not only inform the group of what they had found, but help train the "lecturer" in various ways, such as in organizing and presenting material, reading out loud from notes or written material, or answering questions. The presentation would provoke discussion, and certain themes would emerge, often themes that had emerged in prior discussions--themes that I had heard much earlier in the prison, such as the theme of "respect" (or, more properly, the lack of respect). If

the theme were "respect," the lack of respect the teacher seemed to give the children when speaking to them, the lack of respect the books showed for Puerto Rican culture by not including pictures of Puerto Rican children, or the lack of respect the school showed the local community by not keeping the halls clean would become the data for the group's theorizing and strategies for action.

Over several months, members of the group visited the schools many times and gathered information in their visits and by interviewing their children and each other. The group determined that the principal problems were that their children were not being respected, nor being taught respect, and were falling rapidly behind academically. Accordingly, the group decided to begin meeting with the teachers and the principals about the problems they saw, to try to effect change by putting pressure on the schools. It also started an after-school program to try to correct for the schools' mistakes by teaching their children themselves. The after-school classes sought to re-instill a sense of self-respect and respect for others as well as to teach subject content to the children. Both of these forms of action became possible only after the group as a whole had come to a collective tentative definition of the problem through its critical investigative process, and after individuals in the group had developed the ability and confidence to take both forms of action.

The group organized classes after school and on Saturday for their own children and other children in the community who cared to come. The classes had many features in common with the prison classes. The teaching of basic educational skills as a somewhat discrete activity continued to be a high priority, and both

children and parents came to learn. When neighborhood children came, their parents were expected to be involved, too.

As in the prisoners' peer teaching model, it was fully expected that teachers could also be learners, so adults continued to teach each other. As in the prison, the group appealed to everyone's sense of responsibility to each other to "advance" themselves for the collective good. Adults enrolled in GED classes were encouraged "to bring home to share whatever you learn." Oral reading and speaking were again encouraged, and incorporated into these basic education classes. Sometimes students would practice speaking skills by first reading a paragraph, perhaps from a newspaper, then "breaking it down" (explaining the meaning of it) to the class. Other students were encouraged to ask questions about the article, and the speaker attempted to answer them.

As in the prison, political education also took place, both in the formal classes and throughout the group's other activities. Critical questioning continued to be an important educational and therapeutic technique. If, for example, a student felt unable to perform an educational task, he or she might well be asked to explain why. The "teacher" and the class might attempt to draw out the "student" further, to help the student understand how his or her feelings might have come partly from being "disrespected" or being made to feel stupid by teachers in school, and how those feelings could be overcome by succeeding now. Discussion might turn to how parents can also create feelings of inferiority in their children by speaking to them without respect or otherwise humiliating them, and how as a group it was important

to be aware of "our" responsibilities to the children and to correct these behaviors.

The group also held frequent meetings, of which I attended only some, because I lived so far away. The meetings which I did attend were very much like my classes in the prison except that I no longer taught content material for the GED. Teaching and learning, socializing, critically reflecting and theorizing on their experiences, planning strategy, giving interpersonal support, and doing and reporting on "research" continued to be integrated into their group process during these meetings.

Changes in My Relationship With the Group

When the group reorganized in the Bronx, I was still living in Upstate New York, and could only come to visit from time to time. Whenever I came to a group meeting, however, I was expected to present a lesson or lessons of sorts. I was asked to teach various skills that the group had decided its members needed to develop. For example, the group asked me to teach how to make telephone calls to obtain various kinds of information. They had been trying to gather many different kinds of information, such as the locations of GED classes nearer their homes in the Bronx so they would not have to travel to Manhattan to attend, and felt they did not have the necessary telephone skills required to cope with being put off, being given inadequate information, etc. When we role-played such situations, I was to suggest other things to say, and the group would discuss them.

After moving to the Bronx, the group increasingly began to see me as a resource for providing teaching materials and skills and less as a quasi co-participant in their struggle. In fact, there were material bases for this change. For one thing, I lived so far away and saw the group so much less frequently, that my relationships with the people in the group became more distant. In addition, when I worked in the prison, I had shared some of the burden of the group's struggle for bilingual education, even though I was not a prisoner. But when the group moved into the community, we no longer shared any oppressive conditions in common. Our mutual struggle had been for the creation of bilingual education programs in the prison, but that struggle was becoming more and more distant to the former prisoners' group.

Even more distancing took place as the group increasingly perceived me as having connections with "important" people on the Committee. My association with such "elites" (their word) made me somewhat suspicious to the group, but paradoxically, they also saw me as a link to people with special powers and resources, who might be called upon in times of need.

I was frequently asked to act as advocate. For example I was sometimes asked to accompany group members to the doctor or to the welfare office, because the group members felt I could speak on their behalf, and win them better care. While I had been willing to take on the role of the prisoners' advocate for bilingual education when I was teaching in the prison, I was not willing to take on as much of the advocacy burden as the former prisoners' group wanted me to. I began to feel the group expected me to be at its beck and call: I would receive telephone calls at 2:00

or 3:00 A.M. asking for help or advice and be expected to accomplish a list of things for them whenever I came to visit in the Bronx. When I objected, my loyalty was questioned.

The group's overblown perception of my connections with important and powerful people, the growing dependence on me for skills and knowledge, and the increasing distancing that took place as the group's struggle became more "theirs" than "ours" resulted in a gradual change in my role from friend and teacher and quasi-participant in struggle to a provider of services and advocate. Our relationship had become more impersonal, though I continued to feel very positive about the group and my relationship with it.

My attempts to integrate members of the former prisoners' group into the Committee were not successful. Two or three attended a few meetings of the Committee, but they soon stopped attending. One reason was that the Committee's focus was primarily on trying to change conditions within the prison, while the former prisoners' group was primarily preoccupied with their need to change conditions in their own environment. The people from the group who came to the meetings also felt uncomfortable and alienated by the atmosphere of the downtown New York offices where we held Committee meetings. They also somewhat distrusted the Committee members, not because they disliked them personally, or did not appreciate that the Committee had been working on their behalf while they were in prison, but because they saw the Committee members as "elites" and part of the "system" because they were attached to the "establishment" through their institutional

connections.

Research With the Former Prisoners' Group

As I was still working for the Centro, I continued to try to find a way to develop a research program on Puerto Rican prisoners and the criminal justice system, and I hoped that the former prisoners' group would be interested in participating in this effort. I was beginning to feel a tension between my role as a researcher at the Centro and my role with the former prisoners' group, and I hoped that I could resolve it by coordinating my work with the Centro with my work with the group. Throughout my visits with the group, I tried to be open about what I was trying to do at the Centro; I discussed my efforts to find a way of doing research that would not only be "about" Puerto Ricans and other Latinos and the criminal justice system, but that would also benefit them and would somehow include them in the research process.

Until the Committee had suggested that the Latino prisoners do the survey, I do not recall the prisoners using the term "research" often to describe their activities. The prisoners had always used the term "research," but they began to describe many more of their activities as "research" after conducting the survey. "Doing research" seemed to have subtly become a more explicit part of the group's struggle-oriented group process. For example, the group's efforts to find out about the schools was referred to as "doing research".

In my discussions with the group about "doing research" in connection with my Centro work, the participants began to articulate what "research" meant to them, making the concept of "research" in their overall approach more explicit. The group never proceeded very far in this attempt at explicit definition, even though knowledge production was integral to the process from the start. I elaborate the group's implicit definition of research in Chapter 6. The group was explicit about one point--that research in their program should contribute to an educational process that would help organize the community and enhance the group's ability to create social change by encouraging and empowering others to apply pressure. In this vein, the group tried to think of ways to combine the activity of gathering data with the activity of distributing it. This idea had come from the former prisoners' experience with the questionnaires. They felt that by administering the questionnaires as discussions, they had been able to inform themselves and their "respondents" better, and to create more solidarity. The group settled on the idea of renting a store front where people from the community would drop in, and presenting them with information that the group would have gathered about community resources or about the ways community institutions (especially the schools) were negatively affecting Latinos. The group would simultaneously conduct a kind of group interview with the drop-ins that would elicit information about their own experiences. This new information gathered from the group interview would contribute to everyone's understanding (including the former prisoners' group which would be conducting the "group interview".) In this way, the community would be informed and the "interviewers" would learn, all in the same

process. The results of the research would be immediately given back to the community. Everyone would be "doing research," including the people from the community, who would be encouraged to ask questions (interview) of each other and of the former prisoners. The ex-prisoners' group would "do research on" the people who came in, by inquiring about their experiences, and do research with them by "dialoguing" about the meaning of their experiences (as they had done in the prison). The drop-ins would also be able to contribute information about resources that would be added as research "results" to the store of information the group was trying to collect. It was hoped that such a process would help the group extend its network, making it easier to organize or mobilize resistance.

The ex-prisoners undertook another research project when my husband and I convinced the group to present its concept of rehabilitation to the 1979 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. A longer account of this project is presented in Chapter 6. The group took on the task in its own characteristic way: for example, children were encouraged to read paragraphs of the draft paper in front of the group for practice in reading and public speaking. The consequences of the activity were mixed: the group was grew enthusiastic about the importance of making its own philosophy and practice explicit, but it became further alienated from the world of academic intellectuals, and eventually from me.

My Separation from the Group

During this period, my relationship with the group continued to change. The ex-prisoners' demands on my time and energy kept increasing; they tried to find ways to get as much help from everyone as possible, and they needed all the help they could find, to be sure. But I could not come close to fulfilling their demands on me, such as intervening on their behalf with their parole officers or welfare workers, teaching them how to write business letters and talk to medical doctors, and so on. Their demands caused anger on both their part and mine, as I found myself having to defend my needs for time for myself and my own family.

We had also become further alienated from each other because of the group's decision to concentrate on "doing research" on, and changing conditions in, the community rather than the prison. My continued work with the Committee kept me committed to work on improving conditions inside the prison, and I had been attending fairly frequent planning meetings with the Committee and New York State corrections officials to create a bilingual education program for the state prison system. I had also kept in contact with the Latino prisoner organizations in several state prisons. I felt obligated to follow through on my work on behalf of bilingual education programs. Somewhat ironically, I found myself at odds with the former prisoners over the issue of supporting the current prisoners.

In other words, not only were the prisoners feeling increasingly alienated from me; I was feeling alienated from them as well. My relationship with the prisoners had gone through several transitions. I had come from being a total outsider to much more of an insider, and was moving back to becoming an outsider again. When I

was an insider, teaching was the principal activity that had mediated my relationship with the prison class, but I had also acquired some other partial roles: I had become to some extent a co-therapist, and a co-organizer/activist, and toward the very end, a co-researcher. When I was an insider, the group's mutually reinforcing activities and processes were integrated with my overlapping roles. Most importantly, our struggles to preserve the GED class and expand bilingual education programs had given us a shared purpose that defined those roles as part of "our" project. As I slowly became once more an outsider, my roles started to come apart. Our situation no longer defined an obvious set of roles for me, and I began to perform more of what seemed like discrete services. And without fully realizing it, I had begun to think of myself more a part of the academy-based intellectual world. This was due in large part to my work at the Centro, an organization which, after all, was part of the City University of New York, and was in large part a research center.

Although I did not understand at the time how much my work at the Centro affected my role definition and my sense of priorities about "research," I did feel the need to produce an intellectual product that would fit in with the Centro's theoretical work. Creating such a product for the Centro as part of my work with the prisoners had created some role conflict for me, as I felt the tension between working as an educator, advocate, and co-participant with the group and working as an "intellectual" for the Centro. The conflict was clearer to the former prisoners' group than it was to me; they saw me as working increasingly "for" the university, and less for them.

I then decided to enter graduate school. In the few months after we finished

the paper and I entered graduate school, my relationship with the group seriously deteriorated. Queries about where I was "coming from" came more frequently, and I was asked pointedly where my "real" commitment lay: to them, or to graduate school. My time with the group had to be structured very carefully because of my increasingly complicated schedule. Formerly, I had been more able to adjust my schedule to accommodate the group's casual approach to meeting times, and the group resented my new need to structure my time around my graduate program. Resenting my commitment to attend graduate school as something I was doing for myself that was not benefitting the group, the group began demanding again that I "bring home" some of what I was learning. I attempted to do this, but found it difficult to teach the content of my new courses to the prisoners' group in a way that was interesting to them. The material was too abstract. The group wanted to try to relate everything to their own experience, and if it could not be done, they were not very interested.

The group seemed to feel that I owed them something, which I resented. They continued to demand more "commitment" to them. In our final meeting, we discussed our growing separation. I was told that my concern about getting the paper written in time and my entry into graduate school were the main sources of their problem with me, while I told them that I resented their continuing questioning of my motives and intentions when I felt I had more than proved a high level of commitment to them over the years. I acknowledged that perhaps I had let the deadline for the paper interfere with the group process, but reminded them that they had seemed to value the paper-writing experience for its own sake, and they agreed. I also said that

I felt I should not have to apologize to the group for entering graduate school, and that I had hoped that by attending my new classes, I would find more ways to contribute to the group.

We finally concluded, however, it was best to go our separate ways, as the tensions grew and could not be resolved. Clearly I was not going to drop out of graduate school and devote my entire time to the group. Their struggles were no longer my own as they had been in the prison, and their struggles no longer had a built-in place for me. We were able to communicate and understand each others' points of view to a certain extent, but could not find a satisfactory resolution. It was quite hard to separate, as the bonds of having worked together for years and the social involvement of our families with each other were strong.

After this meeting, I did visit the group a few times, and learned that the group had split at least temporarily into two parts. Apparently the paper-writing process had caused or encouraged the split, as one of the groups had felt it was necessary to continue the group reflection process begun during the paper-writing process, to further define its goals and determine its abilities to accomplish the goals. The other faction had decided that the priority should remain on taking action, organizing the community.

NOTES

1. I use the term "Latino" throughout. I do so partly because the prisoners were both Puerto Rican and Dominican. The term "Hispanic" would solve this problem, but has the connotations derived from its basis in Spanish (from Spain) culture. The

term "Latino" is more consistent with the class and cultural orientation of the prisoners.

2. The Sunni Muslims and Black Muslims and non-Muslim Black prisoners were sometimes successful (and often not) at maintaining their unity within one Black prisoner organization.

CHAPTER 3

PROBLEMS OF PRESENTING AN INSIDE VIEW

Before presenting the prisoners' concept of their program in Chapter 4, I want to raise and acknowledge an important set of problems that affect my ability to present an accurate and truthful "inside" view of the prisoners' emancipatory practice--a view that I believe the participants would mostly recognize as their own. My goal in Chapter 4 is to serve as a kind of "translator" of the prisoners' approach to academic practitioners and theorists interested in emancipatory practice and emancipatory research. In this chapter, I discuss the inevitable distortions my "translation" will contain. I do this partly out of my obligation to the prisoners to acknowledge the problems inherent in my presenting their view. They would be suspicious about whose perspective would be represented and whose interests served by such an account. I must also address a difficult problem caused by radical differences between sociological concepts of knowledge and scientific reporting and the prisoners' way of understanding their own process. The prisoners would certainly have rejected the sorts of abstractions I feel are necessary to codify their process in a way that is useful for sociologists or other academy-based intellectuals. In short, there are contradictions between offering a sociological account of any kind and presenting a view the prisoners would recognize as their own.

Many sociologists and anthropologists have written about the methodological,

ethical, moral, political, and epistemological problems of getting and presenting the "inside" view, and I find myself no exception as I try to describe the prisoners' "inside" view here. Though I, too, experienced many of the usual aspects of the "insider-outsider" problem, such as how to gain access as an outsider, how to deal with conflicting loyalties, and so forth, I am principally concerned here with the challenge of how to best describe truthfully, accurately, and completely the inside view, given: 1) that I was not one of the prisoners, though I participated quite fully in the educational part of their "program" and had ample opportunity to observe many other aspects of their "program" both in the prison and in the Bronx; 2) that my perspective as quasi-participant was that of an activist experimental educator; 3) that my perspective on their "program" now is framed largely by academic sociological discourse; and 4) that I want to present the inside view of the prisoners' program to sociologists, not to the prisoners or another grassroots group. Problems around these issues have vexed me for years, as I have struggled with the implications of my changing perspective on the prisoners' process as I moved from being a teacher/activist to a sociologist and community activist.

MY POSITION IN RELATION TO THE GROUP

One obvious difficulty in presenting an undistorted and fully truthful inside view is that I was never a complete insider in the prisoners' group. I did not experience being a prisoner or face the hardships they endured, and I did not

participate in their "program" outside my class, nor in most of their struggle. For this reason and other more profound ones (my entire background was very different from theirs), I am not fully able to write a description from their frame of reference.

Yet, other factors gave me some ability to understand the program from their perspective. As their activist teacher, I was in a good position to observe their program, and I had that position for quite some time--about four years in the prison, and an additional two years in the Bronx. When the group moved to the Bronx, I continued to have extensive contact with it, giving me ample opportunity for observation.

In addition to having had a good position to observe from, I was a quasi-participant at the edges of the prisoners' process, albeit in my specialized role as activist teacher, in that part of their program and struggle having to do with education. I was inside much of the struggle to expand the bilingual education program. As a participant in that aspect of the struggle, I stood to benefit (by my continued position teaching and the possibility of a full time position in the future) and I carried a share of the burdens (by having my job threatened and being harassed by the administration and guards). I participated in my capacity as teacher and in that capacity, what helped the group also helped me.

Sharing the Struggle

I think that being inside in the sense of sharing some of the benefits and

burdens of the struggle made me more sensitive to how the contexts of their immediate struggles shaped the particular synthesis of education, therapy, action, and research practiced at any given moment. I also was able to see more clearly from this position that the special characteristics of their overall emancipatory practice came out of their struggle.

While working at the prison, I took for granted the framework of disadvantage and resistance in which the prisoners grounded their program. The part of the struggle I shared the most was our attempt to cope with the lack of adequate bilingual education programs for the Spanish speaking prisoners. Though I did not share the same position of disadvantage as the prisoners, I was treated inequitably at the prison both because I was a woman (the local administration refused to hire any fulltime women teachers, and the male guards, administration, and staff made inappropriate sexual gestures and comments), and because I was teaching and advocating on behalf of Latino prisoners, making me a target for trouble from the administration and guards. Just keeping my job was a struggle, as described in Chapter 2. In addition to these aspects of my struggle at the prison was my attempt to perform professionally to the best of my ability as an experimental educator; the prison offered counter-resistance to my efforts. The prison administration's goals were primarily security-related, not rehabilitation-related, and were inconsistent with both my professional ethics (to teach) and my educational ideology (experimental education). The prison administrators expected a teacher-centered classroom based on punitive authority of the teacher, not a cooperative, interactive, praxis-oriented, or democratic classroom.

But because my position of disadvantage was different from that of the prisoners, and only part of their struggle was my struggle, my inside perspective on the entire "program" was incomplete. In other words, I had a valid inside view, but it was limited. My view of the inside from the inside is flawed in this way. This problem is corrected to some extent, however, by the extensive contact I had with the prisoners' group and the former prisoners' group over about a six-year period. I saw the group in the prison over such a long time that there were several complete turnovers of students in my class and the "program" at large during the four years I taught there. I was fortunate to be able to observe their program as a participant-observer for the four years, and in addition, I spent approximately two additional years working with the Bronx group. It is also true, however, that my observations were through the lens of my own activist/educator perspective at the time, and that they are now filtered again through my sociologist's lens.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

I took my experimental educator's view of the prisoners' program for granted until I entered graduate school and tried to find a way to continue working in a similar kind of process with another group, but this time as a sociologist. But when I entered academia, as the prisoners had correctly anticipated, my perspective changed. I began searching for a way out of the role conflict engendered by having half of me

committed to academic sociology and the other half committed to people's struggles at the grassroots level. Becoming socialized as a sociologist distanced me from these struggles.

I began searching the literature for approaches that combined some of the processes synthesized in the prisoners' program, yet provided a place for university-trained researchers and for sociological theory and research. Terms and concepts like "ideology critique," "conscientization," "critical inquiry," "participatory research," "transformative intellectual," "standpoint epistemology," and "action research" have helped me find a descriptive language to better articulate the prisoners' approach in its complexity, to appreciate, critique it, compare and contrast it with other models developed by university trained intellectuals that share important similarities, and communicate it to sociologists, educators, or anthropologists. These concepts helped me describe the prisoners' program and connect it, and the project I carried on after my work with the prisoners, to the problematics of the sociological discourse, especially to the question of how an activist intellectual might do sociological work and still remain connected to a grassroots movement group.

Dangers of Using Sociological Concepts

The more I thought about the prisoners' process in terms of the academic discourse, the more the sense of my direct experience with the prisoners tended to fade away, and with it, my sensibilities about the prisoners' resistance as the

organizing principle for their program. I found that my view of the prisoners' program subtly shifted as I considered it in relation to the relevant analytic categories in the literature. When in my sociological mode, I often tended to begin thinking rather mechanistically about the parts and characteristics of the prisoners' model that could be defined by sociological concepts and then compared with other models. Applying sociological concepts to the prisoners' "program" entailed a labeling process in which the newly labeled parts sometimes began to take on a kind of life of their own. My view of the prisoners' program, framed by concepts such as "ideology critique", began to superimpose abstract categories onto the prisoners' praxis; it has been possible for me at times to think of their process as, for example, myriads of sets of interlocking dialectical relationships among parts, each capable of description by a sociological concept. Analyzing their process has at times become a kind of intellectual game for me. It almost began to seem as though the prisoners' model <u>was</u> a set of relationships between sociologically-described characteristics, as if it were possible to extract the prisoners' program from its context of a real life struggle. Overdoing the sociological analysis had alienated me from my own experience with the group, from my own and the prisoners' "inside" view. Although I found using the concepts crucial in helping me codify the prisoners' approach, I have also found them limiting.

The prisoners themselves would have been more than disappointed to have their program codified and analyzed in this way. The prisoners always firmly resisted making any generalizations about their program, insisting on the extreme importance

of the given situation (e.g. the people involved, the historical point in time, the particular struggle at hand) as the determinant of how their program should operate. The group greatly feared the possibility that someone might interpret their model as something that could be abstracted from the real-life context. Their worst fear was that its process would be re-created as a "program" to treat people, which would profoundly distort their own philosophy and intentions. The prisoners had expressed serious reservations about even analyzing their own process when my husband and I suggested they write a paper about their theory of rehabilitation for the psychology convention. The former prisoner group feared reification of their process even by committing to paper their own description of their philosophy and practice for their own use, never mind psychologists'; they maintained that theirs was not a static model; not one that they themselves would point to at another point in time and try to apply directly, and certainly not one that another person or group at another point in time in another situation could copy. Intrinsic to the prisoners' "inside view" of their own program is the understanding that its practice profoundly depends on the specific context of the struggle at hand--so much so that almost nothing can be generalized about it.

The Need for Sociological Analysis

Yet, if I were to take the prisoners' perspective for granted and treat the struggle at hand as the only defining context and principal framework for analysis,

and if I declined to codify and analyze their program in ways that allow me to compare it and contrast it with other models described in the literature, I would limit my ability to analyze their process in a way that could contribute to the discussion among activists and intellectuals searching for models for an emancipatory practice that includes research and that overcomes barriers such as those between doing intellectual work and activist work and between grassroots struggle and intellectual struggle. So although I realize the dangers of reification in applying academic concepts to the prisoners' process, I find I need to use the concepts I have found in the academic literature.

My second field situation showed that great flexibility is needed in applying the prisoners' model and that the generalizations that appeared to describe the model were not sufficiently subtle. It was very hard at first to find a way to apply the prisoners' model in the second fieldwork situation, the conditions were so different. For example, there was no self-defined group already "in action," so to speak, in my new situation, and I was left with the problem of how to start one, a problem the prisoners' practice as I had begun to analyze it, did not address.

Gradually, I found that some generalizations could be made about the prisoners' process that could be applied in my new situation if they were applied flexibly; codification of the prisoners' process using concepts from the literature was helpful after all. For example, educational, therapeutic, research, and action-oriented activities could be combined in ways that resembled the prisoners' approach, even though the new group, not having the history and values of the prisoners' group, did

not really have a collective ideology. I found that it was possible to create syntheses of education, research, action, and therapy into a group process that helped create a better understanding about the way racism and class division were being reproduced by the school system even though there was no formal group. Some of the constants in the prisoners' process that I defined based on my acquaintance with the literature and that transferred to my new situation included: a strong element of grassroots or peer control over the definition of the problem; a democratic and highly participatory research process; a research process that examined the way the "system plays on your mind" to engender a critical perspective on people's taken for granted understandings of themselves and of the existing social structure as a "given;" a praxis-based approach that tested theory in the everyday practice of struggle; a value placed on many kinds of emancipatory knowledge; and the use of conversational dialogue among friends as a method of producing knowledge.

USING SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS: TOWARD A RESOLUTION

On the one hand, the most accurate description of the prisoners' "inside" view would seem to be one in which abstract categories give way almost entirely to the descriptions of the struggles of the moment and the kinds of interrelated emancipatory activities the prisoners used to fit each of these struggles. This view would seem to fit the prisoners' own outlook best. I could portray the prisoners' program in this way by recalling and reporting on scenes as I could best reconstruct them, portraying

both the struggle at the moment and the prisoners' use of overlapping practices of education, therapy, action, and research as their emancipatory practice. This would allow me to illustrate how much the everyday details of their struggle defined the kinds of syntheses of processes to be used at any given time.

But it would be very difficult for the reader to derive useful generalizations from such a series of scenes. Despite my respect for the prisoners' perspective on their process, I have somewhat paradoxically come around to defending the need for sociological analysis to complement nonsociological inside views (both the prisoners' inside view as I interpreted it from my perspective at the time and my own inside view from my standpoint as activist experimental education teacher). Though I am aware of the danger that a codification of the prisoners' process might take on a life of its own, I find that some detailed codification is very helpful.

The prisoners saw themselves, or people similar to themselves, as the principal actors in a movement for social change; intellectuals, intellectual work, and contemporary theory about such things as the relationship of emancipatory pedagogy to movements for social change were outside their struggle. However, many intellectuals, including sociologists, anthropologists, feminists, critical theorists, critical ethnographers, and adult educators in the tradition of Freire take for granted that academic intellectuals and intellectual work have a place in emancipatory process, and some of these have created models similar to the prisoners'. Although the prisoners were not interested in comparing their process with academic models, a sociological analysis of the prisoners' process--an "inside" view that portrays the

prisoners' process in ways that are recognizable to the academic audience--is necessary to compare that model with academic models.

I believe that the prisoners' approach has something to say to other groups engaged in struggle against oppressive social conditions, and also to academic intellectuals committed to assisting such struggles. I agree with the prisoners, especially after my second field work experience, that their model is not transferable in any mechanical way, but I believe that an analysis of the prisoners' program can help clarify what it would take to make its spirit operational in a new situation. How this knowledge can be transferred to, or appropriated by, other non-sociologist groups is a question I defer for now.

THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION: A DILEMMA

I want to make explicit another, but related problem about my presentation of the "inside view," a problem having to do with the politics of knowledge production. So long as the prisoners could control the production of knowledge about their program, they would almost certainly have exercised severe limitations on the level of generalizations to be made. They would have insisted that the only accurate view was descriptive and that the only accurate description was a constantly changing one. They would have taken this stance no matter who their audience was--themselves, other people in their community, psychologists, sociologists, educators, or activists. As a sociologist, I find sociological categories of analysis useful for understanding the

prisoners' program, and I believe these concepts are useful regardless of my audience. I face a conflict between my responsibility to a social scientific audience for whom a series of snapshots of the prisoners' process would be a wholly inadequate account and my responsibility to the prisoners to convey the central meaning of their program as they saw it--without sociological concepts. (Because the prisoners did not see that their own struggle was related to intellectual struggle, they did not even see social scientists as a legitimate audience. They hoped only to communicate about their process with grassroots people from their own community.)

I have chosen to put a sociological view forward despite the fact I think the prisoners would have objected. I do this because I acknowledge academy-based intellectuals as the probable principal audience for this work--I am not trying to communicate here with grassroots activists. I also believe that a sociological view is useful to people like myself who are academy-trained intellectuals trying to incorporate their own activist and intellectual efforts into peoples' concrete struggles. An attempt to generalize from the prisoners' model can contribute to a theory of how groups in roughly the prisoners' position in social structures can advance their collective interests and values through a process in which they become active knowledge producers. Finally, I think the prisoners' model can make a significant contribution to the development of a theory and practice of emancipatory research that acknowledges the potentially important contributions of the intellectual work of grassroots groups to critical theories of social problems. No doubt the embeddedness of the prisoners' process in the context of everyday struggle must be conveyed by an

accurate, descriptive, inside view. But so, too, is a conceptual analysis necessary--one that abstracts the various characteristics and elements of the prisoners' process.

TWO "INSIDE" VIEWS

Having accepted the task of presenting a sociologically tinged inside view, I still face the problem of how to best present this view, when my very perceptions about the most relevant "truths" about the prisoners' "program" shift with the mode I am using to think about the prisoners' process. My experience is of having two quite different "inside" views, the prisoners' and the sociologist's, each valid from its own frame of reference and each reflecting its own set of problematics. It might seem that they could be reconciled by simply reminding myself and the reader, while presenting the sociologist's inside view of the program, that resistance was the central organizing framework for the prisoners. I find this solution only partially satisfactory, however. It doesn't adequately show the extent to which the form, organization, and content of the prisoners' program was a response to real conditions.

In my experience, dual "inside" views present a problem not only for me, but for some of my academic audience as well. When I write about or explain the prisoners' model to academic audiences either at academic conventions or in personal conversation, my listeners sometimes get "hooked" on an analysis of the parts of the process. Or they become fascinated with the prisoners' concrete struggle. Merging the two "inside" views is a struggle for many of us, it seems.

Chapter 2 presents a narrative overview of the prisoners' process and my relationship with the group. The next chapters use more sociological concepts, but I try to keep the dual "inside" views in focus by offering some descriptive accounts that embed the prisoners' process in their real struggles as I saw them. My intent is to create the "inside" view by using a back-and-forth kind of methodology--switching between the details of the prisoners' everyday struggles and the social-scientific concepts I use to characterize them. In this way, I hope to bridge the gap between my perspective as an activist teacher and my knowledge based on relevant sociological literature. This method utilizes both the concretely experienced details of the prisoners' everyday-life struggle and the organizing concepts and descriptive language of academic sociology.

I do this by reconstructing some "scenes" to illustrate the prisoners' process in a way that brings to life the prisoners' (and my) contextual framework of the time, the immediacy of the struggle at hand. In recalling such stories, I rely on my memory from my pre-sociologist days. This memory brings back the feelings and sensory perceptions that came from my involvement with the group and its struggle, my sense of which are the important aspects of the process to write about, and my awareness of the kinds of details that were important to me at the time when I talked about the prisoners' process to my husband, friends, or fellow teachers. Of course, my sociological frame of reference also comes into play at times even in these descriptive accounts, and in selecting aspects for description.

Most of Chapters 4, 5, and 6, however, are not of a descriptive nature, but

based on analysis and on insights from the literature, which help to make implicit aspects of the program more explicit. My sociological description of the prisoners' process is grounded in my concrete experience with the group (both participation and observation), but it also relies heavily on theoretical and practical models from the literature.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRISONERS' PROGRAM[1]

The prisoners and former prisoners often referred to their complex philosophy and practice simply as their program. Their program is best understood as their form of struggle to oppose and resist "the system" as they understood it and to create an alternative social form comprised of a set of emancipatory practices. By "emancipatory practices," I mean the group's efforts to free itself (and secondarily, others as well) from the constraints of the social system that were responsible for reproducing structural inequality and injustice to the disadvantage of oppressed "minorities." These emancipatory practices were directed at changing both their own consciousnesses and beings and the external more visible aspects of the social structure as embodied in social institutions. This chapter first describes the problems comprising "the system" as the prisoners saw it. I then describe the prisoners' program as their response to the problems imposed by "the system."

The prisoners' program could be understood as the collection of the group's formal activities--the Latino Prisoners' Organization, the GED class, Drug Therapy, and Political Education--but it was more than the sum of these. One might better say it was the collection of self-conscious activities, formal and informal, of a self-organized community within the prison. But it was still more; the spirit of the program shows through in the official activities, but it is also found in the interactions

of group members with each other, fellow prisoners, prison staff and volunteers, and prison officials.

It would be possible to get a fairly good picture of the program through the lens of any single activity, such as the GED class. Nevertheless, a more complete view comes from considering how education, therapy, action, and research as central emancipatory processes with different ostensible purposes relate to each other and combine to constitute the program. For example, therapy, as practiced in the prisoners' drug therapy program ostensibly focused on rehabilitation at the individual level, but it also had aspects of education and leadership training, incorporated research into its process, and was an important element in building solidarity for making small-scale social change. Similarly, the political education part of their program had an educational focus, but also mobilized the Latino prison community for collective action, used aspects of the therapy process to develop political consciousness, and gathered and processed "data" in the midst of action to evaluate the action's effectiveness. In short, education, therapy, action, and research functioned together as a set of emancipatory activities that were combined differently in different contexts and at different times to produce various syntheses, comprising all together the prisoners' program.

In elaborating the prisoners' program, I first describe their purpose in their terms as attempting to alter "the system" to close the "revolving door" that takes them in and out of various repressive institutions. In their analysis, this required the prisoners to address what they understood to be the three levels of the "system," or

"structure." I then describe the educational, therapeutic, and action-based parts of their emancipatory practice, and demonstrate some of the ways these elements overlapped and were combined with each other. (I leave the analysis of the prisoners' research approach to Chapter 5, as their emancipatory research practice is the basis for the rest of the dissertation.) I attempt to show in this chapter that the prisoners' emancipatory process could be analyzed from the perspective of any one of the four elements, and briefly sketch what it would look like if defined as education, as therapy, and as action. Finally, I identify some of the distinguishing characteristics of the prisoners' emancipatory practice that are constant no matter how it is categorized.

THE PROBLEM FROM THE PRISONERS' PERSPECTIVE

My first night at the prison, the small group of prisoners who greeted me reassured me, and introduced themselves, gave the impression that their principal problems were the lack of a high school equivalency program for Spanish speaking prisoners and a lack of bilingual education programming at the lower levels. But it didn't take many weeks before I found that the prisoners' definition of the problem was much broader. One way the group construed the problem more broadly was by linking its manifestations in one sphere with it manifestations in another. If, for example, one of my students was feeling depressed, unmotivated, and unable to do the assignment, another might approach him and initiate a dialogue about why he wasn't working. Did something happen that day? Perhaps he said he had received

news that someone in his family had become ill and not been able to receive proper medical treatment, or that his brother had been arrested. Or maybe he had been attacked by another prisoner or a guard, or even started a fight himself. Usually there was a way that the other student/prisoner could encourage or provoke a discussion including several people in the classroom about how a particular problem at hand was connected to a larger set of problems experienced by others as well. Sometimes more students would get into the conversation, some being confrontive and others being comforting and supportive. Whatever the particular problem, part of the method was to find ways of relating it to more widespread problems in society as well as to other problems the individual was having, and to the existing or potential fragmentation within the group itself. For example, if the student said he was very upset because someone had taken some of the items he had received in a package from home, someone might note how much more meaningful such packages are (recognizing how painful it is for them to be taken away) when not only the recipient's but the sender's resources are so limited. This might be related in turn to how the importance of even small losses is reinforced by being part of an ethnic group and social class that has so few material resources. And then the conversation would turn to how competition for such limited resources can result in hostilities among people from the same oppressed community, but that these very people must try to stick together to improve their situation. Though this kind of dialogue helped define the nature of the problem, putting it in larger perspective, the group's efforts did not rest here. Attempts would be made to analyze how the problem should be

addressed, and action would be taken. On some similar occasions, the leadership of the group would make an effort to get the items back by confronting the person who took them.

Three Levels of Problems Facing the Prisoners

Problems manifested themselves to the prisoners at three levels: the external "conditions" surrounding the group, group-level interactions, and the personal level. The group understood these levels as being inextricably interconnected both in subjective experience and in how problems should be addressed, but for sake of analysis, it is helpful to describe each as if it were separate.

External "Conditions"

In the prison, the group stressed the prison "conditions," including the disproportionate number of poor, black, and Latino prisoners among the inmate population at large. The problematic "conditions" fell into three main categories: 1) general characteristics of prison life (such as brutality, retribution orientation, lack of health care, and oppressiveness), including conditions especially affecting the Latino population, such as the lack of posted rules in Spanish; 2) problems with the prison-run rehabilitation programs (such as the lack of teachers, the programs' individualistic orientation, and interference by unsupportive staff, especially the guards); and 3) problems specific to the bilingual education program. The group also recognized

related problems, such as the prevalence of drug and alcohol addiction, lack of education, lack of job training and work experience, etc., both in the prisoner population and the Latino population at large.

Problems in the bilingual education program were the ones with which I had the closest connection. Of course, one of the main institutional barriers the prisoners had been working to remove was the one preventing Spanish speaking prisoners from getting high school equivalency diplomas. This was the reason they had pressed for hiring a certified teachers. There were no substantive classes in Spanish being offered to the many monolingual or Spanish-dominant prisoners at either the elementary or intermediate levels. And the English-as-a-second language class, which was the only academic class serving the special needs of the Spanish speaking prisoners, did not have a teacher with a designated permanent line in the budget. The group's concern with this aspect of the prison conditions was primarily with the lack of equal access to education programs for Latino prisoners.

When the group re-established itself in the South Bronx, it focused on different external problems. Instead of experiencing the oppression and deprivations of prison, the group now found itself facing all the problems of the community: housing, health care, schools, lack of jobs, etc. The ex-prisoner group continued to focus its attention on local issues rather than attempting to address broader social manifestations of these problems, which it also recognized. To some extent, the Bronx-based group was hopeful about its ability to address several community problems, but it decided early to concentrate efforts on the local public schools. This

choice seemed to come both from prior experience working on education issues and from concern about members' children's lack of educational opportunities.

The Group Level

The prisoners believed that another aspect of the problem was the lack of community resistance to its own domination and exploitation. In the prison, this meant the prisoners' organization was concerned about the Latino prisoners' passivity and tendencies toward fragmentation. It worked to awaken the Latino prisoners to the need for and their ability to change their own understandings of themselves and their relationship to the social structure, so that as a group they would find ways to develop effective resistance.

Problems arose in maintaining group solidarity in the face of several tendencies toward fragmentation. The group had to guard against competition, violence, and lack of solidarity within the Latino prisoner organization, and conflict between the Latinos and the other racial/ethnic prisoner groups at the prison. To mobilize the solidarity necessary to press for changes in prison policy or programming, the prisoners constantly had to work to prevent or resolve hostilities within and between these groups. Within the Latino population, some of the principal internal sources of division and conflict included former gang affiliation, allegiance to different neighborhoods, home orientation (that is, toward the mainland or the island, which was usually Puerto Rico, but sometimes the Dominican Republic), and Spanish vs. English language dominance. Ethnic and racial division also existed between the

main prisoner groups in the prison population: the Latinos, Blacks, and Anglos. Within the Black population, the Black Muslims and Sunni Muslims also competed for influence and power, and because a few of the more Black-identified Latino prisoners were also Sunni or Black Muslim, conflict between the two Muslim groups sometimes strained relations within the Latino population. Divisions within and between the groups sometimes erupted into fights between individuals or between groups.

The prisoner group's efforts to mobilize people were hampered by other manifestations of fragmentation, especially non-cooperation. If people were not willing to sign petitions or help with other forms of action, the group was weakened in its efforts to force needed structural changes, such as improving the bilingual education program.

A lack of solidarity caused by in-fighting, especially among the Latino organization members, could also prevent the group from providing a sound self-help support network. Resisting tendencies toward fragmentation was important to provide the trusting context necessary for therapeutic interpersonal relationships.

External factors also exacerbated the prisoners' difficulties maintaining solidarity. An administration strategy to disrupt the organization was to give favors to certain prisoners who would act as informers or provocateurs. These prisoners would inform the administration about the Latino prisoner group, its plans, and strategies. They would also attempt to provoke fights between members of the group or between themselves and members of the group which would result in the guards' removing organization members involved in such a confrontation from the population

at large into isolation. Part of the Latino group's struggle was to find ways to identify the informers, then to counteract their efforts. The group used various strategies, one of which was to give the informers false information to carry back to the administration. The prison's authority to transfer key prisoners and to punish them by removing them from the general population to "lockup" in their own cells or to solitary confinement ("the hole") directly affected the group's ability to sustain its leadership. The prisoners also experienced interference in the form of "set-ups" instigated by certain guards to provoke fights between individuals or groups to deliberately fragment inmate solidarity.

The tendency toward fragmentation due to external interference was complemented by the prisoners' difficulty obtaining and maintaining external ties and support. The group needed various kinds of support, especially to make sure prison rehabilitation staff fulfilled their jobs and in the form of volunteers from outside the prison who could act as advocates, provide direct resources or assistance to individuals or the group, and teach special classes. Some of the staff actively worked to disrupt the prisoners' efforts. At the time I taught there, for example, I was told by local community volunteers that the local Ku Klux Klan had several of its members working as guards in the prison. Whatever such affiliations the guards may have had, many sought to disrupt the Black and Latino prisoners' groups' activities, including their academic classes. Acting on a retribution rather than a rehabilitation ideology, they used such tactics as simply not unlocking the students' cells who were supposed to come to class. Some of the administrative staff also interfered by

delaying or refusing needs, such as for teaching materials. To counter the interference of these staff and administration, the prisoners' group sought the help and support of others working in the prison. Such individuals themselves were often the targets of harassment by unsympathetic guards and administrators, and were sometimes discouraged from continuing their support to the prisoners' group.

Not only was it difficult for the group to gather consistent needed support from people employed by the prison, but also for it to generate support from the outside community. As the prison was located in a rural area far from urban centers, sources of support from outside the prison were few, difficult to identify, and hard to maintain with frequency. The prisoners' group depended heavily for a time on a hard working and sympathetic person in the prison administration, the coordinator for volunteers, to help them find volunteers from nearby colleges and universities. These people mostly helped by giving lectures and bringing resources to the political education class. One of my important roles was to provide outside support by being the prisoners' liaison to the Committee for Hispanic Inmates, which applied legal and political pressure on the state corrections administration on their behalf.

The group in the Bronx also experienced serious problems with fragmentation. In addition to the continuing salience of neighborhood, gang, language, and other such sources of division, when women became part of the group "on the street" (in the Bronx), sex and gender also became a potential source of conflict. The community-based group in the Bronx was much smaller than the group in the prison, and to maintain its viability as a group at all, had to find ways of recognizing and

resolving its conflicts. The pressures were very great, however, and as described earlier, the group did eventually break down into very small fragments.

The Personal Level

The third arena in which problems manifested themselves for the prisoners was the personal. Outward manifestations included individuals' incarceration and recidivism, criminal activity, addictions to drugs and alcohol, lack of skills and education, and problematic personal and family relationships. The inward, psychological manifestations included feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, self blame, uncontrollable anger, lack of confidence, passivity, and inferiority because of darker skin color or lack of ability to speak English well. For the prisoners' group, these personally experienced problems were of concern not only because they caused pain and anguish for the individuals experiencing them, but also because if not addressed, they would negatively affect the group as a whole by keeping the group from creating effective resistance.

The Prisoners' Structural Analysis of the Problem

The prisoners and former prisoners recognized several levels of external "conditions": the local and specific, such as lack of bilingual education programs, lack of Spanish speaking prison staff, etc. in the prison, and lack of employment and of equal educational opportunity in the community; the somewhat broader, such as

lack of bilingual education programs for Spanish speaking prisoners throughout the prison system; and the global, such as the exploitation and oppression of "Third World" people everywhere, especially Black and Puerto Rican people in the United States and Puerto Rico. Their understanding of exploitation and oppression was based partly on Marxist class analysis, so that they understood racial oppression and the exploitation of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans as based at least in part in ways the (capitalist) "system" exploited existing racial and ethnic divisions. Economic justice was their primary concern, but racial equality and Puerto Ricans' rights both on the island and on the mainland to political, economic, cultural self-determination were also understood to be important.

The prisoners largely attributed their status as prisoners to the capitalist and racist economic system that required a surplus of labor, leaving them with inadequate educational training, poor employment possibilities, and other social problems such as poor housing, poor health care, etc. They were also mindful of the capitalist system's use of existing racial and ethnic divisions in society (especially in the prison) to keep disadvantaged groups from working with each other to create mutually beneficial social change. In this way, they felt solidarity with all economically disadvantaged people regardless of their race or ethnicity. However, their most immediate sense of commitment was to their own group: in the prison, the Latino prisoner's organization and the Latino prisoner population at large; in the Bronx, unemployed or lower class Puerto Rican and other Latino people who were seen as being the victims not only of a capitalist system that had exploited Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican workers both on

the island and on the mainland, but also of racism and ethnic discrimination. Within this analysis, the prisoners sought to find ways to address class, racial, and culturally-based barriers to the achievement of a just society.

Although their analysis was radical in the sense that they believed the capitalist system was the "root" problem, their approach to social change focused on their immediate environment. It was not practical from their position as prisoners to address the fundamental problems of capitalism. By addressing the concrete needs of their small group, they did what they could from their position to change what they called "the system."

The prisoners often used the term "system" to refer to the social structure. Their frequent use of the term is probably significant, because it seems to underscore the emphasis in their understanding of the social structure as active and dynamic; a view that takes seriously the possibilities for active construction of (and resistance to) social structure. The term also illuminates the prisoners' view of an interplay of elements comprising the social structure rather than a single monolithic structure.

The prisoners' understanding of "the system" corresponded to the levels at which problems manifested themselves; the system was comprised of formal, legal, and quasi-legal social institutions (roughly corresponding to the prisoners' term "conditions"); of interpersonal relations within their group; and of their own reactions, feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. "The system" or "the structure" was seen to operate at all three levels. Perhaps the nature of the relationship of the levels to each other can best be visualized as the superimposition of one on top of the other in

three-dimensions rather than a one-dimensional "interlocking". This image better grasps the way the prisoners understood the problems to be dialectically related.

In the prisoners' view, as in the social constructionist perspective, the social structure is not only the visible set of institutions, laws, rules, etc., but also the ongoing active construction of real individuals, and consists in part of the structures people re-enact or actively seek to change in their relationships with other people. In this way, the social structure was to be found in part in group relations, and also in individuals' consciousnesses.

The prisoners were not always consistent in the way they spoke of the relationship between the "conditions" or "the system" and their consciousness. Sometimes they spoke of the conditions as if they were separate from consciousness, as in, "Beware of how the conditions affect your mind." This would seem to indicate a view that consciousness reflects the "conditions" or social structure. However, if the program is taken as a form of struggle (as described in detail below), it seems clear that they saw the "structure" as including themselves and their consciousnesses, and that they approached the task of changing the "conditions" or "structure" as one of changing not only the external institutional manifestations of the structure such as access to bilingual education programs, but also relations in their group and their own consciousnesses. By including <u>themselves</u> in "the system," they understood the social structure as something that could be modestly affected by their own individual and group actions; the dynamic nature of "the system" meant they could both affect and be affected by it.

The Prisoners' Problems as Seen From the GED Class

The following is an account of what the problems looked like in the context of the GED class I taught. This description shows how the prisoners' understanding and their program were grounded in their particular struggles. Compared with the prisoners' structural analysis, the problems look somewhat different from the everyday life perspective, where the conditions were always changing and with them, the particular problems of the moment. Many scenes come to mind from my experiences with the class. The scenes presented here are necessarily composites, because I was not taking field notes.

There were numerous tensions in the daily GED class activity. For example, the very composition of my class at any moment presented a certain challenge. In my class, typically there were a few Dominicans among mostly Puerto Ricans. Sometimes there was a Sunni Muslim, and at times there were one or two Black Muslims who, believing I was the devil, would not speak to me--or spoke very sparingly--but who were very eager to pass the GED. There were usually some who had been in the class for a very long time, and who had not been able to pass the GED, and others who were new. Some spoke virtually no English, while others preferred English. There were always some subtle tensions between these sub-groups and between individuals. I am sure that I was not aware of all the sources of tensions, but was aware that the coordinators, who were always in my class, tried to break down the barriers between the various sub-groups. The coordinators in this capacity were like group facilitators, urging the Dominicans to "get down and help

the (Puerto Rican) brother over there", getting the Spanish dominant prisoners to help the English dominant with a grammar exercise in Spanish. Often there was conflict between Latino prisoners outside of class. The coordinator and some facilitator-helpers would try to encourage a ...end of one of the participants in conflict to help resolve the conflict, or calm the person down so a larger fight could be avoided. And mini-cultural celebrations during short breaks often initiated by the coordinators to help people overcome their differences.

There was almost always a problem with the conditions for the class itself. Often the guards would have told one or more of the students that they weren't on the list to be let out for evening class. I would attempt to contact the guard in charge, and see if I could get it straightened out. Or I would learn at the last minute that the class was being moved. Once we were moved to a large closet, which the prisoners interpreted as a deliberate move on either the guards' or the administration's part to provoke a fight in the close quarters. Because the group had an administrative advocate at the time (the coordinator for volunteers), they asked him to intercede on their behalf, and we got the room changed. Sometimes when we had problems like this, the group would deliberately try to gain the help of someone else, to test them in a relatively unimportant situation, to determine something about where their sympathies lay, and whether they could be depended on.

The group continually had to test members' commitment, as well. It is true that they had collective goals and a communitarian spirit, goals, practice, etc. But the group also depended on its solidarity for effective struggle, and could not afford for

individuals to act on their own, to speak for the group without consensus, or above all, to "rat" to the guards or the administration when the group planned a collective action, such as refusing to come out of their cells to classes if some progress weren't made on getting the bilingual education program going. The need for complete solidarity made for a sense of oppressiveness which was, in itself, a problem. Some coordinators seemed to have a better way of creating a non-coercive sense of solidarity than others. But there was sometimes resistance from the "ranks", and sometimes someone would be "expelled". This usually meant he was also "expelled" from the GED class. When the coordinators were less adept, or several coordinators were transferred to other prisons at roughly the same time, a heightened sense of uncertainty and mistrust came through in the classroom. At these times, the group often tried to bring the issues out in the open, and to remind the group how "the system" needs the underclasses to be fragmented and divided. Sometimes the coordinators would be criticized for taking too much authority on their own.

Prisoners suffered terrible personal problems of every sort with few resources to solve them. Someone's wife just wrote him a permanent good-bye. Someone else was denied parole because there were no letters supporting his release in the file, although he had checked the day before, and the letters were there. Another with migraine headaches and no medical treatment. Someone revealed in Drug Therapy that he was back on heroin. Individuals were encouraged to share their problems and get help with them, when needed. When the group was having difficulty functioning because of disrupted leadership or because it was faced with too many problems at

once, individuals with such problems were left more on their own to solve them. Sometimes they would turn to me or someone else from the "outside." They hoped we had some power to act as advocates, or that we would try to reach someone else who could be an effective advocate, or that we could try to find out something helpful (like how to stop migraines). Occasionally someone would ask me to bring something into the prison, like Contac, but this happened rarely because almost everyone knew that if I were to bring in contraband, I could be fired, which would be the end of the GED class.

The immediate context for struggle was always in flux. The group's leadership was always changing. People were released on parole or sent to other prisons. The prison staff, administration, and outside volunteers were changing, too, although much more gradually. Guards were reassigned to different cell blocks. Key people in the administration resigned or transferred to other prisons. Or key new people were hired, some good and some not so good. Once, for example, after the Committee worked for some time to pressure the state administration to hire more Spanish speaking counselors, a very good Puerto Rican counselor was hired who was of great help to the group. He provided moral support and advocacy as well as direct help by counseling in Spanish. But by the same token, the superintendent of the prison who had been instrumental in supporting the prisoners' groups in forming their organizations and whose criminological approach supported rehabilitation, had been transferred to another prison shortly before I began teaching there. He had been replaced by a superintendent whose philosophy was based much more on the

retribution model. And volunteer programs, especially those from the surrounding colleges, were always changing personnel; at one time one of the local colleges hired a person to be in charge of the college release program who was flexible and eager to work with the prisoners' organization, but who was later replaced by someone who preferred to bypass the prisoners' organizations and deal directly with the prison administration.

One of the prisoners' major problems was to counter the prison's counter-resistance to their efforts. Moving our class to a closet was one typical kind of counter-resistance incident. There were many others. The most successful coordinators were always being threatened with transfers. The group and the individual coordinators then had to try to find ways to prevent the transfers. One coordinator managed to avoid being transferred for a very long time because he was admitted to a college release program, and as a college student under some authority and supervision from the college, would have been an embarrassment to transfer. Of course being gone from the prison during long periods of the day also had a negative effect on the group, which missed his leadership.

The larger context for struggle was always changing as well. The prisoners had taken advantage of the possibilities brought about by the Attica riot in 1971 to form their organization. Public outrage about the National Guard's shootings of prisoners together with the prisoners' demands for rehabilitation programs had created some public support for prisoners' rights and for prison rehabilitation programs. In turn, the Civil Rights Movement occurring in the years immediately before the Attica

riots had created the context of public support for equal rights. As a result of the changes brought about by this historical context, the Latino prisoner organization found an opening in the early years. Not only were changes made in the prisons, such as the legitimation of prisoner organizations and the institution of rehabilitation programs. Other auxiliary changes came as well. A prisoners' legal services office opened nearby, and attorneys began to help the prisoners file class action suits about general conditions that violated prisoners' rights. Very important to the Latino prisoners was the movement in the community at large for bilingual education in the public schools. A legal precedent had been established by the Supreme Court's decision in Lau vs. Nichols (414 U.S. 563 [1974]), in which schools receiving federal funds were required to provide bilingual education where needed.

All of these factors conditioned the prisoners' struggle. Although in general, one can say that the problems at hand involved the interpenetration of personal, group, and social-structural levels, changing specific, local conditions and changing broader social and historical conditions influenced how the problems were experienced on a day to day basis and often made it necessary to adjust the prisoners' program.

THE PRISONERS' RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEMS

The Program as the Prisoners' Struggle

The prisoners' program was their response to the problematic conditions outlined above. It was a form of struggle or emancipatory practice that enabled the prisoners' and former prisoners' group to resist inequitable and unjust conditions and to create an alternative form of social organization. The struggle addressed problems at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Just as these levels were understood to be dialectically interrelated, so too were the parts of the program to address them.

Both the prisoners' experience of problems and their responses to problems changed with variations in the "conditions." For example, when the leadership in the group was fairly stable and support from various volunteer programs, Prisoners' Legal Services, and the Committee was strong, the prisoners could more effectively work on general issues addressing institutional inequality, especially bilingual education for prisoners. At these times energy could be put into working with the Committee, for example, to administer survey questionnaires to the prisoners to determine the extent of need for bilingual programs. At other times, when the combination of "conditions" created a context where there was more distrust and less outside support, the program had to focus more on preventing fragmentation and raising consciousness. A major change occurred as more and more of the early leadership of the group was released on parole, and the focus of my efforts included more and more the work of the Committee and the Bronx-based group. The group inside the prison became more detached from the efforts to make change at the state level, and began concentrating once again on maintaining solidarity.

Although the prisoners' aim was emancipatory, they did not think of their program as a model for emancipatory practice or research. Yet, my judgment is that it in fact provided a model for both, and that their model can be used to inform, critique, and elaborate emancipatory practice and research models developed by academy-trained intellectuals. By looking closely at their program it is possible to theorize about their emancipatory practice and get a clearer view of how their emancipatory research methodology was embedded in their program. Such an analysis helps to set the stage for understanding the kinds of knowledge their research process required and produced; the prisoners' model for emancipatory practice and research, emerging as it did from their own needs and experience, represents a paradigm for knowledge production that was capable of developing new insights. As I learned from working with the group to write the paper for the psychology convention, the prisoners created important knowledge from an alternative and critical perspective about the meaning and process of rehabilitation.

The Structure of the Latino Prisoners' Organization

To understand the group's theory and practice, it helps to understand its organization. The prisoners' group was nominally a cultural organization, like the Black prisoners' organization and was given formal recognition by the local prison administration. Such groups had been sanctioned by the state Department of Correctional Services level in response to the Attica riot.

The organization had an elected leadership consisting of an unspecified number

of coordinators and a head coordinator. From my observation, there were usually five or six coordinators and one head coordinator. Among the coordinators' leadership duties were to help teach classes, recruit new members from the prisoner population into the Latino organization, and serve as role models. In addition, each coordinator had special responsibilities to coordinate ongoing activities such as the newsletter or the group's disciplinary board (which was to ensure that the program "remains a collective body and serves the needs of the people, and not a one individual private interprise [sic].") The head coordinator was to oversee the coordinators, be a role model ("...See to it that every coordinator including himself, will respect each and every member, and treat them as men and as equals..."), and take a major portion of responsibility in leading the group in actions ("...He will make it clear that if and when a sacrifice is to be made, that it will be him and then that will have the honor of making it first...").

The leadership of the organization was very broad. For example, assistant coordinators served under the several coordinators. In addition, the organization set up many committees, all with committee heads and assistant committee heads, also leadership positions.

Drug Therapy was a semi-autonomous group with its own regular meeting times and therapeutic goals, though it was also a sub-structure within the Latino prisoner organization, and its philosophy and practice and leadership were shared with the main organization. Drug Therapy had a similar organizational structure, and its leadership was also broadly spread. The coordinators were always "in training" for

the head coordinator position, as it was taken for granted that a constant stream of leaders must be trained to replace those the prison administration chose to transfer out to other prisons. The leadership structure reached far down into the ranks of the membership, so that almost everyone had some kind of responsibility as the head or assistant head of a committee. This distribution of leadership was a valuable way to give every member real responsibility for, and a sense of ownership of, the program.

Despite the attempt to create a democratic organization with distributed leadership, however, the group could not always live up to its own organizational ideals. First, the group was selective in its recruiting process. Coordinators were responsible for recruiting prisoners from the Latino prisoner population into the organization. By recruiting people in this way, the group tried to exclude those who were "about bullshit" or who might try to harm the program. But this method also tended at times to exclude people on the basis of other factors, such as "homeboy" or former gang associations. Leadership among the coordinators also may have been influenced by similar factors, excluding people from outside a self-perpetuating group of "insiders".

Purpose of the Prisoners' Struggle: Stopping the "Revolving Door"

The prisoners were familiar with the term "revolving door" from the language of criminology, and used it as an organizing concept when talking about their experiences and their struggle. Not only had they come in and out of prison through

a "revolving door," but also in and out of jobs, houses, schools, drug use and drug programs, marriages, etc. They sought through their "program" to stop the door revolving, to liberate themselves from the oppressive and exploitative conditions they suffered--to open some new doors. Stopping the door from revolving involved finding ways through their "program" to interrupt "the system" (understood, as above, as including individuals and their subjectivities) from reproducing the same realities over and over again. Some of my most vivid memories of the prisoners trying with all their might to accomplish this goal by working at many levels at once were of their almost around the clock efforts in the Bronx. My husband and I would arrive at one of their apartments for a meeting, and several things were going on at once, all overlapping, somewhat like my class, but even more complicated. An adult might have just returned from picking up one of the children at school, and was exclaiming about how he or she had tried talking to the teacher about how the child's homework they had helped him with the night before hadn't even been collected, but had been "brushed off." Someone else would encourage the adult not to give up; that it was important for both their own children and for the other children in the class to continue trying to improve the educational conditions. One of the women might be reminding her husband that it was his turn to change the baby's diapers--then turn to me and remark how she needed time to study for her GED, too, and how as a woman, she needed to empower herself just like her husband. A neighbor might be at the door, coming to pick up her or his child who had been over at the group's house for a class, and one of the group would be explaining to the parent that if they

wanted their child to participate, they, too, should contribute their knowledge, and teach a class once a week on something. Several people would be in the kitchen, cooking. They pooled their grocery money, and cooked and ate much of their food together. A confrontation I can't quite hear, and a shout from another room, "We can't afford this kind of bullshit among us." In the middle of all this, I might have around me two or three people who are studying for the GED. They have saved some questions to ask me about some math problems that the other people in the group had been unable to answer. One of the former prisoners my husband had gotten to know through the Drug Therapy program in the prison asks him if he could speak to his parole officer on his behalf. Although our meeting was set to begin at 5:00 P.M., we often actually began about 11:30 P.M.

Of course, the prisoners' and former prisoners' long range purpose was to improve the quality of life for themselves, their children, their community, and other disadvantaged people. They wanted to prevent their own potential recidivism and the possible future incarceration or other suffering of their own and their community's children. To do this, their program functioned to try to prevent "the system" from reproducing inequality along four major lines: race, class, ethnicity, and (in the Bronx) gender.

They sought to confront the reproduction of race, class, ethnicity, and gender inequality on three levels. First, they sought to defeat the oppressions and exploitations by trying to improve conditions directly, thereby interrupting the reproduction of domination for future generations.

Second, they tried to prevent their group (which they considered to be part of capitalism's exploited working class) from being divided by race, sex, or ethnicity. Here, they tried to minimize antagonistic interpersonal interactions, and especially group conflict about whose interests should be of most concern to the group. (For example, some of the people in the Latino prisoners' organization believed more strongly than others that identifying as Black, or as we would say now, African-American, was just as important or perhaps more important than identifying as Latino. This came down to concrete differences of opinion about what books to give lectures about, how much to cooperate with the Black prisoners' organization, etc.)

Third, the group worked to resist internalized negative self-concepts based on racial, ethnic, class, and gendered images of supposedly innately limited abilities and lack of equal rights to economic, political, and social justice. This entailed a process akin to feminist consciousness raising (e.g. Stanley and Wise, 1983) and to "conscientization" (Freire, 1970, 1973).

Stopping the "Revolving Door": Working at Three Levels

As already noted, the group's program operated at three levels: the "objective" structure, the group, and the individuals in the group. Insofar as its program worked to change the "objective" structure, the group's primary focus was on undermining the legal and political support for unequal educational opportunity for themselves and their children. With respect to their group, the prisoners and former

prisoners worked to empower it through group-based self-help (especially therapy and education) and to increase its capacity to mobilize and organize effectively. In the personal realm, the group emphasized strengthening individuals' minds through many kinds of traditional and nontraditional education; their consciousnesses through a nontraditional political therapeutic approach; and their abilities through the teaching of skills. Each of these levels is described more fully below. In the above scene, one of the people had been taking a preliminary step to affect the "objective" structure by trying to convince the teacher to change her behavior. (In the prison, the group had sufficient strength to apply pressure on the prison system to make more substantive changes, but in the Bronx, the group was much weaker politically, so its efforts were more limited.) The group member who was trying to convince a parent to participate by teaching was helping strengthen the group's solidarity and effectiveness. And the women asking help from me were strengthening themselves both by learning something and by getting a diploma. Each of these three levels was an arena for struggle, and the struggles were interrelated.

Changing the "Objective" Structure

In the prison, the group worked to change formal and informal policies and procedures. It first tried to make informal changes at the local level by gathering the support of helpful staff to help advance group goals and by pressuring the local administration to make policy changes, such as instituting the GED class I taught. The next step was to try to force changes in policy at the state level which would put

pressure on the local prison to institute needed changes. This required finding ways to influence the state prison administration. When I was working at the prison, it became clearer that the local administration would not create a fulltime bilingual education program unless it was forced to do so by the state. In fact, it repeatedly threatened to close down my evening GED class. As related in Chapter 2, the Ad Hoc Committee was formed to provide political support at the state level.

The group was much less involved with efforts to change state prison policy, however, than with its own local struggle to benefit the prisoners at the local prison. The main focus was local in part because the prisoners were confined and unable to participate in the Committee's meetings with state officials. But perhaps more important, their most thorough knowledge was of the local situation, not conditions at other prisons. The program fit the local context well, but there were limits to the prisoners' ability to understand and project the needs of Latino prisoners at other prisons, despite their commitment in theory to unify their struggle with others'.

The prisoners challenged existing structural arrangements merely by maintaining the program as a kind of "free space," an alternative to standard education and rehabilitation ideology and programming in the prison. The group countered the prison system's individualistic ideology and practice of rehabilitation by maintaining its own counter-ideology and collective, participatory and emancipatory group practice. As the prison system's ideology emphasized everyone's individual duty to rehabilitate (only) himself, its institutional practices and structures supported this ideology. For example, the prison's drug therapy and counseling program

presupposed individual deviance as the problem to be corrected through therapy. The prisoners' self-organized drug therapy program was designed according to their own ideology and practice of "rehabilitating" not only the individual, but group interactions and the society as well through a combination of therapy and political education.

Working at the Group Level

The prisoners' group worked to empower itself, or strengthen its own internal resources, in several ways. For example, it tried to reduce rivalry and increase trust among participants and improve the quality of interpersonal relations. In a reference to the goal of changing themselves and each other, one of the group's documents states that,

> We are aware of the fact that their [sic] are internal problems inflicting our program, and hindering our goals. Because of this we want to let you know that from this day forward all of these meaningless and pettiness-bullshit will cease. Don Pedro said, 'The triumph of Puerto Ricans over Puerto Ricans is the defeat of our nation,' and if you cannot understand the meaning of these few very meaningful words, then your place is not in this room. Our struggle as a people, and as a collective body has nothing to do with your personal opinions of another individual in the class. So we suggest three choices which are open to you, you can either reason your problem out, or put it to the side, or get the f...k out (Untitled program document).

The group continually had to adjust the structure of its organization in the face of internal and external forces seeking to disrupt it. Changing the interpersonal relationships among "program" members was a major part of the struggle. The above reference to "pettiness" and "bullshit" attests to the very real problems the prisoners had in trying to organize themselves and to restructure the relationships among each

other. Recognizing the potential of "the system" to disrupt resistance, the prisoners sought to counteract destructive patterns of interaction by replacing them with constructive alternatives which would allow them to create the social and political solidarity necessary to take collective actions. The existence of competing "homeboy" groups and small groups of members from rival gangs in the community were especially threatening to group solidarity. The group built trust and a sense of community by emphasizing shared interests rather than territorial or gang affiliation and thus restructured interpersonal interactions for increased solidarity.

The group also had to maintain itself against the direct efforts of the prison administration to disrupt it, for instance, by transferring the leadership of the organization to other prisons or by using prisoner informers who sometimes came to my class or other program activities to try to gather information about the organization or its plans (the organization was often planning some kind of action). These tactics faced the group with a permanent crisis of leadership, which it addressed by making leadership training a major component of each of its programs.

The group also strengthened itself by helping members get their equivalency diplomas and enter the college release program. These efforts increased the collective knowledge of the group and the legitimacy of its members. Members encouraged each other by education and by example to try to effect change through group action. An important part of their struggle was to resist the ideology of individualism, which was the principal focus of the prison's rehabilitation ideology, and mobilize collective actions for collective goals.

Changing Themselves as Individuals

The group encouraged people to take responsibility for themselves. Members helped each other with personal struggles to overcome feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, addictions, and inferiority. Individuals struggled to overcome emotional and rational limitations based "in their minds", and situational limitations based in part on external conditions. A program document states, "All of you's as men and as individuals have a duty to educate yourselves to the fullest, and be constantly aware of the forces that tend to change the courses of our lives. If you must move, then let it be your conscious [sic] that directs your steps. If you must criticize, then let it be creative instead of destructive. If you must condamn [sic] then let it be justified through facts, and not speculation."

The struggle to change individuals was seen both as the individual's own personal struggle and the group's burden to help the individual. The group recognized that overcoming problems in the mind was only part of the struggle; individuals had to be supported in their efforts to take on the real problems of everyday life, such as the harsh conditions of working in a "chicken factory" (packing plant), where their hands froze and only fifteen minutes were allowed for lunch break.

Though I have attempted to distinguish between the prisoner group's struggles to change individuals, strengthen the group, and change the "objective" conditions, the lines between these struggles were blurred in practice. The struggles were understood to be interdependent, and dialectically related so that advances on one

"front", so to speak, facilitated the others. In the language of rehabilitation the prisoners developed, these struggles were to "rehabilitate" the individual, the group, and society.

ELEMENTS OF THE PRISONERS' "REHABILITATION" PROCESS: EDUCATION, THERAPY, ACTION, AND RESEARCH

Although the prisoners' program included structured activities such as the GED class and Drug Therapy, it makes more sense analytically to characterize the prisoners' emancipatory practice in terms of goal-oriented elements that overlapped particular activities. To achieve the necessary changes in individuals, their group, and the external "objective" structure, the prisoners' program contained elements or aspects that could be described as education, therapy, social action, and research. The program was educational in that it aimed to increase various kinds of knowledge and/or skills; therapeutic in that it aimed to change attitudes, feelings, self-perceptions, and behaviors; social-action oriented in that it attempted to change social structural arrangements through resistance to them and through the construction of alternatives; and research-oriented in that one of its goals was to produce knowledge for the group. If the program is viewed as a constellation of all these elements and not through the lens of any particular element (as I attempt to do in Chapter 5), then the following descriptions fit the elements.

Education. The educational aspect of the program included several different

kinds of knowledge and skills. It included traditional knowledge such as reading and writing skills in Spanish and English, grammatical rules, elementary mathematics, and other knowledge required for passing the high school equivalency examination in Spanish. It included classes on Marxist theory, Puerto Rican political-economic history, and the writings of prominent Black revolutionary writers. There was training in various life skills, such as learning to speak in front of others, making effective telephone calls to request information, and filling out job applications. Finally, the program emphasized the teaching of various kinds of knowledge the prisoners produced themselves, most often developed from collective reflection on past and recent experiences.

Therapy. The therapeutically-oriented element of the "program" ranged from informal psychological support to individuals in personal crisis to consciousness-raising that placed personal problems in a political context. The therapeutic goals included changing individuals' feelings and behavioral patterns, changing the definition of the group and the nature of group interactions, and "rehabilitating the system."

Action. The prisoners' group took direct action to change external conditions by trying first to persuade people holding power to change their opinions and policies, and then by organizing direct collective actions, such as petition drives and sit-ins, to apply pressure. The group often built coalitions as a basis to gain more power from which to negotiate changes in institutional rules or policies. The prisoner group's establishment of its various educational classes and the drug therapy program also

constituted forms of action to create alternative social organizations.

Research. The research aspect of the program included producing knowledge based on information already produced by others, much like high schoolers' research projects; gathering practical information; and gathering data from and producing knowledge on the basis of discussions of collective experiences. The last included reflections on individuals' past experiences before imprisonment, experiences in the prison, and the group's efforts to stimulate social change by challenging prison rules and regulations. The group used other research methods as well. Chapter 5 is devoted to the prisoners' approach to research.

Four Perspectives on the Prisoners' Emancipatory Practice

The prisoners' process closely integrates educational, therapeutic, action-oriented, and research processes into one unified, dialectically related, peer-directed, self-help and activist process. The process could be accurately described as the integration of these four aspects. But in saying this, it is important to emphasize that the prisoners rarely identified the aspects or elements separately, except to conform to the prison administration's desire to label some activities as education and others as therapy. In fact, after the group re-established itself in the South Bronx, and the prison program structure no longer forced them to maintain distinctions such as between education and therapy, some of the distinctions between the processes that seemed clearer in the prison became even more effaced. I am quite sure the prisoners

would have objected to drawing artificial lines between the "educational process," the "therapeutic process," the "action process," and the "research process."

The overall purpose of the program could be described as emancipatory: the prisoners' goal was to free themselves and each other from oppressive social conditions, strengthen themselves as individuals and as a group, and create a more just society. Education, therapy, research, and direct action in the prison and the community can be seen as intermediate goals to the ultimate emancipatory goal. It is nevertheless possible to look at the process through any of these four lenses. To do so broadens the traditional definition of any of these processes by bringing the other processes in. For example, if the program is considered as an educational one, it is education with therapeutic, activist, and research elements.

Following are three accounts of the program, as education, therapy, and action. The most detailed account is of the program as education, as this is easiest for me to describe because of my involvement in the GED class. My briefer accounts of the program as therapy and as action may seem to go over some of the same ground as the education-based account, and indeed they do, as I am looking at the same program through different lenses. I have chanced some repetitiveness in order to show how the program has something to say to therapeutic and activist practices, as well as educational ones. Chapter 5 is devoted to the research aspect of the program, as it is this aspect that is most relevant to the sociological project of developing an "emancipatory critical social science" or "emancipatory research."

The Prisoners' Program as an Educational Program

As already noted, the educational content of the program included various basic academic skills and knowledge, life skills, and knowledge generated by the group. The prisoners' educational system, however, is revealed more by methods than content.

Educational Methods

The term "pedagogy" was not one the prisoners used, though it is a term that I think describes their educational process more comprehensively than "teaching methods." Yet, "teaching methodology" better expresses this concept in the prisoners' language, so I will use that term. From the perspective of educational practice, the prisoners' teaching methodology was the glue that held much of their education, research, therapy, and action practice together. Several features distinguished it from standard teaching methodology.

Peer Teaching. The prisoners relied heavily on a peer-teaching model. Their emphasis on peer teaching was undoubtedly developed partly because there was a lack of trained teachers, and they had to rely on their own self-help efforts. However, peer-teaching was also deeply embedded in their individual and group empowerment process as an extension of their attempt to create an egalitarian and democratic organizational form and process.

Blending of Teaching and Learning Roles. Whereas standard teaching practice is a unidirectional one, in which the teacher attempts to teach the student, the prisoners' peer-teaching methodology assumed a dialogic interaction in which teaching and learning roles overlapped. While any given student might be a teacher at a certain time, he might also be the student in either the same or a different interaction. This was often the case when traditional academic content was being taught and learned; prisoners took turns teaching and learning. But it was also the case when one prisoner used a leading question to stimulate another to re-examine his assumptions. Prisoners tried to instigate this critical questioning process for each other whenever they could detect the expression of hopelessness, self-blame, or desire to act out in ways that would be self-destructive or destructive to the Latino organization as a whole. In these cases, the educational content was not traditional academic material, but critical insights and knowledge the group had gained through collective dialogue and theorizing. This knowledge was both taught and transformed in dialogic interactions as "teachers" confronted "students" with questions formulated on the basis of past dialogues to provoke the students' re-examination of their own assumptions. By incorporating the "student's" response into the "teacher's" understanding of the group's repertoire of collective knowledge, the "teacher" learned something new from the "student."

Collective Dialogue. The prisoners sought to create collective interaction or dialogue throughout. Not only were "teacher"-"student" interactions typically

dialogues; the prisoners' method used collective dialogue extensively. For the most part, the dynamic seemed to be a community of "students" and "teachers" all learning together through a process that engaged many prisoners in dialogue.

Collectively Developed Themes. The prisoners' teaching methodology sometimes used certain themes, developed out of a repertoire of shared experiences, as the basis for questioning each other to provoke a reflective response. These themes had educational purposes and content. "Looking at the ways the 'system' plays on your mind" was the most prominent theme.

"Teaching Back." Closely associated was the technique of teaching back, through the posing of questions, a framework of understandings the group had developed over time about all levels of "the system" and the place of the group in it. These understandings, coming out of collective reflections on individual and collective experiences, both past and present, were passed on to new members, and altered as new "generations" of prisoners reflected on them and revised them on the basis of new experience. As individual prisoners were transferred out to other prisons or "graduated" from my class after passing the exam, it was interesting to see that new people always seemed to emerge to continue this process.

It is impossible to see the prisoners' process as an educational methodology without noting the prominent therapy, action, and research elements that distinguish it from many other educational practices.

Therapy in the Educational Program

When the program is viewed through the lens of the educational perspective, its therapeutic and educational elements are seen to be mutually reinforcing. It was clear, for example, that the teaching process was infused with efforts to heal and support individuals; as "teachers," the prisoners worked to create or restore self-esteem, pride, and self-confidence in their "students" to emotionally support their "students'" educational process. As "teachers," the prisoners also attempted to stem feelings of cultural inferiority by bolstering a sense of Latino cultural worth, as a stimulus to encourage individuals to learn on behalf of their cultural community.

Questioning Surface Understandings. Clearly, the prisoners' educational program was shaped in large part by their political perspective and agenda; they saw both education and therapy in terms of questioning surface impressions and understandings, and their political outlook provided an emancipatory and justice-oriented framework for questioning those surface assumptions. The educational program emphasized forms of dialogic interaction in which the prisoners as peer therapist/educators provoked the patient/students to reflect critically on their assumptions and their experiences.

Learning to Express Oneself. Prisoner teachers encouraged and taught the "students" to express themselves; to help each other develop the ability to speak for themselves, to say what they were thinking and feeling. By encouraging and teaching

each other to express themselves, the prisoners advanced therapeutic goals--to help validate the importance of each others' feelings and perceptions as a way to restore self-esteem, for example. But teaching people to express themselves also had an educational goal, namely to provide the "students" with the skills and confidence necessary to critically re-examine the assumptions embedded in their own unreflected understandings. Learning to express themselves was a necessary first step toward making their thoughts and feelings accessible for participating in meaningful interpersonal dialogue. Interpersonal dialogue, in turn, was the basis for much of the prisoners' mutual education process which relied on individuals' ability and willingness to reveal themselves and on others' ability to question individuals' beliefs (in a supportive atmosphere), and to promote better understandings.

Learning to Change Demeanor. The prisoners explicitly taught each other new ways of standing, sitting, modulating their voices, and otherwise conducting themselves. Their idea was that educating each other to change their demeanor in these ways would help individuals internalize better perceptions of themselves, give their group a better image to itself, and help group members and the group as a whole to be treated differently and taken more seriously by the other prisoners and the prison administration and staff.

Building Interpersonal and Collective Trust. The program's therapeutic activities built the trust necessary not only for psychological support, but also for the

kind of dialogue the prisoners used to build solidarity and to produce collective critical knowledge for their educational program. The therapeutic context, most specifically provided by the drug therapy program, helped the prisoners develop the sense of having a safe space to explore their experiences and feelings to develop this knowledge and educate each other. The cultural celebrations and the sharing of food and music contributed a social dimension to this safe space, enriching the therapeutic context with social reinforcements for creating and maintaining friendship relationships.

Action in the Education Program

Education as a Form of Struggle to Create a Just Society. The prisoners' educational philosophy and practice were based in a political perspective that assumed that education was an integral part of political efforts to create a more just society. The prisoners' standpoint was based on disadvantage and struggle, and their teaching methodology represented in part an effort to change conditions by enlightening and otherwise educationally empowering individuals and their group as a whole. That part of their educational program stressing enlightenment, or changing consciousness, is both therapeutic and educational. It was also intended to build a base for social action.

Teaching Resistance. Part of the prisoners' education program was to make the prisoners as participants aware of the kinds of power they needed to resist, and to

teach by example and experience some ways they could resist that power. First, this meant teaching each other how teachers, the mass media, other authorities, and the dominant culture had instilled in their own consciousnesses ideas about their inferiority that had to be resisted. The prisoners as individuals and as a group were expected to help each other replace these negative internalized views with more positive understandings of their self-worth and capabilities. In this way, the educational program worked to effect resistance to the internalized aspects of the social structure. Secondly, by engaging in acts of resistance, such as petition drives and sit-down strikes, the prisoners educated each other in forms of collective active resistance to the "external" structure. In both of these ways, the education program actively sought to change passive individuals into actors.

Teaching How to Create Alternatives. The prisoners' program presented a comprehensive educational alternative comprised of various educational, therapeutic, action, and research-based classes and activities. The very creation of the various classes, programs, and activities provided concrete evidence to the Latino prisoner population of their collective ability to create an alternative structure. As such, the educational program provided a context for the ongoing creative work of successive "generations" of Latino prisoners.

Research in the Education Program

Research Into Puerto Rican and Black History, and Marxist Theory. For the

political education part of their educational program, the prisoners' group researched and presented aspects of Puerto Rican and Black history and Marxist theory. This kind of research was not really producing new knowledge, but was research in somewhat the same sense that students write research reports on information that can be found in libraries; as the prisoners appropriated the knowledge through dialogue, it became new knowledge for them. Unlike high school students who write research reports, however, the prisoners aimed to use the knowledge they acquired in their everyday practice, their program. It is also analogous to the research that scholars do when they review a literature, but again, the prisoners used this research to help them understand their problems and improve their practice.

Research to Identify Resources. The prisoners' organization was always seeking information about resources which would educate its participants about programs and people both inside and outside of the prison that could help them either as individuals or as a group. The group took it upon itself to educate its members about opportunities such as tutoring programs, drug programs, and legal services. Like the research on history and theory, this research did not produce new knowledge, per se. Rather, it accumulated already existing knowledge into a form that suited the group's needs. For the group, however, it was new knowledge. When my husband and some of his students helped the drug therapy program, one of the things they did was to go with some of the ex-prisoners who had been in drug therapy, to visit several drug therapy programs in the community. They gathered

standard information about the programs, such as their requirements, their locations, etc., but they also "checked them out", creating a kind of annotated research report which was submitted to the group in the prison.

Research to Identify the Educational and Other Needs of the Latino Prisoner Population. The Latino prisoners' organization had begun this work before I was hired; it was by learning of the needs and educating each other about the extensive nature of these needs throughout the Latino prisoner population that it was possible to organize enough collective strength to force my hiring. Later, when the Committee for Hispanic Inmates worked with the organization, the prisoners began to use questionnaires, as described in Chapter 2, to determine the extent of educational need.

Research on Each Others' Experiences. By examining their own and each other's experiences, the prisoners undertook a kind of research that supported their educational efforts. In this way, the prisoners learned something about the commonalities running through their experiences that had influenced the course of their lives. This dialogic way of doing research was particularly characteristic in the therapeutic parts of their program.

Research on the Effects of the Group's Actions. Whenever the group took collective action in the prison, extensive discussion followed concerning why it had succeeded or failed. The knowledge gained from these discussions educated both

individuals and the group in the practice of collective action. The prisoners' approach to research is developed more fully in Chapter 5.

The Prisoners' Program as Therapy

If the program is viewed as a form of therapy, it is one with elements of education, research, and activism. This is evident first of all in the prisoners' very definition of the positive state of "health" to be created or ameliorated by the therapeutic process, which involved not only traditional aspects of positive mental health such as freedom from drug and alcohol addiction, but changes in political consciousness as well. The prisoners' view was that they bore some individual responsibility for their crimes and addictions (and therefore that therapy could help restore individuals to "health"), but that they were not solely responsible. The prisoners' analysis was that the society was structured in a way that had placed them in an economically and socially disadvantaged position, making them more vulnerable to committing crimes and becoming addicted than they would have been if they had not been born to lower income Puerto Rican parents. In their view, to take on all the responsibility for their crimes and addictions themselves as individuals would be to ignore the need to make changes in the social conditions; to change the conditions required their own empowerment, including the development of political understandings of the role of the social structure and of the political organization necessary to effect structural changes. Rather than only helping the individual (or

group) as "patient" adjust to social realities, then, the prisoners sought to create within the group an understanding of the inequitable nature of social institutions which must be changed. Theirs was a self-organized form of "radical therapy" (The Radical Therapist Collective, 1971), that emphasized the connections between changing individuals and changing society.

Peer Therapists. The prisoners depended on each other as peer therapists to carry out their therapy program. The prisoners' use of both peer-teachers and peer-therapists decreased their dependence on outside authorities, and increased their reliance on themselves, distributing leadership more broadly than in traditional classrooms or therapy situations. It also helped establish the foundation for according legitimacy to the kinds of knowledge the group produced, as will be discussed further on.

Self-Revelation. The prisoners' therapeutic program emphasized revealing experiences, thoughts, and feelings to each other and examining them collectively. In the prisoners' process, this material was discussed not only in terms of their origin in personal or familial contexts, but in terms of a more broadly defined social context.

Critical Dialogue. The prisoners' therapeutic technique depended heavily on the dialogue process to evoke their internalized negative perceptions of their own capacities. In addition to revealing and examining these self-concepts, the prisoners'

therapeutic process placed them in a political framework. Reliance on this kind of politically-based therapeutic dialogue helped the prisoners restructure their interpersonal relationships, which were often competitive and conflicted, on the basis of a shared experience of socioeconomic and political disadvantage and thus create a sense of political community that decreased interpersonal animosities and enhanced the ability to carry out collective social actions putting pressure on the prison system.

Critical Questioning. The peer therapists stimulated the therapeutic dialogue process by asking questions designed to help the "patient" discover his unreflected assumptions. This process shared many similarities with group therapy, but in the prisoners' therapeutic process, the "therapist" used questions designed to help the prisoners place their personal experiences in a socio-political perspective. The critical questioning technique provided a method for the "therapists" to confront the "patient" with an alternative socio-political perspective that would help them challenge the basis for their own negative self-image.

Friendly Dialogue. The prisoners also relied on mutual therapeutic support through conversational interactions to develop trust and friendship, creating a sense of "family." The cultural celebrations and friendly sharing of food and other resources supported this trust-building process.

Educational, Activist, and Research Aspects of the Therapeutic Program. The

therapeutic program had a strong consciousness-raising aspect that was educational, with activist intent. It aimed to transform the prisoners' understanding of their personal predicaments as individual problems to an understanding of those problems as being shared by groups of people, especially other Latino prisoners. It sought to teach the participants how their self-confidence had been undermined by cultural images, teachers, and other authority figures that had conveyed a negative evaluation of them as poor or Latino and how, despite this history, they had the ability and capacity to create change. Everything from passing the GED exam to successfully avoiding a fight with another prisoner was used to show ways the prisoners could gain control over their lives, and also to show progress in the struggle to create social change. In this way, the group's approach to therapeutic understanding stimulated the development of a collective consciousness of both victimization and group empowerment. Therapy was an educational process and an organizing tool, as well as a technique for self-improvement. It could be referred to as a method of developing critical consciousness, of "consciousness raising" or "conscientization," although the prisoners did not use these terms, preferring the term "attitudes."

The prisoners' very definition of therapy was an activist one, based on a theory of the need for a dialectically related change process directed at three levels: the individual, the small group, and institutionalized aspects of the social structure. The goal of therapy was to produce a state of good "health" on all three fronts. This involved a dialectical and interdependent change process aimed at making individuals "healthy" by changing their negative understandings of themselves, creating a

"healthful" solidarity among the group to take action, and changing "external" conditions to make them "healthier" for disadvantaged people; changes toward "good health" on each front were understood as supporting and stimulating "good health" changes on the others. Thus, at the individual level, desired changes in individual consciousness included mental attitudes, feelings, and perceptions; political consciousness; and behaviors such as language, posture, and manners. In the prisoners' view, changing these behaviors was inextricably linked to changing one's self-image. At the group level, the goal was to transform the group, as their distinction between "self-help" and "group-help" illustrates. The prisoners' therapeutic theory was of the need for parallel changes in individuals and group interactions leading to increased political collective consciousness and solidarity and "rehabilitation" of social arrangements, as well as to increased individual mental health.

The therapy program even contained an element of research. One of the prisoners' primary approaches to research took place in the context of the therapy program. This approach consisted of gathering data about the prisoners' past and current experiences, both outside and inside the prison, through the therapeutic dialogue process. The prisoners collectively reflected on the meanings of these "data," and common themes were identified, developed, and collectively analyzed. From the perspective of therapeutic goals, the most important part of this knowledge-production process was that collective critical reflection (viewed as research) helped to change both the individuals' and the group's "sick" self-perceptions to "healthy"

ones.

The Prisoners' Program as Activism

The prisoners' program was clearly activist in part. It was a particular brand of activism that used grand theory but only very localized activism, and that allowed thorough interpenetration of the program's therapeutic, educational, and research goals with its social change goals.

Struggle by the Grassroots at the Grassroots Level. The prisoners' theory of action assumed that struggle was entirely their own responsibility. Though they sometimes spoke of how their struggle was related to the struggles of "all Third World Peoples", they relied only on their own local organization. For the most part, they were not part of outside organizational efforts such as labor unions or political parties (the only exception I know of was the participation of some individuals in Puerto Rican nationalist parties and organizations). They had little contact with outside leaders and movement-oriented organizational structures, except for other prisoner leaders and organizations at their local prison with whom they were personally familiar and whom they trusted. They depended on developing their own leadership and relied mainly on themselves, rather than outside leadership and participation. Trust of "outsiders" was difficult to develop; the prisoners wanted to keep close control of their group. This pattern was understandable in the prison,

where the prisoners were physically isolated from other action groups and where extreme suspicion was justifiable. However, it was less understandable when the group moved into the South Bronx, where, paradoxically it became ever more insulated from contact with other movement groups. As the group became progressively more mistrustful, it splintered into smaller subgroups. The group's cooperative relationship with the Committee for Hispanic Inmates was an exception to this pattern, but the Committee was the outgrowth of the group's own efforts to gain outside support for its own struggle, and even so, the former prisoners' group came eventually to be alienated from the Committee. The prisoners' emphasis on the importance of grassroots people in creating social change implicitly critiques vanguardist approaches, and creates a barrier to the involvement of outsiders.

Local Actors, Local Action, Local Struggle. At the time I arrived, the prisoners were working mainly to change local prison policies and regulations to improve their own local conditions, though they were aware that the possibilities for creating change locally had been forged by changes in state corrections policy after the Attica riot. The Committee's strategy was to apply pressure at the state level by coordinating and organizing community-based political and legal support for the prisoners' own efforts and for statewide policy changes on behalf of Latino prisoners. The prisoners seemed to appreciate the effectiveness of applying pressure at higher levels of government, but when the group re-established itself in the Bronx, it returned to local-action strategies, relying once again on its own grassroots local

constituency to change narrowly local conditions.

Changing Different Aspects of the "Structure." The prisoners' action approach assumed, as noted above, that action was needed at three levels. In this sense, the prisoners' theory of action might be viewed as being multidimensional, but although the strategy was multidimensional in the sense that it addressed three levels, the prisoners worked in only limited ways at each level. For example, the prisoners did not think of the academic discourse in criminology as a terrain for attacking the "structure.". Neither did they try to change the "structure" by organizing voters to press for changes in laws; at one time I tried to organize elected New York State representatives to pass a law in the state legislature requiring bilingual education programs in the state prisons, but the group was not interested.

Action to Change the "External" Structure. The prisoners worked to change aspects of the "external" structure both through resistance and creation of alternatives. Forms of resistance included direct action to resist prison policies with sit-down strikes and petition drives, but studying critical political theory and Puerto Rican colonial history might also be considered a form of resistance. The struggles for equal educational opportunity for Spanish speaking prisoners and protection of Spanish-speaking prisoners' rights within prison rules were examples of the group's efforts to change prison conditions. The prisoners also pressured the prison administration to extend the college release program to Spanish speaking prisoners.

And of course, they continually organized to maintain and improve the GED class despite interference from the administration and "security" (the guards).

The GED class, Drug Therapy, and other prisoner-initiated activities were all forms of action to create alternative institutions within a larger, more oppressive one. These programs provided spaces in which successive "generations" of prisoners could carry on with research, education, therapy, and action. When the Latino prisoners re-established its organization in the Bronx, their friends and relatives joined in the effort to create new institutions.

Action to Change "Internal" and Interpersonal Structures. The prisoners' struggle to change themselves and their group were also actions of both resistance and creation. They attempted to change people's "attitudes" to resist the imposition of dominant culture-based valuations of their "rightful" places in the society and to replace self-defeating and group-defeating consciousnesses and behaviors with empowered and enlightened consciousnesses and behaviors.

Educational, Therapeutic, and Research Aspects of the Prisoners' Activism. It could easily be said that all of the prisoners' education activities were oriented either directly or indirectly toward some kind of social action. For example, prisoners learning to read and write Spanish or English were taking action on themselves, to improve themselves directly, while at the same time empowering themselves to take a more active part in the group's social change efforts. Learning skills of any kind

were actions directed at improving and empowering both the individual for his own personal well-being and the group for its political-action purposes.

A more unusual aspect of the prisoners' activism relates to the way action contributes to education and research. When the prisoners took action to alter themselves and the "conditions," they then used these experiences to reflect on the effectiveness of their actions. This reflection was used both to better plan future action strategies and to educate themselves about the nature of their relationship with power-holders; they used the experiences to understand themselves and their position (as both powerless and powerful). For example, if they attempted to change a policy by first talking to the lower administrator in charge, and he did not at first respond at all, but did respond when the organization sent a group of its coordinators to speak to the prison Superintendent, they learned something about the interrelationship of power between themselves, the lower administrator, and the Superintendent. They could then use this experience as a basis for theorizing about their experiences more generally as well as to plan their next action strategy more effectively.

This kind of reflection on action was also an important form of research on the group's situation. The prisoners gathered practical information to help either their resistance efforts, for instance, intelligence about who among the prisoner population and the prison staff administration might help them or hinder them, or the identity of prisoners the administration was using as "spies." They also tried to gather information about resources that would help them construct alternatives. For example, they did research to identify outside programs supplying volunteers to the

prison.

The prisoners' social actions were also therapeutic, because they helped change individuals and the group, for example, by increasing individuals' senses of self-esteem and efficacy. So, as therapy aimed to empower individuals and the group, action reinforced therapeutic progress.

COMMON FEATURES IN THE PRISONERS' PRACTICE

The prisoners did not use the following terms to describe their practice, but the terms help characterize the prisoners' overall program, or praxis.

Emancipatory Practice. The program was an emancipatory practice both because the prisoners' goals were emancipatory and because the processes characterizing the practice were emancipatory in themselves. The group's goal--to "elevate" itself collectively and individually--was emancipatory in the sense of freeing itself from the constraints of an unequal and unjust social structure. Although the long range goals were to change the very nature of "the system" to create economic, social, and political equality (a revolutionary goal), the group worked toward this larger goal by trying to change aspects of "the system" in very modest ways in its immediate environment. While their emancipatory practice was directed toward changing the nature of the external structure, it was also directed toward emancipating people from ideological control.

Critical Practice. I use this term broadly, rather than to refer to critical theory as developed by the Frankfurt School. The ways in which the prisoners' practice was critical included the following three. First, the emancipatory thrust of the prisoners' program was embedded in their critique of capitalism, imperialism, racism, ethnic domination, and (for the former prisoners' group) sexism. The group sought to undermine the "objective" structures supporting these forms of domination and exploitation. Second, their practice was critical in the sense of critiquing their own and each others' otherwise taken for granted assumptions about their own "natural" inferiority, low income status, etc.; the idea was to encourage group members to look inside themselves to discover the ways their feelings and ideas helped keep them in a subordinate and powerless socio-economic and political position. (This second aspect of critical practice is the same as "critical reflection", discussed briefly below.) Third, the group encouraged everyone to express constructive criticism of each other's destructive behaviors and attitudes.

Critical Reflection. Combining a marxist-based analysis of capitalism and techniques of psychotherapeutic encounter, the group worked to unmask or uncover structural and ideological aspects of "the system" that would have otherwise remained hidden. The group dialogue process provided a method for developing critical reflection, while the combination of therapy, political education, experience in struggle, and various kinds of research provided the content.

Emphasis on Process Over Product. The program's goals were very much process oriented. While the prisoners had some visions, hopes, and ideas about what kind of social order they were working toward, they valued the process as the most important revolutionary aspect.

Praxis-Based Program. All four elements of the group's practice (education, therapy, action, and research) were praxis-based. Theory was tested by practice. Also, practice was not purely instrumental in nature, in that the prisoners used a theoretical guide for their action. Their theories of education, therapy, action, and research responded to what they learned by trying them out in an ever-changing social context.

The Personal as Political. While the prisoners' organization was concerned about the politics of the "objective" social structure, it was also was concerned about the politics of interpersonal relations. The process emphasized the importance of recognizing in their own behaviors the ways they were unwittingly participating in the reproduction of their own individual and collective domination. They strove to constitute within their own organization a space self-consciously free from the dominant structure of social relations, creating an interpersonal atmosphere of consideration and trust.

Self-Reliance and Self-Help, Peer-Direction and Self-Organization. Theirs was

a collectively self-reliant model, implicitly emphasizing the importance of grassroots people and critiquing vanguardist approaches to creating social change. The model left little place in the process for outside experts, such as educators or academy-based intellectuals, to be leaders. The practice, instead, was mainly self-organized and self-directed--a peer-directed, grassroots process. The group did sometimes request and accept help from teachers like myself, volunteers like my husband, and other professors and students from local colleges, and members of the Committee for Hispanic Inmates, but such outside participation was continually a subject for questioning.

"Family" Relationships. The prisoners spoke of their group as a family and used emotional responses to the difficulties of prison life as a basis to strengthen ties among the "brothers." This emotional aspect was, of course, most apparent in the Drug Therapy program, but emotional ties affected education and action as well.

Dialogue. Dialogue was a characteristic part of the prisoners' practice throughout. Regardless of whether the group was focused on education, therapy, action, or research, dialogue between and among the members of the group was the interactional basis for the activity at hand. Dialogue was also the basis for establishing more egalitarian terms for discourse with outsiders such as myself; rather than accepting normally taken-for-granted assumptions about the terms for discourse that cede "experts" control over conversation (e.g. lectures), the prisoners sought to

gain equal control. At times, however, the group did accept a lecture format; I prepared lessons and presented them, as did some professors who gave political education classes, and the prisoners themselves who sometimes gave informational lectures.

Mutual Self-Disclosure. Self-disclosure facilitated dialogue. Expectations of mutual self-disclosure helped to maintain dialogue as a democratizing influence both on interactions among group members and between the group and "outsiders" like myself. Reciprocal self-disclosure enhanced the group's educational, therapeutic, action-based, and research activities, and strengthened the group's practice by helping to create and maintain solidarity through increased trust and emotional interdependence. And expectations for mutual self-disclosure also increased the egalitarian thrust of the discourse between the group and outside 'experts".

Democratic Participation. The prisoners' practice was also deeply participatory. Broad-based participation was expected as even the most poorly educated prisoners were encouraged to assume responsibilities for the program. The prisoners' organization and group practice stressed democratic decision-making and responsibility-taking throughout, although the group sometimes fell short of its ideals by perpetuating an "in-group" of leaders.

Communitarian Participation. Although the term "democratic participation"

describes accurately the group's efforts to distribute power among themselves, it does not adequately convey the prisoners' value on community. Much of the impulse for their participatory ideology was embedded in their strong sense of community, and the value they placed on an extended family model. This impulse has cultural roots in the Puerto Rican and Dominican experience. Of course, the communitarian value was not without its problematic aspect; questions arose about who was in and who was out of the community, eventually causing fragmentation of the group in the Bronx. The group's definition of community and communitarian participation did not equate community with ethnicity or blood relation. Instead, it relied strongly on shared sense of political community, shared oppression, and a shared understanding of the emancipatory project.

Collective Participation. Collective decision-making and collective action characterized the group's practice in all spheres. Collective decision making and practice reflected the group's emphasis on the importance of the group as a collectivity equal to, and sometimes superseding the importance of the individuals within the group. Throughout, the group was concerned about how to "elevate" itself collectively--as the Latino prisoners' organization, Puerto Rican and other Latino prisoners, prisoners throughout the state system, the Latino community at large, and poor Third World people throughout the world.

Collaborative Participation. The group sometimes relied on limited

collaboration with outside individuals and groups. The group formed coalitions with other entities like the Black prisoners' organization, and collaborated with outsiders such as my husband, members of the Committee for Hispanic Inmates, cooperative prison teachers, counselors, and staff, who might be able to support the program.

Dialectical Understanding. Philosophically and practically, the group questioned the usually taken for granted permanence of "objective" institutions, instead presuming them to be in a dialectical relationship with their own minds and bodies. Human activity could affect institutions, but at the same time, aspects of "the system" were deeply embedded in their consciousness and actions, limiting their ability to change "the system." Critical reflection was needed to understand how "the system" was buried in their ways of thinking and feeling and being--and critical reflection required dialogue, a dialectic method.

Just as the prisoners understood the nature of the (oppressive) "system" as sets of dialectical relationships among and within the structures of "objective" social, economic and political institutions; interpersonal relationships; and individual subjectivities, their program to resist these structures was also dialectical. To accommodate the need to change these dialectically related aspects of "the system," their program embodied a elements aimed at changing all three kinds of structures. The elements of the program (education, therapy, action, and research) were all tightly connected to each other. For example, the prisoners believed that changes brought about by their education program affected their ability to achieve collective

action, which in turn changed their self-understandings and group consciousness, which in turn changed their research questions, and so on. Although at many times, the group used several dialectically related methods simultaneously, they also sometimes emphasized focusing on one at a time (e.g. raising consciousness in individuals).

Of course one of the most fundamental aspects of the group's practice was the assumption of the basic dialectical relationship between the individual and the group; possibilities for "critical" consciousness were intertwined between individuals and the group, as well as possibilities for action. Similarly, the prisoners presumed a dialectic within individuals, between that part of the individual in whom the structure is embedded and that part which sees other possibilities--between an unenlightened common sense that takes for granted the permanence of oppressive structures and an enlightened critical consciousness that sees the possibilities for change.

Other examples of dialectical understanding abounded: for example, efforts to empower themselves were dialectically related to efforts to take power: strengthening themselves put them in a better position to take power, and taking power was understood as a means to empower themselves by changing their ideas of their capacities. Certainly the assumption of a dialectic between reflection and action was central to their program. Dialectics were also important to their research approach, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Combination of Oppositional and Creative Practice. The prisoners' practice

was oppositional or critical on the one hand, and creative on the other: it combined resistance with the creation of alternatives. The prisoners' activism both opposed existing structures and created new ones. So too, were the roles the prisoners created for themselves both oppositional and creative: at the same time, they rejected the standard role models for teachers, therapists, activists, or researchers, and created alternatives to the standard models. The prisoners' program as a whole can be readily viewed as an alternative institutional structure comprised of educational, therapeutic, action, and research-based classes and activities, and the very creation of all the various classes, programs, and activities provided concrete evidence to the Latino prisoner population of their collective ability to create an alternative structure. As such, the educational program provided a context for the ongoing creative work of successive "generations" of Latino prisoners.

Holistic, Unified Process. The prisoners' program overlapped functions (education, therapy, action, and research) and roles (teacher-student, therapist-patient, etc.); it was, in short, intensely holistic. With their holistic approach, the prisoners avoided many of the dichotomies often taken for granted in other forms of emancipatory practice. Rather than creating distinctions between doing research and education, for example, or between being an activist and being an educator, the prisoners' emancipatory practice allowed functions and roles to support each other freely. Education, therapy, action, and research were the elements that combined into a sort of multi-practice, so that all could be found in any activity. Teacher, therapist,

activist, and researcher were multiple roles any individual could assume.

CONCLUSION

This chapter attempts to capture the prisoners' practice in some categories of academic sociology. I hope I have given sufficient concrete description to allow the nature of the practice to show through the abstract categories that can make an organic entity appear as a set of parts. I believe that the prisoners' program, by going so far in the direction of unifying practices that are usually kept separate, is a model that will stimulate thinking among committed academic intellectuals and thoughtful activists in the struggles of socially oppressed groups. As Chapter 9 shows, the contrast between the prisoners' and academy-based emancipatory and/or participatory research models provides additional subjects for thought.

My accounts of the prisoners' process from the perspectives of education, therapy, or action have been rudimentary--each could have been the subject of a dissertation. And each of these views of the process could have been acceptable to the prisoners (although they would have resisted any codification of their program). The view of their program from the perspective of research--the one I have not yet presented--is the view I believe the prisoners would have most likely objected to or rejected. I believe they would have felt their research process was less important to their practice than the other processes. While educators, therapists, and activists; education, therapy, and action were part of their world, researchers and academic

research were not, and they most certainly felt alienated from academia, as I found out more than once. It is, however, the view of the practice as a small-group research process embedded in a methodology for social change that I have chosen to emphasize, as it is this view that is closest to my own interest and situation.

NOTE

1. The context for what I refer to as "the prisoners' group," "the prisoners' struggle," "the prisoners' program," "process," or "research approach," shifted through three principal time periods: the early period of my teaching in the prison (about the first year and a half); the middle period when the Committee for Hispanic Inmates was involved with the prisoners' group (about the next three years); and the later period when some members re-formed their organization as a former prisoners' group in the South Bronx (approximately the last year and a half). These periods overlapped, but it is sometimes necessary to refer to one period or another, when generalizations about the "prisoners' process" cannot be accurately applied to the group during all three periods. Most often, distinctions between the different periods are not necessary, and I mean to include the middle and later periods when I refer to "the prisoners'" struggle, program, or process.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRISONERS' APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE

In this chapter I focus on the prisoners' research approach as an emancipatory practice. Of course, the group's research should be understood as being thoroughly embedded in their overall program, which altogether can be construed as a broad emancipatory process. No matter whether the program is considered as a whole, or only in its research aspect, the prisoners' practice embodied their emancipatory effort in response to the three levels of "the system" described in Chapter 4. The prisoners' processes of education, therapy, and action could equally be seen as emancipatory projects.

The prisoners' research process embodied and reflected their struggle for equality and justice. It can be thought of as a participatory form of "emancipatory research," to which the education, therapy, and action parts of their overall program contribute. "Emancipatory research" and "emancipatory science" (e.g. Comstock, 1982) are useful terms to describe the efforts of some social scientists interested in developing the potential of research and researchers to help disadvantaged groups and "to understand the maldistribution of power and resources underlying our society (and) also to change that maldistribution to help create a more equal world" (Lather, 1986b). The need for an explicit emancipatory interest in social theory and research was expressed early by Habermas (1973), but others have since elaborated notions of

emancipatory research by one name or another. Some feminists interested particularly in "feminist methodology" (e.g. Lather, 1986a, 1991), critical theorists (Fay, 1975, 1977), "radical" adult educators following in Freire's footsteps (e.g., Maguire, 1987), and others have begun a dialogue that can bring together some common elements of models from the various disciplines into a working framework, and eventually a theory, of emancipatory research. The prisoners' research approach has much to contribute to such a theory, not least because the actors in the prisoners' model were grassroots knowledge producers, not academics.

This chapter describes the prisoners' approach to research from their perspective, although I present their view with the same caveats offered in Chapter 3. My primary goal here is to develop a view of how the prisoners' research model is emancipatory and participatory. Chapter 6 looks analytically at the prisoners' research model, and in Chapter 9, I discuss several academic models of emancipatory and participatory research and show how they relate to each other and to the prisoners' model. Though I take the liberty here of abstracting the prisoners' research process out of their entire program for analytic purposes, I re-emphasize that the prisoners' research was not in reality a discrete process operating separately, but was interlocked dialectically with the other three elements of their program: education, therapy, and action.

HOW THE PRISONERS USED THE TERM "RESEARCH"

The prisoners used the term "research" to refer to those activities directed toward producing the many kinds of knowledge they needed for their struggle. Their use of the term was, of course, not based in social scientific definitions of research which imply the use of academy-recognized scientific methods to produce knowledge legitimated by academic standards. They did not restrict their use of the term to the production of knowledge that was new to a scientific community, but included all knowledge that was new for them. Sometimes, however, their research efforts did result in the production of new knowledge within a more social scientific meaning. Because the group's implicit definition of research centered on only that knowledge needed for their emancipatory efforts, other knowledge, even what some claim to be important as emancipatory knowledge, was disregarded. Thus, although their model contributes to the elaboration of the meaning of emancipatory knowledge, their approach to the production of such knowledge through research was limited, from the standard social scientific perspective, by this narrowness of focus on their own local struggle.

Reference to "Research" in the Group's Documents

Only one reference to "research" appears in the prisoner organization's internal documents. The context is a description of the functions of the various committees of their organization, such as "Briefing and Recruitment" and "Newsletter". "Research" is included in this list. According to the document, "it is

the job of the research department to gather material relevant to the class the individual is planning on giving." The reference to this narrow definition of research in the document is much more limited than I found the prisoners' actual usage to be. The reference here to research applies to the gathering of knowledge already produced and in print: "...The library is open to the research department...due to our present conditions it is hard to get information for any class, but if the class plays a role by donating some of their materials like newspapers, magazines, books...with the help of the librarian going into the books in the library it will be accomplished...so the success of the research department mainly depends on the cooperation of the class and their willingness to (give) up their private collection for a length of time."

What the document purposely did not make clear was the political nature of the classes. The purpose of these classes was to raise the political consciousness of people in the group. This was a class without an (outside) teacher; it was self-run, although outside volunteers were invited at times to give lectures on Black history, Puerto Rican history, Marxist theory, etc. As the document used the term, "research" meant first finding out ("researching") what books or materials would be useful and learning (also "researching") where they could be found (often from volunteers from local colleges). Though the document does not make it clear, the role of these sorts of research in the political education class context was to produce an ongoing stream of new knowledge for those involved, as they appropriated and critiqued concepts of political theory and history, producing cycles of new hypotheses about the causes and solutions for oppression. Clearly, the way the prisoners used the

concept of "research" here very closely overlapped with a narrow definition of "education" as the appropriation of already-existing knowledge.

It is interesting to note that virtually the only written documentation indicating the prisoners' definition of research is this one, which refers to education and research in the same breath. This gives a strong indication of how closely related the group construed the processes of producing knowledge and educating themselves.

Broadened Use of the Term "Research" Over Time

In presenting an inside view of the prisoners' approach to "research," it is important to note that their own use of the term became broader over the time I worked with them. During the early period, as I recall, the term was usually used either to describe the gathering of various kinds of concrete information useful for practical purposes or of information about Marxist theory or political history. After the Committee began working with the group to develop a better data base to document the need for bilingual programs, the prisoners began to use the term "research" in a way that sometimes more closely approximated the social scientific meaning. They became very enthusiastic about the idea of gathering data by using interviews and questionnaires, and began to refer to questionnaires and interviews as research. Finally, the group used a research method of gathering data by sharing their experiences and analyzing them critically in a way that approximates feminists' "consciousness-raising" practice and Freire's "conscientization." Although they used

the same process both in the prison and in the Bronx, it was only after the group reorganized as the former prisoners' group that it self-consciously considered consciousness raising as a research technique and actually referred to it as "research."

THE PRISONERS' RESEARCH APPROACH

Emancipatory Participatory Research

Emancipatory Research

The prisoners' research, like their program as a whole, was directed toward the direct improvement of the lives of their group members, their families, and their local communities (the prisoners and, later, people in the South Bronx), and toward structural change at the personal, group, and social-structural levels. Thus, the broad goals of the prisoners' research were to free themselves and others from oppression and exploitation, especially from racism and capitalism, and to create a more just and equal society. More specifically, the prisoners conducted research to empower themselves by changing themselves and by seeking to change external arrangements as much as they could. Some of the research empowered the prisoners by putting them in a better position to critically understand "the system" and their predicament within it. Some research empowered by providing information and knowledge to strengthen individuals and the group. Other research helped provide knowledge and strengthen group process in order to help the group gain more control over its conditions by

challenging the external structure's informal and formal rules. And other research provided knowledge directly helpful for the struggle at hand to change the external arrangements.

As the prisoners' program as a whole was emancipatory both in intent and in methodology or process, the prisoners' approach to research was emancipatory in the same ways. It differs from some prominent academic models of emancipatory research or emancipatory social science, such as "committed" anthropology (e.g., Porath, 1979) and critical ethnography (e.g., Anderson, 1989) in that it is not concerned with certain issues, such as the role for the academic researcher in emancipatory research. But in more fundamental ways, the prisoners' research model is similar to the academic emancipatory research models, most importantly in its search for a research process and for kinds of knowledge that contribute to the emancipation of disadvantaged groups.

Participatory Research

The prisoners' research and their overall program were participatory in the sense that the responsibilities were shared broadly among the members. The strongly participatory nature of all the group's activities was based in their belief in collective self-direction and self-help and in democratic and communitarian values. Rather than relying on outside experts or direction, the group preferred to guide its own process; and rather than turning certain people from within their groups into experts with specialized roles like "researchers", the prisoners sought to create an inclusive process

with non-specialized roles. There is a growing literature about participatory research approaches (e.g. Maguire, 1987), many of which have been developed by adult educators and are based on Freire's method for radical adult education (Freire, 1970, 1985; Mackie, 1981). I discuss some of these participatory research models in relation to a broader framework for emancipatory participatory research in Chapter 9.

Emancipatory Participatory Research

I have chosen to describe the prisoners' research approach as "emancipatory participatory research." The prisoners' approach to research could be characterized in other important ways as well: as dialectical; as reflective; as relying heavily on dialogue, etc. However, all these characteristics (which parallel the characteristics of the prisoners' program as a whole) are related in some way to either its emancipatory or participatory qualities. I focus on the emancipatory and participatory aspects because these two descriptives are among the most characteristic and defining features of the prisoners' research model and because much of the academic literature devoted to developing research models similar to the prisoners' refers to those models as "emancipatory" or "participatory." As I attempt to show in Chapter 9, all the academy-based models which can also be described as either "emancipatory" or "participatory" or both, whether or not they describe themselves in those terms, together with the prisoners' research approach, can be compared and combined to construct a better understanding of "emancipatory participatory research". This is my principal goal for the dissertation. Although I now think, as explained in Chapter 3,

that it would be a mistake to propose and prescribe a single emancipatory research model, it seems useful to show some of the ways the various models complement and critique each other. An analysis of my newer fieldwork project in Chapter 8 shows the usefulness and the problems of combining various models in practice.

Knowledge and Process in the Prisoners' Research

Producing Knowledge

The prisoners' emancipatory program and project required a knowledge base for effective struggle to create change in "the system" at the structural, group, and personal levels. One of the major contributions an analysis of the prisoners' model makes to an understanding of participatory emancipatory research is to elaborate several issues around the relationship between the production process for emancipatory knowledge and the kinds of knowledge produced. If one understands something about how and why the group chose to produce certain kinds of emancipatory knowledge, and how this knowledge was similar to and different from the knowledge social scientists produce (either "emancipatory" or not), something can be learned about how the politics of knowledge production affects methodology, epistemology, and the knowledge produced. Also, understanding how the group's struggle defined the kinds of emancipatory knowledge it needed and for whom, in whose interest, and from whose perspective the knowledge was produced, helps show both the advantages and limitations of the knowledge produced by a group for an

emancipatory process including people other than themselves. Finally, an analysis of the prisoners' research process helps place the prisoners as "organic" intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) whose work offers a partial corrective to existing academy-based theory about the place of grassroots intellectuals in the larger struggle.

The Importance of the Research Process

The prisoners' research was a set of emancipatory practices within an overall emancipatory program. The research can also be viewed as a fairly self-contained emancipatory process, especially from the perspective of social scientific concepts of "emancipatory research" or Freirian based "participatory research." But seeing the prisoners' research as part of an integral emancipatory practice points the way to a general theory of emancipatory practice that would unify not only the four subsidiary practices, but also help develop a model for emancipatory and justice-oriented social movements that connects disciplines and modes of practice (e.g. activism and theory, academic research and grassroots group process). Here, I look at the prisoners' research process as an emancipatory practice abstracted from the whole program, in order to contribute to a dialogue about emancipatory and/or participatory research.

Because research was an integral element in the prisoners' overall emancipatory program, the research process was as important to the prisoners' group as the knowledge the research produced. This interdependence of process and content accounted for some of the unconventional goings-on during research activities, such as the use of the meetings for drafting the APA paper to teach group members reading,

vocabulary, and public speaking skills. It also helps explain why the prisoners evolved a research method that used revelation of personal problems and interpersonal encounter as data gathering techniques. The process-content link is a critical element of the prisoners' research model, especially in terms of understanding its similarities to and differences from other research models.

The Issue of Perspective

There has been much discussion among critics of social science about how sociological, anthropological, and other research too often reflects the interests and point of view of the dominant group or groups in power (e.g. Smith, 1987; Grosz and de Lepervanche, 1988; Harding and Hintikka, 1983; Huizer and Mannheim, 1979). These and other critics have asserted that the notion of scientific objectivity is called into question when science reflects the interest and position of those producing the knowledge. Others have noted that all too often researchers fail even to acknowledge their "position," standpoint, or grounding (e.g. Stanley and Wise, 1983), asserting that if researchers openly revealed this information, readers might find it easier to take into account the biases inherent in the research that may affect the selection of research topics and methods, and the interpretation of results.

Questions of who can be knowers and how the position of the knower affects scientific "truth" and "objectivity" are currently fertile territory for critique and debate in the philosophy of science (e.g. Code, 1991, Nielsen, 1990). For example,

whose "positioned" perspective best comprehends the "truth" of a situation? Debates address whether there is one "truth" or many "truths," what kinds of "triangulations" can best test research results to determine the "truth" or "truths," and so forth (e.g., Lather, 1991; Fay, 1987). The prisoners' research implicitly engages with these and other related issues. I discuss such epistemological issues in Chapter 9 to show the role of a dialogue of standpoints in a model for emancipatory participatory research.

The "Position" (Identity and Interest) of the Prisoner-Researchers

The position of the prisoners as researchers greatly affected the perspective they took for their research--especially in choosing and defining the topics for research, and gathering and analyzing the data. There were several important aspects of their position that affected their research.

Identities. The group's research position was shaped, perhaps above all, by the identities that had shaped its members' life experiences. Being Latino and/or Puerto Rican was a central identity, or prism through which the prisoners' view was filtered. For some, being Black was equally as important as being Latin, but for most, being Latin was more central. In the prison, all the participant-researchers were men, and certainly their identity as men shaped their perspective, as the group learned when it moved to the Bronx and found that the women's perspective was different in some ways. Of course the experience of being prisoners was a critically important definitional identity that in fact was probably the most central defining

perspective for research conducted while in the prison. And other identities mattered as well, though perhaps to a lesser degree: that of being drug addicts or alcoholics, of having been born either on the island of Puerto Rico or the mainland, or of identifying with certain religious beliefs.

The View From Social, Political, and Economic Disadvantage. The group's research perspective was very much shaped by personal, familial, and collective experiences of economic and social disadvantage. It was their own lives and the lives of people in similar circumstances that created the context from which they viewed the world and the problems they chose to address. The problems they selected to address through their research and other parts of their process came from the pain and trauma of poverty and from living in circumstances where their lives were threatened by street violence, drugs, and people in positions of authority who acted as gatekeepers and kept them from receiving basic health care and other services.

In short, the prisoners' view was from "below" (e.g. Gedicks, 1979; Nader, 1979), except as being disadvantaged by gender, as in the feminist perspective. They were part of an economically, racially, and ethnically oppressed "minority." When the group moved to the Bronx, the women in the group pressed for looking at the "system" from their perspective as well, from "below" as oppressed women.

The Positioned View From "Everyday Life" (Smith, 1987). The questions or problems the group's research addressed were grounded primarily in the personal

experiences of their everyday lives. They sought to understand, by doing research, their own concrete situation, both individually and collectively, and did so not by abstracting their lives from their situational context, but by trying to understand through their research the nature of the relationship between very specific and local and sometimes time-specific conditions and their overall predicament. This method is very similar to Ira Shor's "critical teaching" method of analyzing ordinary routines of life in a way that elicits underlying nature of the economic, political, and social structure causing the routines to be so (Shor, 1980, p. 60).

The Positioned View From Within Struggle. Whether the group chose to look "down" (at themselves and their situation) or "up" at powerful institutions (Nader, 1979), its view was grounded in its position as a collective participant in power relations with those institutions. The view was very much one of insiders to a struggle. The members of the group developed knowledge as insiders and full participants in several interrelated struggles, as described elsewhere. The group's position within struggle affected its research perspective partly by influencing it to select research topics on the basis of their pertinence to the group's struggle. Although some research topics were selected with a long view to the broad struggle, many were chosen because of the exigencies of the situation at hand and their relevance to the prisoners' needs on a day-to-day basis. The content of the research was also affected by the view from struggle--for example, the group often examined the dynamics of resistance and counter-resistance by "researching" what happened

when they tried a given strategy of resistance to prison policy.

Perspective as it Relates to the Construction of Research Objects

Social Structural Analysis of Inequality. For the most part, the prisoners' perspective was guided by their use of political/economic social analysis in the construction of the subject to be researched. The group was predisposed to develop knowledge that took for granted class division and class struggle, racism, and imperialism. Though these concerns were primary, other social structural relations of power, especially sexism, at times provided competing and complementary orientations for their research. Gender became important to the group when women became involved with the group in the Bronx, and began complaining about issues affecting them as women.

Psychological Constructs. Although the group depended heavily on a social structural perspective, it also sought to explain and interpret events and behaviors by grounding them at the psychological level. The group made connections between social structure and psychology by investigating such pressing phenomena as the mistreatment of prisoners by prison guards and examining "how the system plays on your mind" (see below). The therapeutic part of their program supported the use of both psychological constructs and social-structural constructs for analysis.

"Looking Up" and "Down" at the Same Time. The prisoners took for granted

that various aspects of the "system" were the principal topic for investigation, but because of their understanding of their own place within the "system" and their understanding of their need to change themselves as part of it, they understood that both oppressive institutions and themselves were important research objects. This meant "looking up" (at the structure) (e.g. Gedicks, 1979) and "down" (at themselves) at the same time. Both the (oppressive) aspects of the social structure and the (oppressed but still active) "objects" (themselves) were to be taken together and looked at in terms of their relationship with one another, not as unitary aspects of the social structure unaffected by each other.

The Prisoners as Subjects and Objects of Their Own Research. Built into their assumptions about the need to "look down" at themselves was another twist of perspective related to what is construed as the object of investigation: the prisoners were at once the researchers and research "objects" or topics of their own research. Unlike some introspective methods such as psychoanalysis, however, the prisoners studied themselves as shaped by oppressive relations in the social system.

Emancipatory Research for Whom?

The prisoners described their emancipatory project in very broad terms, seeing it as support for the struggles of disadvantaged groups including not only Puerto Ricans and other poor Latinos, but "Third World" and economically disadvantaged

peoples everywhere. In the Bronx, the group began to include women as another disadvantaged group. In practice, however, the group's program, including research, was concentrated almost entirely on benefitting itself. In the Bronx, the group made some effort to extend itself into the immediate community by providing an educational program for some of the children in the neighborhood, and it planned to rent a storefront to use as a center to organize from. However, fragmentation of the group began as soon as it moved to the Bronx. Participants in the Bronx-based group were no longer interested so much in the prisoners' struggle for bilingual education in the prison as they were in their everyday struggles in the Bronx, and their objectives became transformed. While research in the prison was done on behalf of the prisoners, and was framed by the nature of the struggle there, the research began to change once the group re-formed in the Bronx. Wherever the group was located, the struggle was largely defined by the conditions of that location, despite the group's theoretical commitment to a broader community for struggle, and the group's research was primarily committed to the struggle at that location.

The group's struggle was organizationally isolated. As far as I know, the group was never formally affiliated with any larger organized progressive movement groups, either in the prison or the Bronx. Individuals had of course been part of organized gangs in the past, and some individuals were either formally or informally connected with the Puerto Rican independence movement, but even those individuals had very limited connections with organizations. They were not connected with labor unions or the labor movement--as members of the "underclass", most had never held

union jobs. The group's own model for social change was grassroots organizing, and its centeredness on its own activities seemed to indicate a rather grandiose implicit (and unexamined) assumption that the center for "the struggle" was their group. I am sure the group would have denied this vigorously, because it did not fit with their theory of supporting grassroots struggles everywhere, but I would argue that in practice it was their operating philosophy. Because the struggle centered on local, grassroots issues, so too did the research.

Participatory Research by Whom?

The Self-Help Approach

The group's philosophy and practice relied very much on a self-help or "group-help" approach (as the Bronx group re-formulated the concept of "self-help" for the APA paper). The underlying assumptions were that individuals in the group had skills, knowledge, and abilities which, when combined with those of the other members, could serve the group well; that relying on themselves and each other would provide an incentive for personal growth, which in turn would empower both the individuals involved and the group as a whole; and that the resources the group could provide itself, especially if augmented in some ways by reliable committed outsiders, were adequate. Although none were formally trained as educators, therapists, activists, or researchers, group members took on all of these roles as part of their general self-help approach. They were not academically trained researchers,

of course, but they knew that they needed to produce several kinds of knowledge as part of struggle, and so became researchers. The prisoners (and former prisoners and associates in the Bronx) were "participatory researchers" who mainly "participated" with each other.

Related to the self-help, or group-help perspective, but also quite different from a political theoretical viewpoint, was the group's belief that it was not only beneficial to struggle for itself, but that doing so was an obligation. The prisoners did not think that people who were not themselves directly oppressed were truly part of the struggle. They implicitly assumed that, as the struggle was their burden, their research should serve the struggle directly, and that it was up to them and only them to decide what research to do, which methods to use, and what to do with the results. Because the group was so taken up with its own struggle, it tended to ignore other struggles. The prisoner group's sense of "owning" the struggle and deserving to control it presented problems for trying to work with other groups.

The Role of Outsiders

Although the prisoners sometimes demonstrated an interest and/or ability to engage in theorizing as academy based intellectuals often do, they had little sympathy for academy-based intellectuals as a class, who were seen as "elites," incapable of understanding what "goes down" in the streets. Individual academy-based intellectuals were accepted and seen as being helpful so long as they gave the group concrete help of some kind, which sometimes included instruction in Marxist theory

or other academic subjects. Individuals like my husband who taught in universities were valued for their ability to teach classes and for providing other services like bringing in books and other classroom resources. They were also appreciated as advocates. And finally, they were appreciated as personal friends. However, they were rarely appreciated for the intellectual work the academics engaged in outside the prison. The group was not interested in these intellectuals' efforts within their academic disciplines to work indirectly in the interests of disadvantaged groups, for example, by reframing issues from a progressive perspective. The intellectuals were appreciated only for what they could contribute directly to the group's grassroots struggle.

Though some academy-based intellectuals probably had produced research studies or theory that might have contributed to the prisoners' project, this kind of intellectual work was assumed to be irrelevant (at best), or biased, harmful, manipulative, or exploitative (at the worst), and was not appropriated by the group. (The group's assumptions were based heavily on their very negative impressions of academy-based researchers who did research in their communities through the Poverty Program of the 1960s.) Already critical of the role of capitalist institutions in the domination and exploitation of the "Third World," especially Puerto Rico, the group was also knowledgeable about the interconnections between corporations, banks, the government, and universities, causing them to be suspicious of anyone or any group with a connection to any one of these institutions. (The group's trip to the New York Hilton at the APA convention did nothing to calm their fears about such

interconnections). The prisoners were suspicious of anyone connected to a university, no matter how helpful or friendly. Theories constructed by academy-based intellectuals were suspect, no matter whether they were "critical" or not. So despite the group's emphasis on education and research, in this sense, its stance was anti-intellectual.

The prisoners did value and use knowledge produced by individuals and groups working on their behalf when that knowledge was explicitly pertinent to their needs or especially requested. For example, students working with my husband as volunteers helping the Latino Drug Therapy program "did research" for the group on rehabilitation programs, especially drug therapy programs in New York City. The Committee for Hispanic Inmates worked with the Latino prisoner organization to gather information that was directly pertinent to the organization's goals (such as determining the extent of bilingual staff and programs system-wide). In the Bronx, the group began to rely heavily on me to help them do "research" by gathering and presenting information that would be of practical use to the group. To the extent that individual academy-based intellectuals were content to do the kinds of research the prisoners wanted, interaction was possible. However, the academics typically offered their services more out of personal concern with the prisoners' situation than as part of their own research activities. So what was research for the prisoners was usually not research for the academic intellectuals who participated in it. I discuss two exceptions below.

As already noted, the group was not tied to other groups. This independence

shaded into a fear of outsiders, even those not connected to "capitalist" institutions. The group resisted collaborating with groups or individuals from outside their own organization. It even resisted collaboration with Latino former prisoners from other prisons. There was some good reason for this. Security was an ever-present concern; the group was always vigilant of the possibility that old gang-based or other rivalries would result in violence, and accordingly was reluctant to trust anyone members had not had an opportunity to know and come to trust over some time. The prisoners wanted to ensure that their struggle was not subverted by outside control, and so held tightly to the reins of their own organization. As an intrinsic part of their struggle, research was under similar control. Although others could help, the group controlled its own research tightly.

While there were some advantages for the group to rely so heavily on a self-help approach, and to control its own struggle, there were disadvantages as well. To the disadvantage of the Bronx-based group, its struggle could not be effectively linked with those of the other former prisoners. The result in practice was that the group found itself waging a self-contained, isolated struggle for which the members themselves had to provide most of the resources, even though their ability to do so was extremely limited. To the disadvantage of the Latino prisoners still in prison, the former prisoners' struggle was not sufficiently linked with the one continuing "behind the walls." (The reason was not only the self-imposed insularity of the former prisoners' group; a significant factor was the expense and inconvenience of maintaining long-distance contact with the prison.) If it had not been for the

Committee, which itself provided a link, the group would have completely dropped its struggle to help Latino prisoners gain bilingual education programs and staff. The research that the Bronx-based group produced never reached the prisoners still in prison, because the groups became so severely separated. And the research of the group that broke off early from the Bronx-based group was not exchanged with the main Bronx-based group.

The prisoners' independence cut them off from academic researchers. They thought of themselves as "researchers," but not as part of a larger intellectual community. The implications were first, that they did not avail themselves of topical academic research and theory that might have been useful to them, and second, that they did not see any relevance of the knowledge they had produced to the work of others in the academy-based intellectual community. Nor did they see that their work could contribute to the body of emancipatory knowledge produced by academic researchers by critiquing either standard or "critical" research. My husband and I convinced them to present their critique of standard rehabilitation and therapeutic ideology to an academic audience only when they were convinced of the side-benefits of doing the paper.

How Struggle Shaped the Research: Examples from the GED Class

In keeping with my effort to keep the prisoners' experience well in mind while trying to systematize it, I describe here the way the prisoners' research process looked

in a real-life setting. My purpose is to depict how the research approach was shaped by the prisoners' struggle. The examples below show how the research was sometimes influenced by a particular crisis moment; sometimes by major themes within their struggle, such as expanding the bilingual education program or showing outsiders that they were competent; and sometimes by deep theoretical questions, such as whether Marxist theory was adequate to explain social inequality. The research sometimes was a response to an individual's situation or problem, while at other times it was oriented around a collective issue. Although it may not be obvious to the reader at this point why the situations recounted below are about "research" any more than action, education, or therapy, the examples help ground an understanding of the prisoners' research in the realities of their situation.

In the GED class, several kinds of research often proceeded at once, along with other activities. There was frequently a need to deal with someone's individual problem with some aspect of the prison's policies or rules. Maybe someone's friend had tried to come to class, but the guard had said he wasn't "on the list" to be allowed out of his cell block to come to school that night. The friend who came to class would report the problem, and a dialogue would ensue: Who was the guard? Was this someone they had had trouble with before who had a "problem" with Latino prisoners getting an education in Spanish? Did anyone get a look at the list to make sure his name really wasn't on it? A "research" task was underway to uncover the source of the problem so that it could be solved. Similar kinds of problems affecting individual prisoners constantly came up: someone had completed an application for

entrance into the college release program, but the college representative had never received it; someone had taken the GED exam and passed it, but nothing was in his parole file to indicate this. In each of these cases, research was begun to gather information to help determine the problem's immediate cause, identify what resources were available to the group to help solve it, identify what immediate forces stood in the way of solving it, and theorize how this problem was a part of larger structural forces.

Even though these problems affected individual prisoners, the group as a whole took them on because of a sense of collective responsibility and an understanding of how the success or failure of the group depended on individuals' successes or failures. I often became involved in these kinds of "research" projects because as a teacher, I had some access to information through legitimate bureaucratic channels. I often wrote memos requesting information, which I was then able to pass on to the group.

Other struggles were always going on as well, all of which had one or more research efforts attached. If, for example, someone had heard a rumor that the education director was going to shut down our class on the pretense of not having enough classroom space, a series of research efforts would ensue: What class were they planning to put in our classroom? Who could get information on this? Who on the staff could be trusted to help the group find out what was happening and act as an advocate to keep the class where it was? What current leaders of the other prisoner organizations could be of help if needed?

In almost every class, someone's recent experience would provoke a personal struggle over conflicting perceptions of ability and inability, hopefulness and hopelessness, etc. Maybe someone had tried, but failed to get a different job in the prison. "Man, what you think, you get what you want the first time you try?" Turning to someone else, the questioner might say, "Do you usually get what you want the first time you try it?" In a confrontational tone, the person who thought he had been wronged might say, "What's wrong with expecting to get what you want the first time?" Others would be drawn into the dialogue. Does anyone get what they want the first time? What have others' experiences been? Given that some groups of people seem to have more advantages than others, and that individuals from more privileged groups usually have an easier time getting what they want the first time they try, what does that mean individuals from disadvantaged groups should do? The idea was for the person in crisis to involve himself, with the help of collective dialogue, in producing useful new knowledge and insight for himself about the ways he was setting himself up to fail, allowing the "system" to "get to" him.

The above struggles were immediate, limited, and very local, but other issues, such as the lack of bilingual education programs and staff, were somewhat broader and affected more people. The prisoners' emancipatory research proceeded at both of these levels of struggle. A third, more abstract and distant type of emancipatory research effort was at the theoretical level, as the prisoners tried to comprehend the limits and possibilities of Marxist theory and theories of imperialism and racism to explain their predicaments and the unequal social structure.

An example of how the prisoners experienced a need to produce theoretical knowledge is found in one person in my class, who appeared to need to do this kind of theoretical inquiry more than other prisoners, to make sense of his own especially unusual personal history. His story shows that the "conditions" that influence the kinds of research produced include the participants themselves, and that the nature of the struggle (and the kinds of research integrated into it) depends in part on the particular history and characteristics of the participants at any given time. This one prisoner's interest and ability to do theoretical research had the effect of drawing others into it, so that it was not simply "his" research.

His story, which I believe to be true, was that he had been born in Haiti in the 1950's, and his parents had been killed by the Duvalier regime. He had been adopted at an early age by a Dominican couple. He had very dark black skin, setting him a little apart from most of the lighter skinned Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, though he was monolingual in Spanish, and his expression was very Latin. His given name had been changed by the Dominican couple. As a teenager, he went back to Haiti, and was involved in the resistance against the government there. Because he became a hunted man for his political activities there, he changed his name again, then escaped Haiti with a price on his head. Somehow, he got to New York, but was an illegal alien, so he kept changing his name so that the immigration service could not catch up to him. He felt he was Black, Haitian, and Dominican/Latino, not one more than the other. Having no attachment to any name (he did not even know his given name), he seemed to express a quiet anonymity--of being any poor, Black, or Latino person. He

felt oppressed on many accounts, and was very conscious because of his concrete experiences, especially in Haiti, of the broad international face of poverty and political oppression.

He was more interested than most of the other prisoners in understanding his own predicament and class location within a framework of the nature of capitalism as a world system of domination and exploitation. This was an unusual situation in which the conditions of someone's individual personal history and struggle expanded the group's repertoire of research forms into new territory.

This person's experiences and personality propelled him to "research" theory, to take theory itself as the object of his investigation more so than the other people who came through my classes, although his "research" was an extension of the kind of research regularly done in the political education class. During breaks in the GED class, this student pursued the study of certain key ideas in marxist theory in dialogue with other people in the class. He would suggest a term or concept, like "the working class" or "capitalist exploitation", then ask, "Who is the 'working class'? Do you have to be a working person to be a person exploited by capitalism?" While some would avoid such discussions, others would become engaged. By exploring their lives against the concepts, they tried to figure out whether the concepts "worked" for them. One of the concepts that didn't "work" for them was the "lumpenproletariat"; they felt that even though they may not have fit a strict "traditional" marxist definition of workers from the working class, it was both their right and obligation to take an active part in class struggle. Part of their conclusion

was based on their analysis of the concept of "exploitation." Through dialogue, they sought "data" from their experiences that seemed to establish their having been exploited by the capitalist system--experiences with loan "sharks", expensive neighborhood "rip-off" stores, the lack of hospitals in their neighborhood when hospitals abounded in more affluent parts of the city, etc. The prisoners' method of using dialogue and reflection on their own experiences to test and critique theoretical concepts is similar to the method socialist-feminist women practiced at about the same time when they examined whether some "traditional" marxist concepts "worked" for them, examined in the light of their own experiences. For feminists, this resulted in a critique of marxist theory and included an expansion of "traditional" marxist concepts like the division of labor (Hartmann, 1981a, 1981b).

EDUCATION, THERAPY, AND ACTION IN THE PRISONERS' RESEARCH PROGRAM

As explained in Chapter 4, the prisoners' program could be properly presented from any one of four perspectives. Because this chapter examines the prisoners' program as research, I consider the education, therapy, and action parts of the program as they are interwoven with and contribute to the emancipatory participatory research process. To avoid being overly repetitious of the material in Chapter 4, I illustrate these relationships only briefly.

Education

It is hard to separate the educational and research processes analytically. Nevertheless, one can identify several ways that the educational program contributed to the prisoners' research efforts. A major contribution was that the educational classes provided a structured context, forum, and sometimes the impetus for research. The political education class is perhaps the clearest case in point, as the prisoners' action of creating this self-directed structured class setting made explicit their commitment to educating themselves about political theory and history. Acknowledging the need to learn this theory and history was a starting point for the prisoners to find out (investigate, or "research") about theories of racism and Marxism, which contributed to the collective knowledge base of the group. As new "generations" of prisoners entered the program, they took advantage of this collective knowledge base, and contributed to it as well in a continuous spiral process of investigation, teaching, and learning.

The GED class, as an explicitly educational context, especially encouraged the prisoners' research efforts. Compared with other prison classes, the GED class had an especially broad educational purpose, which contributed to the research program by supporting the production of many kinds of knowledge. The GED class also employed some nontraditional educational methods that were especially congruent with the prisoners' research approach. When I came to the prison, the prisoners' self and group-education model stressed learning by active investigation and participation,

a practice akin to educational approaches that encourage active learning by "doing" and a concept of the student as an active investigator rather than a passive receptacle for information to be poured in. The GED class was a center for this model of learning. I think I played a significant role in encouraging this active investigative model, as I had just come from teaching in schools that used experimental educational methods. I brought with me into the GED class some important assumptions and teaching experience that at least helped affirm, and perhaps contributed to the integration of an experimental educationally based, broadly defined scientific philosophy and method into the classroom. These assumptions were compatible with the prisoners' educational methods already in process. Some of the more important of these assumptions included: seeing students as creative people who could best learn about the world by actively exploring it themselves; encouraging students to produce knowledge for themselves and each other by discovery and experimentation; presuming that knowledge production is something that everyone is capable of doing -- a "people's activity" rather than something only legitimated experts can do; encouraging self-directed activities where students could take the initiative; treating teachers as facilitators who try to stimulate the students' thinking and exploration by asking questions rather than providing answers; emphasizing learning as a process rather than as a way to acquire bodies of knowledge; and encouraging learning as a social activity best accomplished through group investigation.

My ideal class plan was for the participants to focus not only on learning the content for passing the GED, but also on seeking knowledge broadly. My

experiences in the Bronx and Roxbury helped me realize that for the prisoner-students, an important part of the knowledge they needed was based in their need to overcome the structural constraints of class, race, and ethnicity. I had not thought of "emancipatory education" as a concept for my class's practice, but my broad approach fit well with the prisoner group's educational philosophy, which was to produce and acquire whatever knowledge was necessary for the struggle. Sometimes the prisoners sought to produce knowledge that would help them understand what resources were available for their struggle, or where the "cracks" were in the "system"; sometimes they needed to produce knowledge about their own taken for granted assumptions that would require critical reflection; and sometimes they needed to educate themselves and others about the need for an expanded bilingual education program by documenting how many monolingual Spanish speaking prisoners were in the prison, etc. I often used these activities in class to help develop basic skills.

The English-as-a-Second-Language class was taught during the day by a certified native Spanish-speaking teacher, and although this class was not part of the prisoners' peer directed program, it was closely integrated with it, and the teacher was considered part of the prisoners' community of struggle. This teacher provided another important source of encouragement and support especially for the monolingual Spanish speaking prisoners, and to the Latino prisoners' group as a whole. He gave his students a strong sense of confidence in their ability to learn anything they put their minds to. In this indirect way, he too, supported the prisoners' research program by encouraging the students to take initiative in learning.

Therapy

The therapy program, both as it existed in the therapy class and outside the class as an integral, informal part of the prisoners' process, provided very important support and impetus to the prisoners' research. The therapy program provided a setting for the prisoners to learn about and examine each other's feelings and experiences, exploring the threads of commonality running through both and gaining knowledge about themselves and the effects their social "conditions" had on them.

The therapy program provided a nonthreatening but semi-structured "free space," relatively unencumbered by other agendas, in which participants could to reflect on their lives. (In contrast, the political education class and the GED class had explicit educational agendas oriented around extrinsic content.) Without such a time and place for reflection it is difficult for either individuals or groups to examine their lives critically.

Therapy also introduced reflection as a research method. As an ostensibly therapeutic context implying that the participants were to examine their own feelings and behaviors, a reflective self-research method was taken for granted. The "therapists" acted as co-researchers, facilitating the reflection process.

Third, the drug therapy program was partially grounded in the psychodynamic insight that surface definitions and understandings, or those understandings based on unexamined "common sense," sometimes hide deeper conflicts, feelings, and realities; that it was necessary to penetrate defenses that keep one from seeing what is really

going on; that what seem to be rational "common sense" understandings can be deceptive because they are based on dominant social ideology. The group relied heavily on this notion of how the dominant ideology produces an oppressor from within (Fanon, 1967).

Fourth, in the drug therapy model, the therapist and patient embark on a joint exploratory adventure in which they together uncover heretofore hidden aspects of the "patient's" experiences and personality. They both become "researchers" in this venture, though in traditional therapeutic models, the therapist takes the lead. The prisoners' research model adapted the therapeutic model by accepting a notion of "co-researching", but making all "patients" "therapists" and all "therapists" "patients".

Fifth, the therapy program provided a critical nexus between political education and therapy of individuals by helping people to search for, identify, and explore painful feelings in the context of political social critique. This was accomplished with the help of "critical" questions asked by the peer therapists (or "researchers"). In this way, the group combined some of the methodology of psychodynamic therapy with a social critique of racism and class oppression (and in the Bronx, gender relations). The prisoners' therapy group helped people frame personally painful experiences from a critical social structural perspective and thus gain a new kind of knowledge.

Sixth, the therapeutic program contributed to the participatory aspect of the prisoners' research. Group therapy seemed a natural place for a participatory dialogue that encouraged people to share their feelings and experiences and to actively

participate in each others' therapeutic process, including developing knowledge about the causes of the feelings. The group therapy setting also took for granted a concern with the well-being of the group as a whole. The participatory and group-oriented therapeutic aspects were congruent with the group's emancipatory participatory research process: therapeutic dialogue elicited individuals' experiences and feelings, and the group as a therapeutic community supported the development of a common knowledge base and a collective effort to "do research" on the group itself. The emphasis on peer therapists also contributed to the participatory aspect of the prisoners' research. Although a staff counselor was technically assigned to the therapy group, she was cooperative with the group's goals and process, and worked mainly to support the efforts of the group rather than to lead it. The prisoner coordinators of the drug therapy program made an effort to distribute the responsibility for the group; to turn the participants into each other's "peer therapists". This increased the participatory nature of the therapy process as a whole, affecting and increasing the breadth and intensity of participation in the kind of research the therapy program encouraged.

Action

Action contributed to the prisoners' research process in a most fundamental way. Action was the context for the research that developed, applied, and tested the effectiveness of the group's modest social change interventions and shaped and

reshaped the group's theories about the nature of "the system" by observing what happened when it tried to create change. The approach is similar to what is known as "action research", a term originally coined by Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1948; Peters and Robinson, 1984), and later developed by other social scientists such as Carr and Kemmis (1986), who refer to action research as "self-reflective spirals of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting" (p. 162). More central to the prisoners' approach is the notion of "praxis" or "revolutionizing practice" from Marx's "Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach" (Tucker, 1978), terms which better grasp the importance of the dialectical relationship between people's changing understandings, their actions to achieve change, and changes in the "external" social structure. In short, the prisoners' praxis for research was to ground their research in forms of social action.

CHAPTER 6

PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE: ELEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The prisoners' way of doing research integrated the major elements usually listed in elementary methods texts: defining a topic, gathering data, analyzing data, and presenting results. It did this through a dialectical process so that, for example, the group continually gathered what might be called preliminary data at the same time it analyzed and theorized about the "results" and re-defined the problem to be investigated. The dialectical nature of the process incorporated the ever-changing composition of the prisoners' group and a spiralling of research activities; continually evolving sets of ideas changed as successive groups re-investigated and re-evaluated the importance of certain skills; knowledge in the form of the research "results" from the past was continually re-appropriated, re-critiqued, and re-modified. Through this continuous dialectical process, the prisoners evaluated the relevance and usefulness of knowledge claimed by prior prisoner-group "researchers" against their current collective experience.

It is obviously misleading to depict the research process as a series of discrete stages. Nevertheless, one can analytically separate the research process into four interacting elements: topic identification and selection, data collection, data analysis, and the distribution of results. Distinguishing these elements makes it clear how they overlapped. Though the prisoners' versions of these research elements may at first

seem quite strange to academy-trained social scientists, the dialectical relationships between the elements may be quite similar to the way academic research is actually practiced. I first describe some ways the group approached each element of the research process, and then describe how the elements appeared in some typical research situations to further illustrate the approach.

DEFINING THE TOPIC

Who Decides?

Topic selection was accomplished by a consensus through a dialogic decision-making process. The group making the decision was not always the same, however. Sometimes the group present at a particular time would make a decision on the spot to go ahead with research. This often happened in emergency situations when a problem had to be addressed immediately. Usually the problem was one that affected those present more directly than the organization as a whole. I saw this happen many times in the GED class; though the class did not represent anywhere near the entire Latino organization, consensus was often quickly reached in that group on behalf of the Latino prisoners' organization as a whole to look into problems, such as why a fight had broken out between prisoners or whether it was true that the education department planned to cancel our class soon.

A group of coordinators sometimes made decisions on behalf of the group as a

whole, including the selection of research topics. This would usually happen in circumstances that required secrecy for security purposes, when the coordinators felt they could not adequately trust everyone in a larger group. One such situation occurred when some of the leaders of the three prisoners' organizations were working with attorneys to bring a class action suit on behalf of all the prisoners about prison conditions. Although my impression was that the coordinators rarely made autonomous decisions, including decisions about topics for research, it is possible they acted autonomously more than I knew, imposing decisions on the group as a whole--I was not enough of an insider to know for sure, but I do know that at times some people in the group felt the coordinators had too much power, and I suspect that at least at times appearances of broad participation and consensus decision making hid the power of the coordinators to control the decision process.

For the most part, the decision making process involved various subsets of the prisoners' group. Research topics often had been partially explored by earlier groups of prisoners: new hypotheses had been formed and partially tested; and tentative conclusions reached or new ideas suggested for investigation. This was true of the most narrow of research topics (such as whether a certain guard was "with" or "against" the group) and the most broad (e.g. what does "exploitation" mean?). Consensus was usually reached after dialogue in several settings: a topic might have been suggested in one setting (for example, the political education class), discussed and elaborated in another setting or settings (sometimes even a two-person conversation), and finally emerge as a research topic and project after discussion by

several overlapping groups. The topic selection process was collaborative in that several groups in different settings would have had input.

In many cases, the topic selection process built on previous dialogue. It drew on community knowledge produced by the group over time, but also took newer data into account. For example, early in the drug therapy program, the group had decided to obtain a list of drug treatment programs in New York City, so that group members released on parole would know where to go. The group wrote for information. Later, feedback came to the group about problems with some of the programs, and the information sent by the drug programs seemed incomplete, so the group asked my husband and his students if they would join with some of their previous members who had been released on parole to visit the programs and come back to the group with more complete information.

Criteria for Selecting Topics

The criteria for selecting research topics were never made explicit, but they could be inferred from the choices and from occasional self-reflective discussions about the program. Generally, choices were based on the needs of the group to understand and change "the system" as described at length in Chapter 4. Within this broad guideline, selection was sometimes based on the need to address certain broad questions that pervaded the prisoners' practice: What is the nature and origin of the group predicament? What can be done to improve it? Who are we and what is our

relationship to each other and to the rest of the world? In what way is the structure "against" us; yet, where will it yield (cracks in the system)? What prevents us and our community from changing the nature of the society itself to be an equal and just one (revolutionary intent); or prevents us from achieving equality under the existing system (reform intent)? At other times, research topics were selected to answer much more concrete and practical questions: What resources, rights, or liabilities do we have? What are our pressing needs and problems? Who will support us?

Clearly, there was a broad range of acceptable topics. Selection tended to be on the basis of several more specific criteria. One was whether the topic would yield data that would produce important knowledge to address emergencies affecting the group. In emergencies, topic selection took place quickly because it was taken for granted that the group would recognize the topic as important. For example, when one of my students was not let out of his cell to come to class, topic selection would be a foregone conclusion, and dialogue on the spot would begin to help establish working hypotheses based on previous experience about the possible causes of the problem and the ways to solve it.

A second criterion was whether researching the topic would likely produce practical knowledge that would empower individuals in the group or the group as a whole so the prisoners would be in a better position to wage an effective struggle. Such research topics included, for example, what the requirements were for being accepted into the college release program, or how to make an effective telephone call to agencies or organizations to make requests or complaints.

A third criterion was whether researching the topic would produce practical information of direct use in a struggle at hand. Topics meeting this criterion include such disparate items as the legal rights of prisoners for redress if their teeth had been pulled against their wishes (the usual prison solution to a bad toothache); the particular strengths (like good negotiating skills) or weaknesses individual prisoners might have had that would be of direct use or detriment in a particular struggle; and the analysis of past experience using a particular strategy to effect change. For example, prisoners knew from experience that the local prison administration employed counter-moves when the group used several copies of the same petition to get signatures of prisoners asking for a class--some of the people caught passing the petitions were put in solitary confinement, and a typewriter had been confiscated.

A fourth criterion was whether researching the topic would help reveal difficulties with people's "common-sense" ideas about themselves, "the system," and their place in it that reflected the society's dominant views. Topics meeting this criterion had high priority. They were addressed at every opportunity, no matter how small or narrow the event had that brought the topic to attention. Sometimes just one individual's experience would raise the possibility for a small "research" task that met this criterion, as when one of the GED students had applied for a job and not gotten it, and other prisoners began working with him to do "research" on his own assumptions.

What happened when there were competing needs and limited time and resources to do research? What criteria had precedence, and how were choices

made? In the prison, paradoxical as it might seem at first glance, the ability to address any number of research topics was fairly extensive. The prisoners had more freedom and time for research and other struggle-related activities in the prison than they did in the Bronx. Being collected together in close proximity was also an advantage of the prison context. Just as Marx noted that factory conditions were conducive for workers to organize because they collected workers together with common grounds for struggle, so was the prison a favorable environment for organizing. The prisoners could take up problems as they presented themselves. But when the group moved to the Bronx, the conditions for group activities of all kinds including research were much more limited, as individuals had more responsibilities and distractions. Moreover, daily life presented a much wider range of problems, and of needs for knowledge.

In a situation I relate in more detail below, the Bronx-based group once took an extraordinary amount of time and careful deliberation to choose a research topic because of conflict over which topics were most important. Some topics seemed to be of more interest to the entire group than others, but some individuals in the group felt that even though their own problems were not necessarily shared by everyone (especially the women, who felt they were unfairly being "stuck" with most of the childcare), they should be given priority. Some method had to be invented to decide which issues would be taken up by the group as a whole.

After much heated discussion about whose problems should be the focus, someone suggested that they take turns interviewing everyone in the group to find out

what problems were most important to them. The group held a marathon weekend meeting, recorded the discussions, and by listening to the tape, identified a central theme--"waiting"--that unified most members' concerns. This choice of topic allowed the women to talk about how they were most often the ones to wait with the children to see the doctor or to wait in grocery store lines or at the welfare office, and the men to talk about waiting at the parole office or at the employment office. Even the children had much to say, as they talked about waiting in line at school, waiting for the teacher to teach until the class was quiet, and so forth. The theme of waiting was very productive for analyzing aspects of the social structure affecting their everyday lives.

GENERATING THE DATA: RESEARCH METHODS

Dialogue: The Prisoners' Underlying Methodology

Dialogue had a prominent place in every element of the prisoners' research process, making research a collective and participatory endeavor and ensuring the interdependence of the elements of the research process. Dialogue was the method of choice for determining the highest priority topics for investigation, and it was also used to decide how to interpret and use research results. Dialogue provided a source of cross-checking: if, for example, initial research "results" showed something that contradicted someone's experience, dialogue provided the method for relating the

elements of the research process dialectically with each other, integrating the entire process, with "results" always generating new hypotheses and serving to refine the definition of the problem or topic. Dialogue also unified the four parts of the prisoners' overall process: education, therapy, action, and research.

In terms of research, dialogue was particularly important in generating data, because it was used not only to select research methods, but also as an important research method in its own right, dialogue being the usual way group members' personal experiences became data in collective research projects. Of course, dialogue is not the sort of research method that can be described by a set of formalistic rules. There were no set procedures of structured group discussion to elicit individual experiences from group members and to compare or tabulate them.

The Importance of Participation in the Research Method

The prisoners' was a thoroughly participatory research process under their own direction, control, and expertise. It was participatory in that it involved large numbers of group members not only in generating data, but in all elements of the research process.

In defining research topics, the collective participatory dialogue process caused topics to emerge through consensus (though often influenced by the coordinators). Participation was also influential in deciding on the perspective for the research, although the general "position" or standpoint of the group was a constant. Subtleties of the group's perspective were continually negotiated and re-negotiated as new

members took part in the dialogue, contributing their experiences and individual perspectives.

In deciding on methods for the research, an intra-group interview (dialogue) almost always preceded other methods, and the group interview sometimes was the principal method for collecting data. When other methods were necessary, participatory discussion determined this, and selected the methods. When the group's method of collecting data extended beyond the within-group interviewing process, and certain individuals were given or took specific research tasks such as interviewing someone, the data-gathering process was less fully participatory, but even at these times, several interviewers were often involved.

In analyzing the data, the chief method was participatory group dialogue. Of course, this dialogue also reformulated problems, developed theory, and otherwise recycled the elements of the research process. Finally, the distribution of research results was widely participatory. Often, group dialogue was the only method of distribution, as the results were intended only for the group to see and were rarely recorded in writing.

Although the prisoners' method of data collection is participatory, it lacked one element that is present in most academic models for participatory and collaborative research: the academic researcher. The academic models usually take for granted the presence of a credentialed research expert, who "collaborates" with the indigenous group, allowing the group to "participate" in the research process. The prisoners' model turns this relationship of academics and indigenous participants

on its head. The indigenous participants collaborate primarily with each other, and have the power to decide whether an academic will be allowed to participate and collaborate. In fact, the prisoners rarely allowed academics into the process.

The Use of Themes to Serve as Guides for Collecting Data

Sometimes the group used a certain theme on which to base dialogue. "Waiting" was one such theme. Themes helped the group analyze a range of experiences in a systematic fashion. One other theme was "being cold." Discussion around this theme began once when we tried to have a meeting in someone's apartment where the heat had been turned off, and the only heat available was from the gas stove. We were all sitting together on a bed, trying to keep warm, and found ourselves talking about "being cold"--how many times and in what circumstances we had been cold, how much control we had over not being cold in different situations, and so on. Most of the time, however, the group did not have the leisure to ponder such things. Instead, it usually focused its attention more directly on a problem based in the struggle.

A Brief Catalogue of Methods

The prisoners selected particular methods intuitively, matching the need for knowledge to methods they believed they could accomplish and that they believed would yield useful results. The methods can be conveniently divided into those that

study external conditions, and self-study methods. The method of dialogue was used for both purposes.

Methods for Studying External Conditions

Examination of Documents. The group relied on documents, especially in gathering practical knowledge for struggle with the prison administration and in preparation for being released on parole. The group especially valued documentary evidence revealing undesirable policies discriminating against the Spanish-speaking population that violated laws or guidelines.

Questionnaires. After the Committee began working with the group, the prisoners began to develop and use questionnaires. The questionnaire was the group's first attempt to collect quantitative data that could be tabulated. It was also the first time the group had written down its findings.

Interviews. The group conducted all kinds of interviews to determine external conditions, including interviews of each other, of non-group members in the prison, and of the prison staff. These interviews were completely unstructured and, especially with outsiders, generally took the form of casual conversation. The prisoners even administered the questionnaire the Committee helped them develop as an open-ended interview. Their method of interviewing peers, even with the questionnaire, was typically interactive in that the interviewer responded to the

interviewee's answers, offering information about himself, the nature of "the system," and the results to date.

Experimental Action Research. The group was always learning by doing and evaluating the results retrospectively. Sometimes, it self-consciously chose intervention strategies in order to learn by observing what happened. The group identified a problem (usually a concrete practical problem, but sometimes a theoretical problem), gathered some preliminary data to further specify the nature of the problem and how it might be solved, took some action, gathered data to determine the effectiveness of the action, redefined the nature of the problem and how it might be resolved, took action again, and so on.

Participant Observation. In the prisoners' method, participant observation extended along the dimension from mostly participant to mostly observational. For the most part, the prisoners were quite thoroughly immersed as active participants when they acted as participant observers. They were, of course, participant observers in their own process--except for a few outsiders who, like me, were quasi-participants but mostly observers.

Documentation of Life Histories. To learn about the commonalities of their experiences, presumably rooted in their social-structural position, the prisoners produced data by documenting (orally) their own and their families' life histories.

Self-Study Methods

Interviews. To gather data from their collective experiences, both past and present, the prisoners often interviewed each other in a group setting such as the drug therapy or political education classes. Such interviews were conducted by various members of the group, and were either open-ended or focused, depending on how well defined the research topic had become. The self-study was directed toward the production of knowledge for both individuals in the group and the group as a whole, in addition to the therapeutic and educational purposes it might have.

Self-Revelation. Closely associated with interviewing was the (therapeutically derived) process of self-revelation. Individuals were encouraged to reveal their thoughts, insights, and feelings for examination, critique, and support by the group.

Group and Individual Critical Reflection. The group engaged in critical self-reflection to produce insights or understandings into unsatisfactory experiences and to reconceptualize past experience taking into account both one's own failings and the failings of the social structure.

Observation. Each member's observations of himself (or herself when the group was located in the South Bronx) and of everyone else also provided a source of data. The presentation of observations about themselves and each other was an important way to gather information, particularly on how attempts to create change,

and the prison administration's resistance, affected members and the group. The struggle with external conditions often created conflict within the group, and observation of and reflection on this conflict was essential to the effectiveness of the group.

ANALYZING THE DATA

The prisoners analyzed data in an ongoing process as data were produced, and compared it with (tested it against) existing conclusions or hypotheses. Perhaps because so little of the data they generated were written, there seemed to be little need to set aside a special time and place for analysis. The one setting that lent itself to structuring a time and space for analysis was the drug therapy class. Here, reflection and analysis could take place in a structured setting at least partly removed from action. Fortunately, the Bronx-based group recognized the need to reproduce this semi-structured setting in their new environment. It was during reflective group meetings in the Bronx that the group developed the paper for the psychology convention and carried out its research on "waiting", discussed below.

The group's use of several methods to gather data provided some check on validity. Gathering data from several sources (e.g. several individuals or several groups of people) and gathering data about a topic over a lengthy time span also helped increase the validity of the data. However, the group was not concerned with establishing formal validity standards, and was unconcerned about issues such as

interviewer or observer effects. The group's methods, goals, and standards for data analysis were based in its own needs for struggle and not in a need to prove objectivity and validity to outsiders according to scientific standards. Consequently, the validation process was informal. Although critical reflection and dialogue about results can uncover some threats to validity, the lack of systematic controls in the group's research methods probably resulted in a tendency to confirm preexisting hypotheses--a problem that may also have negatively affected the group's ability to use data effectively to improve its struggle. Of course, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions on this point.

When the prisoners conducted their survey, the Committee tried to help by sharing its knowledge of standard research methods, but was only partially successful for several reasons. I was the primary person from the Committee helping the group develop a questionnaire, and my knowledge of sociological research methods was particularly weak at the time. The group was enthusiastic about the new technique (the questionnaire) because of its ability to confirm the need for bilingual programs, a finding the prisoners did not want to jeopardize. They were also struck by the questionnaire's value for educating respondents and stimulating solidarity, two important outcomes that would probably have been undermined if the survey administrators had followed a tight interview protocol. Finally, of course, the prisoners' group wanted the data for its own purposes and had no interest in producing data that would be of value to the academic scientific community.

DISTRIBUTING RESEARCH RESULTS

When my husband and I suggested that the group write up its critical theory of rehabilitation for the psychology convention, it was the first time the prisoners had written up its "results" for presentation in a form recognizable to social science. The group did not value this way of distributing "results," however, because the product was directed to an elite audience accustomed to reading research reports rather than to grassroots people. Occasionally the group produced results in a form that was directed to an audience other than themselves or their community; for example, they wrote petitions to the local prison administration and letters to the state prison administration that in effect summarized "research" substantiating the need for bilingual education.

For the most part, however, they had no need to distribute their results in any formal way or outside their own group. They simply "presented" their "results" to each other orally on an ongoing basis, and this was sufficient, as their purpose for most research was to inform themselves and each other.

Very late in the evolution of the group's practice, it became concerned about how to use its research results to help organize the local community in the Bronx. Members had gradually become more aware of a research process with differentiated elements, beginning with their experience working with the Committee for Hispanic Inmates on the questionnaire; they had helped conceptualize the nature of the problem to be investigated (the need to gather data to substantiate the need for bilingual

programs), develop and then administer the questionnaire, tabulate the results, and write them down. Writing the APA paper had provided them with some more experience with a formal research process, and much discussion had gone into the question of for whom the research results would be useful, raising the profile of the issue of research results. The experience of writing the APA paper seemed to have given the group an enthusiasm and new appreciation for itself (although it may also have exacerbated divisions within the group leading to its break-up), and discussions began about how to extend the group process further into the community, to pass on what had been learned to people in the local community.

The group came up with a plan, which it was not able to put into effect before it broke apart, but which illustrates nonetheless an elaboration of its model of the research process. With regard to distributing research results, the group planned to hold discussions with community members in a storefront it intended to rent or occupy, during which members would both present what they had learned and gather new data from the new participants. The group planned to draft charts and graphs illustrating data they had gathered, for example about the large relative proportions of black and Latino prisoners among the state prison population, and the increase in the numbers of prisoners over several years, and hang the data on the walls of the storefront to help raise the consciousness of people in the community about the growing number of Latinos being imprisoned. Lists of problems and issues the group had identified would also adorn the walls, as would telephone numbers and addresses of drug programs, and other practical information. This would have been a method

for distributing research results that would have relied primarily on oral dialogue, but would have included some written materials comprising their research results. The plan would have enabled the group to begin presenting its research results to a grassroots community outside the immediate group in a way the members felt would appeal to people like themselves.

ILLUSTRATIVE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

A few examples of typical research activities will perhaps serve to illustrate the elements of the prisoners' research process and how the elements were dialectically related to each other. The diversity of activities may also suggest ways the prisoners' research approach can contribute to the development of other emancipatory participatory research practices.

Example 1: Finding Out Why Parole Records Did Not Contain GED Results

After the group had succeeded in establishing the high school equivalency class, members began to encounter the problem of Spanish speaking prisoners' parole records not reflecting their having taken and passed the high school equivalency examination in Spanish. This problem exemplified the ways the institution attempted to resist or subvert the reforms the prisoners had begun to make.

Problem Definition

The group first become aware of a problem when one of the prisoners, having passed the GED in Spanish, went up for parole and found that there was no record of his accomplishment on file. The parole board made decisions about giving parole based in part on evidence of educational achievement, and the lack of proper notation of such accomplishments could have negative consequences for the prisoners. In this instance, the presenting problem was understood without much deliberation to be worthy of investigation, because everyone understood that the administration was reluctant to provide or legitimate an educational program in Spanish, and had been actively working to impede the Latino organization's efforts. So by consensus, the problem was immediately accepted by the group as a topic of interest to all. I first heard about it in my class, but news of this event had been circulating among the Latino prisoners for several days.

Although the presenting problem was immediately accepted as a research problem, its definition needed to be refined through a preliminary research process. First, the group needed to determine whether this was an isolated incident, or whether it was widespread. This, in turn, required the determination of a suitable method of obtaining access to information about whether GED test results were documented in several prisoners' parole files. This research sub-task began with dialogue to decide how to best to gather the needed information. Several possibilities were suggested, including asking the several people who had passed the test to try to find out on their own whether the test results were included in their parole folders. This was

dismissed, because several of the people had been transferred to other prisons. Eventually, as I recall, the group identified someone who knew one of the prisoner clerks who would be able to get the information.

This preliminary problem-refining research determined that the problem was widespread--that many of the Latino prisoners who had passed the exam had parole files not accurately reflecting this fact. The problem was redefined as the search to find out who or what formal or informal policies accounted for the omissions.

This search exemplified a class of related efforts to uncover, comprehend, and eventually overcome instances of institutional resistance to change. Hypotheses were suggested: perhaps the group was mistaken, and the GED in Spanish was not equal to the GED in English according to some rule in New York State entirely outside the province of the prison; or perhaps the local Director of Education at the prison had simply decided not to forward the test results to be included in the parole files because he wanted to keep Latino prisoners from becoming eligible to enter the college release program. The preliminary research generated numerous new hypotheses.

Generating Data

During the initial stages of problem definition, the group used dialogue to decide what methods were available to determine the extent of the presenting problem. This might be called a group interview, in the sense of a mutual interviewing process rather than of an outsider interviewing a group. The method for

generating data about the extent of the problem was essentially documentary research, in which the prisoners' parole folders were examined to cull certain information.

The deeper problem--understanding the institutional arrangements in the prison that accounted for the presenting problem--required generating more data to test the hypotheses. In this case, the group decided to enlist the help of cooperative staff. The staff presumably gathered information by informally interviewing actors in positions to know what was going on, and then the prisoners interviewed them, to gather data from their informants.

Analyzing the Data and Drawing Conclusions

As I recall, the prisoners learned that the education director had in fact held back the test results because he did not want the bilingual program to gain momentum--but that he was not alone among local administrators in surreptitiously opposing the inclusion of these results. The group's informants stated that one of the reasons the education director and other local administrators wanted to subvert the bilingual program was that they wished to avoid the additional oversight from the state corrections department a bilingual education program would bring. This knowledge stimulated the prisoners to propose new hypotheses (or refined "working hypotheses") about the nature of "the system"--both its oppressive aspects and the contradictions within it that would help the prisoners in their struggle. For example, the group then tentatively concluded (aided by other information and experiences, especially experience with the Committee) that the state education office in the

Department of Correctional Services was likely to be more interested in appearing to outside parties as amenable to bilingual education programs than the local administration, and that the local administrators' possible fear of oversight might be helpful to the group if it could get the attention of state officials. This particular research activity resulted in conclusions about organizational behavior, which were useful not only for addressing the immediate problem but also in the broader theoretical project of understanding "the system."

This example illustrates how by investigating a very specific local problem, the group worked toward drawing broader conclusions. In this case, the prisoners learned about the internal contradictions in the prison system as a bureaucracy and about how different levels of the bureaucracy respond differently to outside political pressure.

Distributing Research Results

As was usually the case when the group was based in the prison, research results were distributed by word of mouth, pretty much as the data were gathered. There was no formal presentation, and the results were not written up. Instead, simultaneously with their "distribution," the results became new hypotheses.

Example #2: Documenting the Need for Bilingual Programs

This example and the next are the only two examples of the prisoners'

research projects that significantly involved outside researchers, in this case, from the Committee for Hispanic Inmates.

Problem Definition

The prisoners' group had long been pressing the local administration for more bilingual classes and other changes to benefit the Spanish-speaking prisoners. The group had collected names on petitions and met with administrators to request and demand classes and other changes. They had described in qualitative terms their needs, but had not gathered any quantitative data to substantiate their need nor produced evidence recognizable as research to the prison administrators. The Committee for Hispanic Inmates was working with Latino prisoner groups throughout the state to support them and act as advocates on their behalf by meeting with state prison administrators. The Committee decided it would be helpful in its negotiations with the state corrections administrators to have data documenting in several ways the growing need for changes benefitting the Latino prisoners throughout the state. Some of this data the Committee gathered on its own without the participation of the prisoner groups, such as on the growing total numbers of Spanish-surnamed prisoners in the state system and their increasing proportional representation among the prisoner population. By meeting with the prisoner groups, the Committee, together with several of those groups, decided it would also be helpful to gather data directly from the Latino prisoners to determine the extent and kinds of changes they most needed, and to document the need for bilingual staff and bilingual programs by gathering data

showing how many Spanish-dominant prisoners were among the Latino population. In this case, the initial problem definition came from outside the prisoner group.

Generating Data

The plan to develop and administer a questionnaire was suggested by the Committee, but not imposed on the prisoner groups. "My" prisoners' group was eager to document the Latino prisoners' needs, and welcomed help from the Committee. Although the impetus for the questionnaire came from the Committee, the demand for bilingual staff and programs had originally came from the prisoner groups, making the effort as a whole a collaborative one between the Committee and the individual groups. Developing the content for the questionnaire was also a collaboratory effort between the Committee and the prisoner groups. Some groups included questions that others did not; but all the groups gathered basic data that included such items as how many Spanish-dominant Latino prisoners were in the population, how many had previously earned high school or GED diplomas, how many and what kind of bilingual education classes currently existed in the daytime and evening education programs. Most groups also gathered data about how many people currently desired to be in various levels of bilingual education classes but were excluded because no classes existed or space was limited.

The prisoners were in charge of administering the questionnaires. There was some variation among the prisoner groups in how this was accomplished. I do not know how groups at other prisons administered theirs, but in the prison where I

worked, the questionnaires were administered by the oral interview method. Some questionnaires were written up and duplicated, then distributed to several people who then conducted the interviews. The data were compiled, tabulated, and given to the Committee, which collected the data from the several prison groups and presented the findings to the state administrators.

As noted in Chapter 2, the prisoner group used the questionnaire to raise consciousness about the need for changes to be made on behalf of the Spanish-speaking population. The interviewers had used the opportunity to spread information about the lack of a permanent GED class in Spanish, to emphasize to respondents the importance of education, to advocate the need to work together to organize for change, and so forth. They also urged people to say they wanted to be in bilingual education programs, that they desired Spanish speaking counselors and other staff, and the like, thus "contaminating" the data. But from the prisoners' perspective, the goal was to use every situation, including administering the questionnaire, to further the struggle.

The prisoners at "my" prison were not particularly interested in finding out the exact truth about how many people were truly monolingual in Spanish or how many truly wanted to be in a permanent GED class in Spanish; they were already convinced there was a substantial need, and furthermore that the purpose of gathering such numerical data was to bolster the legitimacy of their claims when used by the Committee on their behalf. But although the prisoners were not very interested in using the survey instrument to produce new knowledge for themselves, they found to

their surprise that administering the questionnaires gave them an unforeseen opportunity to develop new important qualitative knowledge of various kinds. Because they were using an interactive interviewing method, they found themselves gathering all kinds of new data, for example, about obstacles standing in the way of people's participation in the existing bilingual programs, such as misunderstandings about the requirements to enter the GED class. It was a surprise to the prisoners that using the survey to gather quantitative information had provided the unexpected opportunity to produce qualitative data.

Analyzing the Data, Drawing Conclusions, and Distributing the Results

Analyzing the data for the ostensible research project--to document the needs for bilingual programs, Spanish speaking staff, and so forth--was a fairly straightforward process of simply adding up the responses, which each of the prisoner groups did for its own population, and the Committee did by aggregating the data. The Committee used the aggregated data as a research product in its negotiations with the state administration. Although some of the state administrators doubted the validity of the numbers, disputing the scientific merit of the questionnaire itself and the administration of the questionnaires by the prisoners, the data were at least somewhat effective as a negotiating device to impress the state with the need to expand programs, increase staff, and make other changes.

The prisoners also analyzed and distributed the qualitative data they generated as they administered the questionnaires. As they gathered the data, they interpreted

the "results." Analysis also took place in the dialogues between the "interviewer" and "interviewee." At the same time, qualitative research questions became defined, refined, and turned into questions the interviewer would begin asking his next "interviewees", so that details of the questionnaire changed during the project. Qualitative questions continued to be developed long after the quantitative data had been produced and "distributed" by the Committee to the state.

Example #3: Writing an Academic Paper Redefining "Rehabilitation"

This example also centrally involves outsider-researchers--in this case, my husband and myself. Both of us had been working with the group for some time. My husband had attended and helped out the drug therapy program with some of his college students for approximately a year, and I had taught the GED class for about four years. Although I was no longer teaching in the prison, we had been meeting regularly with the re-established group in the Bronx for several months. I had been working at the Centro, trying unsuccessfully to find ways to help organize and then work with a group of Latino parolees and other interested people from the community to do some meaningful research on criminology. I had been reading critical theories of criminology, and was trying to integrate the knowledge from that reading with such a research project. Organizing a group composed of parolees from different prisons, including the Bronx-based group, had not been possible--much less doing research with it. The Bronx-based group, however, had elaborated the group process it

developed in the prison in many ways that my husband and I thought were interesting. We were committed to the group in many ways: we attended their meetings every two or three weeks for several months even though we had to drive 75 miles to and from each meeting; we contributed our knowledge and skills to support the group; we brought reading materials and other resources as well.

Problem Definition

My husband had received a call for papers in a regular mailing from the American Psychological Association (APA). The Division of Community Psychology was interested in papers on rehabilitation for the 1979 convention, which was to be held in New York. My husband saw value in the prisoners' therapeutic approach, which differed significantly from standard therapy and rehabilitation models, and thought it would be of interest to psychologists. I was interested in the topic because it fit well with my interest in critical criminology and with my previous attempts to do research with the prisoners. My husband and I thought the group would be interested because it was consistently critical of standard rehabilitation models as promoting dependency and passivity and as reducing social problems to individual problems. We also knew that the group was looking for ways to spread its "program." We suggested that we work with the group to write a paper.

To our surprise, the group initially raised many objections. Their only purpose, they said, was to communicate with each other and their own community; they had no interest in communicating with "academics." They also expressed fear

about being "researched," misrepresented and misunderstood, saying that research in poor communities in the 1960's had mainly benefited the researchers, who were paid workers for poverty programs, and only invaded the privacy of people in the community. Another fear was that their way of working would be taken as a model for another community "program" and imposed on other poor people--they felt strongly that people like them need to develop their own "programs" to suit their own particular needs. They also feared that a written document would objectify the group's program and misrepresent it as static--they wanted others to understand the process as ever-changing.

We found ourselves negotiating the definition of a possible research activity--a process that revealed much about the group's ideas about research. We suggested ways to avoid some of the problems the group had raised. My husband and I pointed out that the group could write about itself as it wished; it could do research on its own approach to rehabilitation and, by deciding what to present in the paper, could control how much privacy it wanted to retain. No "outside" researchers would be involved. We told the group we could not guarantee that other researchers might not somehow misuse their paper; it was possible, for example, that the group's model might be used as a model for an alternative rehabilitation "program."

The group questioned me and my husband about what our interests were in doing the paper. Would one or both of us be paid for it? Would we benefit in some other way? What was "in it" for me or my husband? The mistrust of our academic connections was evident. We could honestly say we would not be paid, but could not

assure the group that we would never benefit in any way from writing the paper. My husband could be fairly certain that he would not benefit professionally from his association with the group or from the paper, but because I was less clear about what my future connections to academia, I could not be so sure. I was considering entering graduate school, but did not know what area of sociology I would focus on. There was no way I could promise that I would never do anything that used my experience with the group, and I did not feel I should have to apologize for this, since it was my experience, too. The group was somewhat understanding, but also continued to be suspicious and mistrusting.

The group wanted to know what would be "in it" for them. Why should they do a paper for psychologists? My husband tried to explain that it was important within the academic community for alternate views to be presented, and that they would have the opportunity to change the minds of people who read their paper. The group was far from convinced that this was the case, but finally decided to proceed with the paper because the process of doing it would be an educational experience for the group as a whole. Some were enthusiastic because it would give the group an opportunity to discuss in a structured way its purpose, goals, and methods. In addition, the self-research process would provide the basis for a group self-evaluation; the group could compare its achievements with its goals. Others valued the exercise of putting the group's ideas down in writing, one of the skills the group most valued.

Thus, although the selection of the research topic occurred at my husband's and my suggestion, the group redefined the research problem in several ways. Rather

than writing for an audience of psychologists, the group chose to write for itself. It added the goals of self-evaluation and of learning to write and, as we eventually learned, found ways to make use of the research process (which it valued much more than the product) to advance several of the group's other internal goals.

Gathering the Data

The group decided to hold a series of collective discussions to elicit the "data," which consisted of individuals' statements of the group's philosophy of rehabilitation and memories of activities that exemplified the philosophy. (For the group, the data were no more important than the side-benefits of the research process, which included giving participants an opportunity to speak in front of the group and teaching the skill of taking notes on meetings.) The discussions were led by different individuals from the group, but in the beginning, my husband and I would ask very general questions like "How do you feel your approach is different from drug therapy programs in the community?"

We discussed how we might actually produce the paper, and agreed that my husband and I would write up our notes from the initial meetings with the group, and give them to the group to discuss prior to the next meeting. The group's critique or comments on these notes (developed at meetings in our absence) would serve as a rough agenda for the following meetings. This plan worked very well. The group presented changes in our notes, and indicated which of their ideas they felt were most important. We worked out an organization for the paper over several sessions of

exchanging notes and revisions. My husband and I then wrote a first draft of the paper, and the group began to discuss and revise it, also taking several sessions, some on their own and some with us.

The above all pertains to the research project as my husband and I thought we had negotiated it with the group. But running in parallel with this research project was the group's own agenda. Although the group was not very interested in the academic goals of meeting a deadline or presenting the paper, during our group discussions it became very involved in gathering other data that had no direct bearing on the topic of the paper. For example, group members explored how their parents' unemployment or underemployment had affected their lives as children, and discussed how to deal with parents of children attending their after-school and Saturday education program who were taking advantage of them as a free babysitting service without contributing their skills or time to the program. I learned later that the group also began to explore some philosophical differences among themselves--a process that may have contributed to the fragmentation of the group.

Analyzing the Data and Drawing Conclusions

Data were interpreted as they were gathered. My notes usually served as a "first-cut" interpretation of the analysis that occurred in the group discussions. The validity of my rendering of the collective data analysis was checked by other people's notes and group discussion of my notes. Items I had not included were added, and sometimes my framing of the group's philosophy was altered. Group discussion of

successive drafts of the document helped refine the conclusions to the group's satisfaction.

The group did some of its analysis in relation to ideas from academia that I introduced. For my work at the Centro, I had been reading academic writings on prison rehabilitation and criminology, and I brought this information into the group discussions. For example, I introduced Charles Silberman's (1978) concept of "community regeneration," which I had recently encountered. I saw the prisoners' (and former prisoners') model for rehabilitation as related to "community regeneration," but also as providing a critique of the concept. The group found the "community regeneration " concept useful for characterizing aspects of their model that distinguished it from standard ones. They saw the concept as a contrast to treatment-oriented models that make people passive instead of supporting them to take control of their lives by attempting to change their living conditions directly. The prisoners saw their model as similar to the "community regeneration" concept in that it stressed reliance on themselves rather than outside experts and emphasized the importance of the process rather than the product of change.

I also brought the group some research on prisoners' views of rehabilitation (Davidson, 1974) that revealed that prisoners saw traditional programs as ineffective, hypocritical (i.e., meant not to be rehabilitative, but simply to occupy the prisoners' time), or as primarily useful to prisoners because participation made them look good for parole hearings. The group was excited and pleased to find through this literature that their views were shared by others. They were surprised to find they could

experience a sense of solidarity with others through the experience of being exposed to an academic literature.

Having read about self-help models as well as critiques of self-help, I also introduced "self-help" as a concept the group might want to use to think about itself. After considerable discussion of several successive drafts my husband and I wrote, which included a discussion of this literature, the group was able to further clarify its understanding of the importance of its own model by noting through comparison and contrast the most important differences between itself and standard rehabilitation models. We came to think of the group's model as emphasizing "group-help" in addition to self-help.

The prisoners also had extensive basis in their own experience for comparing their model with others; for example, they already were aware of ways their program was different from drug therapy programs many of them had been involved with in the community. They had also been exposed to the prison system's rehabilitation ideology and programs. They were able to go a long way toward differentiating their own model from standard models just on the basis of these experiences.

Yet, the group's exposure to the literature gave them some new language to use to think about their concept of rehabilitation. "Community regeneration" and "self-help" were perhaps the new terms most used by the group. Neither of these terms adequately fit the group's concept of itself, but both terms stimulated much discussion that helped promote a better understanding among the group of its own approach.

Of all my experiences with the prisoners' or former prisoners' group, the meetings at which we tried to define the group's model for the paper were the most lively, intellectual, emotional, and social. We usually met late at night, and continued on for hours gathering "data" through a process that involved collective discussion and occasional interrogation of academic concepts. But these meetings were not confined to discussions for the paper. The group wanted the meetings to "advance the group in as many ways as possible." So time was also spent on educational or therapeutic exercises, using the paper-writing process as a new context for the overlapping group process approach. Adults and children who had problems reading were encouraged to read parts of the paper aloud to open group discussions; individuals were encouraged to stand and speak about their thoughts on a section of the draft that they had been assigned to study during the week; difficult words were selected to be looked up in the dictionary, with definitions read aloud by someone for more group discussion; paragraphs that referred to certain aspects of the prisoners' approach were selected to be commented on or critiqued by various members; my husband and I were sometimes asked to give a small "lecture" about the meaning of something we had written, or literature we had referred to in the paper; and wives and sisters asked their husbands and brothers about the Latino prisoner organization's program in the prison. In this way, the former prisoners were able to communicate the importance and meaning of their experience with the Latino prisoners' organization in ways the families had not understood before. When someone would have an objection to something we had written, but could not say exactly what the

objection was, the group would encourage, and even help, the member to state the objection.

As the deadline for presenting the paper grew nearer, I grew more concerned about meeting it. For me, the deadline meant that we needed to draw some conclusions quickly, and the group's slow pace for writing caused me anxiety. The result was some tension between me and the group, inasmuch as the group's priority was to use paper writing as a learning experience, not to produce the written product. At one very long session that took place outdoors late at night in a park in the South Bronx, we agreed on a final draft. It was a memorable scene, as we sat on blankets on the ground, surrounded by trash and broken glass, sharing food, and attending to crying babies.

Distributing the Results

For the group, the main audiences for the results were the group itself (which learned them from the process of analyzing the data, so needed no special dissemination efforts) and others in the community, who the group intended to reach by face-to-face interaction, either informally or through the storefront the group planned to use. For my husband and me, of course, the APA convention was to be a major venue for distributing the results, though to a much different audience. We felt that the ex-prisoners might enjoy presenting the paper at the poster session, because the experience would allow them an opportunity to discuss their theory and practice of rehabilitation with those who were interested.

We agreed ahead of time that a subgroup would attend the poster session at APA where the paper was to be presented. Three or four representatives from the group went with my husband and me to the poster session at the New York Hilton Hotel. Immediately on entering the hotel, the group members felt more than a little uncomfortable; the hotel was alienating enough by itself, but the psychologists all dressed in business suits made them even more uncomfortable. Fortunately some of the other people presenting their papers in the poster session room were informally dressed, and friendly to the group members. After setting up our own poster, the group members went around to the other poster presenters to introduce themselves and see what other kinds of papers were being presented. They were surprised and displeased to see that many of the papers were on topics they considered unimportant and trivial--one particularly disturbing to the group was something about people's behavior in bars. Some people did stop by to look at the paper the group was presenting, and to talk about it with members of the group. This made the ex-prisoners feel somewhat more comfortable in their surroundings. All in all, the actual presentation of the paper at the poster session was unremarkable.

Nevertheless, the experience as a whole gave the ex-prisoners a powerful reinforcement for their sense of alienation from academia. The group expressed some anger toward me and my husband afterward for having made them think there was any possibility such a group would take them seriously. We had to agree that from their standpoint, the convention was rather a waste of time. The group became more alienated from me, as a result of this experience. I had been recently accepted to

graduate school, and the group members were angry that I would leave them to become part of an academic institution.

Despite the group's disgust with the convention, it considered writing the paper to have been a very positive experience. The ex-prisoners had never anticipated that a presentation to the psychology convention would accomplish anything important. On the contrary, they had worked on the paper for their own purposes and remained excited about the ways doing the paper had helped the group define its goals, evaluate its progress, and make educational and therapeutic progress. Discussions of the group's ideas of rehabilitation continued for some time after the paper was presented--in fact, the group decided the paper writing process was so successful that it would next write a version for group members and the "community," addressed more to that audience than to academics. The project we had instigated for an academic purpose turned out ironically to be a success in the group's nonacademic terms. It had been transformed into a project that combined knowledge production with the group's usual mixture of self-help, group-help, education, therapy, and action.

Example #4: Finding Out How "the System Plays on Your Mind"

The idea that "the system plays on your mind" was central to the group's theory and practice in that it emphasized the interaction of structural forces with individual attitudes and behaviors as a causal force explaining the prisoners' personal and collective predicaments. The idea was that interactions with representatives of

oppressive social institutions created and reinforced negative emotions and self-perceptions that led group members to act in ways that further established their low social status--the prisoners came to behave in accord with the ideology that repressed them. The group sought, by making the ideological sources of individuals' self-destructive beliefs and behaviors explicit, to undermine the destructive aspects of the dominant ideology. It also worked to identify kinds of action that can overcome the grasp of ideological control and the institutionally based constraints on justice and equality. The prisoners' research on "how the system plays on your mind" brought together a critique of ideology with a collective reflective analysis of everyday experiences of struggle to produce emancipatory knowledge about the power of ideas and about the power of the visible aspects of social structure in reproducing inequality. The research effort also tried to make clear the possibilities for overcoming the dominant ideology's effects through resistance. And the research helped the group judge the success of all its efforts to overcome ideological and structural constraints through its forms of emancipatory practice (a sort of "evaluation research").

The working concept of "how the system plays on your mind" helped frame a research endeavor to uncover the ways ideological control helped keep disadvantaged groups, especially themselves, from challenging existing inequality and injustice. By acknowledging that they had unwittingly become part of the problem, the participants could see a way to take an active role in changing "the system" by changing their own attitudes and behaviors. Drunkenness, gang violence, verbal abuse, and other

manifestations of problems that had previously been thought of as personal were newly understood to be at least in part the handiwork of ideological control. These problems could now be understood as being based in the needs of the "system" to encourage self-destruction by oppressed groups and to prevent effective resistance. Once it was understood that their own negative self-definitions and self-destructive behaviors were part of the problem of oppression, it became clearer that the ex-prisoners could assume some responsibility for changing their ideas about themselves, and, by doing this, they could potentially gain a measure of control over some of "the system's" effects by freeing themselves from such negative ideas and by resisting the institutional inequality. The next step was to try to change not only their minds, but aspects of the institution, for which other kinds of research were useful.

Problem Definition

The idea of "the system plays on your mind" was already a working hypothesis and key research topic of the group when I came on the scene, as noted in Chapter 2. Although the group had already defined this concept, its manifestations were continuously emerging, and newer members became engaged as active participants in a continuation of the group's earlier "research." In this way, the newer participants helped to refine and elaborate the group's knowledge base, while at the same time learning more about themselves.

In a sense, each instance in which participants examined this question was one of a problem-defining nature; the whole point of the research process was to redefine

a problem that had appeared merely personal without critical reflection. Each instance was also one of developing self-knowledge for the affected individual. Still, in each case someone had to turn the revelation of a personal experience into a topic for investigation. In the example of the prisoner who was feeling depressed about having tried but failed to get a job in the prison, someone else in the class confronted him and identified and defined the person's feelings and thoughts about his situation as a topic for research.

Gathering Data

The "research" usually involved several overlapping elements of data-gathering. An interactive or dialogic interviewing of the individual helped elicit the individual's assumptions, which included negative self-definitions and expectations of himself, his family, and his community that had led to self- and community-destructive behaviors. The prisoners acting as leader-researchers in the situation asked questions to stimulate not only the individual experiencing the problem, but also the others in the group to remember, identify, and discuss details of their everyday experiences that would reveal the social structural aspects affecting their past and present opportunities and also their ideas about themselves. The prisoners taking the investigator role focused on the ways destructive feelings and beliefs had been produced. One way of doing this was by identifying and characterizing specific experiences that had produced negative self-definitions, feelings of hopelessness, and self-blame. The research then narrowed in on the mechanisms, usually social

interactions, that had produced these interpretations and feelings. For example, the group investigated the kinds of negative messages about self-worth they had received as children in school when their teachers had told them how stupid they were, and how they couldn't learn. They also explored more recent similar experiences in the prison, drawing parallels between the mechanisms in the past and the ones to which they were being subjected in the prison, and which resurfaced old feelings.

In this way, the interviews gathered data about features of the external social structure that were revealed in the course of individuals' stories about what had happened to them and how these circumstances had made them feel or act. They looked "up" (at the elements of the social structure) and "down" at themselves (their attitudes and behaviors), and tried to understand the relationship of power between the two.

Finally, they acted on their insights and understandings to try to change both themselves and their concrete situation, and gathered data to evaluate what happened when they attempted such changes. This new data served to elaborate their theories about the nature of the power relationship --to evaluate the effectiveness of their resistance and determine what kinds of counter-resistance the institution effected.

Analyzing the Data and Distributing the Results

In this form of research, the processes of analyzing the data and distributing the results were very much intertwined with gathering the data. Analysis happened on the spot, as the data were elicited. If the original "informant" (for example, a

person who was feeling discouraged) said he never got what he wanted, and didn't see the point of trying any more, questions asked of him and others in the group would reveal not only that he, but others, had had many similar experiences of failure (a finding interpreted as evidence that it wasn't just an individual problem, but a social problem); that they all had been given messages to the effect that they were stupid and doomed to fail; and that they all knew at some level that they were just like everyone else, with the same innate capacities, and worthy of the same kinds of opportunities and lives. The original informant, of course, is the most important recipient of the results.

Example #5: Research on Waiting

After the ex-prisoners' group developed the storefront idea, it decided to experiment on itself with the method it proposed to use at the storefront. By this time, the group had enthusiastically adopted the idea of "doing research" as an explicit group activity.

Defining a Problem and Gathering Data

The group decided to hold a long meeting over a weekend to carry out the experiment. One hope was that research themes might emerge from the marathon meeting. A related idea was to gather a large amount of information (data) from the group that would provide the basis for further research.

The meeting included a core group of five or six former prisoners, their spouses, a very few friends, many children, and my husband and me, and much of it was audio-taped. Of course, the two-day meeting was interspersed with meals, interruptions from the many children whose parents attended the meeting, and entrances and departures of friends and family members. The discussion during the meeting was very free-flowing. It was not directed toward any particular questions or problems, but rather, group members encouraged everyone to talk about experiences that they considered to be problematic, which had anything to do with a broadly defined social structural framework. Group members took turns asking questions and facilitating the group process. Children were included, and encouraged to talk about their own experiences. A real effort was made by the facilitator to let whoever was speaking continue speaking until he or she had been given the opportunity to complete his or her thought. Sometimes the speaker would become very emotional, perhaps shouting or weeping. When this happened, the group process worked as it had in the prison: the other group members would provide emotional support and work with the person to re-think his or her experience from a political, economic, and social perspective. Some members would contribute their own similar experiences, and group discussion would help form a group consensus about the psychological and social meanings of the experiences to that group and to black and Latino poor people everywhere.

Analyzing the Data

The meeting did not arrive at any conclusions, but the group agreed to listen to and analyze the tape for central issues or ideas, and to discuss what had been learned from the tape at the next meeting. At that meeting, group members enthusiastically discussed the process of listening to the tape. They had found several themes. One theme that ran throughout the two-day discussion had been that of "waiting." Some group members had talked about how much time they had wasted waiting to see caseworkers at the welfare department, while others noted they always had to wait a long time to get to see the doctor, and others complained they spent half a day waiting to see their parole officer only to be given the name of a supposedly possible source of employment for which they then spent the rest of the day waiting to be interviewed, only to be turned down for a job. (The ex-prisoners' discovery of the theme of waiting was duplicated in the academic literature by Gearing and Epstein [1982], two anthropologists who identified "learning to wait" as part of the hidden curriculum of lower-class education.)

The "waiting" theme provoked more discussion at this new meeting. "Waiting" was connected to related concepts already in the group repertoire of past discussion, such as "respect", race, sex, and economic status. The women talked about a burden women share, worrying while waiting for their husbands to come back from prison, while the men spoke of having waited very long times in the prison to see doctors or dentists. The participants discussed questions of who it is that bears the heaviest share of waiting in this society, discussing how race, class, gender, and national identity affect economic and social status and waiting--although they did not

attempt to summarize their thinking in such words.

By having chosen a theme that emerged from fairly unstructured conversation on the tape and adding the new "data" on the same subject, the group moved the discussion to a somewhat higher level of analysis as the former prisoners introduced the marxist concept of "circulation" to show how "the system" circulated them around from one institution to the other, keeping them occupied and "out of trouble" (not causing trouble for "the system"), and keeping them waiting at each institution in the community, just as they were in prison. The group was discussing how "the system" operates to prevent resistance, although again, this kind of language was not used.

One of the former prisoners related his current experience of working in a "chicken factory" (that is, a packing plant) as a contrast to the waiting theme. He spoke of the rapid pace at which the workers were forced to work without breaks. This observation provoked someone else in the group to point out the apparent irony of a system that on the one hand makes you work as fast and hard as possible in the factory line, but then keeps you virtually immobile waiting when you are a "client" of the bureaucracy. Someone pointed out that in both settings, the workers were being controlled by the "system" while also being deterred from disrupting it. There was general agreement.

Distributing the Results

The ex-prisoners' group was animated by the discussion and the uncovering of the theme of "waiting." Clearly, group members experienced a sense of increased

understanding. Not only had they discovered a truth about their social conditions, but it was a truth they believed would resonate with their neighbors who might visit the store front. It was knowledge they felt would help them organize for social change. Unfortunately, they were never able to test this idea--they never secured a store front.

KINDS OF EMANCIPATORY KNOWLEDGE PRODUCED

Drawing distinctions between the kinds of emancipatory knowledge the prisoners produced is problematic from the outset; even distinctions between categories like "practical" and "theoretical" knowledge set up oppositions and dichotomies that the prisoners' process largely dissolved in practice. Yet, I think it helpful to identify some categories of emancipatory knowledge partly because academy-based researchers searching for ways to do emancipatory research with grassroots groups like the prisoners might better understand how helping a group to produce a specific category of knowledge can in fact contribute to the group's emancipatory project as a whole.

Practical Knowledge for Self-Help and Group-Help

The prisoners needed many kinds of practical knowledge for their emancipatory project. Individuals needed many kinds of knowledge simply to increase their skills and understandings in order to empower themselves. In the paper

the group wrote for the APA convention, one of the key distinctions they made between their model and standard rehabilitation models was that theirs was a "group-help" effort as well as a "self-help" effort; they sought knowledge to strengthen not only individuals but their group and community as well.

Life Skills

Knowledge about the skills needed as preparation for release from prison was one example from this category. Doing "research" on pre-release skills meant identifying the kinds of skills helpful in preparing for release and investigating details about those skills. Simply identifying these skills was a difficult task, one which was the source of ongoing debate and disagreement within the group. The group decided through dialogue that it needed to research such skills as learning how to negotiate a good relationship with one's parole officer, how to get into community drug rehabilitation programs, how to get medical attention, and how to avoid loan "sharks."

The prisoners "researched" these practical pre-release skills by investigating their content through dialogue and discussion. Data were gathered by drawing on group members' experiences and those of cooperative volunteers or staff who contributed their own ideas to the group discussion. The prisoners attempted to identify, differentiate and codify the various parts of the skills, already identified, which they needed to teach each other. For example, if the skill was conducting oneself well at an interview, the research from this part of the process yielded

information such as the need to teach how to dress for an interview and what kinds of questions to ask. For each new "generation" of people who needed these skills, the group again produced the relevant knowledge, the "state-of-the-art" as it existed within the group's collective experience.

When the group moved to the Bronx, it continued to develop knowledge about life skills, identifying new skills as new problems arose. I was asked once to present a lesson to the group about how to make a telephone call to get information or make a complaint. The group had identified making such telephone calls as a skill they needed but did not have. When I made my presentation, explaining as well as I could what I would do, the group made constructively critical comments about how they thought such a call would be more effective if changed this way and that. Dialogue, taking place around on the information ("data") I had presented together with information or "data" from their experiences became new knowledge about making calls.

Traditional Basic Educational Skills

Although the learning of basic skills such as mathematics and literacy are usually construed as knowledge already produced that the student appropriates, the prisoners' approach emphasized the active production of knowledge by students, as explained earlier. In this view, each student produced some knowledge new to himself every time he learned something even as simple as how to multiply two numbers; here, the student "researched" how to multiply with the help of the other

participants who were helping him "research" this. The teacher/researcher, whether it was myself or one of the prisoners, acted as "co-researcher" in a joint process of discovery to be celebrated when the "research" was successful, and the student ("primary researcher") understood how to multiply.

Practical Knowledge for the Struggle at Hand

In addition to knowledge for self-help and group-help, the prisoners sought knowledge about themselves and the external "conditions" that helped inform their strategies to effect changes at all three levels of "the system."

Knowledge of Structural Constraints and Contradictions

The prisoners needed knowledge of "the conditions"--the aspects of their institutional environment that affected their ability to attain personal and collective goals. These included laws, policies, and rules; individuals standing in the way of their goals; and rights and protections afforded them by law. A first "research" need was to produce knowledge about which were the relevant "conditions." Although this research step might seem like "preliminary" research, it constituted an ongoing research project because new "conditions" were always being defined and identified. The prisoners identified "conditions" partly by gathering information from cooperative outside resources, such as the local Prisoners' Legal Services office. The Committee for Hispanic Inmates assisted the group in this respect by identifying the bureaucratic

problems associated with hiring bilingual staff (such as the lack of "permanent lines" for Spanish speaking staff) and identifying pertinent court decisions giving Spanish speaking students rights to bilingual education.

The prisoners also investigated how the "conditions" worked to exacerbate the disadvantage of the prisoners--the mechanisms by which the institutional structure reproduced the inequalities that the group was working to resist. The group developed knowledge about the way these mechanisms worked by interviewing each other and outsiders, by observing and analyzing the mechanisms at work, and through their dialogue process.

Understanding the "conditions" also included learning which conditions provided a window of opportunity for resistance. For example, although "the law" was understood by the prisoners to be a "tool of the capitalist system," it was also understood to provide some opportunity for resistance. Prisoner-lawyers were always researching opportunities for addressing inequality through the law.

Knowledge About Sources of Support and Resistance

One set of research objects was people who worked in the prison. The prisoners engaged in a kind of intelligence gathering--keeping up-to-date information about what various people on the staff (administrators, teachers, counselors, and guards) had done to either support or undermine the group or individuals in the group. Although this kind of practical knowledge was constantly being developed by many members of the group, the group often "researched" a particular staff member,

particularly a new one. In retrospect, my first meeting with my class represented in part (probably in large part) the prisoners' effort to do "research" on me. A second set of objects for this research was themselves: the prisoners produced knowledge to assess their own and each other's strengths and weaknesses and loyalties. A third set of research objects was the other prisoners. The constant changes in the prisoner population due to transfers in and out made it necessary for a continual research process to assess the loyalties, strengths, and weaknesses of other individual prisoners and prisoners' organizations.

Knowledge to Define and Document the Need for Change

The Committee provided a significant amount of help to the group by introducing the questionnaire as a device for producing quantitative baseline data showing the need for bilingual education programs and Spanish speaking staff. The prisoners otherwise relied on the dialogue process to produce knowledge about the needs of the Latino prison community. While the dialogue method had proven to be quite effective to produce knowledge useful to the group about its own needs, the data from the questionnaire helped legitimate the knowledge to the state and local prison administrations.

Knowledge of Interpersonal Skills

Fundamental to the effectiveness of the prisoners' struggle and ability to mobilize and organize themselves was the need to develop knowledge about how to

get along better with each other and with others in the prison. A great deal of effort was invested in producing knowledge about what kinds of social skills were needed, how they could be developed in the group, and how to eradicate some destructive forms of interpersonal interaction. Some basic guidelines, such as "think before you say something," were established within which the group tried to elaborate more specific knowledge about how to get along. The counselor assigned to the drug therapy group was helpful in guiding the group's search for this kind of knowledge. Learning to say encouraging things was one such skill.

Knowledge for the Larger Struggle

For the most part, the prisoners focused on their own emancipatory project. However, they did, at least theoretically, think of their struggle as being related to the struggles of all "Third World" people, and tried to place their own struggle in such a context.

Knowledge About Theories of the "System"

The group's political education class provided a context for dialogue about the struggles of Third World peoples, especially those of Puerto Ricans both on the island and mainland. They used their knowledge of critical theoretical social analyses, especially Marxist theory, critical perspectives on the colonial "development" of Puerto Rico, and biographical accounts of racism in the United States, such as George

Jackson's Soledad Brother (1970), as the theoretical basis for their discussion to relate their struggle to these broader struggles.

Knowledge About the "Way the System Plays on Your Mind"

The prisoners' "research" process helped produce many kinds of knowledge about the "way the system plays on your mind." In one research approach, individuals examined how their past experiences had caused them to have low self-esteem and low expectations for themselves. The negative messages the prisoners had received and internalized were brought into the open, on the theory that they had power to control the prisoners' feelings and behavior only so long as the prisoners were unaware of the power the messages still held for them. The focus was on how these internalized beliefs "keep you passive" and "in your place." The information (data) from this part of the prisoners' research process was analyzed in such a way that it provided a critique of a set of beliefs and social interactions that supported existing oppressive social structural arrangements and at the same time empowered the individuals by showing them they could control this mechanism of control by becoming aware of how it "plays on your mind." Producing this kind of knowledge was necessary to transform the individuals' and group's consciousness about the need to create social change and enable them to take an active role in resistance.

Most of this kind of "research" was accomplished through politically informed therapy, frequently in the Latino Drug Therapy Program. As already noted, the

group produced this knowledge by doing "research" on themselves and their experiences through dialogue. The prisoners questioned each other about the facts of their personal predicaments --their drug addiction, their lack of education, their personal criminal histories. Eliciting this data helped the prisoners acknowledge the reality and seriousness of their situations. "Data" on personal feelings, beliefs, and history were analyzed to demonstrate that the social and economic conditions of "the system" (and the ways individuals reacted to those conditions) had been at least partially responsible for the conditions of the prisoners, other Latinos, and other impoverished and non-white people.

The prisoners also examined the effects their taken-for granted understandings had on other people, especially the group and its ability to organize effectively. One important example was research on their own prejudices based on neighborhood or gang affiliation, color, birth on the island or mainland, Spanish-speaking ability, etc. The prisoners developed very concrete knowledge, using the immediacy of their own relations with each other to examine and confront their own reactions to the prisoners around them, questioning whether instances of conflict between individuals or groups had been at least in part based in their own or others' racial or ethnic prejudices or on rivalries that were being exploited by the prison administration.

THEORY IN THE PRISONERS' APPROACH

Producing Theory as a Non-Goal

In their own way, the prisoners were always working on the development of social theory or theories to test their propositions about their individual and collective disadvantaged situation and to predict effective forms of struggle. They had an implicit theory-producing goal, a statement of which is something like this: to determine the historical, economic, and social structural causes for their own, other Latinos', and other Third World people's unequal and disadvantaged situations; to determine the kinds and extents of personal responsibility for their predicament; to establish the relationship between structural and personal causes; and to determine the interventions in the social system around them that would improve the well-being of the group, its members, and Latino people.

The group produced working theories all the time--theories about what "works" in struggle and what doesn't, about the quantity and quality of their resources and also about the opposition's, about different aspects of exploitation and oppression and how they are carried out by institutions, about how their own responses to oppression either help or hinder effective struggle, etc. These were theories in process. They were elaborated and changed throughout their research process, and the group refined the theories by taking into account more "data" gathered from more recent "research" efforts.

Producing a theory "product" was of no interest to the group, however. There were at least three reasons for this. For one, the development of theory was not separate from other stages of "research." Second, whatever theory the group might have been able to articulate at a given point of time was understood to be already in

the process of changing. And finally, their emphasis was on the activity of theorizing rather than creating theory.

Although the group did not produce theoretical "products", it did produce working theories, and it also used theory. The lines between producing and using theory are blurred in the prisoners' model, as can be seen from the examples below.

Appropriating Existing Political Theory

In the political education class, the prisoners produced knowledge for themselves in the form of theoretical frameworks to explain inequality and oppression. Though this knowledge had already been "produced" by others, the prisoners produced this knowledge for themselves and each other by an active learning process, similar to experimental education approaches that view students as scientists participating in producing "new" knowledge (again) for themselves. The prisoners appropriated knowledge selectively, choosing pieces of theory that seemed to explain the conditions of most interest to the group.

Producing Theory About the Three Levels of Social Structure

The prisoners also produced theories about "the system" based on analyses of their own experiences at each of the three levels of the social structure. For example, observations about the administration's use of rewards led to an analysis showing how

a reward such as entrance into the college release program both motivates individuals and diminishes group solidarity. In this instance, the group used its orientation in marxist political theory to analyze the links between external social arrangements and the group to show how the prison system worked to counteract resistance.

The group produced theoretical knowledge about the individual, as well. Much of the group's efforts was directed toward helping members produce self-knowledge. The group's concept of how "the system plays on your mind" helps capture the kind of theoretical self-knowledge they sought to produce. The dialogic process of looking at each individual's experience produced new knowledge in the way that psychotherapy produces self-knowledge: the insights gained through a re-examination of personal experience represent discovery. These insights are known in a deeper and probably more lasting way than the same insight handed out in a lecture or a book. Of course, knowledge of "how the system plays on your mind" is more than self-knowledge because it concerns relations between the self and one's social surroundings.

Theory Critique: Taking a Contemporary Theory as Object of Investigation

When the Bronx-based group decided to write the paper on its concept of rehabilitation, it engaged in a process of critique of standard rehabilitation and therapeutic theory, even though members were not much aware of the theory their

method critiqued. The prisoners were not interested in traditional rehabilitation theory, or in turning it on its head. They did not care to prove traditional theory wrong, so long as they were able to practice their alternative; what they needed for their struggle was only the alternative method. The group agreed to do the paper only when it saw direct benefits from writing it other than presenting it as a theoretical alternative to a group of academics.

In this instance, the production of a critical theory of rehabilitation was my husband's and my goal, not the prisoners'. A grassroots group like the prisoners' with an implicit critique of a social scientific theory can only produce it if academy-based theorists knowledgeable about that theory work with the group to elicit the implicit critique that is embodied in their alternative practice, and the critique can only be known if the group is "working" (living and struggling) in an area close to the theory-to-be-questioned. My husband's and my method of making the group's implicit critique explicit worked because the relevant knowledge had already been produced as a collective process by the group, and only needed to be codified by the group in a way that would result in a written research product. The knowledge presented in our joint paper was produced by making the group's implicit critique explicit. As will be seen in Chapter 8, I used a similar method with the parents in my neighborhood to develop theory about the reproduction of racial inequity in the schools.

The group became quite involved in the exercise of critiquing rehabilitation theory. According to my notes on a meeting with the group, the ex-prisoners began

by posing a question implicitly challenging standard rehabilitation theory, "If you've never been in prison, never been on drugs or alcohol, do you have to be rehabilitated?" Their starting point here was to counter normative theories designating the victims as the only ones who need to be rehabilitated, and to make the point that the whole society needs to be "rehabilitated." My husband and I tried to be good listeners during this exercise, and did not take the role of posing critical questions for the dialogue. The group then proceeded through dialogue to establish several aspects of a redefinition of rehabilitation: Rehabilitation included "being involved in community action;" "rehabilitating the community" (a complicated concept including improving the physical conditions of the community, empowering disadvantaged people, and working toward the elimination of the domination and exploitation of their community); "the act of becoming less passive, and speaking out against being taken advantage of;" a "unified concept of rehabilitation of ex-offenders and the community at the same time;" and "pressing agencies to provide the services they say they are providing."

During the discussions about the paper, the group also stated critiques of what they understood as other normative definitions. One was leadership: "Being able to participate in an inmate-run program teaches you not how to be a leader, but how to accept the leadership role if necessary for the benefit of the group;" "Leadership is being able to accept responsibility, not leadership in the sense of dictatorship;" "In our group, everyone is a leader." Another was of the standard "program" treatment approach that emphasizes treating individuals: "The Jaycees are run for the

individuals...(our group) emphasizes the importance of the group over the individual; (Our group) has a purpose beyond advancing people individually;" the 'system' approach is for individual growth...(our) attitude is that a prisoner who isn't involved inside sets back the community outside."

Theory Critique: Taking Marxist Theory as the Topic of Investigation

The group occasionally produced knowledge about theory itself, as I related earlier when describing the Haitian man in my class who initiated discussion to question key Marxist political theory concepts. As I described above, this kind of research investigates theory; it interrogates theoretical concepts by counterposing insights from direct life experience and leads to new hypotheses and new knowledge for those engaged in the exercise. Of course, the process occurred entirely outside the world of academic journals, outside the dialogue of academic intellectuals. The impetus for critique of theory came not from having read alternative interpretations of the theory, but from the personal experiences of those who joined the dialogue. As far as I remember, these dialogues always concentrated on the central concepts of marxist theory, rather than on more specific theories.

Of all the various kinds of research, this form was the most removed from the group's immediate struggle. Its concrete goals were less easily defined than for other kinds of research. Although many people were drawn into his discussions, others

seemed to think such theoretical and abstract work unnecessary or irrelevant, as the research was directed more toward an intellectual understanding of the nature of "the system" than how to change anything.

Though knowledge production by interrogating theory was quite rare, I think it is especially important for two reasons. First, it shows that under certain conditions people from grassroots groups with no special academy-based theoretical training are capable of doing the kind of theoretical work often thought to be the exclusive province of academy-trained theorists. Certainly the Haitian might have benefited from any number of changes that would have enabled him to do better theoretical work, like being in dialogue with others who were similarly interested and well-read, and having more theoretical writings at his disposal. Although this kind of knowledge would not have been produced had he not been there, it is noteworthy that he successfully involved others in his discussions.

This example shows that within the prisoners' model there exists a basis for a method that I would call "continuous critique." A method or practice for criticizing "critical" theories which are themselves understood as being critical of "normative" theory is a necessary condition for preventing the reification of "critical" theory (e.g., Fay, 1987).

HOW THE PRISONERS' RESEARCH IS AN "ALTERNATIVE" OR "CRITICAL" MODEL

This section pertains to the prisoners' research methodology as a whole--the characteristics of their general research approach, not to their research methods per se. Many of these characteristics distinguish the prisoners' approach from standard social research, and are similar to some participatory and/or emancipatory academic research models. Many of the characteristics were included in Chapter 4, because they were characteristic of the prisoners' practice as a whole, or of its educational, therapy, or action elements. For this reason, my descriptions here are very brief. This list is a kind of short-hand for much that appears in different places throughout this chapter. I return to these characteristics in Chapter 9, to show how they relate to concepts in the literature defining alternative approaches to emancipatory participatory research.

Dialectical Approach. The prisoners incorporated the dialectical principle in many aspects of their research approach, which included dialectics between different ways of gathering data, between theorizing and data-gathering, between addressing theoretical and pragmatic concerns, between elements of the research process (as when data analysis generates new topics for research), between knowledge production and knowledge consumption, and between the researcher role and other roles. The research process itself was dialectically related to other parts of their emancipatory process: action, education, and therapy.

Praxis-Based Approach. The prisoners embedded their research in their

activity and reflection; they tried to change their circumstances and themselves simultaneously; they developed and used their knowledge and to change the world.

Dialogical Approach. Dialogue served as the basis for communication that underlies the prisoners' research. The dialogue took place principally between and among themselves, but included dialogue with others and with the theories they read--Marxist theory, and theories of racism. The group was not in dialogue with other similar grassroots groups, labor organizations, political organizations, or with the academic community, however.

Peer-Directed. The prisoners' research process was understood to be not only their burden and for their benefit, but under their direction and control.

Participatory. The process was participatory, involving as many individuals as possible in active roles. It can be described as a democratic, communitarian, collective, and collaborative participatory model.

Process-Oriented. The prisoners considered their research to always be in process, so did not value formal research products.

Community-Oriented. The process was directed toward the development of the community. Although the group's definition of "community" was problematic, its

goals for research included developing solidarity and critical consciousness in the community. The research was intended to contribute to social change by changing ideas in the community and by organizing it.

"Committed" and "Interested" Research. The rationale for research was solely to produce social change in their own, or what they perceived to be their community's interests. Their research was not thought to be impartial or disinterested.

Multi-Roles for the "Researcher." The prisoners as "researchers" also served as facilitators, educators, therapists, and organizers.

The Prisoners' Disinterest in Academic Sociological Theory

Sociologists have produced much theory and topical research that would have been useful and of interest for the prisoners to "research." For example, critical sociological work on "deviance" might have been of interest to support the prisoners' position that their criminality had been at least in part socially determined. Perhaps studies of prisons as bureaucratic institutions might have strengthened their ability to create more effective strategies for struggle. The prisoners' group was unaware of the existence of such theories and studies, and had no access to them.

I learned that they also had little interest in such work. When I began to read

in criminology, I tried unsuccessfully to introduce such works as Foucault's Discipline and Punish (1979) and a sociological case study of Chicano prisoners' organizations (Davidson, 1974). Trying to introduce Foucault was a big mistake; the prisoners got the impression that I was becoming one of "them"--meaning academics who produce theory that is not directly relevant to real people's struggles at all; and further, the little I managed to convey about Foucault's theory, which was about the architecture of the prison and the similarity of its architecture to other institutional buildings, they thought to be so obvious that it wasn't even worth discussing. They had a little more interest in the case study about Chicano prisoners' groups, but did not see how knowledge about these groups would help their struggles.

CHAPTER 7

PARADOXES IN THE PRISONERS' MODEL

The prisoners developed a model for emancipatory participatory research that is largely free from academic influences and that is grounded firmly in the perspective and practice of a group of socio-economically marginalized "grassroots" people. As such, the prisoners' model can contribute to the dialogue about models of emancipatory participatory research that directly benefit the grassroots groups involved. It can also contribute to the larger project of redefining social science and social scientific activity in ways that engage the active participation of marginalized groups together with academic intellectuals in producing emancipatory social knowledge (thus contributing to better critical social theory) and in creating a knowledge-based emancipatory method (revolutionary praxis) that integrates research with education, therapy, and action into a unified praxis.

I was first introduced to emancipatory participatory research by the prisoners who, of course, did not use the term. As I became more grounded in academic sociological research, I recognized the prisoners' praxis as including a type of emancipatory participatory research parallel to several academy-produced emancipatory research models, which I discuss in Chapter 9. I came to appreciate that the prisoners' model has several unique strengths not found in the academic models. But paradoxically, I also became aware that many of these very strengths

made the prisoners' model problematic in some respects. My work developing a more highly elaborated emancipatory participatory research model with a group of Black parents, of which I give an account in Chapter 8, was in large part an effort to resolve this paradox by finding ways to merge the prisoners' model with some of the academic models so as to allow the strengths of each to survive. In general, the principal strengths of the prisoners' model not found in the academic models derive from the extreme extent to which the grassroots group controls the research: theirs is a peer-directed and peer-participatory process guided by the group's own needs and perspective. The paradoxes and contradictions resulting from this characteristic revolve around the limitations imposed by such extreme self-directedness. In particular, the prisoners' model had not developed a repertoire of roles for the active participation of academic researchers in emancipatory research, and there were few ways for the results of potentially relevant social scientific research to enter their process.

This chapter reviews those characteristics of the prisoners' model which can be viewed as strengths, but which paradoxically also carry some liabilities, most of which have to do with the distance the prisoners' model maintains between its grassroots research process and academic research and researchers. The paradoxical nature of these characteristics became clearer to me as my own grounding shifted from being almost entirely outside academia when I worked with the prisoners, to being a graduate student. I review some of these characteristics, first as strengths, and then as weaknesses.

STRENGTHS OF THE PRISONERS' MODEL

The prisoners' research model takes for granted both the need for emancipatory knowledge and the ability and need of oppressed peoples' to engage in knowledge-producing activity to overcome their oppression. In these two respects, the prisoners' research model realizes the possibility theorists since Gramsci have proposed of a process that brings oppressed groups as active theorists and participants in progressive social change more fully into the creation of emancipatory knowledge. In short, the prisoners' process exemplifies a well developed model for a small group's emancipatory praxis that engages grassroots people in the production of emancipatory knowledge as part of their struggle to change both themselves and the external arrangements affecting them.

But the prisoners' research approach goes much farther than the academic models discussed in Chapter 9, in the extent to which the process is controlled by the indigenous grassroots group. In the prisoners' model, the emancipatory participatory research process addresses the group's own emancipatory needs directly, and does so through a peer-directed self-help approach. To a group such as the prisoners or former prisoners, faced with the many immediate concrete problems of everyday living under interconnected systems of oppression, having a research process available under the direction of one's own group makes it possible to produce research results readily applicable to the immediate situation. Whether the need is to engage in the necessary research-education process to change an individual's or the group's

consciousness, gather information about how to apply for a job, or systematically "research" how "waiting" operates as a mechanism of oppression, the research process is highly responsive to the group's needs.

Such a strongly peer-directed emancipatory participatory research approach was only possible because in the prisoners' model, research was viewed as a normal part of life, rather than a collection of specialized skills practiced by those with academic training. It is this characteristic--the conception of research as a normal part of life--that perhaps most sharply distinguishes the prisoners' model from other emancipatory participatory research models, as it follows from this conception that ordinary people without specialized training as scientists can "do research."

Several positive implications follow from the prisoners' do-it-yourself conceptualization of research. First, everyone can potentially "research" social reality in the prisoners' model; "doing research" is not an exclusive activity. The approach exemplifies Gramsci's assertion that everyone is a theorist.

Second, the prisoners' "research as a part of life" approach makes research an unalienating and empowering human activity. The prisoners' model recovers humans' confidence in their own abilities to make sense of the world and systematize knowledge about events and structures affecting their everyday existence. In contrast to academic models for research, including most of those for emancipatory participatory research, the prisoners' model places grassroots people and their indigenous intellectual work of analyzing their everyday lives squarely in the center of the research process.

Third, the prisoners' model makes the grassroots group independent of outside leaders or intellectuals. The prisoners guided the research process: they relied on themselves to frame the questions, investigate, and draw conclusions. In the prisoners' model, outside intellectuals do not impose their own frameworks of analysis or agendas for research on grassroots groups. The intellectuals are expected to take a supporting role rather than a leadership role; the group has already substantially defined the problem.

Fourth, when research is a part of everyday activity and everyone can be a researcher, role distinctions between researcher and researched object disappear, at least when the group and its members are the research object (when the group researches "the system," it largely maintains the subject-object distinction). The relationship between researcher and researched is equal, as each is a peer, and each acts both as researcher and research object. In all the above ways, the prisoners' research approach serves to greatly democratize the research process, by making it a broadly participatory activity.

The prisoners' peer-directed emancipatory participatory research process based in the principle that research is part of everyday activity also had several other implications. As the peer participants alone controlled the research agenda, they were free from external constraints and commitments determining what research they would do, and how they would do it. They were also free to prepare research "products" as they liked, in accordance with the immediate needs of the audience, which was none other than themselves. This usually meant that the research results were transmitted

orally. To fit their needs, the prisoners were free to produce a wide variety of emancipatory knowledge, more diverse than the kinds of knowledge often defined as emancipatory by academic researchers. They were also free to use a wider range of methods, including some not considered acceptable by standard social science.

The prisoners' use of the dialogue method to generate data exemplified the treatment of research as part of everyday life activity. Conversation in which one tests one's knowledge against others' knowledge and experiences, and in which new syntheses result as other people enter the dialogue, happens naturally as part of life. The prisoners' research process was grounded in their everyday experience of struggle, and knowledge developed through dialogues that synthesized and re-synthesized new "conclusions" into new hypotheses. Ongoing dialogue, as part of everyday life activity, provided a natural mechanism for sustaining the dialectical synthesis and re-synthesis of conclusions and hypotheses. The group's intense use of dialogue also helped establish the group as an epistemic community (e.g., Code, 1991, p. 224), capable of generating its own epistemological standpoint for the production of social analysis.

STRENGTHS VIEWED AS WEAKNESSES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PRISONERS' GOALS

Many of these strengths of the prisoners' model were weaknesses as well. But before proceeding with a critique of the prisoners' model, I want to note that it is

difficult to determine whether the limitations I discuss below were mainly due to the model or to the prisoners themselves. It is possible that if exposed to different circumstances, the prisoners' praxis, while still peer-directed, participatory, and emancipatory, might have been different, particularly in relation to academic social science. Because it is virtually impossible to make this determination, I equate the prisoners' model with the practices they followed.

Some of the strengths of the prisoners' praxis are weaknesses, even from the perspective of the group's own goals. One weakness was that the group's peer-directedness went to the extreme of distancing the prisoners from other large and small movements for social change, thus impeding the group's possibilities for successful collective action. My main focus in this discussion, however, is on the problems arising from the group's research model, many of which are related to its distance from academic research.

A principal limitation was that the prisoners' emancipatory research goals were restricted in practice to their own small group. While their emancipatory research model had the advantage of being self-directed and oriented strongly toward the group's own immediate needs, there was little consideration or concern for how knowledge produced by others (for example, the knowledge coming out of community groups in the Bronx who were involved with the struggle at the time to maintain Hostos Community College as a bilingual college) might affect the group's own definition of "the problem." The group's extreme form of self-reliance cut it off from influencing and being influenced by other potentially relevant emancipatory

knowledge, including that produced by academic researchers on topics such as bilingual education or community control of schools (e.g. Gittell, 1980).

The group's orientation to research as a normal part of everyday life gave it many strengths, as elaborated at the beginning of this chapter. But because it was their particular lives that framed the research questions, even situations their neighbors a few blocks away might have found very problematic (such as the Hostos struggle) were left out of their research agenda. The model's dialectical process took in and re-synthesized, for the most part, only the input and output from its own participants. The prisoners' view from (their own) everyday lives limited the scope of knowledge they themselves might produce about the "conditions."

The former prisoner group's interest in research was so tied to the experience of their very own everyday lives that even the subject that had almost completely absorbed their attention while in prison--the prison conditions--was too distant from the lives of the reconstituted group in the South Bronx to continue to be investigated. The site of struggle had shifted, and the Centro's research interest in prisons and prisoners seemed no longer relevant to the group's situation. The former prisoner group's inability to focus research interests on events and conditions even slightly outside its own everyday site of struggle narrowed the group's perspective and restricted its base of power and its capacity to create social change. It also restricted the group's comprehension of the interconnections between various spheres of struggle even in their own community, the South Bronx.

While the prisoners did do some research on content areas not directly

affecting their lives, this was mostly limited to Puerto Rican and Black history and Marxist theory. Academic research or theory in substantive areas relevant to the group's experiences might have contributed to the group's research "program" and emancipatory process in general. However, their model provided virtually no space for such contributions. Several times I brought research or social analysis produced by "outside" academics to the attention of the prisoners' or former prisoners' group that I thought might be of interest. Clearly some, like Foucault's (1979) social analysis of prisons, seemed understandably remote and overly abstract. But academic research products from a critical perspective that might have contributed to their struggle remained alienating. I tried introducing several kinds of such research, but virtually any research product that did not originate from the prisoners' own struggle, and that was not generated by their own emancipatory process, was not of interest to the group.

Reliance on dialogue among group members as the principal method for generating knowledge no doubt contributed to a democratic and egalitarian research process, but the intensely personalistic quality of dialogue and conversation also limited the scope of the group's research and the kinds and quality of knowledge available to it. The Centro's effort to introduce a standard research method (the questionnaire) was appreciated by the group, which shows that the prisoners' research model would accommodate the introduction of at least some standard (even positivist!) traditional research methods. However, as our experience with the group showed, the introduction of such traditional instruments resulted in much creative adaptation to fit

the general scheme of the prisoners' process. In essence, the questionnaire as a research method was converted to fit within the prisoners' dialogue approach. Among other things, this conversion meant that the data the prisoners produced by using the questionnaire was vulnerable to the criticism that it was not valid within the standards of social science. The prisoners' model lacked not only the techniques of data collection and analysis provided by standard social science, but also the ability to adhere to standards of scientific validity that could have helped persuade the outside scientific community or state officials of the group's arguments. Employing some "standard" research methods, not converted to the dialogue process, might also have enhanced the quality of knowledge available to the prisoners for their own education.

Because of all of the factors above, the prisoner's model was limited in its ability to incorporate other perspectives, other knowledge, into its dialectical process. Such knowledge from an "outside" source or sources might have challenged the prisoners' assumptions in ways that might have helped the prisoners develop better knowledge for their own needs. There was little mechanism for an outside check on the group's own perceptions of its needs. An exception was the Centro's suggestion to collect data about the need for programs in other prisons. This indirectly helped the local prisoners' group by broadening the base for struggle for bilingual education in the prisons.

The prisoners were not interested the diffusion of their own research results to other audiences beyond their neighborhood. Their research had been generated out of their own needs, and was for their own benefit. They alone "consumed" the research

"products." To be sure, the process was one in which the producers were unalienated from their research products. But since there were no written products, the group was focused so much on its own needs, and the emphasis was on the research process rather than on products, there were no research products available for others' use.

In short, while the prisoners' model was strong on developing grassroots researchers and a grassroots small group empowerment process enhanced by research activity, it lacked cross-fertilization with knowledge from the "outside;" its lack of contact with the outside limited the emancipatory potential of the prisoners' praxis in general and the validity of the group's emancipatory knowledge. The group's praxis also compromised the potential of its grassroots intellectuals to realize their full capacity to theorize broadly the conditions of oppression and the possibilities for emancipation. Of course, those inside the group's own local struggle were in a very strong position to determine what needed to be investigated. But any definition of "the problem" was restricted by the particular view from the "inside" and from "below" defined by the group's own particular local struggle. Other similar groups, such as the network of Hostos College supporters, also had a "bottom-up" view from the "inside"; many such local groups undoubtedly could have had equally valid, though equally partial views of the social conditions relevant to their own lives which might have been of interest to the prisoners. By limiting its research to the view from inside the small group, the participants prevented themselves from gaining a more complete view of the social conditions in the community--the interrelationships of systems of domination, and the potential for joining with other groups. In this way

the group partially subverted its own political goal of uniting in struggle with other "Third World peoples."

Because the prisoners' model was so extremely local, it omitted the intellectual struggle from its definition of struggle. The prisoners didn't consider "the conditions" or "the system" to include hegemonic scientific systems of thought in the world at large, or "epistemic discrimination" (Dalmiya and Alcoff, 1993, p. 217) or domination; hegemonic ideology was operationally conceptualized as a problem only insofar as they themselves had internalized mistaken ideas. The group's form of resistance to ideological control was to raise each other's consciousnesses to stop ideological reproduction among themselves, their own local group. My husband and I attempted to convince the group that it was also important to challenge widely shared definitions of social problems and social solutions--in particular, that their reformulation of "rehabilitation" was important to the "struggle" in general, even indirectly to their own. However, we could not show a direct or relatively prompt benefit to the group itself from challenging ideology in academic discourse. This task was too far away from their own immediate struggle, and although the ex-prisoners did complete the paper for the APA proceedings, they did so only because they derived other benefits from writing the paper.

From the perspective of (what I perceive to be) the prisoners' interests, their research model did not fully realize its potential to produce knowledge to benefit even its own constituents. By restricting the "informants" or research subject/objects participating in the research to people in the local group, by focusing only on the

conditions affecting themselves, and by virtually excluding research produced by "outsiders" (either academics or other grassroots groups), the prisoners' research model vastly limited its ability to be self-critical. In other words, however strong was their epistemological standpoint to produce valid emancipatory knowledge, their own struggle represented only a small fraction of the "view from below."

I do not mean to fault the prisoners' group for its almost exclusive concern with its everyday struggles. Considering the oppressiveness of the prison and the economic and social difficulties of living in the South Bronx in the late 1970s, it is a testament to the group's commitment to knowledge production that it continued to expend any effort at all on research. Though the process might have been advanced if the participants had had wider horizons, it is perfectly understandable that they did not.

STRENGTHS VIEWED AS WEAKNESSES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WORKING CRITICAL SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

As my grounding shifted, and I began to think about the prisoners' emancipatory participatory research model from the perspective of a social scientist, I found that some of the same aspects of the prisoners' process that enabled it to contribute to social knowledge were also troublesome. First, the prisoners' is a model for a research-based emancipatory praxis, but although it contributes to understanding phenomena that are also of interest to "committed" academic social

scientists, it does not address the practice needs of those researchers. For such researchers seeking ways to do research with or on behalf of a grassroots group, while making a contribution to the development of emancipatory social theory, the prisoners' model provides few possibilities, as I learned while working at the Centro. In the prisoners' model, doing research with the group required the academic researcher to conform to the group's agenda, which was defined by its own perspective. Even the Centro's research agenda, which I thought was quite compatible with the prisoners' perspective, was rejected. So much control over the research process is exerted by the grassroots group (to the exclusion of any others) that there is little room to accommodate an academic researcher/theorist's own research agenda. It might be possible for an outside researcher to bring her or his own research topic before the group, but to be accepted, it would have to fit the narrow constraints of the group's needs. The implications of this limitation are particularly serious for researchers who, like the Centro, define the "struggle" more broadly than any one individual local group might be inclined to do.

My experience with the Centro and the prisoners is instructive. In the prisoners' model, an outside researcher can "participate" with the grassroots group in the production of knowledge, but only on the group's terms. For example, the Centro's research agenda was accepted by the prisoners' group when the Centro aided the prisoners' own program by helping the group produce knowledge about the unavailability of badly needed bilingual educational programs in the prison, but was rejected by the former prisoners' group when the Centro's agenda continued to focus

on prisons, now a different agenda from the former prisoners'.

The prisoners' model lacks provision for interaction between its researchers and politically progressive academic researchers, or between its own research/theory products and contemporary critical academic research and theory. The group's research model was so self-sufficient, so peer-participatory and peer-directed, that the group avoided using academic research or theory to enhance or critique the knowledge it had produced. The prisoners' considerable anti-academic sentiments reinforced their predisposition against bringing academic researchers, research, or theory into their research process. In principle, the prisoners' model can produce unique emancipatory knowledge from its "bottom-up" method using untrained indigenous peer researchers in a peer-directed process. But in fact, this knowledge might have been sharpened, broadened, or better critiqued if relevant academic research had had some way of entering the group's theorizing. This point becomes clearer in Chapter 8, in which I relate how a grassroots group used concepts from academic social science to sharpen its analysis, and in Chapter 9, in which I discuss some epistemological considerations having to do with emancipatory participatory research.

The diffusion of research results is also a problem with the prisoners' model. Because the research was conducted primarily to address the group's own needs, the group was almost completely unconcerned about diffusing its research results to outsiders. To the extent it did communicate its research results to the community, it did so only on a very local basis. This insularity kept the group's results from being

checked, even by sympathetic critics in the community.

A serious problem with the prisoners' model from the perspective of the academic "critical" researcher was the group's negative reaction to communicating results to an academic audience. This negative reaction pertained to research the group itself was conducting; there was, of course, no place in the prisoners' model for an academic researcher to conduct his or her own research, much less to publish the results. The prisoners objected even to recording research "results" on paper, because in their model, conclusions were responding to the ongoing dialectic, and therefore always changing, and it would be impossible to capture the "truth" as a research "result." When my husband and I began discussions of the APA paper with the group, the participants objected to putting any conclusions in writing, because doing so would leave the mistaken impression that their model was unchanging. Moreover, they considered their conclusions to be ungeneralizable; they took so seriously the idea that every situation is historically specific that they considered their own conclusions relevant only to their own experiences.

In the prisoners' model, the research is done with the group's interests solely in mind, and the group alone is the producer and the audience. The model left no way for academic research to enter the research process or for the group's research to enter academic discourse. One's choices as an academic working with the group to do research were therefore quite limited. For the most part, they consisted of participating in group dialogue sessions as a quasi-peer and engaging in the group's way of gathering data by examining each other's experiences. Being somewhat of an

outsider was not so problematic in this respect; the group sometimes appreciated the knowledge an outsider with a different perspective and different experiences could contribute. Participating in the group's process as a social scientist was, however, problematic in the many ways I have discussed above.

The most troublesome thing about the prisoners' model, from the viewpoint of a "committed" academic researcher, was the impossibility of achieving the model's great potential. If the "bottom up," "inside" view from struggle, developed in a peer-directed process, could be brought into dialogue with existing relevant critical theory, more complete social knowledge might emerge. But the prisoners' process precluded this outcome. One might say that the prisoners' group guarded its standpoint so fiercely that it left no way for the general discourse of "critical" social theory to penetrate. The prisoners' resistance to interaction with contemporary academy-based intellectual theory and theorists prevented the model from making its insights available to "outside" academic theorists (and prevented them from informing the prisoners' theorizing). As a result, the potential of the prisoners' model for contributing emancipatory knowledge is not fully realized; the model's capacity for producing knowledge with the view from "the bottom" goes unseen (and uncriticized) because of its disinterest in and aversion to connections with academic discourse.

For a "critical" or "committed" sociological researcher/theorist, working within the restrictions imposed by the prisoners' model presents a frustrating set of limitations. While the prisoners' research method (implicitly) corrects for academic-imposed distortions and limitations by turning the usual relations of knowledge

production on their head (by putting those in charge who as a class have in the past often been turned into passive research objects and exploited or sometimes otherwise harmed by outside academic researchers), it almost completely excludes the trained researcher's specialized expertise, and prevents him or her from bringing the grassroots group's insights into the relevant academy-based critical discourse.

From the perspective of the outside academic, then, the group's model is ultimately unattractive because it confines the outsider to providing services; it also limits the possibilities for following one's own intellectual interests, for which the experience of working with the group may well provide frustratingly fertile grounds. While the group's control over the agendas to be pursued provides it with safeguards to prevent it from being exploited or harmed by "outside" researchers, this amount of control can also frustrate the researcher hoping to work with the grassroots group to develop critical theory.

IN SUM

In modern capitalist society people take on specialized functions, so that activities, academic disciplines, relationships, etc. that would otherwise overlap are separated. The prisoners' model for participatory emancipatory research and for an emancipatory methodology offers a self-enclosed model for praxis in which many activities and roles are integrated, and in which research is a part of life and a way of struggle. But paradoxically, the prisoners' model inadvertently reproduces some of

the separations now taken for granted under modern capitalist society. Of most interest here are the separations between academic intellectuals and grassroots intellectuals, and between the intellectual struggle taking place within academic intellectual discourse and grassroots people's internal dialogue. The group devalued the intellectual struggle, separating the politics among academic intellectuals and intellectuals' theories from the politics of grassroots groups' concrete struggles. Of special consequence is the separation between the prisoners' model's local historically specific struggle and other emancipatory struggles, including intellectual struggles.

Academics typically build emancipatory or "critical" theory and practice by developing substantive critical theories of oppression and resistance that involve exploration of the ways struggles are interconnected. For this sort of enterprise, the knowledge produced by grassroots groups using emancipatory participatory research methods must have a common ground for meeting and interacting with the knowledge produced by practicing intellectuals, so that the epistemological conditions for establishing critical dialogue can take place. While the prisoners' research process sought to establish the conditions of the group's own oppression and the possibilities for overcoming it, the prisoners' model--or at least their praxis--prevented the standpoints of others' struggles, not to mention the concepts of academic intellectuals, from entering the analysis. Largely because of these self-imposed separations, the prisoners' model failed to realize its potential to change and be changed by emancipatory knowledge from the standpoints of other marginalized groups. To keep "critical" theory critical by building in an ongoing dialectic incorporating the

standpoint(s) of grassroots groups requires a broader form of praxis than that of a self-enclosed small group such as the prisoners'. Such a praxis would include the intellectual and practical activities of practicing academic intellectuals (as well as others). Developing a praxis for emancipatory participatory research that allows academic intellectuals to interact more fully with a grassroots knowledge production process is a central concern of this work. Such a praxis would be a broader approach to emancipatory participatory research than either that comprised by the prisoners' model or those created by academic intellectuals and would, I believe, contribute to better emancipatory theory and practice.

If the prisoners' model is to serve in any way as a method for producing emancipatory theory, it must be transformed so as to become more open to the exploration of the interconnections of other centers of oppression by entertaining into its dialogue knowledge developed from the standpoints of other marginalized groups. Because much of this knowledge has been developed, or at least is carried, by academic intellectuals, this means the prisoners' research process must become more open in some way to those intellectuals' research and theory. These points are explored in more depth in the final chapters.

SOCIAL SCIENCE FROM BELOW:

GRASSROOTS KNOWLEDGE FOR SCIENCE AND EMANCIPATION

by

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CHAPTER 8

REPLICATING AND ELABORATING THE PRISONERS' MODEL: RESEARCH WITH BLACK PARENTS ON THE REPRODUCTION OF RACISM IN SCHOOLS

THE SETTING

The School Conditions and the Parents

In January of 1981, my husband, ten-year-old daughter, and I moved to Prince George's County, Maryland, just over the line from the District of Columbia. We enrolled our daughter in the local elementary school, which was over 90% Black, and despite what we had been assured to the contrary, soon found that she was suffering from a punitive educational experience also sorely lacking in academic rigor.

The school district covers a large suburban county that has endured a long history of segregation. A historical pattern of housing segregation in the county and the metropolitan area in general helped create and maintain the pattern of segregated and inferior schools for Black children. Lawsuits have failed over the years to successfully desegregate the schools, although they did lead the school system to implement a magnet school program in the mid-1980's. Population shifts resulting in high densities of Black residents and Black parent resistance to their children's busing have made busing problematic as the solution for integrating the schools, and economic crises limiting the ability of the system to provide money for magnet

programs have made it increasingly difficult to integrate the schools by that method. As of the early 1980s, pupil performance in the county was far below the levels found in the other Washington suburbs, though above the levels of the inner city, and performance in the predominantly Black schools was the lowest in the county.

On a personal note, when my family and I moved to the area, the real estate agent attempted to "steer" us away from the house we eventually bought, because it was in a "highly mixed" area. We were unconcerned, as the setting fit our needs in important ways, especially in being close to public transportation and in a small rural enclave, and we were pleased to be in a "mixed" area. As it turned out, our general neighborhood is almost entirely Black, and we were naive in thinking after much too cursory an investigation of the schools that the local school was acceptable. Living in the area has been an interesting, if often frustrating experience. Our daughter's school experience was the most problematic of all.

As soon as our daughter entered school in January of 1981, we became concerned. She was bored, discouraged, and fearful of the teachers. She didn't seem to be learning anything. She reported that she spent hours and hours participating in "group punishment" activities such as writing "I will not get out of my seat without permission." One of her classmates was punished by not being allowed to go to the bathroom the entire day when he failed to bring in his assignment. He had wet his pants and was made to sit in his wet pants the rest of the day.

To my surprise, when I went to speak to my daughter's teacher about the lack of critical thinking assignments, the hours spent in repetitive punishment deskwork,

the absence of required book reports, etc., I found the teacher, an African-American woman, very unconcerned. She first questioned where our daughter had attended school previously, and then asserted that the kinds of work I seemed to expect the children to be doing at this school were far above their ability level. She then went on to make the surprising (to me) assertion that "You can't expect the same (academic level of performance) for Black children as whites."

My husband and I began to investigate further. We found that the school's achievement test results were near the bottom for the county. And we began talking to other parents, learning that in their experience, many teachers either failed to teach at all (didn't give assignments, spent their teaching time giving punitive repetitive desk work, or walked the halls talking to other teachers), or taught the content incorrectly (as in teaching how to divide and multiply fractions incorrectly). One teacher stamped a picture of an owl at the top of one of the children's papers, and wrote this sarcastic note: "You think you're so wise, don't you?" At the bottom she had written, "You thought you had it, didn't you?" (She had found a mistake in the punctuation in the heading. Otherwise the paper was perfect.) Blatant verbal expressions of low expectations were sometimes expressed, such as, "My dog could have done this better than you." The reading groups in our daughter's class were divided into sections, the lowest named, "Lost at Sea," the highest named "Survivors." Help was not forthcoming from any level of the school system administrative structure; teachers, principals, mid-level administrators, and county administrators were unresponsive. Such seemed to be the case whether the teachers

or administrators were African-American or not.

The Apparent Problem:

Low Academic Standards, and no Organized Parent Resistance

All of this transpired despite the fact that most of the children attending the school were from middle class families. According to socioeconomic data gathered from the 1980 census, household income, education, percent employed, and percent employed in managerial or professional positions in the 97% Black area immediately around the school were all equal to or greater than the means for all families in the county (census data reported in Stern, 1987b). The situation in the school did not fit my preconceptions about middle-class schools.

My husband and I began talking informally to parents of the other children after the PTA meetings, and found that they, like us, had aspirations that their children attend college. Many of the parents were themselves school teachers or school administrators in other school systems. Although a few parents seemed extremely upset about the quality of education and were very vocal about it, many seemed reluctant at first to express negative observations or feelings about the school. There seemed to be no organized opposition among this school's parents to the low quality of education at the school.

My husband and I were perplexed: How could the school have such low academic standards, contain so many children whose parents were clearly middle

class, and yet have no organized parent movement to raise the standards? We both attended PTA meetings regularly for the rest of the school year, and at the beginning of the next school year, I was appointed by the newly elected PTA President to be the chairperson for the Program Committee, the committee in charge of presenting programs for the PTA's monthly meetings. Working in my capacity as Program Committee chair, I attempted with some success to facilitate a PTA-based parental effort to understand and change the conditions at our local school. This chapter presents a partial account of my work with the parent group, first within the local PTA and then elsewhere in the school system. My main focus is on the methods we developed for emancipatory participatory research, and particularly on the ways we addressed the role problems of the social scientist in a grassroots research activity.

A Context for Action Presents Itself

By the time I began my work with the PTA, I was well into my graduate training, and my unsuccessful experiences working with the Centro and the former prisoners' group were fresh in my mind. My efforts to maintain my groundings simultaneously in academia and in the grassroots "field" had frustrated me, the Centro, and the prisoners' group. I had approved of the Centro's activist-oriented goal of finding a way to do research that would benefit the grassroots group, involve them in some aspects of the research, and contribute substantively to the development of critical theory about Puerto Ricans and the criminal justice system--but the

project's failure remained a puzzle. Conflicts about my own role had particularly troubled me, as I felt torn by the competing demands of my commitments to the Centro as an academic institution and to a prisoners' group that was uninterested in any kind of research that did not fit its own local needs and its own agenda. I was becoming increasingly aware that the prisoners' way of doing research as part of their everyday life and from their critical perspective provided a powerful model for a peer-directed grassroots emancipatory research process, but I was disturbed that their concept and practice of research had been incompatible with the Centro's, which seemed to require at least some interaction with substantive academy-produced critical research or theory.

I gradually began to recognize my new life situation as a real-life struggle similar to the prisoners'. I saw that the prisoners' model might be useful as a method to address the reproduction of racism and class inequality at our children's school. It also appeared that perhaps I might again search for a way or ways to resolve the separations between the prisoners' method and academic research.

At the time I became involved in my daughter's new school's PTA, I had begun to explore some academic writings about approaches to critical anthropological fieldwork that suggested forms of praxis for the "committed" researcher. This literature was encouraging, in that I could see others had faced that part of the dilemma having to do with the competing demands of working with a grassroots group in the midst of struggle on the one hand, and for an academic institution on the other; of finding ways to combine the roles of being an activist and an academic

researcher. Although this literature did not specifically address the problem of how to reconcile the prisoners' research-as-a-part-of-life approach with academic research models, it nonetheless addressed many issues about how politics, knowledge production, and fieldwork ethics are interrelated. Later I began finding other literatures, especially in critical ethnography, feminist epistemology, and Freirean-influenced participatory research, which also contributed to my thinking. These literatures helped to inform my thinking as I attempted to re-create the prisoners' model in this new setting, and will be discussed in Chapters 10 and 11.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter describes my work with the parents, in which I sought, as a participant in a community struggle, to replicate key features of the prisoners' emancipatory participatory research method, and also to provide a place for myself as a social scientist, a way for contemporary sociological research and theory to enrich the process, and a way for the "inside" or indigenous perspective of the group to enter academic discourse about a subject of mutual concern. My account emphasizes methodological issues, but the presentation is more or less chronological. I first describe my entry into an emancipatory participatory research process with the parents. The new field situation presented me with a new issue I had not encountered in my work with the prisoners: how an "outsider" might go about initiating a process like the prisoners'. I discuss the contradictions involved in an "outsider" like myself

starting a grassroots peer-directed research process like the prisoners', and the ways I attempted to resolve these contradictions.

Much of the chapter describes several forms of emancipatory participatory research we used as a group. The parents' research method resembled the prisoners' model in many ways, especially in its reliance on dialogue and the critical examination of each others' experiences as the principal method for gathering data and in its integration of education, therapy, and action into its research process. It is very different, however, in that it allowed space for the praxis of an outside researcher: I was able to find a role for myself that could complement and not undermine the peer-directed "bottom-up" participatory research process.

This fieldwork experience shows that it was possible to establish the prisoners' democratic peer-directed "bottom-up" research process in another setting with a different group of people and to do it in a way that allowed me to participate in the group both as a peer and as a practicing social scientist. In this dual role, I was able to facilitate the group's process and help it directly by finding ways for various kinds of research, including sociological research and theory about race, class, and schooling, to enter the parents' praxis. The experience shows that a praxis that unifies a strong peer-directed dialogue-based research process with the emancipatory research praxis of a practicing social scientist can benefit the group directly and also contribute to a more complete critical theory of schooling.

In the following chapters, I compare the prisoners' model, the model I developed with the parents, and models for academic researchers' emancipatory

practice, to outline a more general framework for emancipatory participatory research that extends the meaning of this concept beyond small-group participatory research efforts. As we begin to see in this chapter, the conjunction of these models allows for contributions in several areas: raising the quality of social analysis performed by the grassroots groups as part of their struggle; developing new social knowledge that has not emerged from other forms of research practice; demonstrating the value of a methodology based on a dialogue of standpoints--particularly between the standpoints of grassroots disadvantaged groups and of friendly co-researcher/analysts from the dominant racial or cultural perspective, between a view "from below" and a view "from above;" and establishing a form of emancipatory research praxis for committed academic intellectuals. This is a methodology that contributes both to the production of improved social knowledge and to the struggle for social equality.

Three Stages of Development in the Parent Network

My work with the parent group, or network, went on for about six years, from 1981 to 1987, during which time the composition and organizational basis of the network underwent several transformations. Three major stages in this series of transformations can be differentiated. Most of my account of methodology is restricted to the first stage, which lasted about two years. I also describe very briefly the second and third stages, because it was in these later stages that the efforts of the network in the initial stage yielded some interesting outcomes.

The first stage lasted from the time I entered the "field" in January 1981, when I first became involved with the PTA, until about the spring of 1983, a year after my daughter had graduated from her elementary school, making my continued participation in the PTA somewhat awkward. In the discussion that follows, I illustrate the range of research methods the group used. The discussion proceeds more or less chronologically, and illustrates several types of research methods: critical investigation of each other's experiences, including comparisons of African-American and white parents' experiences with the same schools and the experiences of the same parents in dealing with different schools; formal and informal interviews with school officials; visits to different schools to gauge the quality of programs and the treatment of parents; individual and collective action to produce change, and reflection on the results of that action; and assimilation of knowledge from academic social science delivered by invited experts, by me, or by other parents based on their readings.

During the second stage, from approximately 1983-1985, the network had no clear institutional grounding for its work. The network expanded during this time as it began drawing parents in from several schools, but it had no organizational center, and functioned mostly by telephone. Most of the parents who participated in the network in this stage were African-American and most had children in predominantly Black schools with poor educational conditions. One outcome to be described in the second stage has to do with a theoretical breakthrough for the group (also a contribution to sociological knowledge)--the discovery that schools reproduce race and

class divisions in part by differential treatment of parents. The other outcome in the second stage was the unanticipated formation of two parent group "spin-offs," both of which took action to address problems of racial inequality in schooling.

The third stage took place from approximately 1985 to 1987, during which time I attempted to continue using the PTA as an institutional base for carrying on the parent research work, but from a county-wide PTA Committee, the "Equity Committee." By examining the work of the second and third stages, it can be seen that the parents' network continued to develop and refine its collective knowledge, and that I was able to find new ways of integrating my role as sociologist with my peer-participant role and academic sociological research with the parents' research. In the third stage, one outcome was developing a semi-formal pedagogical context for teaching the knowledge developed in the network's earlier stages to other parents, while another was further development of the parents' theory about how the systematic differential treatment of parents in the informal everyday politics of schooling reflects and reproduces race and class division and inequality.

INVESTIGATING EACH OTHERS' EXPERIENCES AS A RESEARCH METHOD

Investigating each others' experiences through critical dialogue was the prisoners' central method for raising consciousness about the existence of oppression, investigating the manifestations of the oppression, identifying possibilities for resistance, and assessing the effects of resistance. It was therefore central to the

prisoners' methodology of both research and struggle, and reestablishing such a dialogue process would go a long way to replicating the entire prisoners' model.

The prisoners used critical dialogue to generate data about the internal attitudes, feelings, and understandings of the individuals involved, and the nature and characteristics of the social structure. The method partially resembles Freire's "conscientization" model (1970) and feminist consciousness-raising, as discussed in Chapters 10 and 11. The prisoners also used various other methods, but always interpreted the findings by using critical dialogue.

The prisoners' dialogue was "critical" (though they did not use the term) in several ways. First, it was critical of the systems of power relations throughout the society that systematically maintain existing forms of dominant-subordinate relationships, especially class and race relations. The prisoners' theoretical orientation to their critique of society was based primarily on Marxist class analysis, but incorporated a theories of racism, colonialist imperialism, and (later in their process) sexism as well. In taking a critical view of the social structure, the prisoners aimed not only to understand the nature of the oppressive "system," as they called it, but to change it as well. Understanding and changing the "system" went hand in hand.

The parent group was not critical in quite this way. Whereas the prisoners' group had an activist/revolutionary perspective rooted in their historical context (e.g., the recent Civil Rights Movement and the Attica Rebellion), and in their youth and fairly desperate socioeconomic situation, the parents' group formed in a more

conservative time and among older and socioeconomically better-off individuals. There was no doubt the parents were aware of racism as a powerful social force, however. Some had taken part in the Civil Rights Movement, and all spoke of personal experiences with racism. Yet there was a great range in the extent to which the pervasiveness of racism was acknowledged and discussed with me at first, and only some parents were inclined toward an activist perspective. (Two sets of parents were Plaintiffs in the then-current NAACP desegregation suit against the schools.) On the whole, however, the prisoners' critical perspective differed from that of the parents mainly with respect to the lack of critical perspective on the parents' part about the specific systematic ways institutionalized aspects of racism affected their daily lives. Those who were aware that things were terribly wrong at the school did not at first connect their general experience of being oppressed to particular mechanisms that institutionalized the oppression in the schools, a connection the prisoners had readily made in the prison situation. The group did eventually identify several such mechanisms, and one way to read the account of my attempt to establish and elaborate the prisoners' research process in this new setting is to follow the development of the parents' critical perspective as a function of the various kinds of research we did. Despite the different socioeconomic and historical position the parents' group was in, it eventually developed a somewhat systematic process of critical dialogue based on friendship discussion that shared the essential characteristics of the prisoners' process. The parents' everyday discourse, like the prisoners' was grounded in the experiences of friendship and of shared oppression and struggle.

Second, the prisoners' dialogue was critical in that it sought to identify repressive, oppressive, exploitive mechanisms embedded in the general social structure, but manifested in the institutions closest to their lives, especially the prison and the schools. The focus was to identify mechanisms that contributed to the reproduction of class, race, or (later) gender relations. Although it did not represent their entire analysis of inequality, the prisoners were very much concerned about the way the society reproduced inequality by closing off access to equal opportunity to education. Accordingly, they sought to identify and change the specific mechanisms responsible for denying equal access to educational opportunity.

Third, the prisoners' dialogue was a critical investigatory process in that they confronted and helped each other criticize their negative and self-destructive taken-for-granted understandings about themselves, especially about the reasons for their personal and collective predicaments. The prisoners' research process sought to bring out self-destructive personal feelings and memories and to investigate the ways these feelings had negative consequences for themselves, their families, their community, or the prisoners' group. As with "the system," they sought understanding and change simultaneously. The prisoners connected their negative feelings (such as despair) with the resulting attitudes and behaviors those feelings caused (such as thinking the status quo is inevitable and can't be changed) to find ways to reverse the ideas that immobilized them from taking social action to improve their conditions.

Fourth, the prisoners' dialogue critically interrogated the connections between the prisoners' bad feelings and negative attitudes on the one hand, and the social

mechanisms that had caused them on the other. Through dialogue, the prisoners attempted to get at the connections between feelings, including the at least partial misattribution of those feelings to personal weaknesses, and the social-structurally based mechanisms that reinforced or caused those feelings in the first place. The prisoners combined self-analysis with social analysis by linking specific feelings and attitudes with specific social mechanisms. Everything from the lack of positive images of Latino people in the mass media to individuals' memories of teachers' having called them "stupid" were included in this aspect of analysis. This kind of concrete analysis allowed the prisoners to make the inferential leap between unanalyzed personal feelings and a social analysis of structural inequality. This was a kind of political-therapeutic process that sought to locate the origin of feelings not only in psychodynamics and personal psychological history, but in the political-economic and social structure as well. An example was the link between an interaction in which a teacher repeatedly calls a student "stupid" and an analysis of the social role of the teacher in reproducing inequality.

Finally, the prisoners' dialogue method was critical in the sense that embedded in its quest for social liberation and for a just and egalitarian social system was a process for an ongoing critique and revision of tentative hypotheses and conclusions. This dialectical process, though flawed and incomplete, helped to prevent a reification of the prisoners' developing theory about the causes for or solutions to structural inequality, as the knowledge integrated into the group's research process reflected input from new people and new experiences. The group's insularity, however--its

isolation from other movement groups and from academy-based contemporary social research and theory (and academic researcher/theorists)--limited its ability to incorporate other critical perspectives from outside the group into its collective dialogue.

Beginning the Dialogue-Based Research Process: My Entry into the "Field" as a Peer

I began attending PTA meetings and talking with other parents soon after my daughter enrolled in the local school. In retrospect, the parents and I engaged in a friendship-based dialogue process somewhat similar to that of the prisoners from the start, though it did not initially take on all the aspects of critical dialogue. We had begun trading similar negative experiences we had had with the school, trying to find out how extensive these problems were, what the nature of the problems was, what attempts had been made to address the problems, how we felt about seeing our children suffer, and so on.

The main way we talked to each other was by telling each other stories about things that had happened to our children at school. The stories were elaborated with details about other parts of our lives and our experiences. They included self-reflection, and they invited responses yielding even more stories and self-reflections. Storytelling is an art, and the African-American women in my experience are masters of this art. Though I was not as good at storytelling as the other parents, my stories

entered the collective repertoire, and I found them coming back to me sometimes with new meanings imparted to them by the storyteller of the moment. Stories formed a "data base," so to speak, for our collective knowledge. Older stories acquired new meanings as we reinterpreted our experiences.

These conversations marked my entry into the "field," even though I had not yet considered that I was doing anything other than being an active parent, looking out for my child's best interests. Many of these conversations took place on the telephone, as I started to become telephone friends with a few other mothers and grandmothers.

During the first months, I did not see a connection to my work with the prisoners, and so did not propose that we "do research" together the way the prisoners' group did. Our "research" began as a part of everyday conversations about the terrible educational conditions at the school. I began to use the prisoners' "research-as-a-part-of-life" approach--unconsciously, at first--and to participate with other parents in the beginnings of an emancipatory participatory research process following the prisoners' model. (At the time, I had not yet even codified the prisoners' process, so its elements and functions were only partially clear to me.)

My entry into the "field" was different in this and other ways from the standard fieldwork situation in which an academic researcher enters a community to do research on that community. In retrospect I can see that entering the way I did afforded strong possibilities for interacting as a peer, and for initiating a peer-directed emancipatory participatory research process, despite the fact that I was a graduate

student and an outsider--I was both not Black and a newcomer to the neighborhood. But being grounded as a fellow parent, with a child being subjected to the same educational conditions as the other parents' children, made it easier to establish a peer relationship that avoided some of the problems usually inherent in academic activist field research.

My entry into the school context suggests three important points about resolving the contradictions involved in an outsider's beginning and carrying out a grassroots peer-directed emancipatory participatory research process. First, it was very helpful in terms of equality that I was subject to some of the same oppressions as my neighbors. Second, it was important to enter the "field" in a non-dominating way, using a friendship-based dialogue, so that a peer-directed research process can develop its own perspective, distinguishable from an outside academic's.

Third, it is important to establish and maintain relationships as a friend, so that one's suggested knowledge and insights, based either in personal experience or in sociology, can be easily challenged by the indigenous participants. By establishing a relationship as a friend, my differences from the group--my white middle class position, my newness to the neighborhood, and my academic sociological knowledge--made it easy for others to challenge my judgments and for me to accept challenges graciously. If I had entered as an "expert" sociologist, I believe the relationships would have been quite different. My differences from the group also helped the group theorize about the situation at hand, because my experiences provided a counterpoint to others' perspectives. Only by making the comparisons that were

elicited by friendly dialogue around our differences of perspective were we eventually able to discover a new and different aspect of how schools reproduce race and class division--by differential treatment of parents depending not so much on their individual race, but on the majority racial composition of the school their children attend. These points are discussed at length in the narrative analysis below.

Gathering Background Data

Data Showing our School's Low Achievement Scores

During the summer of 1981, before our daughter began her second year at the school, my husband and I had sought and obtained a complete listing of the average achievement scores for all the schools in the district. The existence of such a listing was not publicized (when my husband and I had requested the data from our school's principal, she had told us she only had testing information about our school), but it eventually proved available upon our request from the school district office. We found our school had scored near the bottom of the district on achievement tests at every grade level, but similarly to other predominantly Black elementary schools in the county. In fact, we observed a strong negative relationship between the proportion of Black children in a school and its average achievement test scores. We also noted that an average "Cognitive Abilities Test" score accompanied the achievement score for each grade level, and that these cognitive abilities scores seemed to be used to predict the achievement scores. Our school's average cognitive

abilities test scores were consistently below grade level, and were at approximately the same percentile level as the average achievement test scores. On the basis of this information, our own observations, and the observations other parents had shared with us, my husband and I suspected that race-based mechanisms were involved in the poor quality of education at the school, and that the testing system was part of the problem.

My small effort to gather baseline data on the schools paralleled the efforts the prisoners and the Committee for Hispanic Inmates had made to document inequality in the New York State prison system. Also in parallel, this information contributed to the development of the parents' critical perspective, as I discuss further below.

Interviewing the Principal

After the first PTA meeting in the fall of 1981, the PTA President, whom I had come to know from the previous year, asked if I would like to chair the PTA Program Committee for the year. I accepted, hoping I might be able to design some programs that would bring more parents into the dialogue about the seriousness of the educational conditions and perhaps stimulate the parents as a group to take some badly needed action. With the testing data in hand, I made an appointment to see our principal. I suggested that the data indicated our school needed some very serious interventions, reiterated some of the problems I had observed about the lack of stimulating assignments, the time wasted on group punishments, etc., and proposed we should be very concerned about raising the quality of education of our school in

comparison with other schools in the county, and should work together to do so. I inquired about what kinds of educational changes she anticipated making, and whether she thought there was a problem in getting the needed resources from the district.

Although I had hoped that the principal, who had just been given the job, would agree that there were some problems with the school, she countered in several ways, attempting to deflect my points, and especially to deflect any responsibility the school might have for the low scores. She felt it was inappropriate to compare our school with others, but rather that any comparisons should be done longitudinally, comparing our school's scores from year to year (although the percentile scores were roughly the same every year). She said the teachers were all excellent, she had no problems getting resources from the district, and that the low scores were due to problems outside the school.

Her main critique was of the parents, who, she said, needed to "participate" more in their children's education. She suggested that the children's educational problems were based in a lack of parental "involvement." They should "turn off the blaring radios and televisions" so the children could do their homework, and more parents should volunteer at the school. She referred to parents' "negative" attitudes about the teachers and the school, and suggested that we should "get involved" in "positive" ways, especially by volunteering rather than always "making waves." Several parts of the message seemed clear: the school was not responsible for the low achievement scores, but the parents were. The parents should refrain from complaining and confrontation about the school conditions, because this form of

"involvement" would be "negative," and we should instead channel "participation" into voluntary activities. The principal was not interested in developing a cooperative relationship to improve the school.

Most tellingly, she used the cognitive abilities test scores to help justify the children's low average achievement scores. When I attempted to suggest that there might be something wrong with the cognitive abilities scores, as the cognitive abilities scores were lowest for the predominantly Black schools, she simply repeated that the ability scores showed that the children were achieving at approximately the levels they could be "expected" to. Finally, she referred to a theme that would recur throughout my experience working to raise the expectations for the children's academic performance: the "dangers of overachievement." According to the principal, and others who would express their opinions later, the children were in danger of being "stressed out" if pushed to "overachieve," and the cognitive abilities tests were being used to set a guide for "overachievement." [The next school year, this principal actually brought in a "stress management consultant" (an African-American woman) to a PTA meeting to warn the parents about the psychological dangers of pushing their children to 'overachieve'--a move of counter-resistance against the parents' efforts to upgrade academic standards.] In making an appointment with the principal, I did much as the prisoners had done, using ordinary interactions with representatives of "the system" as interviews, to gather data not available from within the group, not only for my own personal information, but to contribute to a more interesting and productive dialogue with other parents.

Interpreting the Interview Sociologically

I also made use of my sociological knowledge and perspective while conducting the interview, and in this way added the layer of sociologist to my peer participant role. I had become aware of much sociological research and theory that bore on the situation at hand. For example, I was aware of the intellectual struggle surrounding the Jensen (1969) hypothesis about race and I.Q. testing, and had read works such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Aronowitz (1973), Heyns (1974), Ogbu (1978), and Persell (1977), which gave me a theoretical overview of how class relations are reflected and reproduced through a "hidden curriculum" of schooling.

In my conversation or "interview" with the principal, I interpreted her responses from this perspective. For example, I interpreted the principal's theme of parent "involvement" in the light of theories of political participation and democracy (for example, Dewey, 1966; Pateman, 1970; Schattschneider, 1960). I was aware of some of the research specific to parent participation in schooling, showing that schools attempt to avoid parental interference as much as possible (Gittell, 1980; Brantlinger, 1985); that parents whose children attend mainly Black schools have more difficulty achieving access (Lightfoot, 1978; Sieber, 1982); that parent participation in schooling can take different forms, such as individual school voluntary activities like classroom tutoring, participation on school advisory boards, and so forth, with effects that range from being manipulated ("cosmetic positions on advisory committees") to citizen control ("power over all aspects of schooling") (Pousada,

1984). This literature stimulated me to consider what kinds of decision making the principal was excluding parents from at the school level and which interests the various "actors" at our school (teachers, principal, parents, administrators, women, men, Blacks, whites, etc.) might have in common.

This sociological knowledge both helped me frame questions and made possible an analysis of the interview I would not otherwise have made--one that gave initial direction to the parents' emancipatory participatory research dialogue. This interview, combined with data gathered from other observations and participant observations, and the testing data, helped us begin to connect our children's intolerable educational conditions to specific aspects of the inequitable social structure--particularly interrelationships between systems of race and class oppressions--that were responsible for creating those conditions.

Interviewing District Level Staff About Achievement Tests

After my conversation with the principal, I decided to speak with and interview the person in charge of the administration of the testing program for the school district. This interview was very instructive. The administrator, like the principal, told me that you generally can "expect" lower achievement scores from predominantly Black schools, as those schools' average cognitive abilities test scores were low. I felt this statement was very revealing in that the administrator's use of the term "expect" made transparent the link between the statistical and social meanings of the term. The statement was also very interesting to me in that I had

heard almost exactly the same statement from our daughter's teacher the year before when I had gone in to ask if it would be possible to give the children some more stimulating work, and she had said the children at this school could not be expected to perform at the levels white children do. That the teacher and principal were both African American, and the district school administrator was a white male made the picture all the more interesting.

Interactive Dialogue with the PTA President

Before arranging the first meeting of the Program Committee, I spoke at length over the telephone with the president of the PTA. I told him that my idea for the Program Committee was to present a series of programs about the general problem of educational standards, focusing on trying to raise the educational standards at our school, and I asked what he thought about this plan.

During the conversation, I also relayed the substance of my conversation with the principal and the school administrator. We talked at length about what kinds of parent involvement we thought were needed as opposed to the kinds of involvement the principal had suggested. The president agreed with me about the need to define our "involvement" as being more than "cookie bakers," but he seemed to hedge about how far we should go in raising these issues, because we wouldn't want to "antagonize" the principal or teachers. My analysis and comments about the importance of trying to stop the school from imposing an inferior education on our

children, that would prepare them, as part of the Black community, for lower-status jobs, was well taken: the PTA president was very concerned about the need for Black parents who had "made it" to see to it their children did not "fall back."

In this and other such conversations, I did not usually talk about books, theories, or authors, but simply used concepts from social science when it seemed perfectly natural to do so. Of most interest to the PTA president were the parallel statements among the three levels of school staff indicating they all used the cognitive abilities test to predict and justify low average achievement scores for predominantly Black schools.

The parallel statements gathered from my interviews, together with the existing concerns of the parents about the problems at the school and my additional research on the standardized test results for the district, stimulated a set of questions about how race and class affect expectations for academic performance. What does the cognitive abilities test really measure? Why do our community's children score so low on the test if it really is a measure of innate ability? Is there any scientific justification for a concern about "overachievement"? It seemed perhaps predictable in terms of race and class interests for an older white male school administrator who had for years been part of a segregationist school administration to defend his racial and class status by using standardized test results to "prove" the intellectual inferiority of Black children. But perhaps it was also in the interest of the Black principal to use the theory that low achievement scores are to be "expected" from Black children to deflect blame from her own performance. Was it being disloyal in a sisterly and racial way for Black

female parents to confront the Black female teachers and the Black female principal about the low academic standards in the school? Might part of the problem lie in the inadequacy of the Black teachers' college preparation, and if it did, how could Black parents confront it? How can parental efforts to improve the school avoid using Black personnel once again as the principal victims in a school system that had long denied Blacks equal access to teaching and administrative positions? In discussing such questions, the parent network began talking about the relationships of race and class to the problem of low educational standards at our school.

My conversation with the PTA president was long and rambling, but kept returning to what became a recurring theme in my conversations with the Black parents: race as a personal experience. The situation of my being white and having moved into a Black area provided extensive material for curiosity both for me and among the Black parents. My family and I were having a difficult time making sense of our entire living situation, especially the school, and the other parents were curious about why we had moved here, and how we were experiencing living here (in a Black area). In my conversation with the PTA president, as I had to a lesser extent earlier with other parents, I responded as best I could to questions posed both directly and indirectly on the general topic of what kind of white people we were. One of the parents had told me early on, "We have to be suspicious, you know, so we're going to be asking you a lot of questions." The PTA president in effect "interviewed" me extensively about these sorts of issues. This initial conversation was similar to many long conversations I had later with other Black parents. But I think this first "in

depth" interview was important in that it took place in the context of one PTA officer to another, under the auspices of talking about PTA business. It set the stage for the kinds of conversational dialogues that continued between me and the parents, and among themselves, also under the auspices of the PTA. That there was an agenda related to the PTA gave the conversations a broad structure around the relationship of racism to schooling that made it more possible to explore our personal experiences around racism. The PTA president also provided me with information about his own life, which enriched my understanding of the people and context I was working in. He also filled me in on some of the history of the area, revealing entrenched institutional racism with regard to both housing and the schools.

To my statements of surprise about how bad the school was despite the middle class status of the parents, he responded by relating experiences of how the Black middle class continued to experience racism. He said he had two cars, a nice house, a professional position, spoke a foreign language, had an advanced degree, and had a wife with an advanced degree--in short, he had all the characteristics of a middle class white, but he still bore the social and economic consequences of racism. He related how he lived in a housing development that was initially planned to be white, but when a few African-American families moved in, the developers bought the white homeowners out and resold the houses to Blacks at higher prices. We talked about how I could live where I liked if I had the money, but how life choices are fewer when one is not white.

Initial Dialogue with the Program Committee

In retrospect, the many telephone calls I made to set up the initial meeting of the Program Committee began a process similar to the prisoners' method of doing research by gathering data from each other's experiences. As the committee met only once a month, much of our interaction occurred over the telephone. We developed a sort of gossip method of research (gossip has been discussed by feminist philosophers of science as "part of a gynocentric social science tradition which is oral and dialectic in nature" [Ginzberg, 1989; see also Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Spacks, 1982][1]. We began to establish a dialogue-based research process by getting to know each other better as friends--but friends with a common problem. These early conversations were very long and rambling. To my surprise, I found that although many of the parents had lived in the same housing development for about twelve years, and had children in the same school, most did not know each other as friends, only by sight. They were neighbors but not friends. At our first committee meeting, I found myself introducing two neighbors who had never formally met, but whom I had come to know by talking on the telephone.

The Parents Interview Me

Many of our early conversations were, in essence, interviews the parents conducted with me. I was asked such questions as why our family had decided to

move to this specific area (Did we know it was a mostly Black area? No, we thought it was "mixed.") What religion were we, and if we were not religiously Christian, why would we care about racism? (Because we both grew up in homes where racial equality was valued.) Were we afraid of what would happen to our daughter if she played with Black friends? What would we do if the white kids ostracized her? Weren't we afraid of living in a house in the woods? Weren't we aware that "rednecks" usually lived in these kinds of houses, and that these are often violent, racist people?

My initial long conversation with the PTA president had touched on many of these questions, and many of the other parents' questions were similar. The Black parents especially sought information about me that had to do with my experience of race and racism. I count these conversations as some of the most valuable personal ones of my life--through the other parents' questions, and their responses to my answers, I began to see myself a bit through their eyes. We were able, in these individual conversations, to talk about race in ways that opened up a whole world of unexplored differences in our experiences. The parents wanted to know other things about me as well, of course, and as friends normally do, we exchanged our thoughts, feelings, and experiences about many things other than schools and racism. I found that my willingness to be "interviewed" about a wide range of topics helped make it possible to establish a rather high level of trust and openness that was necessary for a peer-directed emancipatory participatory research process (although I did not have this project yet in mind).

We interviewed each other extensively about our experiences with the school, and how we saw the problems there. I conveyed the information I had gathered about the testing program, and about the school administration's staff who were using the testing program to justify the low scores at the school. In these conversations, I included my understanding of the situation, which reflected my sociological point of view (i.e. that the testing system was a mechanism that reflected and reproduced racism and that was systematically used to the detriment of Black families hoping to advance their children's socioeconomic position--although I did not speak about it in these terms). My sociological self was integrated from the beginning in these discussions. I used my sociological knowledge in connection with my own and others' experiences.

In these conversations, I also listened to the parents' responses, which were often posed as questions. For example, "'So and so' was wondering if maybe the reason the county administrator was so open about saying you can't "expect" as much from the Black kids as the white ones had to do with your (my) being white like him--Don't you think as a white person, he would automatically expect every white person to believe Blacks are naturally inferior?"

The parents tended to hold three dominant ideas about racism: that "racism is everywhere;" that it is institutionally expressed through segregation; and that it is a matter of individual prejudice. In many of our conversations at this early time about the school situation, however, parents tended to think of individual level racial prejudice as the principal means for perpetuating racism. This analysis contrasted

with my presumption, based in part on sociological knowledge, that there were many fairly invisible institutionally based mechanisms that were reproducing racism, (I agreed, of course, that white prejudice exists, and that people's individual racial attitudes should be changed, but I did not expect this strategy to be sufficient.)

Establishing "Group Dialogue" over the Telephone

As I talked with each person, I incorporated the new data from that person into the knowledge I passed on to the next. The data included the relating of differences between my ideas about racism and those of the other parents. All of this was done by telephone. By using the telephone, I attempted to create a kind of group dialogue by incorporating the content of prior conversations into current ones, and communicating what others had said. By our first committee meeting, I had conveyed to each of the parents who came some of the content of my conversations with the other parents (though being careful of course not to pass on personal information not related to school issues). I passed on three kinds of content: 1) specific problems each parent had encountered with regard to her child's education at the school, such as the child repeating the exact same work, especially in math, from week to week or the child's entire class wasting a morning or afternoon writing a disciplinary assignment such as "I will not talk in class;" 2) parents' difficulties and frustrations in bringing their concerns to either the teachers or the principal; and 3) the parents' ideas and mine about what the nature of the "problem" was--the mechanisms of racism that might account for the attitudes of the teachers, principal, and district

administrator, for the existence of the testing program, and for the conditions at the school.

Individual parents began to express to me what a relief it was to be able to talk to another person about their concerns about their children's experiences at the school. I felt it was a relief, as well, and said so. (A problem eventually developed out of this support element of the process. Parents I didn't even know began calling me with their problems because they needed help and support, and had gotten my name from others. I was not as successful as I wished in getting the parents to call each other rather than relying mainly on me.) A sense of shared personal concern for other people in the network gradually developed from these conversations.

In retrospect, I think these early discussions in which I "passed around" data from one of us to the other created at least four conditions that facilitated the formation of the parent group: 1) a more self-conscious awareness of the existence of a serious educational problem at the school; 2) some sense of solidarity among a small group of parents who knew from our discussions that they were not alone in opposing the status quo at the school; 3) development of some personal trust and openness, making it possible to examine our own and each other's experiences and assumptions in a critical but friendly spirit; and 4) a sense of the Program Committee's work as more than a bureaucratically inspired task to create a set of programs, but as the beginning of a search to learn why the school's educational standards were so low. This sense of search for knowledge provided the basis for the group's participatory emancipatory research project.

The Importance of Dialogue in the Early Research Process

By examining and comparing each others' experiences, we raised consciousness about the severity of conditions in the schools, began to confront the reluctance of the Black parents to take action to address the problems directly, and eventually discovered some mechanisms that were operating in the school system to suppress criticism and prevent change. Most of the examples of critical dialogue discussed so far served to raise awareness of the severity of the school conditions, to bring about recognition of a crisis that required attention. This sort of consciousness raising was not as necessary in the prisoners' group because of the several historical factors mentioned earlier that had created widespread awareness of a crisis. There was no such obvious crisis to stimulate our parent group's attention, so it was important to establish a sense of a crisis in order to mobilize action. Collecting and sharing anecdotal data about classroom conditions helped raise the parents' awareness in the early stages of the work. I found that for the approximately four years I was involved with the parent network, it was important to keep on generating this kind of data, both to maintain parents' awareness of the severity of problems and to identify of problems (as new people and experiences provided them) in order to develop an increasingly sophisticated analysis.

The early dialogue also helped to articulate awareness of how the school's problems were embedded in the larger unequal social structure, especially with respect to race relations. Dialogue helped develop a body of data showing in detail the connections between the racially unequal social structure and the school, with

mechanisms such as the school system's testing policy coming to be seen as evidence of the institutional manifestations of racism within the school.

At first, however, the parents did not engage in the sort of self-reflective critical research the prisoners had used to show the ways the social system becomes internalized within individuals and disadvantaged groups, leading them to blame themselves for their situations and to be passive. Nor had the parents begun to make the connections between such feelings of blame and the institutional mechanisms responsible for facilitating them.

Dialogue based in friendship was very helpful in supporting the development of a peer-based relationship between me and the parents that could acknowledge my sociological training. I found that through conversation I could reveal my sociological insights about the school situation and receive comments back on an ongoing basis, just as one might do with other friends. By allowing my sociological persona to come out in my personal conversations in the spirit of shared curiosity about how to explain the conditions at the school, I could pose and answer questions both sociologically and personally. I was able to recognize the sociological significance of questions the parents were posing tome. In beginning our group, this use of dialogue was very helpful because it allowed me to offer frames of "the problem" in terms of possible combinations of sociological factors, rather than in terms of specific personalities or of our school's particular history.

The First Program Committee Meeting

The Program Committee

The Program Committee as a formal group was very small--five or six other parents besides myself. But as an informal network, the Committee was much larger, consisting of twenty-five to thirty people. Many parents could not attend our monthly meetings, but participated through phone contact with me and other parents. Many parents became involved in this telephone network who did not think of themselves as being "on" the Program Committee, and who did not contribute to the committee's formal goal which was to plan PTA programs. For them, and for the five or six formal members as well, the committee primarily created a familiar and legitimized context for communicating with each other about school concerns. The location of this communications network within the PTA was important because it gave people some sense of security in expressing their concerns.

Brought together under the formal auspices of the PTA, we had begun a process similar to the prisoners' by talking among ourselves on the telephone about our common problems at the school. The process started before our first meeting--for some of us, it had begun the year before. The process unfolded "naturally," and was well underway before I began to think and talk about it in relation to the prisoners' model. The parents, like the prisoners, "naturally" investigated their shared experiences once a channel for doing do was created, and their process recalled three elements of the prisoners': education, therapy, and research. The parents gave each other emotional support as well as educating each other by sharing ideas, practical advice, and information. Action was the element missing from this process, and this

theme is explored throughout the rest of the chapter.

Six African-American parents came to the first meeting: four from the middle-class, single-family housing development near the school; one from a condominium-apartment complex; and one from a rental apartment complex. The composition of the Committee seemed to approximately resemble the PTA membership in terms of its distribution in different forms of housing. All of the members of the committee were women, which made it very comfortable for us to become friends (there were some men in the larger parent network, including the local PTA president).

At the meeting we continued the dialogue that had begun over the telephone, and discussed how we could translate our concerns into a set of programs for the PTA. I proposed that we create a first program around the issue of the low achievement scores, and that we might ask the person from the county administration whom I had interviewed to come to the meeting to answer the parents' questions.

One of the parents at the school (a man who later became part of the parent network), who worked as a mid-level school administrator elsewhere in the county had told me that unquestionably, the allocation of resources and assignment of principals were made in large part on the basis of the standardized test scores, with the less effective principals being placed at schools where the scores were low. He had also said that the tests were supposed to be part of an accountability system, but that to his knowledge, the results of the tests were not used for diagnostic purposes at the school level to improve areas that were shown to be weak as evaluated by the

tests. I found that his insights were especially helpful for communicating to the other parents on the Committee some of the more serious implications of the testing program. Having another parent's semi-expert insider knowledge about the county's testing policy to feed into the parent dialogue helped convince us that the tests per se were probably a major link in the creation of low educational standards at our school. We decided to invite the county director of testing to our first PTA meeting.

Uncovering Parents' Resistance to Taking Action

During the committee discussion, we began to notice and investigate some differences between my own and the other parents' heretofore unexplored assumptions about taking action to change the conditions. This meeting marked the beginning of our investigation into the ways the social system becomes internalized within individuals and groups in ways that suppress dissent. These differences in our assumptions appeared at first as simple differences of attitude about becoming an activist, but we eventually began to see that these attitudes were being created and re-created by systematic differences in the ways we were treated which in turn were a function not only of our individual racial attributes, but of the majority racial composition of the relevant environment (in this case, the school, which served a predominantly Black population). Our attitudes could be traced to very different experiences of white privilege on my part (McIntosh, 1990) and of racism on theirs.

We reached these conclusions over a number of years as a result of ongoing discussions within the diffuse and very decentralized parent network, involving many

more people than the "original" PTA committee. Many of the people in this dialogue never met each other, or even talked directly to each other. Eventually, however, this dialogue resulted in the development of an analysis of how racial inequality is maintained through unequal power in the "everyday politics of schooling" and reproduced by a process I called "Black parent pushout" (Stern, 1987a, 1987b). This analysis makes a contribution to a more general theory of how schooling reproduces race and class inequality by showing how African-American parents as a class (in our experience) are given inferior treatment to that of white parents as a class, because parents whose children attend majority-Black schools are systematically discouraged in subtle and not-so-subtle ways from acting on their children's behalf at school, while parents of children attending majority-white schools enjoy better treatment. Our formulation draws on and contributes to the "hidden curriculum" theory of education (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Carnoy and Levin, 1985; Apple, 1982; Aronowitz, 1973; Anyon, 1980) by extending the notion of the "hidden curriculum" to that of a "hidden curriculum" for parents (Stern, 1986). The story of how this analysis developed is detailed later in the chapter.

While our theory of "Black parent pushout" developed over several years, its roots were in the process of self and group analysis we conducted in meetings and telephone dialogues among the Program Committee parents. At the first Program Committee meeting, one of the parents said it might be a "touchy thing" to bring up the issue of the low scores on the cognitive abilities tests with the parents. She said it was "so discouraging" to keep hearing these kinds of things (about how Blacks are

inferior)--even though you try not to believe them, "it is still in the back of your mind that you're fifteen points lower, or whatever, even if you don't respect the scale." One of the parents went on to say that "it makes me almost get that nauseous feeling thinking about you getting into it...I used to lie in bed at night wondering whether I would live or die (during the Civil Rights movement)...race is a big issue...(that) I haven't had the energy to go back into for a long time." Though the other parents on the committee were very concerned about the poor educational conditions at the school, and agreed that the data we had gathered (parents' anecdotal stories, the test scores and testing policy, and the statements about how the low scores were to be "expected") indicated a crisis, they seemed reluctant to organize a PTA program that would expose these issues to a wider audience. Although we decided as a group to invite the testing director, the parents were uneasy. In a telephone conversation following the meeting, one parent not on the committee reflected that our discussion reminded her of how painful it was to even begin thinking about what was going on at the school because she and her husband had invested so many of their hopes in moving to this suburban community where the neighborhoods and schools looked better, and it was just too much to contemplate that the move might have been in vain.

As I have mentioned, action was the one part of the prisoners' process that seemed problematic for the parent group. When expressed my hope that our committee might be able to help stimulate activity that would improve conditions at the school, I found most of the other parents in the Program Committee network

resisted the idea of organized activity, especially if it would be perceived as threatening to the school staff.

Despite the parents' reluctance to even considering organized action to improve the school, many had taken individual action on their own children's behalf. They had done so, and persistently, despite the negative ways they had been received. I later came to appreciate how much more effort it had taken the Black parents to intervene as individuals to improve their children's educational opportunity than it had ever taken me to act as an individual on an individual-level problem. The Black parents needed even more than white parents to organize collectively, because their individual efforts were met with more resistance than those of white parents, but paradoxically, the Black parents were less willing to consider collective action than white parents, as I learned later by observing other schools.

My hope was that the Program Committee would act as a small movement organization that would develop an explanation of how such a poorly performing school could persist in a middle class Black area and would resist the imposition of inferior education on our children. To most of the parents, however, resistance was not a "natural" thing for a PTA committee to do. We later began to theorize the possibility that the schools' counter-resistance to the Black parents' efforts to resist the imposition of inferior education on their children was assisted by the dominant idea that the PTA exists to support the local school, to work cooperatively with its policies, teachers, and administrators for the presumably common goal of educating the children. This was a functionalist view of the relationship between the parents

and the schools. In the higher achieving "elite" white schools in the county, the cooptive ideology of the PTA plays out differently because the school "naturally" provides a higher quality education, so parents have less to be oppositional about and more to cooperate with. Of course, white parents sometimes find fault with the schools, too. But when they do, their actions are perceived as being less threatening than those of Black parents, and accordingly, the schools are more responsive to their demands. Moreover, white parents are potential advocates for the school in local politics because as they have access to the white power structures at the county level. In short, the cooptive idea of the PTA works well in white "elite" schools to promote the common goals of parents, pupils, school administration, and staff. In our school, the same ideology worked against the children's education, because there were no such common goals.

Using My "White Privileged" Perspective as a Source of Data

It had perplexed me and my husband, based on our experiences from the year before, that our attitudes about what could and should be done to try to improve the school situation were different from the other parents'. The first important difference seemed to be that my husband and I were much more willing than the other parents to state openly our negative judgments about the school, and to label the school as a "bad" school. While the other parents complained about many of the things that troubled us as well, they refrained from indicating as directly as we did that the conditions indicated a crisis.

Some of the parents' reluctance seemed to come from a need to deny how bad things were because they had invested so much money and hope in moving to the neighborhood. One of the parents noted how she just "hated to look behind the walls of the school to see what is going on," because it would be too painful to find out it wasn't worth it to have moved out of the District of Columbia. These were parents who, like the PTA president, had hoped to escape the confines of racism by acquiring educations, getting professional jobs, and moving out of the District into single family homes in the suburbs. Another source of reluctance was the difficulty of finding time for a major effort to improve the school conditions--in most families, both parents were working to pay their mortgages, and it was difficult even to schedule meetings with their children's teachers before or after school, much less to attend our meetings. They were already spending a considerable amount of time making appointments with the teachers and principal, and getting nowhere.

Yet, the reluctance had other aspects as well. To me and my husband, it seemed patently obvious that the within-school conditions were a manifestation of institutional racism, part of a pattern of racially unequal access to opportunity in schooling that resulted in a systematic pattern of destructive educational practices. This did not seem so obvious to most of the other parents. The history of community debates on racism and schooling, particularly the focus of the Civil Rights Movement on eradicating the most obvious legal and structural barriers to racial equality by desegregating schools, had framed the critique of racism in schools as one of segregation. Looking within the schools to see less obvious mechanisms at work was

not as prominent part of the critique. In our own district, the ongoing legal struggle to desegregate the schools by busing and magnet programs framed the community debate. Although the parents did not like what their children were experiencing, they did not trace the problems to institutional racism.

Further obscuring the less visible aspects of institutional racism in Black schools has been the Black community's emphasis on issues of Black staffing and of Black schools as centers for the affirmation of Black culture. With so many Black staff and a Black principal at our school, it was hard for the Black parents to perceive the educational problems as racism, and concurring with my husband's and my labelling of the school as an educationally "bad" school provoked some feelings that such an evaluation (the school is bad; the school is Black) was itself perhaps racist. I had to try to make clear my evaluation that the school was "bad" because it was Black for structural reasons, not because of any inherent inferiority of Black people. (The conversations I had with the other parents that revealed these shadings in perceptions are indicative of the kinds of conversations that I think need to take place between African-American and white people; they are "touchy" conversations to have, and seem to happen best when people are friends, anticipate each other's good will and honesty, and share an interest in understanding situations from each other's points of view; they are conversations that seem to have no "end," and reach no definitive conclusions, but open up worlds of understanding.)

Most of the parents' reluctance, however, seemed to stem from a concern about "rocking the boat," "making waves," being "negative," or creating antagonism.

The recognition of these feelings and the research process that showed their roots not so much in the parents' personalities, but in social-structurally based mechanisms incorporated into the schools' differential treatment of parents, were critical in shaping the parents' emancipatory participatory research process.

My husband and I had much less hesitation about bringing our concerns directly to the attention of the school staff and administration than the other parents. More or less at the first signs of trouble, we would go to see the teachers, make appointments with the principal, or if we did not get satisfaction there, call the county school administrators. We wrote notes to the teachers when we found our daughter's homework miscorrected; notes to the principal when we got no response from the teachers. Very few of the other parents were as outspoken as we were. We found that with the exception of the two sets of parents involved in the NAACP lawsuit, who were very assertive and persistent, and four or five other individual parents, the other parents generally seemed to feel they should stop short of demanding outright changes from their children's teachers or the principal. At first, when I tried to find out what might be the basis for this difference in attitude, all I could learn was that the other parents did not wish to be overly "negative." "Negative" was the word the principal had used in warning me about what kind of school "involvement" was desirable. Parents were supposed to be "positive," not "negative."

My husband and I also noticed a big difference between us and the other parents in our attitudes regarding collective action. We quickly concluded that ultimately, the only way to achieve the needed changes was for the parents to

organize and work together for change. We knew from our previous conversations that many other parents had gone to see the teachers and principal, and had written notes (although less often than we had), but with the exception of the few other outspoken parents, they seemed uneasy whenever we had alluded to taking any sort of collective action.

I gradually came to see that the other parents' reluctance to confront the oppressive institution had to do with their past experiences with the school, which caused them to anticipate that such action might be dangerous for their children. They felt unable to protect their children from retributions that might be taken if they as parents spoke out too much. Seeking even what seemed to me minimal changes seemed dangerous (such as ensuring that the children wrote book reports, or that the group punishments were stopped). I soon learned through my daughter's experience that the other parents were right: our children were punished for our outspokenness.

Eventually, our differences in attitude about taking action to change our circumstances became part of the parent dialogue and contributed to the development of the Black parent "pushout" theory. In the end, it seemed that my presence provided something of value for the other parents, too: the insights gained by comparing my prior assumptions (which came from my past experience based in class and racial privilege, and represented what ought to be) with my new experiences, and with their continuing experience.

Discovering the Mechanisms Suppressing Opposition:

Eliciting Negative Feelings About Being Mistreated

The statements made at our first committee meeting indicated that there was a lot going on beneath the surface that would help explain the parents' reluctance to take more action. Eventually, the parents' dialogue process elicited a catalogue of mechanisms that suppressed the Black parents' confidence and disabled them from taking action on behalf of their children. But the dialogue began with the parents talking about the feelings that arose for them when even thinking about trying or having tried to make changes. These feelings included discouragement, fear, frustration, anger, and helplessness. They were not expressed in the psychological language that probably would have been used by the prisoners, most of whom had had experience with group therapy, but in everyday language such as, "I feel so bad when my child keeps going through the same bad experiences year after year, and whatever I say or do doesn't seem to make any difference. My observations, complaints, and suggestions just keep being ignored" (an approximation of a typical statement). Such expressions came about naturally, through the dialogue process. I tried to keep in mind the feelings that had been expressed, summarizing them from time to time, asking if others had the same feelings, and sharing my own, especially as I was becoming increasingly frustrated with the way I was being treated by the school.

The negative feelings seemed to be connected with a generally negative, fearful and pessimistic attitude about trying to make changes in the school. After talking about the negative feelings resulting from thinking about trying to make

changes, our dialogue became more directed toward a slowly developing analysis of what might account for the feelings. This seemed to happen quite naturally, as the other parents became more and more involved in the collective friendship process of sharing and investigating each others' experiences, feelings and thoughts. If I encouraged the process, I did so without consciously trying, the parents (mostly women) were reflective and interested and concerned about each other's feelings.

Adapting the Concept of "Low Expectations"

One of the participants was a teacher in a different school system, and familiar with the concept of "low expectations" for children from psychological research on expectancy effects (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). It was she who suggested that maybe the concept of "low expectations" could be extended to be used in this situation, to explain the school's treatment of us as parents. This expanded concept of "low expectations" provided a very useful tool for us to use in our theorizing.

Several sub-themes developed about "low expectations," not all directly involving the school's expectations for the parents, but all contributing to a more comprehensive theory about how our school fit into the larger scheme of social inequality by reproducing that inequality through various kinds of "low expectations." For example, it was suggested that the principal at the school seemed to have "low expectations" for her teachers' performance, in that she allowed them to spend a great deal of time in the hallways during class time talking, seemed unaware of what was going on educationally in the school, and did not appear to have any special

educational goals she wanted fulfilled for her school's students. We suspected that the county school administration also had "low expectations" for our principal's performance, as very little oversight of her activities by middle level district administrators seemed to be taking place, and she was allowed to be physically absent from the school much of the time during school hours, to arrive just before school started, and to leave promptly after classes ended.

In turning to the idea that the school system had "low expectations" for us as parents, we began to focus more on how parents were being treated when they attempted to raise their concerns with school staff and administration. The network began generating data (gathered by discussing our past experiences) showing the kinds of responses we encountered when we raised our concerns. But before moving on to a discussion of these responses, it is important to note an important role I played in the parent dialogue at this point.

Discovering How "White Privilege" is Diminished in a Majority Black School

I joined eagerly in these discussions, and think that I played an important role at this time in developing our research by communicating my surprise at my husband's and my own negative experiences with the school. My husband and I initially raised our concerns to the staff and administration in ways that were consistent with our previous life experiences and that in retrospect reflected our "white privilege." At first, we expressed our concerns assertively, but over time we couldn't help but notice we were not getting the same kinds of responses we were

accustomed to. We were receiving much the same treatment at the school as the other parents, but we still had the attitude, based on past experiences with other institutions, that we could and should try to assert ourselves to make change; that if we kept trying, we would eventually be heard; that we had recourse within the system if we ran into barriers at lower levels; that our concerns were so legitimate that they could not be ignored forever.

My husband and I noticed over time that we were feeling a bit more like the other parents. Our own expectations for how we would be treated were changing. Of course, we had both been ignored by faceless bureaucrats and been subjected to rude behavior from time to time when complaining about service or treatment. But our experience with the school system was different in its systematicity: almost every staff person and administrator at every level, from the local school to the county administrative level, treated us badly. We were not used to being so blatantly ignored; so curtly and rudely spoken to. We found ourselves being patronized (for example, the principal once said to me, "We're sure you'll find a way to be more positive"), or pointedly ignored. Appointments we made were broken without prior notice, our presence was not acknowledged when we appeared for appointments, and so on. We were interrupted without apology, eye contact was avoided, our requests for information were refused or put off. We felt we were being treated as if we were stupid and ignorant people, as if we had nothing valid or valuable to say, as if we ourselves were worthless. When I spoke with the other parents in surprised tones about being treated this way, I failed to encounter the surprise I anticipated in their

reactions; I found instead that my husband's and my treatment was not very shocking.

Worst of all, it began to appear that retribution for my husband's and my efforts to improve the school was being taken on our daughter. She began to complain that the teacher never called on her even when she had her hand up, and that she was being harshly punished for small things. Our African-American neighbors were not surprised, and in fact had warned us that teachers might exact retribution on the children of parents they saw as "troublemakers." We began to understand why the other parents seemed to think it was dangerous to "rock the boat."

As I began to communicate my surprise and anger about these things to the other parents, it became apparent that my husband's and my initial expectations about how one should be treated when seeking change served as a basis for comparison both with our own new experiences and with the Black parents' experiences. Several sub-"research" projects about "low expectations" for the parents began with this observation of the differences between my husband's and my own expectations and the other parents' experiences. My husband and I "researched" our memories to see if we could recall similar experiences. Basically, we couldn't. I "researched" the other parents' experiences in the social setting outside the school, and found that what I called inferior treatment was just part of a larger pattern in the African-American parents' lives. I began to think more about our disappointments living in the area--the bare shelves in our local library, the sullenness of the checkout clerks in the grocery stores--as part of the whole picture of living in an area where the residents are

systematically given what I would call, by comparison with my prior experience, inferior treatment.

I "researched" my recollections of the prisoners' dialogues and recalled especially the former prisoners' group's discussion of "waiting." I communicated these "data" to the parents, together with my comments about how I had participated in the discussion about "waiting," but not as one undergoing the same hardship experiences. Listening as an "outsider" to the ex-prisoners' discussion had not given me the same understanding as participating in the discussion and in the experience itself as an insider. I was able to talk over my growing awareness of what it was like to be inside a situation where there seemed to be so little recourse and where I feared my actions might hurt my child. Luckily for me, my relationships with the other parents with whom I had these discussions were secure enough that I did not fear ridicule for revealing these sorts of observations about myself--the other parents were tolerant, generous, understanding, and curious enough not to just "write me off" as naive, but to try to understand the differences between our experiences and help me understand the situation at hand.

Learning about White Privilege: The Parents "Research" My Perspective

I became in this way an object of the other parents' "research." It turned out that my ways of thinking based on my past experiences provided a rich source of data for comparing with their experiences, attitudes, and expectations. All of these "data" showing comparisons were "researched" by the parents in the telephone network and

became part of the collective repertoire of knowledge. Unlike the prisoners, however, the parents did not refer to this as "researching" me, or "researching" anything else for that matter. We just used our personal relationships to help us understand our relations to our social contexts, including the school system. The investigation used everyday friendship-based conversation as its research method, with the more sociological aspects of the research embedded in thoroughly personal dialogue that occurred in bits and pieces over weeks, months, and sometimes years of conversation.

Comparing our reactions provided an invaluable source of data for theorizing about the school system's "low expectations" for the parents in a way that took into account our own different beliefs about what the appropriate response should be to them. By making available to the parent network the "data" about my family's expectations of higher standards for treatment, it became easier identify the content of this inferior treatment--the mechanisms used to discourage us from asserting our claims to high quality education on our children.

Identifying School-Based Mechanisms of Suppression

The most potent of the school's mechanisms for controlling us was probably retribution--punishing our children for our activist efforts. Teachers withheld deserved rewards from children of "troublemakers." The daughter of one of the more outspoken parents' children was shamed in front of her whole class when the teacher

told the class that it was because this child's mother insisted on more homework, that everyone would "have to" do a book report. The same parent found another particularly insidious act of retribution when she learned that her daughter's previous teacher in elementary school had placed a note in the child's permanent folder before transfer to middle school, indicating she should be placed in classes for the "mentally handicapped," even though she had above average grades, average standardized test scores, and had never been tested or found to be mentally retarded.

Labelling outspoken parents as "troublemakers" was itself another form of intimidation. This label was intimidating not only to the parents themselves, but to others who might think of taking action. The label followed parents from school to school as their children grew older and began attending middle and high schools, where new teachers and principals already knew of them as "troublemakers."

Sometimes parents were reportedly even threatened with legal action or state force. A parent I met later on said, "A teacher...was literally off the wall...The principal told us we should be aware that the teacher could sue us, and the union would provide the funds...That's intimidation...they've got you by, to be perfectly blunt, by the short hairs. And they know it." Reportedly, a parent from another school like ours, who refused to leave the school until she saw her child's teacher about a problem her child was having, was actually arrested for trespassing on school property. Though I never confirmed this event, the other parents found it entirely believable and consistent with their other experiences in the community.

The African-American parents found this kind of extremely negative

experience quite within the bounds of what they could expect both from the school and the society. The continuity of experience, of half expecting, for example, that police force would be applied inappropriately, provided the Black parents' base of comparison for what could be expected in the school setting. I watched as years later, some of these parents endured as their teenage sons were arbitrarily stopped while driving and made to get out of their cars with their hands up so they could be searched. Or barred from shopping in clothing stores at the mall. And of course, as in the school, the enforcers were often African-American themselves.

Other, less extreme mechanisms also served to discourage us from taking action. We were ignored and snubbed in many ways. Our repeated notes or telephone calls to the school office were ignored. Often, our presence was not acknowledged when we appeared at the school for appointments with the teacher or principal. The principal would sometimes turn her chair around backwards away from us when we appeared for an appointment.

We were also patronized. For example, our principal insisted on being called "Dr.," while she called all the parents by their first names. The principal and teachers presented themselves as "experts," as the only legitimate sources for making educational judgments. One of the parents analyzed the school staff and administration's attitudes of superiority in terms of their presenting themselves like doctors, as if they were above questioning, as if only they knew what was best for us.

School staff regularly attempted to humiliate or shame parents for daring to bring up their concerns. Once when I went to talk to a teacher, the principal said

something like, "You're just causing trouble for all of us, wasting everyone's time, every time you set foot inside the school." We were frequently admonished for "rocking the boat," as if to say we were just acting irresponsibly. Another frequent message which was used to discredit us, or diminish our sense of the importance of our concern was the admonition, "You are the only one who has this problem."

These mechanisms are some of the more obvious ones that parents interpreted as forms of intimidation. Many of these parallel the mechanisms Goffman (1961) identifies in his analysis of total institutions.

Other effective mechanisms of suppressing parents' resistance included withholding important information and failing to inform us about important school-related matters. By withholding information about such things as testing schedules and course prerequisites for the children's admission into college track courses at the middle school level, school officials prevented parents from exercising control as individuals over their children's education.

The teachers and principal often refused to meet with the parents, and they were rude in their refusals. Prior to my experiences at my daughter's school, I would not have imagined that professionals would be so rude as to refuse point blank to meet with us individually. It came as much less of a surprise, especially to the other parents, when the principal refused outright, with no explanation, a request from a group of us for a meeting. She did not even pretend to have an excuse, such as that she had no time, and refused to answer any of our requests for an explanation.

Officials also took actions to fragment parents' opposition, especially collective

action. Parents were told they could not meet with the principal as a group; school volunteers were instructed not to tell anyone in the community if they saw something going on at the school they didn't like; and parents were encouraged to ask and be concerned only about their own children.

We became aware of this pattern of treatment by discussing our feelings about asserting ourselves in the school and trying to understand how these feelings had been produced. In this respect, we adopted one of the prisoners' main research methods--investigating our personal experiences and feelings to illuminate the institutional mechanisms producing those experiences and feelings. The school staff and administration was using these mechanisms to systematically discourage us from raising our concerns, to demoralize us as individuals and keep us from mobilizing collectively to change the school. The school system was "playing on our minds," in the prisoners' words.

The mechanisms the parents identified illustrate how there is a politics of schooling that takes place at the level of everyday informal interaction between parents and school staff and administration (Stern, 1987a). Power and influence operate between school staff and parents in everyday interactions, but systematic relationships of inequality may appear on the surface to be matters of personality difference, problems of parents' bad attitudes, or results of the particular individual circumstances of a certain interaction. (It is in the interest of power holders to attribute problems to such particularistic causes.) These power relations between teachers and parents, principals and parents, district administrators and parents can be

viewed as expressing the larger politics of race and class, especially as they are embedded in the racial and class politics of schooling that (especially in our local school system) allows most white parents' children access to better quality schools, and assigns most Black parents' children to lesser quality schools. In these institutionalized power relationships, the race of the school official does not matter. An analysis of this level of the politics of schooling is best developed when it can be seen from "within" the standpoint of parents' everyday struggles to resist the imposition of inferior education on their children.

These examples of our method of gathering data by investigating each other's experiences come from our research early in the development of the parent network. We continued using this method throughout my work with the parents, even though after 1983, the network became much more diffuse. In long, rambling, open-ended telephone conversations, friendly conversations based in curiosity and the need to understand our predicament with the schools (a standpoint from within struggle), we continued to question each other's insights or presumed knowledge in ways that generated new understandings without anger and without reproducing a dominant-subordinate relationship. Dialogue about our life situations continued to be one of our key research methods.

THE PTA CONFRONTS THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Another research method crystallized at the Program Committee's initial PTA

program. The program featured the county school testing director whom I had interviewed earlier. The Program Committee agreed to invite him despite reluctance to "rock the boat." In support of the plan, they thought, among other things, that getting one of the county administrators to the meeting would likely increase the attendance at the PTA meeting, and perhaps bolster the PTA membership. The other parents' way of thinking about this meeting was somewhat different from my own; while I was thinking of the meeting as a way to arouse parent concern in a way that would help develop a small movement to understand and change the undesirable conditions in the school, the other parents had a less adversarial view, less geared toward mobilizing and organizing for possible confrontation.

A Group Interview with a County Official

I suggested we prepare an information sheet of sorts for the parents, to prepare them to ask questions about the testing policy. As I had made the suggestion, and was the one who had gathered the testing data, I wrote up the sheet. The test data included the average achievement test scores for all the elementary schools in the county and the racial composition of each. It showed--and I reproduced the information on the data sheet--that our school had one of the highest percentage Black student populations, and also that it had one of the lowest achievement test scores. I also included the average scores for the so-called "abilities" test for the county, the state, and our school. Finally, I included some statements the administrator had made

to me about how our school's low achievement scores could be "expected" on the basis of the low cognitive abilities test scores. I hoped the sheet would stimulate the PTA to take a critical perspective on the causes of the school's low scores. I also hoped the sheet would encourage a critical view of the relationship between the racial composition of the school and the low standardized test scores and of the use of one standardized test to set expectations for performance on another.

This first PTA meeting was, in effect, a group interview of a county school administrator. The parents attending the meeting seemed to look briefly at the sheets I had prepared, put them down, and then listen to the administrator's presentation, which basically consisted of his attempt to describe the meanings of the various standardized test scores. He talked, for example, about how there were scores for individual students' performances, averaged scores for each grade level at each school, and so on. When he began explaining in a kind of low drone how our school's achievement scores were about what could be "expected," because they were about the same as the cognitive abilities scores, the parents began referring to the information on the sheets, and asking questions about what the cognitive abilities test was and what it had to do with the children's achievement test scores. The district administrator made no attempt to back away from the statements he had made to me, some of which appeared as quotes on the sheet. On the contrary, he reinforced them by noting that our school's average cognitive abilities scores were below average, and so our school had "achieved roughly where you would expect them to...the abilities test is used as a guide...." One of the parents asked if the cognitive abilities test

wasn't being used as a ceiling for the expected achievement scores, to which the administrator replied it was a "floor." By referring to the sheet, the parent pressed again: "It is being used as a ceiling, not a floor, because the school is not even 'expected' to achieve the county average."

Although the parents asked some questions like these about the testing policy, many asked questions that were irrelevant to the way the testing policy was reinforcing low expectations for Black children as a group or class. Many parents were focused on their own children, asking, for example, if their child's score might have been better if he or she had taken the test at some other time during the year. At this first meeting, our PTA as a whole expressed relatively little concern about the school in general, about the effects of the testing program on our community's children, or about the racial implications of the testing program. Instead, the parents' questions mainly reflected concerns about their own individual children. But to the extent the group did raise questions at the school level, the information sheet was a useful tool in providing parents with some substantive information and a framework on which to base their questions.

However, toward the end of the meeting, the presenter (probably inadvertently) drew the group's attention away from the individual level of analysis to a group level of analysis by his response to the question about how test scores might be raised when he said, "The best way to change test scores is 1) a new principal...who has a tremendous impact on test scores; 2) certain teachers... stick out." Another question: "Do certain schools have more of these teachers?" He

replied "Yes." A parent asked a follow up question about why replacing the principal might have this effect, to which he simply replied, "leadership." Although nothing was said during the PTA meeting about replacing the principal or teachers, his comment was effective in stimulating much conversation among the parents afterwards about whether perhaps the principal was having a bad effect on the school. In the end, it was around the issue of replacing the principal that the limited parent action from the local PTA took place.

Despite my initial judgment after the meeting that few of the parents were concerned with the testing policy per se, I learned from telephone conversations afterwards that the meeting had affected many parents: more parents had become interested in the educational crisis of our school, and saw the problem not just as one their individual child was experiencing; parents had become more aware than I initially thought of the racial implications of the testing policy--many had been silent during the meeting because they did not want to "rock the boat;" some saw a possible solution to mobilize around (changing the principal); and they learned something important from seeing the spokesperson for the school system stating that although our school's children were performing academically at lower than average levels, this was not a matter of concern to the administration because it was to be "expected," given their low cognitive abilities test scores.

In preparing the information sheet for the parents, I had used my sociological perspective to gather and present data that would bring the parents' attention to the problem at the group, or sociological level. Although the parents were strongly

inclined (and also encouraged by the school) to address their attention to the individual level, the sheet was at least somewhat effective in raising their interest in school-level problems. I had also relied on my sociological knowledge to frame the issue of low educational performance at our school in terms of how the standardized testing policy reflected and expressed the belief that Black children are not as competent as white ones.

A Methodological Aside: Intellectual Leadership or Influence?

By laying out the problem in this way, rather than in terms, say, of what psychological factors might explain the Black children's low achievement scores, I provided considerable intellectual leadership. Writing up the information sheet was one of the most heavy-handed things I did to provide guidance or leadership in framing an issue for our emancipatory participatory research process. In some sense, the sheet was the result of collective research work in that I had discussed the findings of my research into the achievement testing policy with other parents, including the Program Committee, before I wrote it up for the PTA. But clearly I had taken considerable autonomous leadership in gathering the data in the first place and in introducing the data into many telephone conversations about the school even prior to the first Program Committee meeting.

One might ask whether the group's findings were its own, or unduly influenced by my own views. The most honest response is to describe my methods

openly, and to provide as self-reflexive an account as possible. I believe I did influence the analysis by framing the problem as institutional racism and diverting attention away from individual, psychologically based analyses. However, in the end the parents, like the prisoners, developed a complex social analysis that took into account subjective and individual-level factors as well as social-structural ones. I conclude from this that I introduced a sociological framework for understanding the problem that contributed greatly to the overall analysis but did not stifle the parents' creative analytical process.

On the telephone, prior to my writing up the fact sheet, and during the Program Committee meeting, some parents had implicitly questioned the sociological view I was taking by talking, for example, about how the children might have performed badly (even year after year) because they don't have good test taking skills. I would reply as authentically and truthfully as possible, saying something like, "Well, I don't know...it seems strange to me that if that were the problem, all the predominantly Black schools would be having the same low scores year after year." I took the other parents' views seriously, as I would with other friends, and tried to maintain a conversation that would not be dominated by my views. Obviously, I found it impossible to be noncommittal when I was quite sure of my sociological analysis and disagreed with an analysis such as that the main problem was that it was the principal's first year on the job. When this occurred, as I described above, I tried to state what I thought, but not as if I had the only "truth." In the example above, I avoided saying something like, "I don't see how the fact that

it is the principal's first year can be the root of the problem; the pairing of the cognitive abilities test scores with the achievement scores is more the issue." When I came to know another parent better, and felt we had come to the point where we could question each other's opinions more comfortably, I might have said something expressing my position more definitively.

I think it is important to note here that I did, and still do, think that the pairing of the cognitive abilities test with the achievement test to predict "expected" achievement test scores was an important part of the ideological apparatus of the school in maintaining low expectations for Black children's academic achievement. In terms of mobilizing interest, the focus on the testing policy as a mechanism to systematically disadvantage Black children proved to be effective. However, over time, the parents' attention became focused not on the testing system, but on another mechanism (the suppression of Black parents' resistance to poor educational quality). Interest in the testing system diminished as the parents became more interested in pursuing this other mechanism. I attribute this shift in part to my own efforts to allow, and even encourage, the dialogue process to pursue the group's interests and needs rather than my own.

Although I did take leadership in structuring our conversations, I did so while grounded in the same directly relevant external conditions as the other parents (that is, sending my child to the same school), so my perspective and concerns came from "inside" a common experience, at least to some degree. Of course, because neither my child nor I were Black, my experience of these conditions was bound to be

different. If I had been African-American, I would surely have seen things that were invisible to me as white. However, being a "stranger," as Simmel (1921) describes, allows one to see things that those immersed in a given situation cannot see, so my outsider standpoint had its value as well.

Perhaps most importantly, while I did influence the structure of the conversations, I began from a position of interested and concerned curiosity, a real desire based in my own needs to understand and if necessary, to improve the conditions of my daughter's education. To the best of my ability, I tried to use sociological and political theory as guides, not truths, to help formulate hypotheses and tentative statements of "the problem" which would then be open to critique and reformulation by the other parents.

Of course, my original framing of the problem(s) may have ultimately restricted the possible conclusions the parents could reach through their research process. I took a leadership role by framing the problem in terms of racism as a system of domination that includes not only mechanisms of personal prejudice and discrimination against individuals, but mechanisms embedded in institutions (institutional racism), in terms of resistance and counterresistance, and in terms of the needs of systems of domination to reproduce themselves in part through ideological hegemony. Within these broad theoretical perspectives, however, my framing of the problem(s) was very broad. I was guided by questions like "Why are the school conditions so bad?" and also broad sub-questions, such as "What does it mean that the Black principal and the white administrator both said Black children can't be expected

to perform academically as well as white children?" I believe these framings left the other parents a great deal of leeway in generating and testing hypotheses. Also, as Lather (1986b) and others have advocated, I tried to limit the effects of my own interventions by being aware of my theoretical and personal biases.

An Ethical Aside: Telling the Parents About My Research Project

In the course of preparing for the first PTA meeting, I began to realize how much my work with the parents, especially the group investigatory process we had begun mostly by telephone, resembled the prisoners' research process. I noticed that we had been educating each other and giving each other personal support, much as in the prisoners' general emancipatory process. Yet there was no collectively defined emancipatory project, such as the prisoners had. And the parents in our network were far from being organized in any way that resembled a small social movement organization like the prisoners'.

I began to think more self-consciously about the possibilities of attempting to re-create the prisoners' model in this new situation and of writing up the results of this effort for my dissertation. I realized that I had already begun trying to work out some of the contradictions between being an academic sociologist and a community activist in my work with the parents, even though I had not been making a self-conscious effort to do so.

In about November 1981, I began talking to the other people in the Program

Committee network about the prisoners' way of doing research, and how ours was like theirs in many respects. I noted, for example, that like the prisoners, we gathered data about the external conditions of the social structure by exchanging accounts of our personal experiences, and that perhaps we could extend this process to include other parts of the prisoners' model. Trying to maintain a high ethical standard by being open and explaining that I wanted to try to re-create the prisoners' model among ourselves as part of a project for my dissertation, however, presented several problems. A problem at the outset was that although I felt ethically bound to explain the prisoners' model in some meaningful way, the parents were not very interested in hearing about it. This was clearly my project, not theirs. In the course of our usual kinds of conversation about what was going on in our lives and in the school, bringing up the prisoners' model seemed out of place--an intrusion into an otherwise comfortable conversation of mutual interest. Because it seemed too complicated and out of place in ordinary conversation to expound on how I had worked for the Centro; how the Centro had hoped I could continue my work with the prisoner group and contribute to the development of critical theory about Puerto Ricans and the criminal justice system; how I had tried to incorporate doing what the Centro had wanted into my work with the prisoners' group; how the prisoners' group had combined research, education, therapy, and action; and so forth, I tried to find concise but meaningful ways to describe what I was trying to do based on the prisoners' model.

Accordingly, I began explaining my dissertation project in terms of my hope to

find a way to do research that would benefit both a local group trying to address a social problem and sociological theory as well. Another way I talked about my "project" was in terms of finding a way to "do research with rather than about people" and "instead of doing research on people experiencing the problem, doing research with people on the social problems affecting them." I also spoke in terms of "doing research on ourselves to find out from each other what our experiences have been and how we conceptualize the problem."

I wanted to let the other parents know what I was doing because I wanted to be open with my new friends about my project. But I also wanted to be open because of my concerns about the ethics of fieldwork and those expressed in the sociological and anthropological alternative fieldwork literature. I was especially affected by having visited, at about this time, the town about which Small Town in Mass Society (Vidich and Bensman, 1960) was written, interviewing a few townspeople, and learning that over twenty years after the study had been published, the townspeople were still feeling extremely upset, manipulated, and deceived because after having treated one of the authors as a friend and bringing him food in times of illness, they learned from reading the book that he said negative things in public about the people who had befriended him: he had been doing research on them all along.

Of course, field notes are normally part of a project for a dissertation. This too presented a problem. My intent was to make the object of investigation the development of the project itself, not the other parents, who were my friends. I had referred to the project as doing research with people rather than on them. So, the

nature of the fieldwork project was significantly different, and required, it seemed to me, different ethical guidelines from fieldwork in which an outside researcher does research on a group of people.

When I decided to start writing fieldnotes in anticipation of doing a dissertation, I was hesitant from the very beginning to take notes on my conversations with people who were becoming my friends. I felt especially uncomfortable quoting them exactly, even in notes to myself. I did occasionally write down something verbatim, however, when it struck me as something I would want to preserve because of its eloquence. But I normally tried to take notes that summarized what I had learned from my conversations, in an effort to treat my new friends more as co-researchers than as objects of my own research. I did, however, often take down verbatim what the school teachers, principal, and central administrators said, because these interactions were not based on an understanding of friendship, and these individuals were objects of investigation. In public settings (like the PTA meetings), I took verbatim notes on what everyone said, including the parents, as these public interactions were understood to be outside the personal friendship.

My fieldnotes mostly focus on observations about myself, how I was feeling, and what I was thinking as well as what was happening, and what I was learning from the other parents. For example, I wrote on March 11, 1982, "We talked about expectations...how being Black, she did have high expectations for the schools, but then she knew from experience she can't expect a lot...I said I thought I understood, that when (my husband) calls offices, and gets better treatment than I do, since I'm a

woman, I expect to be treated well, but since I know from experience that I'm not treated as well (as my husband), I'm not surprised when he's treated better. She said that yes, when you're Black, you learn through years of experience not to be surprised about these things...So you expect the same, but you expect a little lower, too."

The issue of field notes raises a difficult point that seems to have no clear resolution. I was entering into a participatory process in which those who would have been the objects of research in standard fieldwork practice were instead to be subjects of research, or co-researchers, but the co-researchers did not fully understood the project as a research project, and did not perceive themselves as co-researchers. Can a "co-researcher" relationship be established if it isn't defined by all involved as a research relationship? What does one do about field notes in this situation?

If one enters the "field" as a peer and friend as I did, our relationships were understood to be based primarily in friendship. The parents' process was never fully and self-consciously defined as "research," nor the network as a "research group," especially during this first year. By contrast, for the prisoners, doing research was much more a self-conscious activity. Because of this difference, it was difficult to decide what kinds of field notes to take that would not deceive my friends and co-researchers about the nature of our relationship by objectifying what they said and did in a document they had no knowledge of (my field notes).

Equally important as the implications for the other parents were the implications for myself and my own ability to implement a peer-directed research

model. If I wanted to make the process a co-research project, how could I do so if I were to begin objectifying my fellow co-researchers by taking notes about them? Believing that I needed some kind of record for trying to establish the process, I settled, as best I could, on a method of taking notes about myself and us, as described above.

In retrospect, I think that perhaps, if I had been clearer about these dilemmas from the very beginning, I might have been able to convey more explicitly to my new friends that I was thinking of them as co-researchers as well as friends, and that I needed to take some notes about what they were saying in order to keep track of what we were learning together. Perhaps I could have created a diary-like document that we could have gone over together. In this event, however, I would have needed to have someone able to spend a considerable amount of time to go over notes together, and it is doubtful that among these particular parents, anyone else would have had the necessary time to do this. In conclusion, I can only say that I did the best I could, but that the solution to this problem remains somewhat elusive.

More Interviews of School District Administrators

The group interview of the school district's testing director at the first PTA meeting was successful in raising parent interest in the testing program. At our next Program Committee meeting, we decided that the PTA meeting had raised a number of important questions that had not been satisfactorily answered. Many of these had

to do with the link between the testing program and instruction at the school level, and particularly why it seemed as if our school had not been designated as requiring educational changes despite its low achievement test scores. The Program Committee decided to invite the same administrator back, or another one if needed. We were told by the first administrator that answering these questions would require someone from the district whose administrative responsibilities covered instruction. He suggested we call the woman in charge of instructional activities in the county school system's central office.

After calling this official's office many times without success, I finally reached her and found her very hostile when I explained that the parents were concerned about the test results and wanted to know how the results were being used to improve their children's education. Among the many things she said, were: "There is no purpose in talking about these general questions" (especially how the test results were being used to diagnose educational problems at the school). "If you have questions about your child's education in subject areas, then you could call someone....but no purpose would be served by my coming to your PTA meeting to talk about these questions." "(Only) if the achievement score is below the cognitive abilities test score, this (and only this) is a school where remediation is needed." "There is nothing that can be done about the cognitive abilities score. It addresses the basic ability of the child. An abilities test is not going to change by the teaching." When I countered by noting that the predominantly Black schools scored consistently lower than other schools throughout the district on the cognitive abilities test, and then asking if she believed

this meant that Black children had less "basic ability" than other children, she exclaimed "Oh, no! I'm a Black woman who went to all Black schools!" I went on to say that sometimes parents had been told their children were "overachieving," because a child had an achievement score higher than her cognitive abilities test score. I explained that I thought the same dynamic might be at work at the school level; that a ceiling for expectations of our children's academic achievement was being set by the cognitive abilities scores, and that I questioned the validity of the cognitive abilities test as an accurate or valid measure of the children's ability to learn, and as a standard for their achievement. Despite what she had just said, she replied that she agreed with what we had been told, that there was a danger of overachievement: "We wouldn't want to expect more of a child than he might achieve...that puts too much psychological pressure on him to try to do what he cannot." In the end, she said she might come "for a little while," but not to answer the parents' questions. For this, she suggested that someone else from the same office might be persuaded to come to our meeting.

I telephoned the other Program Committee members to tell them about this conversation. They were shocked that an African-American administrator so "high up" would have said all the things she did, although they recalled my earlier accounts of how both the Black teacher and principal had talked about not "expecting" the same academic performance from African-American children as from the "other" children. Word spread among the parent network about what had transpired, which provoked a considerable outrage and curiosity about how an African-American person

of "expert" educational status could have said the things she said. The plot was definitely thickening, as layer upon layer of evidence was piling up to show a complicated web of racism embedded in the policies and practices of school staff and administration at both the individual school and district levels. Our small group was coming to a consensus that the cognitive abilities test was being used to lend scientific credibility to pre-existing racist expectations among the predominantly white school system administration, but it was very hard for everyone to understand how the Black administrator had "bought into" this way of thinking.

The "interview" I conducted by phone turned out to be one of the most important ones in terms of gathering data to help the parent group develop a theory of how several forms of "low expectations" reinforced each other and supported the reproduction of racism. For example, some of us suspected that racism on the part of the white county administrators had been originally responsible for using the cognitive abilities test to produce "expected" achievement scores, but it was becoming clearer that the test reinforced racist expectations not only among white administrators, but among Black ones as well, and among school staff, both Black and non-Black, parents, and children.

In the end, several district administrators came to our next PTA meeting. Two school board members, both invited by the PTA President, also came: our local school board representative, who was not African-American, and the only African-American school board member, who represented a nearby area and whom Black parents from all over the county frequently called when they had problems. For this

meeting, I prepared another information sheet summarizing the issues and some of the questions raised at the last meeting. About 75 parents attended this meeting, perhaps twice as many as the first, and many more than anyone remembered ever having attended a PTA meeting at the school before. The instructional representative from the district office made a short presentation about how the instructional program could be "adjusted" on the basis of test scores: the curriculum, teaching methods, teaching materials, and in-service training. A parent asked who determined which, if any of these "adjustments" would be made for a school. The answer was ambiguous--"the principal, the program supervisors, the director of instruction, the executive council, and the Board of Education." Another parent asked, "We see (our school) below the national and county level. How does the county address this? How would you go about bringing this school up to average or above average?" Again, the response was unsatisfactory: "We analyze the test scores...we do item analysis...we have a set procedure." The parents were not successful in getting even a recognition from the school district officials that our school was in dreadful need of "adjustment". Instead, the dreaded spectre of "overachievement" was raised again. At this meeting, the parents were much more focused on the school-level problem, and their questions reflected this change of focus.

The parents tried other avenues of inquiry. We had heard that schools were "flagged" if they were underachieving, and that schools that were flagged got curriculum specialists and other staff resources. But our school had no special resources. Based on what we had heard before, it seemed that our school was not

considered as underachieving in spite of its low achievement scores, because the ability test scores were equally low. One parent said: "The cognitive abilities scores are being used as a ceiling...the policy seems to be that central office doesn't 'flag' a school if the school has both low scores. Any school needs to be 'flagged' if its achievement scores are low, doesn't it?" Answer: "To my knowledge, we don't flag schools. We assume all schools need help." Question: "Do you plan on providing additional services for this school and others on the basis of low scores?" Answer: "Yes, there are some schools that will receive more..." Question: "What will they receive?" Answer: "A plan."

After learning earlier in the meeting that the state had discontinued its requirement to administer the cognitive abilities test in conjunction with the achievement test as part of the state accountability program, I asked why the county continued to use the cognitive abilities test. The reply was, "If we didn't use it, we wouldn't know if it was a reasonable score that we're getting." Apparently, these administrators thought our school had a "reasonable" score and needed no help--in fact, it seemed that by the school district's definition, a school with very low ability test scores could never need help because it could never be achieving below its "ability." Disgusted looks were exchanged among the parents.

This meeting, with all of the participation of the several district administrators, proved frustrating in that few satisfactory answers were given to the parents' questions. The African-American school board member spoke the last words of the meeting. She advised the parents, "...Across the board, there is an important piece of

information floating around...that certain schools are handicapped...those with the low cognitive abilities scores...that are given to minority majority schools. People don't want to send their children to these schools...Please don't stop inquiring about testing." This statement seemed to ease the sense of frustration by pulling the parents together with a sense of common purpose. This effect was not so evident the evening of the meeting, but emerged in subsequent conversations after the meeting.

Too Far or Not Far Enough:
The Perils of Confronting School Officials

The Program Committee was congratulated on the success of the program by many parents in the PTA and the African-American school board member, but not by the school administrators or our principal. A flurry of telephone calls among the parent network followed the meeting. Many parents were frustrated and angry at the lack of intelligent responses they had received from the administrators.

But many expressed concern about going any further with these kinds of confrontational programs. There was considerable discussion about whether we had gone "too far" or not far enough with these programs. There was concern about further antagonizing the school staff and administration. Almost everyone agreed that the PTA programs had been very informative and that they had helped to show that our school problems went far beyond our isolated individual experiences to include a general attitude of disregard, at the least, for our school's plight by the central

administration. But our programs had the effect of antagonizing the principal and teachers. Many of the teachers who had come to the PTA meeting sat grimly together in a row at the back of the room and did not participate in the discussion. In the Program Committee, we had discussed the possibility that our local school staff might become antagonized by our programs addressing the problem of low academic standards at the school. Some of the committee members had hoped that by focusing on the district's testing policy, we might be able to go more toward the root of the problem and possibly even enlist the support of the teachers and principal in raising the academic expectations for the school.

Yet the programs were not having any such effect on the teachers and principal. On the contrary, the parents in the network were experiencing some increased counter-resistance from both the teachers and principal. Teachers were worse than ever about not responding to parents' notes and calls, and some of our children were experiencing more harassment from their teachers than usual (for instance, large numbers of points taken off their grades for a misplaced punctuation mark in a paper heading).

But by now we had gained some momentum, and no one suggested that we change the direction for our programs. Many parents in the PTA let the committee know they appreciated the programs we had organized. Our next program brought an African-American academic researcher to the PTA.

OTHER RESEARCH METHODS

Bringing Academic Researchers into the Parent' Research Process

At my suggestion, the Program Committee had earlier discussed the possibility of bringing an expert on testing from outside the school system to talk to the PTA. I had hoped to bring some academy-based intellectuals into the parent dialogue process, in hopes that the parents might find their specialized knowledge helpful. I phoned around, and learned that there was a professor at Howard University who had expertise in the area of standardized testing. From the perspective of the other women on the Committee, inviting an African-American academic woman from a respected Black university was an especially positive move. Someone on the Committee suggested that perhaps some of the Black female staff might benefit from having a Black woman expert come to talk about the testing program, and presumably about how it was negatively affecting our children.

I called the professor, discussed our situation, and found her interested and sympathetic. We discussed the Jensen hypothesis (1969) and the racial ideology surrounding standardized testing in general. She graciously agreed to speak to our PTA about the cognitive abilities test. She also suggested another colleague from her department who might like to participate as well.

Both professors came to the meeting. Although both tended to talk about testing in terms of individual children rather than groups, each did emphasize that there was no reason not to expect this group of children to perform as well academically as any other group of children. And perhaps most importantly, they each asserted, based on research in the testing literature, that the cognitive abilities

test does measure achievement as well as intelligence. This alone probably made the meeting worthwhile in terms of solidifying the parents' understanding of the misuse of the cognitive abilities test to predict "expected" achievement scores. The authority of these specialists helped validate the parents' emerging understanding of the district's use of the cognitive abilities test as an institutionally-based mechanism reproducing racism; its function as a part of a racist system was becoming more visible. Not only did both professors reinforce the parents' developing critique of the county's testing policy and affirm the community's right to expect their children to perform academically at a higher level, but they also stressed the importance of teaching the kinds of skills the parents had been complaining were not being taught at the school: problem solving, critical thinking, learning to synthesize information, and not just memorizing facts."

This third group interview provided the parents with an opportunity to gather knowledge themselves from experts who had done research. The experience allowed the parents to gain access to a kind of knowledge that is usually produced and circulated only within academia. The two professors helped reinforce the parents in their concern about the quality of education at the school and stimulated the parents' emerging critical perspective of the testing policy. And perhaps equally importantly, as experts, they provided some legitimacy for the parents' concerns.

Writing Non-Academic Research Documents

When I first spoke with the professor from Howard, she asked that I write her something to summarize the issues we wanted covered so that she might be better able to focus her talk. I talked with the Program Committee members and compiled a list of issues that became a letter to the professor. We also used the letter in our Committee as a kind of working document to summarize the state of our knowledge about problems with the testing policy. For the letter, I framed the problem in terms of testing's impact on not just the children at our school, but on the many children who attended predominantly Black schools throughout the county whose schools had similarly low cognitive abilities scores. Although the parents' perspective on the problem had been shifting away from the individual perspective to a focus on the effects of bad schooling and the testing policy on the Black community, framing the testing problem in terms of its effect on the larger community stimulated some additional conversation in the network about the more general importance of our work. Seeing the argument in writing had a distinct effect; the research we had been doing was turning into a recognizable body of knowledge that could be read as a knowledge product, critiqued, and revised. The prisoners, even though they resisted writing up their process, had also found it valuable to put their theory in writing for the same reason.

The letter was really the third written summary of our thinking: the first two were the "fact sheets" handed out at the PTA meetings. These documents can be viewed as knowledge products or "working papers" that helped summarize and synthesize the state of the group's knowledge at the moment. They were not in any

way comprehensive statements of the knowledge produced by the parents, in that, for example, anecdotal data supporting the emergence of many sub-themes about "low expectations" were not included. They were fully informed by the knowledge we gained through the dialogue method, but they focused on objective indicators of our school's inferiority and the contradictions posed by pairing the cognitive abilities test with the achievement test.

Ostensibly the audience for the fact sheets was the PTA at large, whose participants were not yet familiar with the knowledge summarized in the documents. So these fact sheets served to inform and educate a slightly larger group from the same community in whose interest the knowledge had been produced. We (or at least I) hoped that the PTA parents in general would be both informed and motivated by the fact sheets. And in fact, this appeared to be the case, as parents based many of their questions on the information on the sheets.

Ostensibly, the audience for the letter was only the professor from Howard. However, all three documents also served the small nucleus of people on the Program Committee by documenting our definition of the problem, our tentative analysis, and some questions we had at the time. Collaborating on the letter helped clarify our thinking. At other times, especially later, I thought of doing this again, but without an obvious external function to be served, it was too awkward; the parents were busy people, and I think probably not willing to go through the exercise for its own sake.

Research By Observing: Comparing Majority White Schools

with Majority Black Schools

Shortly before the professors from Howard came to our PTA meeting, one of my friends from the PTA, Mrs. Jackson, suggested that we try going to a majority white school to see if we would be treated differently. This suggestion was an outgrowth of our network's continuing interest in "low expectations"--how the various forms of "low expectations" were related, and how my initial expectations of being treated well by school staff and administrators were different (higher) than the other parents'. I called a predominantly white school in another part of the county, and told the office that I was moving into the area, but had not yet decided where to look for a home, and wanted to look at some of the schools before moving. After having made an appointment for a visit, I went with Mrs. Jackson, and the two of us were greeted and welcomed by the principal. The principal introduced herself to us, and as we went through the school, she introduced us to some of the teachers. We were treated hospitably, as guests, and with respect. We asked if we could observe one of the classrooms. "No problem." Of course, as we expected, the classroom atmosphere was completely different from our school. The children were eagerly engaged in work at their seats, and the teacher spoke to them warmly. We could tell by looking at the bulletin boards full of the children's work that the classwork was interesting and challenging. My friend was most struck, however, by the differences in the way we ourselves were treated. There had only been a few African-American children and a very few African-American teachers in the school, yet she had been treated

much better than at our school where almost everyone was Black. As we talked about this experience after leaving, she reflected that perhaps she shouldn't have been so surprised after all; in her experience, getting service at stores in a mostly Black area, for example, was usually more difficult than at stores in a mostly white area. (I have since learned that many of us deliberately go to the white suburban malls to do our shopping, partly out of safety concerns and because the products are better, but mostly because we are treated better.)

After we had gone together to this one school, Mrs. Jackson tried on her own in a week or so, going alone to another mostly white school to see if her experience would be any different from our experience together. She found as in our experience together, that she felt welcomed, was treated with respect, and had her questions answered without hesitation. (Mrs. Jackson has a profound sense of curiosity and adventure, and a real feel for social investigation. She provided invaluable guidance for me in the early stages of our work.)

Our little experiment contributed some important new knowledge to the network's ongoing theorizing about "low expectations." Our emerging theory, a hypothesis which required more testing, was that we were treated with less respect, more hostility, etc., when our children attended mostly Black schools like our elementary school, and with more respect and less hostility when our children attended mostly white schools, regardless of whether we ourselves were African-American or white. This hypothesis was more fully articulated and explored during the second stage of the parents' network's work, during which some of our children

actually moved on to different schools.

Mrs. Jackson decided on her own to observe several classrooms in our school. The focus of her observation in this endeavor was not so much to document the ways parents are treated differently, but to gather more data about how the educational conditions differed between white and Black schools. She had been struck by how different the classrooms and classroom interactions had been seemed in the white schools, and decided to "check it out" further by going back into our school to observe. She was one of the few parents who did not work outside the home and who had time to do this. The "results" of her observations, especially her comparisons between the white schools and ours that showed how our school was so much worse, were then fed back into the network's ongoing dialogue, mostly through me and through the Program Committee. This new research, reinforcing our conclusions by another research method and with a different "researcher," is an example of how the parents' process depended in part on the continued accumulation of new data showing the existence of the "crisis" and how the group tested its tentative understandings by triangulating results from different researchers. The new data always revealed some new nuance that helped refine the ongoing theorizing of the group.

Learning through Action

Discovering More About Counter-Resistance

A central theme throughout our discussions had been the school's resistance to our efforts to effect change, or to put it another way, the schools' counter-resistance to our resistance to the imposition of low educational standards on our children. I have already described several methods the school officials used. We had faced counter-resistance on an individual basis, and to some degree on a collective basis, as when, for example, the teachers and principal tried unsuccessfully to prevent another active parent from succeeding the 1981-82 PTA president by stuffing the ballot box.

In another attempt to resist our efforts, the principal tried coopting the parents by initiating a parent volunteer program. Her statements to the prospective volunteers at the first meeting showed clearly how she sought to curtail our criticism: "If there is a problem that you see, don't talk to your husband, wife, or child about it. Don't talk to your neighbor. Talk to the principal." "Don't alienate yourself. Don't alienate the volunteer program by complaining or telling problems to the community. Why? Well, because this upsets the teachers often, and it doesn't help the school..." "Tell your children, neighbors, husband, or wife the good things you saw. Emphasize the positive."

At the fourth PTA meeting of the 1981-82 school year, our program consisted of several small circle discussion groups of PTA members to be led by different members of the Program Committee around themes we had been discussing, especially testing and "low expectations." Before breaking into discussion groups, we began to encounter some resistance from some of the parents within the PTA who had in earlier meetings made comments sympathetic to the teachers and principal. One

parent spoke out against our PTA programs by saying something very surprising: she said that on Sundays this very room was used as a place of worship; that the minister stands on Sunday on the very spot where the PTA president was standing at that moment; and that we should not be bringing all this "negativity" into a place of worship. She went on to say that these PTA programs had been full of "negativity," and that we already have too much "negativity" in our lives. Life is very hard anyway, she said, and PTA meetings should be uplifting. Where were the "good" things about the school in our PTA programs? Why were we concentrating so much on how bad the school was? One of the other parents, Mrs. Sterling, standing in the back of the room, spoke out that if other people were satisfied with "sitting in the back of the bus," then fine, they could just go on sitting there and seeing to it that their children and their children's children would continue to do so, but as for herself and her children, she wanted to "move up." (Mrs. Sterling and Mr. Sterling were perhaps the most outspoken parents in the school, and Mrs. Sterling became the next PTA president. She also later became my very close friend.) Some cheers came from other parents after her statement, but the first parent had hit a chord.

This first parent articulated in a very stark way an undercurrent of counter-resistance running through the parent network based on a combination of Christian theology and a real need to have a less stressful life. This theme was not new; the sentiment had been voiced very early on by one of the central people in the network who served as a formal member of the Program Committee when she had spoken about how she hated to even "get into" these problems, how they were so "deep," and

how she had hoped to find a better life for her family in the suburbs and hardly dared to admit that the school was little better than those she had left in the inner city. This same parent had also often spoken of the need to be "positive" in conjunction with leading a Christian life and doing the Program Committee work, often referring to The Word.

Several interrelated and possibly mutually reinforcing factors seemed to enter into the parents' reluctance to engage in confrontation. I have already noted some of the school-based institutional practices that deter parents from questioning the schools' treatment of their children, and the psychological reasons people need to deny the severity of the conditions. But the additional factor of wanting to live one's life in accordance with Christian theology, at least as that theology was interpreted by their churches, seemed to be a very powerful deterrent to action. I did not feel I was grounded enough in the Christian point of view to counter arguments from theology. Without being knowledgeable about The Word, it was difficult to carry on an effective dialogue about its contradictions.

The frequently expressed need to find peace in one's life was also difficult for me to counter. I had learned from personal experience--working for the Department of Social Services in New York, teaching in the South Bronx, teaching in Roxbury, teaching in the prison, and most recently, living in a Black neighborhood--that the everyday life experiences of a member of a "minority" group are qualitatively much more stressful because of the many subtle and not so subtle ways racism and discrimination pervade so many aspects of life. Living in a Black neighborhood has

been especially instructive, because even though my family and I are not African-American, we have found everyday life much more stressful and problematic in a myriad of ways simply because the neighborhood is Black. Store staff and managers do not provide courteous service and easy exchanges as in the white areas; the nearest hospital, which the ambulance by law is required to take patients from our area to, has a high rate of deaths; the road department leaves our potholes until last to fill; white customers look knowingly at one another whenever a Black clerk cannot perform even the simplest addition task; the fire department rushes to protect a few white homes from a brush fire, leaving a mostly black housing development totally unprotected; the local library has comparatively few books; and so on. This is not to say there are not compensations for living in a Black area as well, but these compensations are to be found in having access to Black culture and African-American friends, not in what is provided by institutions of commerce or government.

Just as I eventually learned from personal experience that the parents' fears of taking action on behalf of their children's education were legitimately based in a reality of systematic, differential (mis)treatment, I have become increasingly aware that the experience of being Black is very stressful in ways I am sure most white people do not comprehend. I have come to have a greater appreciation for why, under these conditions, it is difficult to deliberately take confrontive actions when there is such a need to safeguard whatever small sense of peace it is possible to create in one's life, and how much courage and sacrifice it takes for Black Americans to take the many actions necessary to create needed changes.

One of the central problems for me was this contradiction of trying to make positive changes when it seemed that critique and confrontation of the status quo was the only effective means. I have come to the tentative conclusion based on my experiences that a non-indigenous person like myself, working in a community for the emancipation of that community from systematic injustice, must respect the indigenous group's reluctance to take the kinds of action an "outsider" like myself might think are appropriate. The consequences of taking action are simply more serious than a person from the dominant social group might imagine. Attaining a goal like racial equality in education may be more costly to the indigenous grassroots community than the "outside" researcher-educator-activist is aware. It is difficult to know, as an outsider, what kind of leadership to provide in such a situation. From time to time, when I talked about my fieldwork to white professionals from outside the county, I would be asked why, if the conditions were really so bad, I did not do more to draw public attention to these problems by, for example, writing articles for the newspaper. I gather others in my situation might have gone ahead independently to bring public attention to the situation. Taking this kind of independent action on behalf of the group would have put me in an advocacy position and removed responsibility for taking action from the parent group. Although I am still somewhat unsure about what the outside researcher's responsibilities should be in similar situations, I think that given my knowledge of the parents' feelings of vulnerability, my decision to let the parents control the situation was the most ethical one. As it turned out, I think that in this particular situation my decision was the right one.

Below, I describe two cases in which indigenous participants, in groups that developed as outgrowths of the original network, decided to take action. In these two cases, it appears that the participants benefited from the early work done by the network, which had taken very little organized confrontive action on its own. In each case, when the conditions changed in some important ways, the later groups did take such action.

Knowledge Gained from Collective Action to Remove the Principal

My daughter and several other children whose parents were involved in the parent network graduated from elementary school in 1982 and moved to a middle school. Because of the busing plan to desegregate the schools, the children from her elementary school were bused to several different middle schools, fragmenting the existing cohesive parent network centered in the Program Committee, but also providing the possibility to expand the network by including parents from different schools. This was a time of transition for me and for the parent group. I was no longer the Program Committee Chair, but some of the core network, which included Program Committee members from the previous year, continued to work on improving the quality of education at the elementary school under the leadership of Mrs. Sterling, the new PTA president.

Even though the cognitive abilities test was a powerful tool used by the school system to keep the Black children from "overachieving," the network's sense seemed to be that we should use our limited time and resources to try to improve the quality

of education at our school more directly by taking action to get a new and better principal. This focus had come about as a result of the many discussions about low expectations: the principal seemed to have low expectations for the teachers; the teachers had low expectations for the children; the teachers and principal had low expectations (low esteem, etc.) for the parents; and the parents had been programmed to have low expectations for the performance of the school staff. Moreover, the first speaker/interviewee who came to the PTA had told the parents that changing the principal had the greatest effect in raising the achievement scores.

Although many people in the network believed that our school would be better off if we could get another principal, few believed it was possible to get the existing principal removed, and most did not wish to be involved in such an effort, for all the reasons elaborated above. Only six parents were involved in the action to remove the principal: three couples, including my husband and myself. Both of the other couples had been involved as plaintiffs in one of the many NAACP desegregation lawsuits against the county, and they alone, with my husband and me, were willing to take the additional chances involved in trying to remove the principal. We were all already labelled as troublemakers. Together, we wrote several memoranda to the Superintendent of Schools noting the low achievement scores, and giving evidence of the many negative things happening at the school that showed a lack of appropriate educational leadership by the principal. We asked directly that the principal be replaced with someone who had already proved to be an effective principal. We asked for someone with prior experience as a principal because our school, like other

predominantly Black schools in the county, was always the training ground for new, inexperienced principals. We said we would not be satisfied until someone was assigned who had "high expectations" for the children, who treated parents with respect, and who had already proved successful. We were ignored and rebuffed at first, but we persisted, met with the Superintendent of schools, and the Superintendent eventually agreed.

The principal was replaced. However, the former principal was moved to another school nearby, a school almost like ours in its racial composition and low achievement and cognitive abilities scores. One of the parents in the network who worked as a counselor in another school in our school system, and who did not ever become publicly associated with the Program Committee or speak out at PTA meetings for fear of retribution on his job, had earlier told us that it was common knowledge among the staff in the school system that the less effective staff were circulated among the predominantly Black schools. Seeing that this had actually happened, however, was shocking and discouraging. That the principal appeared again "just around the corner" was instructive by showing us yet another institutionally based mechanism perpetuating racial and class inequality and illustrating the kinds of contradictions posed by taking local action.

However, our school greatly benefited by bringing in a new principal. The new principal, also an African-American woman, immediately began to work actively with the PTA, teachers, and children to improve the educational climate at the school. Her attitude was completely different from the preceding principal in that she not only

welcomed parents to the school, but welcomed their comments as positive efforts to improve the school. She took pride in her work and in the children. Parents continued to have some problems with their children's educational experiences, and the school continued to have many problems. Nevertheless, the school atmosphere changed dramatically, and a collective project took shape to work together to improve the school.

A "Spin-Off" Group Takes Action

Most surprising of all, perhaps, was that the new principal used her leadership to form a coalition with the PTA, which had been strengthened during the previous two years' work, to pressure the district administration for resources needed at the school. When, for example, the district said it had no money to provide trailers for additional classroom space needed for the school, the new principal and the PTA threatened to come en masse to the district offices and demonstrate. She and a large group of parents based in the PTA formed a pressure group to take action. They succeeded in getting more books and materials of all kinds for the school. I would never have guessed that this could have happened, judging from the tentative attitude about "rocking the boat" that I had encountered for the previous two years. I had even become more tentative myself over time, as I had become especially bothered by the kinds of retributive actions taken out on my daughter. Suddenly, with the introduction of a new principal who herself took an activist stance and understood that

adversarial action against the district administration was necessary to raise the educational standards at the school, taking confrontational action could be viewed as "positive" (though it continued to be perceived as negative at the school district's central office).

From the perspective of the politics of schooling, the introduction of a new principal whose desire to make the school effective was in concert with the parents' desires created a political entity more capable of confronting the white power structure embedded in the school system at the district level. The new principal, together with the PTA, represented enough of a power bloc to enter school district politics as a viable interest group. For this short moment in the school's history (the "new" principal is now gone, and the school's community is no longer the political force it once was), the district's effectiveness in fragmenting resistance was disturbed, and the parents were able to mount some effective resistance to the inferior education of their children.

It has to be considered that the Program Committee's work may have been irrelevant to the parents' ability to organize with the help and support of the new principal; that all the changes were due to the principal herself. However, some time after the new principal arrived, she told me that when she first arrived at the school, she kept hearing from the teachers about all the "troublemaker" parents, and how "negative" we had been. She remarked that it didn't take her long to figure out that we had a lot of things to be "negative" about. The parents had taken the opportunity of having a new principal to fill her in on problems at the school, she said. Most

importantly, she said that our work had been very important in educating the parents about the problems at the school, and motivating them to improve the school. The parents were semi-organized and able to take action in concert with a principal who worked to advance their interests.

As an interesting aside, the new principal managed to get rid of one or two of the worst teachers. But these teachers also ended up, like the former principal, at predominantly Black schools nearby. And more interesting to me, one of the teachers who had been always very rude to me and had presented other parents with a host of problems as she resisted their efforts to improve things at the school, was now not only very courteous to me, but pleasant and congenial when I visited the new principal at the school from time to time! It seemed as if the principal had re-cast me as a "good guy" in the eyes of this teacher.

In retrospect, it seems to me that the overall research/education process worked quite well (at least in terms of short-term change) with respect to the development of ability within the group to understand and change its circumstances. The PTA group had apparently become knowledgeable and prepared to take action if the conditions were right. The PTA body, including most of the Program Committee members, had been understandably and legitimately concerned about taking action to remove the principal, and I had not pressured or manipulated them into taking action that might jeopardize them; the parents who were willing to risk taking action to remove the principal did so, and my husband's and my involvement in this endeavor was effective; and our insistence on a principal with a "good track record" resulted in

gaining for the school an effective leader who altered the conditions substantially, making it easier for the parents to organize in their own interests during the time she was principal.

This is not to say that I claim the research process to have had any far-reaching, long-lasting structural effects; if anything, the educational opportunities for African-American children in the district seem even bleaker than before, and no grassroots movement seems imminent to resist the unequal educational conditions at the county level. The process seems to have generated some activity for a while, and then dissipated.

Nevertheless, this first example of a "spin-off" of parent participatory action grounded in the early emancipatory participatory research effort demonstrates that our early efforts had results that extended beyond the time we were actively working with the PTA. The presence and leadership of the new principal made it possible to organize the parents around creating a better educational environment at the school partly because the earlier research and educational work had advanced the collective understanding and the group's ability to work effectively.

Introducing Academic Literature on Tracking

Starting in the fall of 1982, when my daughter began attending middle school, the parent network began to operate somewhat more independently from the elementary school PTA. I was still in close touch with some of the parents from the

PTA, but I no longer centered my work there, even though it was during this time that my husband and I joined with the other two couples to try to get the principal removed. My daughter was bused with some of the other children from our area to "integrate" a mostly white middle school far away, where I knew no one and where the educational problems were not nearly so severe as they had been in the elementary school. Our tight-knit nucleus of the Program Committee no longer existed after about the middle of that school year, as we were no longer functioning as a Program Committee and our children now attended different several schools. During this and the following two years, I reached out in many different ways to expand the network, hoping to find a way to use the prisoners' method to help Black parents throughout the district work on raising the quality of education for the children, and continuing the themes that had been developed in the parent research network. At a state PTA convention, I met a woman who lived not far from me. She was one of the relatively few African-American representatives at the state PTA meeting that year. Her youngest child was attending a mostly Black elementary school in our area and was experiencing serious educational difficulties. It seemed to her that some of her son's problems were related to his very dark skin; that the teachers, both African-American and white, were especially prejudiced against him as a dark-skinned black male.

We spoke on the telephone often. I introduced her to another parent who felt her son, too, was having an especially hard time in middle school partly because of his dark skin color and sex. The two women became good telephone friends, and I continued to talk to both. Out of this three-way conversation came a body of data

about the kinds of experiences young, dark-skinned Black males go through even in the middle-class suburbs. More mothers of teen- and pre-teen-aged sons entered this conversation, but often by talking to me. I would sometimes succeed in getting these mothers to talk to each other directly, rather than indirectly through me, but many times, I think these women never actually met face to face; we simply introduced each other by making telephone calls. A loosely knit support network emerged. This was the closest approximation in Maryland to the prisoners' intense therapeutic process, as the mothers were anguished and worried about the experiences their sons were going through.

I noticed the seeming paradox of concern over their sons' futures as a feminist issue. The mothers didn't really care, though, whether it was, or should be a feminist issue; they were not nearly so concerned about defining a connection to the feminist movement as they were about how racism affected their children's lives--especially their sons, who often seemed to be victimized even more than their daughters.

As we talked more about my new friend's son's experiences, I found that our conversations moved back and forth between discussions of her experiences, the network's insights about the various kinds of "low expectations," and the academic research and theory I had been reading about race, class, and schooling. She was interested in reading actual studies that had been done to show how racism operated at either the classroom or school system level. She was at first primarily interested in teachers' racist attitudes, but became interested in a wide variety of studies and theory

relating to this topic, including, for example, racial bias in curriculum materials. The theory of the "hidden curriculum" of schooling (e.g. Anyon, 1980; Giroux, 1981) was very interesting to her, and I gave her Anyon's article, and one by Timothy Sieber (1982) to read. This sharpened her interest in the concept of "tracking" (e.g. Oakes, 1985), a concept with which she was partially familiar, but not in any way as detailed as Anyon's study illustrated.

The Discovery of "Levelling"

At the beginning of the next year, her son began attending middle school. He and the many of the children from the neighborhood were bused to a middle school that had approximately equal numbers of Black and white students at the time. She was appalled to find that he had been placed in a math class below his ability, and that he was prevented from taking a foreign language. She identified this as an indication of "tracking." The educational content of his entire program seemed to her to be far below his abilities. She and her husband questioned the principal about their son's placement in these low level classes, and learned that the children had been "levelled," or recommended for class placements, by their elementary school teachers.

She acquired some internal school documents showing that most of the children from her son's predominantly Black elementary school had been "levelled" at low levels, whereas children coming from a predominantly white school had been "levelled" fairly consistently at much higher levels. Because of her work, "levelling"

became a new area of study for the network, the long tale of which I cannot relate very much of here. "Levelling," along with the pairing of the cognitive abilities test with the achievement test, became viewed as two of the most visible formally sanctioned institutional mechanisms used systematically to the disadvantage of children attending predominantly black schools. The parents' network also continued to pay attention to the ways schools suppress Black parents' efforts to improve their children's education.

Diffusing Knowledge about "Levelling": A "Spin-Off" Group Forms

My friend who had discovered the "levelling" policy and identified it as a "tracking" mechanism had been talking with the president of the nearby high school PTA about what she had learned. It so happened that shortly afterwards, the Superintendent of Schools proposed converting that high school into what the Superintendent referred to in his proposal as a "professional" high school. The PTA president became skeptical about the proposed change partly because of his new knowledge of how the Black children from the area were being "tracked" by the "levelling" policy. He requested and obtained the proposed curriculum for the school. To his consternation, when he looked at the actual curriculum being proposed for the so-called "professional" high school, he found that the high school was actually going to be turned into a vocational high school. The problem the parents in the area had been having with the school had been the school's de-emphasis on college preparatory classes, not a lack of vocational classes.

The high school PTA president successfully organized not only his own PTA, but the leaderships of the middle school and elementary school PTA in his immediate area. These in turn organized the PTA parent bodies to inform the community about the "professional" high school and to organize resistance to the Superintendent's proposal. This constitutes the second example of a "spin-off" group taking action in its own interest. The diffusion of the knowledge the parent network had generated had proceeded through me to my friend who had not been in the network for long, and then to a friend of hers, who then transmitted some of that knowledge (or at least the implications of that knowledge) to three PTA groups which then took action on their own behalf.

It is difficult to know exactly how much either the parent network's preparatory work or my efforts had to do with the success of either of these two "spin-offs." Certainly, without other key people (namely the new principal and the high school PTA president), neither parent action is likely to have taken place; circumstances external to the parent network were important determinants of the ability of the parents to organize. On the other hand, it appears possible that without the network's preparatory work, neither of the actions would have been taken. (I knew of no other parent-organized, broadly participatory, confrontational actions taken by the Black parents in the district during that time to address equity issues at the school level.)

During this period, I was feeling rather discouraged that the basic network seemed to have become so diffuse, with little chance of becoming even as much of a

self-defined group as had the Program Committee early on. We weren't having meetings, and we had very little sense of being a "group" at all. Not only that; our research was less centered than ever on any one project or theme. There seemed to be several partially defined research projects going on at once, and I had lost the ability to even keep track of what they were, or who was engaged in doing them. The network was spreading, but we were becoming less, rather than more, cohesive. I was also feeling discouraged that the group had not been involved in taking much action. All of my efforts seemed not to have brought about much change. The "spin-offs" were an unanticipated, but encouraging result.

Elaborating the Theory of Differential Treatment of Parents

My friend who discovered "levelling" had also become interested in my account of the parent network's theory of Black parent "push-out." She found that the kinds of experiences the Black parents and I had encountered at our school were very similar to the ones she had been subjected to in the predominantly Black schools her three children had been attending. I then told her about how Mrs. Jackson and I had gone to the white school and how we were treated entirely differently, and she thought about repeating the experiment herself, but before she did so, a ready-made opportunity emerged.

Her oldest child and my daughter were both accepted to a competitive science and technology program at a majority white high school in the county. Not only was

the host school predominantly white, but the science and technology program within the school was overwhelmingly so. The two of us began attending PTA meetings and visiting the school. Together, we experienced a radical break from being treated as inferior, ignorant, know-nothing parents in the Black schools to being treated as intelligent, colleague-parents in the elite white program at the white school. This was a most interesting experience to go through together.

We asked for and were given information about the school's distribution of its budget and the curricula for various classes. A parent subcommittee of the PTA was in existence to examine the grading structure for the school. In our prior experience with predominantly Black schools, the principals would have considered such a committee a serious threat to their power, and would have done all they could to prevent it from forming or functioning. But this subcommittee had the cooperation of the teachers and the principal, who supplied grade distributions for all the classes, a level of cooperation I had never before experienced in the school district. Together. we participated in this subcommittee for a while. We compared experiences, and both found that we were treated by the staff and principal with respect, and in a most collegial way, though she was African-American, and I white. It became clear to us that it seemed much easier to be involved in a positive way in a predominantly white school. It was a much more positive experience to go to the white school where one was treated courteously and as an equal. As my friend said, it was as if the school "expected" the parents to be their equals, not their inferiors. She was particularly struck when the principal saw her in the hall one day, and asked if she would be

willing to review and give him comments on a document he was preparing. Rather than trying to keep information from us, as with the school that had tried to prevent her from obtaining information about the "levelling" policy, the school was willing to give the parents at least some of the necessary information that would allow the PTA, the teachers, and administration to collaborate on improving the school. The whole dynamic was different.

By comparing experiences with this friend, I learned a great deal more about how racism operates at many levels. Her experiences at the elite white school, despite the dramatic differences between the Black and white schools, were more frustrating than my own. Individuals' prejudices seemed to come into play in the elite white school. Both she and her children seemed to have to work much harder than my daughter and I did to achieve the same results (placement in desired classes, getting prompt appointments with school guidance counselors, etc.). This experience suggested that many more kinds of comparisons were needed to develop a more complete theory of how race and class relations are reproduced through schooling. Nevertheless, the initial observation that both African-American and white parents are systematically treated worse in predominantly Black schools, and better in white schools, remained unclouded.

The predominantly Black schools our children had attended were probably at one extreme, while the science and technology program in the white high school was probably at the other, making the contrast very sharp. But we now had more data, and our theory was continuing to develop. By treating structurally advantaged

parents well, and structurally disadvantaged parents poorly, the schools helped reproduce inequality by enabling those already advantaged to become "positively" involved, and disabling those already disadvantaged from becoming involved in any way. The expressions of parent interest that were treated as positive in the predominantly white schools were treated as negative in the predominantly Black schools. The fact that the African-American parents I was working with were mostly middle class made the problem of the reproduction of inequality through schooling particularly interesting. In our experience, schooling in the county seemed to be a social structural mechanism that undermined the socioeconomic position of the Black middle class first by systematically providing an inferior education for their children because of their race, and then by preventing the parents from effectively asserting their newly won class advantage to protect their children from being thrown back into a lower-class status.

We developed an analysis of parent-teacher and parent-school relations as a political arena with the potential to influence what goes on in schools. In the white, advantaged areas of the county, we saw schools that invited parent input and influence, while it was discouraged and resisted in our local predominantly Black schools. We developed a concept of the "everyday politics of schooling" (Stern, 1987a), an arena different from that of school board or community politics, in which parents can exercise much closer, less confrontational, and possibly more effective influence over school personnel than they can in larger level politics--if the schools are organized to receive that influence. The predominantly white schools we visited

were so organized, possibly because the political power of the local parents put school officials on notice that they would do well to cooperate with parents, but the predominantly Black schools rejected informal parental input. As a result, parents had to choose between withdrawal and a more confrontational politics, with the result of parental "push-out."

Structured Parent Workshops: Teaching the Group's Knowledge to Different Parents

When the parent network underwent its transformation from being centered around the Program Committee to having no center and no organizational base, I did several things to try to expand the network. I made contacts with other predominantly Black PTAs in our area, attended statewide PTA meetings, and tried to find grassroots community activists interested in the problem of racial inequality in schools. In an attempt to create more of a sense of "group," I tried to get some of these people together in different kinds of contexts. I recalled the various contexts the prisoners had developed to gather people together, especially social gatherings, therapy sessions, and classes. But as I had found in my earlier work with the parents, it was extremely difficult to get people together at one time in one place, and most of the total time spent by the parents doing emancipatory participatory research continued to be spent on the telephone. I noticed the absence of the few Program Committee meetings and PTA meetings that had previously provided at least some

face to face contact. During this period, I invited about 150 people, of whom about 100 came, to an afternoon pot-luck dinner at my house. I presented it as an opportunity to get together informally with other people, mostly parents from different schools throughout the county, who were interested in issues having to do with racial inequality in schooling. The people I invited were not politicians or community leaders; they were individuals who had been connected to each other via the telephone network because of problems they were encountering personally with the school system. The party was successful as an event, and the telephone network was strengthened somewhat, but it did not result in the organizational center I believed our group needed. Nor did my next attempt: holding a series of weekly roundtable discussions at the local junior college for people in the network. The roundtable discussions provided a kind of study-group context, but different people seemed to come each time, and attendance was weak.

In retrospect, I think it would have been better to have continued the roundtables than to do what I actually did, which was to find an organizational base for the network within the county PTA organization, in a new sub-committee called the Equity Committee. In the Equity Committee, most of the participants acted in their roles as representatives various community groups, including the district-level PTA Board. Earlier, all the participants had simply represented themselves, participating as parents with no official function. Although the Equity Committee was open to any parent from any PTA, and it attracted a few people from the parent network at the beginning, all the parents who were not leaders of community groups

soon dropped out. I mistakenly spent time trying to find ways to continue the emancipatory participatory research work through the Equity Committee. The community leaders had their own agendas, and a different definition of inequity in our school system from that of the parent network (their concern was primarily with the lack of a "multicultural" curriculum). The Equity Committee also preferred a top-down approach, in which community leaders and local political leaders negotiate with the school system administration.

Despite these differences, I proposed and succeeded in gathering the Committee's organizational support for a series of "empowerment" workshops for parents. I spent an enormous amount of time calling parents who were part of the extensive telephone-based network to inform them of the workshops and gathering names of other prospective interested parents from throughout the county. I hoped that the workshops would help broaden the base of participation, and provide a face-to-face, semi-structured setting to continue the emancipatory participatory research process. But my ideas for an informal parent-run, highly participatory "bottom-up" workshop format were transformed by the Equity Committee to the point they bore little resemblance to what I originally had in mind. The Equity Committee structured these workshops in a fairly traditional way so that most of the time the participants were listening to different speakers (many African-American) about such things as the lack of a multicultural focus in the history curriculum. Yet, I managed to preserve a very small amount of time and space to "teach back" some of the knowledge that the parents' research process had produced. I encountered considerable resistance to

doing this from some of the other Equity Committee members, particularly the chairperson, who were very concerned about not appearing to be "troublemakers;" their main concern was to remain on good terms with school administrators so they could influence them to make changes, rather than to organize a grassroots movement from the bottom up.

As part of the Equity Committee's parent empowerment workshops, I led two "seminars" summarizing what the parents in the network had learned about the ways the schools convey "low expectations" for Black children's academic achievement. I included several points that reflected the synthesis of the parents' knowledge, gained from exchanging their experiences, and knowledge from the academic literature on race and schooling: the use of the cognitive abilities test; the mechanism of "levelling" and how it leads to "tracking;" and the different ways parents are treated when they try to affect school change, depending on whether the school is mostly Black or not. These "lectures" were received well by the Black parents who attended them. They commented readily, and asked many questions. But the lectures were not enthusiastically received by some Equity Committee members, by some teachers and/or administrators, and by many white parents, who found the discussion of race-based mechanisms distasteful. I found that "by accident" the time was cut drastically short by the Equity Committee chairperson for my "lecture" at the second workshop.

Nevertheless, these "lectures" did provide a forum to present the results of the parent emancipatory participatory research process to an interested audience (other Black parents who might themselves go on to use the data). In some ways, it was

like presenting a paper at an academic convention in that I made a little formal presentation, and questions and comments followed. But it was different in that the knowledge I was summarizing was directly relevant to the needs of the audience; the delivery of the research product was aimed at an audience very similar to the people who had produced the knowledge. As I did not have a tight-knit "research group" with whom I could share the responsibility for preparing the presentation, it was also helpful to have this forum as a further check on the validity and generalizability of material that I was presenting as, in effect, research "results". I found that many Black parents told of similar experiences, and the white parents said nothing.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From my own grounding within my child's elementary school PTA in a predominantly Black area, I established a small network consisting mainly of middle class African-American women that led an emancipatory participatory research process. This section summarizes the research methodology we developed and addresses four broad questions about the emancipatory participatory research process: What was the extent of my influence on the parents' process? How successful was the process in overcoming the barriers between academic sociology and grassroots struggles? What was the nature of the knowledge produced? And to what extent did the parents replicate the prisoners' process, as was my original intent?

The Parents' Research Methodology

The parents, like the prisoners, did research "naturally," as part of their everyday lives, in order to understand the circumstances of their lives, and in particular to address the problem of the inferior education that was being imposed on their children. The primary method for collecting data and theorizing about it in the parents' model was friendship-based dialogue--what I have called a "gossip" method, grounded in a desire to both understand and change the conditions. Stories formed the basic "data" for these dialogues, and conversation was the basic research method; the questions that were to be answered in the research process concerned the meanings of the stories and the explanations of what happened in them. This dialogic method provided a way for knowledge to be accumulated and re-synthesized in each succeeding conversation, and encouraged the analysis of everyday personal experiences in the context of a search to explain the conditions at the school. Implicitly, the parents' research was an activity of peers, not experts, and I entered into it as a peer and friend even though I was an outsider in many respects. Friendship-based dialogue provided a context of trust and care that encouraged participants in a supportive way to interrogate and question each other's attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and theories.

The dialogue was carried out mostly on the telephone, as the structure of the setting (in the suburbs, among busy middle class people most of whom did not know each other well and had little occasion to be together in the same place with each

other) did not provide the sort of close contact situation available to the prisoners. The telephone made it possible to establish a grassroots, democratic peer-based emancipatory participatory research process despite having very little face-to-face contact.

The research was conducted by a very loosely structured parents' network that did not define itself as a "group," much less as a research or action group. Nevertheless, this diffuse network carried out an emancipatory participatory research process that yielded beneficial concrete results to the community of participants involved, and contributed to a theory of how race and class relations are reproduced through an everyday politics of schooling in which Black parents as a class are systematically afforded inferior treatment.

The group gathered data primarily by sharing personal experiences (mutual interviews, during which the individuals involved posed questions to each other and critiqued each other's observations and conclusions). They augmented the data with other sources, including individual and group interviews with school and district staff, school system documents, action research by trying to change conditions in the school, and participant observation. The data were "processed" in dialogues that involved comparing experiences and the other data, as well as reactions to the data. Hypotheses were developed and new syntheses proposed in a dialectical process of ongoing theorizing that responded to new data generated by individuals' new experiences, new group members, and knowledge gained in other ways.

The parents' research was grounded in our shared standpoint as parents in a

Black middle class neighborhood attempting on an everyday basis to improve the deleterious and unequal educational conditions for our children. As such, the standpoint was "from below" as an oppressed "minority" and from within struggle, although the group had less consciousness of being engaged in an active struggle than the prisoners' group had. The parents' perspective also drew on the dialectical counterpoint between the Black parents' experience and my white privileged perspective as a fellow parent. My dual perspective as a fellow-parent insider who was also a white outsider played off the Black parents' "inside" perspective to create a deeper dimension of dialogue that allowed us all to see aspects of the system that might well have been invisible to either the Black parents or to me, separately. The insights we gained from our similarities and differences emerged naturally within a peer dialogue process that was informed in part by my sociological knowledge.

The parents' research objectives flowed from our standpoint, but the research focus changed during the process. At first, our focus was on the visible indications of poor educational conditions the school (lack of substantive assignments, low achievement test scores, and so forth). Research into these conditions documented that there was indeed a crisis that needed the parents' attention, a crisis that the parents came to describe as "low expectations." This theme of "low expectations" became the guiding theme of the parent network's research. It focused research attention both "up" at the structure of inequality and "down" at themselves as their reactions to the schools were shaped by low expectations. The parents came to see the oppressive features of the social structure both in its more visible external aspects,

and in its ideological forms, including the schools' interpretation of the cognitive ability tests and the parents' own internalization of the schools' ideology about the proper place of Black parents--another set of "low expectations." This dual view up and down was obtained through a process that first elicited the individuals' negative feelings as a result of being mistreated by school personnel (e.g. anger, fear, frustration, hopelessness, humiliation, powerlessness), then analyzed the school-based mechanisms that caused those feelings and functioned to suppress the parents' resistance. In analyzing their feelings as emanating at least in part from the school system's use of repressive mechanisms of parent push-out, the parents were able to question the ways they had blamed themselves for not being effective. (The prisoners formulated this same theme as "the way the 'system' plays on your mind.") This part of the parents' method combined self-study with a study of social-structural mechanisms; self-criticism with social-structural critique; personal experience with the political sphere; and psychological-level analysis with sociological analysis. Unlike the prisoners, however, the parents' group did not take the step of connecting microlevel sociological analysis to macro-social structural critique.

The parents' network gradually developed a critical perspective on the role of schools in reproducing race and class relations, although this view was never fully articulated body by a parent "group" in the same way the ex-prisoners' group redefined rehabilitation theory as a theory about the "rehabilitation" of society. What I interpret as the group's understanding developed as a function of all the research work the group did from the earliest stages on. By the time the view had become

more fully articulated, many of the parents in the early group had become distant from the network, and were not even involved in the later stages of theorizing.

What Was the Extent of My Influence on the Parents' Process?

I played many roles in facilitating the group's research process: creating a structure and space for the parents' initial research process; framing the research in very general ways (e.g., in terms of institutional racism, the reproduction of social relations through ideology, and resistance/counter-resistance) and more specific ones (especially the focus on the role of standardized testing in reproducing racial inequality); observing the parents' reluctance to taking action and posing this as a sociological question for myself and then in conversations with the other parents; making observations and asking questions in the course of conversation that reflected my critical perspective on the role of schools and thus stimulating conversation along these lines; serving as a telephone and social center for the parent network; providing background data from my own research about the local schools; making contemporary sociological research about racism and schooling accessible to the group, mainly through conversation; and writing up "working papers".

I believe that my leadership was important in initiating the process and helping the network formulate a broader, more sociological definition of the "problem" than it might have otherwise developed. A major contribution was to create a small space (using the Program Committee) for the social critique to develop. Despite the fact

that I provided considerable leadership and guidance for the parents' research process, however, the other parents were able to develop the theory of "low expectations" for African-American parents' participation in large part out of their own initiative. The choice to pursue this theme, rather than that of the cognitive abilities test (a theme that I had initiated), indicated that I did not control, and was in fact at least partly successful in my efforts to encourage, the parents' efforts to define and direct the research. It was the parents' choice to change the focus from the cognitive abilities test to Black parent "pushout." The formulation the parents developed was successful enough in a practical sense to spin off at least two other independent parent groups whose efforts were directed toward undermining the mechanisms perpetuating Black children's unequal access to educational opportunity. Apparently, the peer-directed process and its findings had enough impact on parents' understanding and motivation that, when combined with some other favorable conditions, it helped parents take action on their own behalf in their own local situations without either my knowledge or participation. Given opportunities to act and a relevant and persuasive analysis of the situation developed from their own perspective, indigenous leadership was able to take over.

Nevertheless, as already noted, many of the verbal formulations of the parents' knowledge that I present in this chapter, such as "Black parent push-out" and "everyday politics of schooling," are my own rather than the group's. As I make clear below, however, although the terms are my own, the concepts are a collective product of the parents' dialogue. I have selected terms for their value in relation to

academic sociological discourse, while the parent group, which developed the underlying concepts, used different terms to emphasize different aspects of the phenomena (such as "low expectations") that were more relevant to their different intended audience and their different purposes.

How Well did the Process Overcome Barriers between Academic Sociology and Grassroots Struggles?

I was able to integrate my academic sociological researcher role quite well with my peer participant role. I was far more successful with the parents in this respect than I had been earlier with the prisoners in part due to some differences between the parents' and the prisoners' attitudes toward academic intellectuals. The parents were certainly less hostile toward academic intellectuals, did not suspect them automatically because they were connected with "elite" institutions, and may have actually given me the benefit of doubt in some cases because I was engaged in doing a dissertation to get a doctoral degree, an activity they respected. The parents respected academic knowledge, making it much easier for them to accept the value of my sociological knowledge.

It helped greatly that I shared the other parents' concerns because we all had children suffering in the same school system. By living in the "field" I was studying, I gained some great advantages. For one thing, my entry into the field as a peer was accomplished very easily. Also, by sharing some of the same disadvantageous

conditions as the African-American people in my community, I was able to gain something of an "inside" and "bottom-up" perspective, and to contrast this perspective with my own "white privileged" one. This made it much easier to do research "with" rather than "on" the parents, and inasmuch as research was to be "on" the parents, it was on "us" rather than "them."

My success also depended, I think, on the ways I managed my own behavior and attitudes. I felt comfortable in presenting myself both as a peer and an academic sociologist by just "being myself," a whole person with an intellectual life as well as the other parts of me. I did not attempt to lecture the other parents in sociology, or think of myself as a teacher or expert, but instead conveyed sociological research, concepts, and theory as hypotheses when it seemed helpful to do so and in a way that allowed, and hopefully encouraged, the parents to question my ideas in friendly conversation. I also think that allowing myself to be "interviewed" at length over and over by many different people over a very long period of time (six years, eventually) gave people enough confidence in me to allow me to carry on my own project of applying, testing, and elaborating the prisoners' model, even as I was working on our collective research project about the schools. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my work with the parents began from the "research as a part of life" perspective--that is, I worked to integrate academic sociological research into a pre-existing indigenous, or "folk" research process, rather than the other way around. From this perspective. I was entering an already existing research process, but was making it more systematic and explicit. Thus, I presented sociological concepts as ideas that should

be accepted only if they connected clearly to the parents' ideas, perceptions, and experiences.

To my surprise, I found that sociological research and theory fit quite easily into the parents' process. I believe this was the case partly , because of my familiarity with the concrete conditions of the situation and my knowledge of sociological theory and research that was relevant to those conditions. The friendship-based dialogue character of my conversations with other the other parents was critical to the process. In conversation with other parents as my friends, we could exchange our feelings about the situation and our analyses of it, including tentative understandings grounded in a synthesis of experience, observation, and sociological theory. The structure of these conversations allowed sociological knowledge to enter the network's discourse in a non-dominating way, and in a way that allowed it to be interrogated without an authority relationship interfering. I did not try to develop the group's capabilities to do surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and the like, partly because these techniques did not fit easily into the research process. The parents might have found use for such techniques, except that they had very little time to devote to working as a group, so it was unlikely that doing a formal research project would be important enough to the group to justify the effort. The closest I came to using standard research methods was to give the parents my analysis of the county school system's data, showing the racial composition of the schools and the cognitive abilities and achievement scores.

When I worked with the prisoners' and former prisoners' group, I was unable

to find a way to do research that would be useful to the grassroots group itself and that would also produce a product that contributed to sociological theory. I had also failed to find a way to continue in my community activist/educator role as I added a researcher role. I found a solution in my Maryland community by adapting the prisoners' "research as a part of life" approach to the different life situation of the parents. I established myself as a peer participant first and a sociologist second. I did not try to fit the parents' needs into a research project defined by the theoretical "needs" of sociological discourse, but rather by the needs of the parents' struggle. In this way, I tried to fit academic sociological research and theory into the parents' research process and make sociological concepts fit the parents' need to theorize for struggle. In the process, we produced knowledge of relevance to sociology.

What Was the Nature of the Knowledge Produced?

The parents produced a considerable amount and variety of emancipatory knowledge. Like the prisoners, they sought knowledge to identify and name the problematic external conditions and then to find ways to change those conditions. They first documented the easily visible manifestations of the problem, such as extremely low achievement scores. They later sought to identify their self-destructive negative feelings about themselves and about their inability to change the social structural conditions, and then to identify the particular mechanisms causing them to have those feelings. The parent network's main efforts in this direction focused on

discovering the mechanisms of ideological control that disabled them as advocates for their children in the schools. As the parent network continued to produce this knowledge, it became more and more able collectively to articulate its critique of institutional racism in the schools. I was able to articulate this analysis and present it in a workshop for other parents in our school system. That the analysis "rang true" for Black parents whose children attended predominantly Black schools elsewhere in the school system provided some validation for the parent network's analysis.

The parents' network also produced two theoretical innovations relevant to the substantive academic discourse on race and schooling: the idea of the everyday politics of schooling, and the finding that race and class inequality are reproduced in part by the differential treatment of Black parents. Neither of these theoretical innovations was ever fully articulated by the parent research network because the academic terms of the argument were not of very much interest to the parents, who were not concerned to know which of their ideas might be news to sociologists. They did, nevertheless, find the ideas, if not my terms "everyday politics" and "Black parent push-out," useful in their research.

I was able to articulate these ideas as innovations because I was grounded in both the sociological and the "research as a part of life" paradigms for producing knowledge and could use each to inform and interrogate the other. My experience suggests that sociologists working in "real life" situations with people in their own communities can use their dual grounding effectively if they can begin with the "research as a part of life" paradigm for producing emancipatory knowledge and then

bring their sociological knowledge into the community's discourse.

The view from "the bottom" and from "inside" (the struggle) made possible new contributions to academic sociology by providing insights from a new social structural standpoint. Yet, I found that the new ideas also emerged partly as a function of my ability, as an outsider with a set of sensibilities derived from "white privilege," to provide a basis for a comparison of our different experiences and our different reactions to similar experiences. This suggests that bringing people together who are differently placed in the social system provides an opportunity to develop new knowledge about how systems of oppression function to reproduce inequality. Given the typical lack of access and open communication between academic sociologists and people who see oppressive systems from below, this opportunity for learning can perhaps be best realized in a context where friendship-based dialogue can take place around an experience common to both (or all). It may be that friendship-based dialogue involving individuals with very different perspectives on the same experience can be a tool for revealing aspects of oppressive systems that remain obscured under other methods.

A grassroots peer-guided emancipatory participatory research process enhanced by sociologists' participation and knowledge from academic research may make possible a democratization of knowledge production and distribution. Grassroots groups can benefit in two ways. First, their ability to produce knowledge they need for their own struggle is increased. The parents' group benefited in this way by coming to understand several aspects about the way the school was racist, despite its

Black principal and Black teachers, and by empowering itself to take some action to improve the children's access to better quality education. Second, the knowledge grassroots groups produce from their view "from below," "within," and from "everyday life" (Smith, 1987) can be spread to others, including potential allies in the struggle and participants on academic discourse, which can be shifted in accordance with the experiences and standpoints of marginalized groups. The knowledge that the prisoners produced remained local knowledge, and did not spread in these ways. The prisoners did not diffuse much of their knowledge to others who might have benefited from it. The parents' model for emancipatory participatory research, by allowing for the close participation of a peer sociologist, made it easier to diffuse the knowledge from the group to a broader audience, especially an academic one. The process we developed also made it possible to codify the knowledge the parents produced and teach it to other parents in a similar situation, as I did in the parent empowerment workshops.

A final comment is needed on the nature of the knowledge the parents' group produced. From a positivist perspective, the group's conclusions about institutional racism in the schools have a very weak epistemological status because they resulted from methods that were not replicable and that lacked operational definitions, formal procedures, and the other usual attributes of social scientific research. It would take me far beyond the bounds of this dissertation to make a full epistemological argument for the status of these conclusions as knowledge, even of a provisional status, but I can sketch some of the key characteristics of the parents' emancipatory participatory

research process that I think justify its claims to producing knowledge. Some of these issues will be discussed further in the following chapters. Like standard science, the parents' process contained procedures for generating hypotheses, for determining whether the evidence supported the hypotheses, for generating alternative hypotheses in the event the evidence did not appear to support the hypotheses, and most importantly, a method embedded in friendship discourse by which competing explanations can interrogate each other. The ongoing nature of a dialogue that continued to bring in new co-researcher/observers created a context for checking whether earlier hypotheses still held. The parents' process also had at least one significant epistemological advantage over what is usually practiced in social science in that the subjects of knowledge, the group of knowledge producers included both myself and the other parents; we were grounded in different standpoints not only by virtue of their being Black and my being white, but by counterposing the epistemology of a research-as-a-way-of-life method with more standard sociological methods and theory. Finally, the knowledge the parents produced was tested through praxis.

To What Extent did the Parents' Process Replicate the Prisoners' Process?

I found it was possible to implement a modified version of the prisoners' emancipatory participatory research process in a suburban setting with middle-class,

African-American parents, despite many differences between the two groups. The prisoners had a self-organized, peer-directed group that existed as an organizational entity, whereas the organizational base for the parents' network was only their membership in the PTA; the prisoners were Latino, poorly educated poverty-ridden men oppressed by the total institutional setting of the prison, whereas the parents were African-American well-educated middle class women (for the most part), living in the suburbs; the prisoners had a revolutionary theory of society, whereas the parents did not seek to overthrow the social system, although they were very conscious of being oppressed by racism; the prisoners saw themselves as oppositional political (revolutionary) actors in a grassroots "bottom-up" struggle, and had a strong sense of community and the need for solidarity, whereas the parents saw themselves as gaining some benefits from their class position and had little sense of community, much less of political solidarity; and the prisoners' group had a strong indigenous leadership, whereas the parents' group did not. The historical conditions were also very different, in that the prisoners' process took place during a time of relatively more social activism and revolutionary consciousness. The parents' group developed in the 1980s, in the midst of the Reagan-Bush era, a more conservative political context. The life conditions of the two groups were also different. The parents did not form a self-identified, cohesive group like the prisoners' because they were free to move about and to live the busy, disjointed, and relatively asocial lives of the suburban middle class. Instead of creating a formal group, the parents developed a rather diffuse network linked mainly by telephone. Because of these differences, the

parents' emancipatory research process necessarily differed in many respects from the prisoners', even though the prisoners' basic framework was implemented. One major difference, already noted, was that I had to provide several forms of leadership in initiating and sustaining the process.

The four highly integrated parts of the prisoners' emancipatory framework (education, therapy, research, and action) were each established within the parents' emancipatory participatory research process, but the education, therapy, and action parts were much less highly elaborated in the parents' model than in the prisoners'. This was probably partly due to the fact that the prisoners had much less access than the parents to outside social support systems, so they had to create everything they needed within a single social group. Their residence in a total institution gave them the time to do this, and made it possible to create formal therapy and education groups more easily than the parents could have. Paradoxically, in the prison, having such formal groups was one of the few legitimate ways available for prisoners to establish regular, informal contact with each other. Many of the individual activities developed by the prisoners were not appropriate for the parents, such as classes in basic literacy, or research on drug therapy programs available in the community, or classes on how to make effective telephone calls.

The prisoners' method was much more formalized than the parents' in that it included classes of various kinds. The participants understood they were attending classes. The parents did not consider themselves to be in a "study group" or in a political education class--or in a research project, either--so imposing activities that

would have been appropriate in those contexts seemed to me inappropriate or manipulative. I decided to err on the side of letting the process continue to flow in a research-as-a-part-of-life mode that was comfortable in the circumstances. Because the prisoners' life could accommodate more structured study situations than the parent group, the "research-as-a-part-of-life" took different forms in the two groups.

Finally, the prisoners' approach to research was different from the parents' because it more fully exploited the potential of the research process itself (rather than research products) to contribute to its overall emancipatory process: the activity of doing research had instrumental value in organizing and mobilizing the prisoners' resistance, empowering individuals and the group, and so forth. Although the parents' approach also emphasized the importance of the research process to its emancipatory project (e.g., dialogue-based research served as a form of interpersonal support and collective education), the research process did not lend itself as easily to a relatively fully developed methodology for social change as did the prisoners' process. In the parents' model, research results--that is, consensus-based conclusions about the state of the system and the group--were far more important than in the prisoners' model. Nevertheless, the research process did embody, though to a lesser degree, a methodology for social change.

Despite these considerable differences between the two groups and their research practices, I found it was possible to implement the prisoners' peer-directed emancipatory participatory research model in this new and very different situation, although the parents' model depended substantially on my guidance and facilitation.

It was substantially peer directed both in that I count myself at least partially as a peer, and in that much of the direction of the parents' research process came from the other parents. Most importantly, I believe the parents' research on Black parent pushout demonstrates that the parents' research process developed a grassroots perspective on how racism is reproduced through schooling, thus establishing the potential of grassroots groups as epistemic communities capable of producing valuable knowledge. This perspective was most easily available to those grounded in the problematic situation, which demonstrates the importance of incorporating into social critique the view from within and below as experienced by those in struggle.

Note

1. I use the term "gossip research" to refer to a process of building knowledge through a series of conversations that share individual understandings and circulate and transform knowledge from one individual to the next. Information cumulates, and a new individual's perspective is added at each link in the dialogue chain. By this method of informal knowledge production and construction of shared meaning, personal experiences and social analyses can be fused and communicated within a group of peers who have achieved a sufficient level of comfort to comment and question each other's understandings and interpretations. The gossip research process allows the development of several topic threads simultaneously as they are elicited through conversations about everyday life and the continual development, criticism, and resynthesis of past knowledge. I discuss this method in relation to "second person knowledge" (Code, 1991) in Chapter 10.

CHAPTER 9

TOWARD A GENERALIZED SMALL-GROUP MODEL OF EMANCIPATORY PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: SYNTHESIZING THE PRISONERS' PEER-BASED PRAXIS WITH FORMS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS' CRITICAL PRAXIS

From the prisoners' and the parents' processes, it is possible to generalize a model of emancipatory participatory research practice for a small group--for a research praxis designed for the needs of groups struggling against oppressive conditions that combines the emancipatory research praxis of the group with that of an academy-trained intellectual working with that group. This chapter presents such a model, which we will refer to as the generalized small-group model of emancipatory participatory research.

The generalized small-group model represents an extension of the prisoners' emancipatory participatory research praxis, described primarily in Chapter 6. It synthesizes that praxis with lessons learned from my fieldwork praxis with the parents' group and a reading of several academic literatures on forms of emancipatory or participatory research. It is grounded both in the needs of a grassroots group and those of an academy-trained intellectual (me) trying to find ways to merge forms of critical research praxis with peer-based emancipatory research.

The generalized small-group model is intermediate in generality between the

prisoners' model and a much larger, unfinished project that I outline in Chapter 12. This larger project would bring the generalized small-group model into a dialogue with various projects in the literatures of emancipatory social science and pedagogy so that these approaches can combine in the larger projects of developing a multi-disciplinary and multi-grounded synthesized emancipatory praxis which includes both academy-trained and popular critical intellectuals, a methodology for developing an critical participatory critical social science joining academy-based critical emancipatory research with popular research, a dialogue of epistemologies engaged in a search for ongoing redefinitions of objectivity, and a theory of domination that takes into account multiple sources and mechanisms of domination. Together, these projects contribute to the development of a methodology for developing knowledge through a democratic, dialogic participatory process that embodies a democratic "bottom-up" methodology for social change as emancipatory praxis. A theoretical framework for emancipatory participatory research serves as the theoretical umbrella for how the several projects relate to each other in the creation of the methodology that brings together a movement for cognitive democracy with a movement for a more fully participatory and substantively democratic society.

The second part of this chapter raises and then addresses a critique of the overall project of emancipatory participatory research, at any level of generality, that comes from postmodernist thinking. I show how the kind of praxis pioneered by the prisoners' group can address postmodernist critiques of knowledge, power, and emancipation and lead to a reconstruction of these key concepts. Chapters 10 and 11

discuss some of the literatures that helped shape the generalized small-group model and that can participate in the larger emancipatory project. For example, a discussion of second person knowledge (Code, 1991) explains the importance of dialogue in an emancipatory participatory research process, while a discussion of Fay's (1987) effort to redefine critical theory as critical social science shows how the generalized small-group model can be conceptualized as critical social science from below. Such discussions show how this emancipatory participatory research model relates to complementary perspectives in published literatures and how the projects of the various literatures can be enhanced by being drawn into a dialogue with each other and a model of peer-based emancipatory participatory research.

A GENERALIZED SMALL-GROUP MODEL FOR EMANCIPATORY PRAXIS

The notion of emancipatory participatory research that came out of my work with the prisoners and parents was one of a small-group emancipatory praxis in which a concrete, community-based group works together with one or more academy-based intellectuals. The group produces knowledge to empower itself directly, and also contributes to better social scientific theory, as the parents' group did; the participating academic intellectual contributes to both parts of the project by serving as a link to concepts and knowledge bases in the academy. The praxis integrates research with education, therapy, and action and grounds knowledge production in everyday friendship dialogue, augmenting the dialogic epistemology with other

epistemologies, even including positivist research, when needed.

In defining a generalized small-group model of emancipatory participatory research, two major characteristics of the prisoners' process stand out: its peer-based character and its treatment of research as part of everyday life and struggle. Research was regarded as something "ordinary" people could do, as it was a necessity of life, given that, from the perspective of being oppressed, many kinds of knowledge are needed just to survive, much less to improve conditions or change "the system."

In my work with the parents' group, I tried to find ways to maintain and integrate these two principal characteristics in a new setting, but in addition, to find an appropriate role or complex of roles for myself that would relate my work both to the community of critical academic intellectuals and to the local group's emancipatory research praxis. I also hoped to find ways to bring the "people's research" process into dialogue with academic research.

The prisoners' and parents' practices were different, of course, in some important respects. The prisoners developed a knowledge-based method for social change relying almost entirely on the efforts of the peer participants. As such, the prisoners' effort stands as a model of grassroots, peer-directed, peer-participatory emancipatory praxis[1] grounded in struggle. In the prisoners' model, the major burden of intellectual work fell on a group of Latino men marginalized far from the center(s) of power by their ethnic, class, and racial status. Despite their poverty, lack of formal education, drug and alcohol addictions, imprisonment, and the many negative circumstances of their lives leading to incarceration, this group of men

comprised a community of knowers and active subjects of social change. They engaged in an effort to link knowledge and power through praxis, motivated by several factors which included their extreme sense of alienation brought on by the crises of their personal and community experiences of desperate social and economic marginalization, and an emancipatory and justice-oriented[2] goal and hope informed both by the memory and experience of forms of community inscribed in Latino or Hispanic cultures and by modernist Enlightenment ideals of democracy, freedom, equality, and justice present, although incompletely and imperfectly realized, in United States political culture. Their efforts were inspired by, and borrowed concepts from, the then-recent Civil Rights and Black Power Movements and the Attica rebellion, community movements for rehabilitation of prisoners and bilingual education, and a marxist-based political and economic theory legitimating the rights of the dispossessed. The combination of these background factors and some other circumstances, especially the collection of so many individuals in one place, made possible the emergence of their peer-directed emancipatory research praxis largely without the facilitation of academic intellectuals.

The prisoners' peer-based process and approach to research as a normal part of life stood in creative tension with finding a way for me or for critical academic theory and research to enter the prisoners' process. I tried to find ways to use this tension by combining my search for a role in a parent-based emancipatory research praxis with my reading of the literature.

The African-American parents' group produced a different emancipatory

participatory research praxis because of its different historical and social circumstances and because of its different interaction with my efforts to introduce knowledge from academic social science. The group's circumstances precluded the depth of peer interaction found in the prisoners' program, making some outside facilitation and independent intellectual work not only possible, but necessary. Circumstances also led to a different way of combining research with education, therapy, and action, and also opened the group to interaction with academic ideas. The case study of the parents' group prefigures a framework for emancipatory praxis that can combine the praxis of an activist academic researcher with that of a grassroots group.

Despite the differences between the two groups' practices, they had much in common, and it is these common threads that make possible a synthesis.

Toward a "Substantive Democracy"

The primary goal of emancipatory participatory research as a small-group process is the emancipation of the grassroots participants from oppressive social conditions. This goal implies some fundamental differences from the standard model of research, which usually maintains a separation between the praxis of the academic researcher involved in doing critical research or developing critical theory and groups involved in struggle.

The idea of emancipatory participatory research as it is developed here

embodies a particular conception of the relationship between knowledge production and other types of social action, between knowledge producers and other social actors, that erodes the usual distinctions between intellectuals and activists and between academics and nonacademics. Emancipatory participatory research allows for the praxis of a grassroots group to be integrated with the praxis of transformative intellectuals. It thus contributes to the larger project of creating what Gramsci called a "substantive democracy." In such a democracy, "the political system itself reflect(s) an ongoing... 'organic unity' between the intellectuals and the people-nation, between leaders and led, between 'theory and practice', and so forth" (Quaderni II, 8:191, quoted by Golding, 1992, p. 77). As Adamson relates, "Genuine political education depends on the 'elaboration' of intellectuals tied to the working class to provide it with 'organic' leadership" (Adamson, 1980, pp. 142-3).

Gramsci's theory of political education and the organic intellectual does not however, in some ways, represent a fully egalitarian emancipatory praxis. For example, in writing about the relationship of workers and intellectuals, Gramsci wrote of "an 'organic' connection between the will of the people and the intellectuals who lead" (Golding, 1992, p. 84). He also conceived of a division in the "organic" relationship in that "the popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel" (quoted by Adamson, 1980, p. 146). Despite this division of labor and apparent hierarchical relationship in Gramsci's vision, his concept of how politics and intellectual activity can be combined to form "substantive

democracy" remains central to any attempt to forge a framework for emancipatory praxis joining academic intellectuals with grassroots groups. This concept of democracy as a process that engages people in forms of praxis combining scientific intellectual work with emancipatory action is similar to Comstock's and others' formulation of critical science as a democratic process (Comstock, 1982). The practices of the prisoners and the parents suggest that such a process can benefit the overall emancipatory project by making possible the production of knowledge that both academics and oppressed grassroots groups need.

Characteristics of the Generalized Small-Group Praxis

What I refer to as a generalized model of small-group emancipatory participatory research praxis resulted from my journey, as it were, back and forth between two grassroots groups and a set of published literatures about critical research and practice. The resulting model, which defines a place for a trained critical intellectual in collaboration with a grassroots group, dialectically integrates the emancipatory research praxis of a group like the prisoners' with various forms of emancipatory research praxis of an academy-trained intellectual working in concert with the group. Below, I list numerous elements that characterize this generalized small-group model. Then, I identify key issues in integrating an academic intellectual into a small-group praxis in ways that democratize and otherwise improve research processes. Chapters 10 and 11 demonstrate that this generalized small-group model

can be further elaborated on the basis of several literatures of emancipatory social science and pedagogy. As Chapter 12 shows, several of the elements of the small-group model also characterize the larger emancipatory project described there.

The characteristics listed below build on the prisoners' model, but incorporate the knowledge I have gained by working with the parents' group and my reading of the literature. That is:

1. It is a primarily peer-based grassroots "people's research" group process that is guided by the emancipatory and justice-oriented needs of the group to counteract direct experiences of oppression. As such, it embodies a "bottom-up" methodology for producing knowledge and social change.

2. It is a form of emancipatory research praxis embedded in a matrix with three other forms of emancipatory praxis: education, therapy, and action, which comprise together an integrated emancipatory praxis. The connection between education and research is an especially close one in which the appropriation of existing knowledge (part of education) is viewed as producing knowledge anew for each participant. The participants' overlapping roles parallel the four forms of praxis: participants act as researchers, teachers, therapists, and activists. Although the forms of praxis and role definitions can exist semi-independently, they also are integrated with the other forms of praxis and roles.

3. It is based on the concept of research as a part of everyday life. As such, it primarily employs an everyday "people's" discourse to carry the research process forward, although in this generalized model, sociological concepts enter the discourse

as well. Dialogue among participants is the most basic research process, and the examination of personal experiences through dialogue comprises much of the data gathering and analysis.

4. It embodies a dual and synthetic meaning of "methodology," which encompasses both knowledge production and social change.

5. Its goal is process as much as product, in producing emancipatory knowledge and achieving cognitive democracy, and also in producing democratic forms of life and a more fully participatory and substantive (rather than formal) democracy. In its emphasis on process, the group conceives of both political and cognitive democracy as open-ended, always incomplete, and imperfect processes.

6. Its methodology is dialectical throughout, and is based on dialogue, itself a dialectical process.

7. Its understanding of power is of a matrix of interrelated systems expressed at three levels of what the prisoners called "the system": the individual, the group, and the norms and formal rules of institutional structure. Power is conceived of both in positive and negative terms; that is, the group is concerned to empower itself in various ways (a positive sense), and to take power from those who control the social relations affecting the group (a negative view of power). Macro-structural forces are thought to control much of social and economic life, but people are conceived of as actors who have some ability to interrupt the ways inequalities are reproduced; power is conceived of as a relation in which everyone participates. Power relations were played out in a struggle of resistance and counter-resistance. Resistance was

understood to take place at all three levels of "the system". The prisoners used the concept of "the way the system plays on your mind" and the parents used the concept of "low expectations" to understand the power relationships between social structural forces and consciousness or subjectivity: each interpenetrated the other.

Democratizing the Relations of Knowledge Production in the Generalized Small-Group Praxis

Of major significance to the project of creating a generalized model of small-group emancipatory participatory research praxis are the ways in which the process of knowledge production--along with other aspects of the relationship between grassroots individuals and academic intellectuals--is democratized. This democratization, however, depends on the quality of the interpersonal relationships between the academic researcher and the small group. Below, I discuss some of the ways my experiences indicate the research process can be democratized at this interpersonal level. (In Chapter 12, the democratization of research is viewed as a project that includes, but proceeds beyond the level of interpersonal relations of researcher and small group.)

Living in the Same Area as the Group

In my experience, living in the same neighborhood as the people I did research with provided us with many similar experiences of oppression, so that we had much

in common as peers to try to understand and change. When one's own life is affected by the same social structural conditions as the other people in the group, not only can one be seen as a legitimate peer participant, but one has direct knowledge from experience to share. My feeling at present is that if one is not an indigenous member of the group, it is probably even more important to live in the same area. Being a non-indigenous participant in the group, and sharing similar life conditions is an exciting (though demanding) experience, as differences in the way one experiences the same conditions because of being an "outsider" or having been born with white, class, or gender privilege (in my case being white rather than African-American) become important data in the research process.

Experiencing the Same or Similar Conditions

It is not always possible to live in the same area as the group. I found in working with the prisoners' group both inside and outside the prison that although I was neither a prisoner nor resident of the South Bronx, I gained some important experiences by peripherally sharing some of the groups' conditions of oppression. In the prison, for example, although I was not a prisoner, I was teaching a class on a part time basis that the prison administration was always trying to eliminate. The prisoners and I together, although in different ways, endured the constant harassment and intimidation tactics of prison administrators and security personnel who constantly attempted to close down the class. My position was far from secure, as I was working only part time, and had no job security. Furthermore, I was one of very few

women teaching at the institution at that time, making my teaching position even less secure.

In the Bronx, experiencing similar conditions took the form of having to conform to the social conditions of the former prisoners' lives whenever we got together. My husband, daughter, and I lived at the edge of many of the former prisoners' lives as they came out on parole, and established themselves in the South Bronx. We received phone calls in the middle of the night about all kinds of crises; we were visited by the former prisoners and their families who came to stay with us, and we stayed in their apartments; and our "meetings" were invariably delayed and interrupted by crises of all sorts. If one is not in a position to experience the conditions directly or in the same way, then ways can be sought out to come into the kind of extended contact with people in the group that make it easier to understand their conditions.

Being a Friend

Finding and making friends with the other people in the group takes a great deal of time, but friendship (as I discuss further in relation to Code's [1991] idea of a "second-person" paradigm for knowledge in Chapter 10) is a peer-based egalitarian form of relationship that undermines hierarchy and separation. Having now spent more than ten years in this predominantly African-American neighborhood, I have made a variety of kinds of friendships, all of the close ones with other women. When I was working intensively on school issues, I was usually closest to one friend or

another with whom I would speak at length (an hour or two) almost every day on the telephone, but I would often speak to two or three additional people who were less close friends, or sometimes to newfound acquaintances, in the same day. I never hid who I was or what I was trying to do (most of the time I was searching to define my project, and I had trouble saying exactly what it was I was trying to do), and I revealed much about myself to my very close friends, somewhat less to my less close friends, and so on. I attempted to be a good "distant friend" to people who were only acquaintances, as well. I drew on my early training as a woman to do this: I listened sympathetically, responded as authentically and as helpfully as I could, shared similar experiences, expressed empathy, and so forth.

Considering the Relationship with the Group as Permanent

Whether or not it is possible to live in the "field," I have come to think that conceiving of the relationship one has with the group of "research participants" as a permanent one has positive implications both for the kind of relationships that can be forged and the kinds of knowledge that can be produced. If the relationship is considered to be a permanent one, there seems to be an increase in the investment in the relationship, and the possibilities for a more truly reciprocal relationship between the researcher and other people in the group are reinforced. Of course people move and circumstances change, but if one enters the situation with the idea in mind of having a permanent connection to it, one's very connectedness seems to yield different kinds, or at least different qualities, of knowledge. "Connectedness" is, as

Chapter 10 describes, one of the qualities that characterizes many feminist approaches to knowledge. Interestingly, it is my experience with the male Latino prisoners that made me especially sensitive to this factor; when they realized that our relationship could extend into our lives beyond the classroom, and could include both me and my family on a permanent basis when they became released from the prison, more things about our lives began to be shared in a framework of mutual trust. I think that one of the principal ways that conceiving of the relationship as permanent colors the democratic relationship between the researcher and others in the group is by making imaginable a collaborative search for an understanding of broader social reality--if the relationship seems permanent, it may be easier for the search to take more forms and delve into more areas of life.

Revealing as Much as Possible About Your (Research) Project

I found this aspect very difficult on several accounts. Nevertheless, I tried to be as open as possible about what it was I was trying to do. The fact that my idea of the project changed over time made it difficult to convey exactly what I was doing. That my current idea of my project was not a pressing issue to the other parents was another important obstacle to revealing what I was doing. In general, I found it useful to say that I wanted to be "doing research with people, not on them, about a social problem at hand." This conveyed much of the essence of what I was doing in a fairly simple way, and I used this explanation with other parents at various stages of the process.

Allowing Group Participants to Interview the Academic Researcher

Part of being both a friend and peer-researcher is allowing "interviewing" to be a reciprocal process. Although much is accomplished in terms of establishing a trusting relationship by allowing oneself to be interviewed, much can also be learned by being interviewed: the questions that are asked provide a kind of data that can later serve to generate knowledge, as one finds out what seems problematic to the other person. For me, one of the most personally fulfilling aspects of the emancipatory participatory research process has been getting to know people in tandem with getting to be known. The content of the "interviews" others would carry out "on" me varied greatly, depending on the circumstances and how well we knew each other. In Maryland, an ongoing theme that continues to be reworked is that of why I moved here, why I stayed, and how I feel about living here.

Storytelling

Exchanging stories as a way of generating critical knowledge has been one of the principal components of my conversations with other people. Although I describe storytelling elsewhere as an important part of an indigenous epistemology based in dialogue, it is also a way to carry on friendship. But not all stories advance the emancipatory process. Usually, our anecdotes about everyday life reveal a critical perspective on social life. I have found that getting to know people by exchanging stories is a way to create a peer relationship in spite of differences; by exchanging stories, it becomes possible to see commonalities.

Integrating the Researcher Persona into the Friend Persona

Rather than separating one's researcher self from one's personal self, integrating them into one persona allows the other people in the group to interact with the researcher as a person rather than an expert. I deliberately describe the integration process as going from the researcher persona into the friend persona, to emphasize the overall importance of the friend persona. By integrating roles, it is possible, in my experience, to introduce sociological knowledge into the group's research process in a way that allows the other participants to question one's specialized knowledge and expertise from the peer position as friend rather than from the subordinate position as non-specialist to expert. For me, integrating my sociological self into my friendship role allowed me to keep my sociological knowledge in constant tension with popular knowledge in conversation with others: I did not have to constantly evaluate my sociological judgments about the local situation because my sociological perspective was an explicit part of conversations with others, so others could help me evaluate it.

Using the Problematic Nature of Local Conditions to Make Friends, Create a Group, and Begin the Research Process

Rather than coming to the group with a problem to study, in this model for emancipatory participatory research, the problem(s) to research emerge from the situation at hand, and from a discussion among friends. Approaching the research in this way makes it natural to embed the research process in emancipatory praxis. It

also democratizes the research process by allowing the group's circumstances to dictate the "problem."

Thinking in Terms of Entering a Conversation Rather than Starting One

By recognizing that a conversation about oppression is probably already taking place (I always think to myself that wherever there is oppression, there is resistance, and wherever there is resistance, there is oppositional discourse), it becomes possible to engage in critical discourse without imposing one's outsider ideas. One simply finds where and among whom critical conversations are taking place, and then joins the conversation. It can be a problem to find where and among whom it is taking place, but if one is living in the area and undergoing the same oppressive conditions as the local people, it should be possible to find some of those conversations. By "conversation," I refer to more than individual, concrete discussions. I mean to include ongoing fragmentary dialogues among different groups of people in the same community about common problems. Even though one thinks in terms of entering an ongoing conversation, one need not necessarily accede to its terms, of course: if one participates authentically, it is important to give one's views or knowledge as honestly and coherently as possible.

I find that it is useful to think about such conversations as internally contradictory--as expressing both conservative and progressive streams of thought and consciousness. It is often possible to bring out those parts of the conversation that seem to express internalized dominant (repressive) ideology (referred to in other

discourses as "false consciousness"), and to show how these parts of the conversation contrast with others that seem to express critical consciousness. Some of my best "work" involves reflecting back to the other conversational participants the contradictions I see in such conversations. I have found that when I am able to do this well, I bring in ideas from past conversations or from conversations with other people, and juxtapose them against each other as well. One of the most exciting things about this process is finding that my friends (or at least my telephone friend-acquaintances) can help me identify some tensions in my own consciousness; this is how I have learned and continue to learn about what racism is--which is too long a story to complete here.

Recognizing the Ability of Non-Academy-Trained People to Act as Social Theorists

Perhaps this is such an obvious element that it need not be noted. However, if there is any doubt, it should be made clear that even people who cannot read and write (some of the prisoners were just learning) can and do act as social theorists. It is important for the researcher working with the group to try to understand and pick out the implicit social theory that is embedded in their conversations.

Thinking in Terms of a Disjointed, Fragmented, Open-Ended Conversation

Instead of interview-like conversations in which a certain amount of material is covered in a certain length of time in a structured interchange, the conversations I speak of are ongoing, fragmentary, and disjointed. They are rambling and often "off

the point" of the given topic at hand. Nevertheless, over time, these concrete conversations "add up."

Thinking About the Researcher's Specialized Sociological Knowledge as of Equal Value to the Group Participants' Knowledge

By thinking of one's specialized sociological knowledge as one kind of knowledge, as limited as all others but of potentially equal value to the kinds of knowledge a grassroots group has, it is easier to put a grassroots-based emancipatory participatory research process on a peer basis. The key idea is that all knowledge is incomplete, distorted, and so on, but sociological knowledge can be used to inform popular knowledge, and popular knowledge can inform sociological knowledge. This idea supports a more equal interpersonal research process. At the level, then, of knowledge produced by the group which comes out of a process in which both sociological and popular knowledge are valued, that knowledge is then subject to critique by those discourses it wishes to enter, on their terms. In other words, the knowledge the parents' group produced about how race and class are reproduced in part by the differential treatment of parents might be evaluated by groups of African-American activist parents in praxis: they would evaluate whether that knowledge "worked" for them. However, the same knowledge would be evaluated by sociologists and anthropologists according to different standards.

The Problem of Field Notes

As I indicated in Chapter 8, I found it ethically inconsistent with friendship to take notes on my conversations with my friends. I did take notes in public meetings, and on occasion, tape recorded group discussions. I also took notes about what I was learning, and on my own experiences with the school system. Occasionally I recorded anecdotes someone told me, and I often wrote down things I had learned about the schools in my conversations with friends. Basically, my guide was to follow what I told my friends, namely that I was trying to find ways to do research with them rather than on them.

Locating the Context for Research in Friendly and Accessible Spaces

It is important to locate the research process in "spaces" where it can take place with relative ease, and where people are comfortable. My two field situations were very different from each other. In the prisoners' case, some ready-made spaces already existed, and to make it much easier, the prisoners were already gathered together more or less in the same space. However, it was very difficult to arrange for ways to gather the parents together at the same time. At first we had our regular Program Committee meetings, which helped give the process some organizational basis, but most of the group process actually took place over the telephone. This happened to be a comfortable and accessible space for dialogue to occur, given that we live in the suburbs, and informal physical common spaces are very difficult to find. Chapter 8 details some of the other kinds of spaces I created for this work.

Allowing the Definition of the Research Problem to Be Negotiated and Transformed by the Group Process

In the generalized small-group emancipatory research model, choosing a research topic is itself an important part of the group process. From my experience, if one tries to enter a conversation in progress about a particular aspect of struggle in a local situation, the topic presents itself in a general way through conversation. But for the academic to focus on a particular aspect of the general problem is difficult, keeping in mind the importance of democratizing the research process. Nevertheless, I think it is important for the academy-trained critical researcher to take some leadership in helping the group name and define the problem more narrowly than, for example, "These schools are just horrible, they always have been, and they always will be." Exercising this leadership requires a kind of balancing act. It is important to listen carefully to what others are talking about, rely on one's own direct experiences in the situation, and to operate from sociological knowledge in helping to define the problem. I discuss examples of these issues in the chapters about the prisoners' and parents' groups.

The point is to help the group define the research topic in a way that flows from its needs to address its oppression and yet allows for more systematic investigation. My role included listening and trying to articulate the critical knowledge the group already had in connection with the internalized ideology the group also expresses. I also offered tentative formulations of the problem that reflected sociological insights--tentative, to facilitate the process of defining the topic

without imposing my own definition of the problem on the group. In my experience, the process of coming to the definition of the problem involves "critical theorizing" and comprises a very valuable part of the research process that would be lost if the researcher came into the situation with a ready-made problem definition (especially a narrow one).

Proposing a narrow definition of the problem tends to suppress the group's critical theorizing process in coming to a definition. By contrast, allowing the disadvantaged group considerable power over the definition of its problems promotes the possibility of creating a theory about the power relations at hand that reflects the genuine complexity of those relations as they affect the group in everyday life. Although the group may have great difficulty (who wouldn't?) in understanding all the power relations affecting it in a given situation, and although the theory the group "produces" about these relations may not be coherent and internally consistent, it has the advantage of looking at the many dimensions of the problem from actual experience through collective dialogue.

A group's definition of its problems may undergo many transformations, and several topics may be on the table at once, all undergoing transformations. This may seem frustrating to an academic researcher trying to write research on a predetermined subject, but this kind of apparent incoherence may be necessary for the group's understanding to progress. It may be possible in an emancipatory participatory research group for an academic research to gain the group's cooperation to do research on a topic of sociological interest to the academic researcher, although

I did not try to do this. Such research would be more consistent with democratizing the research process if it benefited the group in some way. The academic literature reviewed in Chapter 11 gives several suggestions for ways a researcher might go about doing more specialized research on a more narrowly defined topic with a group.

Grounding the Research First in the Standpoint of the Group, but Bringing Other Perspectives into the Process

Producing emancipatory critical knowledge that is relevant to a group's needs begins with grounding the research standpoint first in the group's own experiences. However, the researcher can bring other perspectives into view that throw light on the group's analysis. (Sometimes these perspectives represent other standpoints, or positions from which social reality is viewed, whereas at other times, they simply represent different views of reality that can be gotten from a similar standpoint.) These different perspectives or standpoints can come from the researcher's own different experience of the same situation or other experiences from other situations, or from sociological research and theory. They can also come from others who can be integrated into the process. I found that bringing the professors from Howard University to the PTA program, bringing parents from other schools into the parent network, and introducing academic research on tracking were particularly helpful in providing additional perspectives to bear on the problem at hand.

The group's own standpoint attempts to grasp knowledge that can be viewed from their position within struggle, from the perspective of disadvantage. The

prisoners showed that the field of vision that is taken into account from an oppressed standpoint goes both "up" and "down": up at social structural arrangements as they are expressed in institutional rules and norms, and down at group members in both terms of psychological (consciousness) and material reality (the imprints the social structure has left on their material reality).

Using Everyday Discourse

Rather than using technical and specialized discourse, it is important to carry out conversation using everyday discourse. Often it is useful to bring sociological concepts into the conversation, but if they can be "translated" into everyday language, they are more easily absorbed, and do not create distance between the researcher with specialized academic knowledge and the other people in the group. There are exceptions to this guide, however; for example, some people in the group may themselves have specialized knowledge that overlaps sociological knowledge. Furthermore, there may be people in the group (as was the case in the parents' network) who have specialized knowledge in other areas that can be brought to bear on the situation. At those times, it may be important to learn the specialized language of the other participants. For example, some of the parents in the PTA were teachers or school administrators in other school systems, and they used specialized language about educational programs and such that our group used to help understand our own problematic school situation.

Using Indigenous Epistemological Systems, but Incorporating Other Epistemologies

Everyday friendship-based dialogue about everyday-life issues comprises the backbone for the epistemological system of the generalized small-group emancipatory participatory research process. Viewing, using and developing everyday conversational dialogue as an indigenous epistemological system for generating, testing, and validating knowledge democratizes knowledge production by allowing more people into the knowledge production process who already have the necessary tools to participate. Different groups probably have somewhat different epistemological systems within their forms of dialogue; Collins (1990) suggests some criteria African-American women have for conversation-based epistemology, and Code (1991) suggests others for women (presumably in general). My experience suggests that there were indeed differences between the Latino men's and African-American parents conversation-based epistemologies. The methods of determining truth, in particular, seemed to differ: for example, the Latino men confronted each other in a more adversarial way than did the African-American women to determine the truth of another's statement.

While friendship-based critical conversational dialogue provides the underlying epistemological system for small group-based emancipatory participatory research, other epistemologies come into the process as well: an epistemology of self-reflection based in psychological models of group therapy; an epistemology based in marxist theory in which consciousness and material conditions are understood to be dialectically related through praxis; and standard scientific epistemology (e.g.,

positivism).

Kinds of Emancipatory Knowledge Produced

As in the prisoners' process, the generalized small group model for emancipatory participatory research emphasizes the generation of knowledge that is first of all useful for, and in the interest of the disadvantaged grassroots group producing the knowledge. A wide variety of such knowledge can be produced including various kinds of self-knowledge (one's skills, strengths, negative feelings about oneself, and the discovery of having internalized some of society's ideologies that devalue oneself); knowledge indicating evidence of oppression and inequality (statistical baseline data, anecdotal data, etc.); knowledge about the mechanisms of oppression (embedded in institutional policies, interpersonal relations, and individual consciousness); and knowledge representing basic educational (including literacy) skills (in this research praxis, the appropriation of knowledge is closely associated with producing knowledge; see the discussion of Freire's method in Chapter 11). The knowledge produced consisted both of how to do things and how to understand things. Guiding the knowledge production process is a goal to understand the nature of power relations. Though the knowledge production process emphasizes knowledge useful for the group itself, the knowledge produced may often be useful to others, and contribute to critical theory.

Creating Knowledge Products From the Group's Research

Several kinds of research products can be produced by the group or sometimes by the researcher for the group's use. These products, if they take a written form (they do not necessarily have to), may consist for example of agendas for future discussion that summarize the existing state of the group's thinking at the time, or letters to third parties that summarize the group's theory. The prisoners used a tape recording of a discussion (about "waiting", in Chapter 6) as a research product which they then used as data to further analyze. A prominent characteristic of knowledge products in the generalized small-group model is their use as data; the knowledge-producing process is viewed as an ongoing dialectical process, which it can afford to be if there are no outside agencies waiting, for example, for a report.

Accessibility of Research Products Produced by Social Scientists

One of the roles of the researcher working with the group is to identify areas of academy-based critical research or theory that might be useful for the group's process, and to find ways to make them available. In my experience, I rarely introduced these sociological theories or studies in their original written form into the research process (although I did so with some surprising results in one case in the parents' process, as described in Chapter 8). For the most part, I simply read up in the areas relevant to the problem at hand, and talked about them in my conversations with people. (For me this meant becoming familiar with theories about the reproduction of race and class through schooling, ethnographic studies documenting various aspects of this process, and various sociological accounts and theories about

how racism and class relations are institutionalized in schools.) Occasionally I made somewhat more formal and traditional presentations to groups that included a review of these theories and studies.

Bringing Social Theory into Grassroots Groups' Dialogue

Bringing sociological theory into the group dialogue process, and testing it in practice makes it possible for the group to critique academic research and theory from its own experiences. It was through this process that the parents' group modified existing theories about how race and class relations are reproduced through schooling. The critical academic intellectual working with the group can bring theory to the group and being its lay critiques and alternative models into dialogue with critical academic theories in the literature.

The Generalized Small-Group Praxis as a Flexible Framework

My experience with two small groups engaged in emancipatory participatory research praxis suggests that such groups may find almost innumerable ways to develop such a praxis. The processes they invent are highly subject to their identities and conditions, and to ongoing elaboration and critique as a function of changes that might result from their interactions with academic models or their efforts to develop their praxis in interaction with the conditions they seek to change. Within the general framework of the model, groups may find their own ways to develop knowledge,

including knowledge new to them but already familiar to others--for emancipatory purposes, knowledge "rediscovered" by a group for its own needs may be as valuable or more valuable than knowledge delivered by academics.

The generalized small-group emancipatory participatory research model produces successive sub-categories of knowledge--boxes within boxes, if you will. For example, the emancipatory knowledge such a group might produce includes sub-categories such as "practical knowledge" and "self-knowledge." Practical knowledge for struggle in turn consists of several sub-categories, such as knowledge about the external resources available to the group in its struggle and knowledge about the specific institutional mechanisms reproducing the form of oppression the group is resisting. Within the sub-sub-category of knowledge about available resources, other categories emerge--for example, in the prison, knowledge about which of the institutional personnel have been most helpful to the group. Within that smaller category, the prisoners would have "checked out" whether the helpful institutional personnel could be trusted, perhaps by arranging for someone to try to persuade the person to bring in some contraband; if the person agreed to do it, he or she was not to be trusted; bringing in contraband could compromise the group's goals.

At these sub-category levels, different groups in different contexts are likely to find it best to creatively choose from and invent new aspects of the framework; this sort of flexibility is itself a major characteristic of the process. (It was the prisoners' intent that their process never be codified, because each group would need to invent its own emancipatory approach, given its particular circumstances.) The above

general list of characteristics should be sufficient as a flexible basis on which a group and a participating academic intellectual can create a tentative framework for emancipatory participatory research as a small-group process. The descriptions in the earlier chapters of the prisoners' and parents' models give many examples of the sub-categories that developed in those particular models. The level of detail provided here should be sufficient to provide the reader with some ideas about how various aspects can be elaborated or combined in new ways within the general framework.

The Contribution of Academic Literatures to the Praxis

The greatest contributions of the academic literatures to elaborating a small-group praxis probably lie in helping to expand on, or illustrate the importance of certain aspects of the framework. The literatures, together with my own concrete practice, create a dialogue that allows for comparisons, that generates many questions or problems, and that helps address them. The range of contributions becomes clearer in Chapters 10 and 11, but some examples are:

1. The group: Where are the possibilities for such a group to be located? For example, in my experience, both the prisoners' group and parents' groups were located both in quasi-institutional spaces (the Latino prisoners' organization and the PTA Program subcommittee) and in informal, extra-institutional spaces (the former prisoners' homes and the parents' telephone network). Freire used "culture circles", the women's movement of the 1970s gathered in consciousness raising groups, and so

forth. What are the various possibilities for initiating such a group? Can groups already in existence for other purposes function as emancipatory participatory research groups?

2. The academic intellectual's group membership: What are the various possibilities for an academic intellectual's relationship with a group? (It would not be possible for everyone to live in the "field" as I have.) What are the trade-offs of advantages and disadvantages for the academic researcher to be an indigenous member of the oppressed group?

3. The academic intellectual's contribution: What are the roles an academic might emphasize in a given situation: e.g., a clinical role emphasizing advocacy; a clinical role emphasizing the production of useful research results for the group; expertise in research methods to share with the group; knowledge of certain areas of substantive critical research; teaching basic education skills; facilitating the posing of critical questions in a rather formal pedagogical way; exchanging stories as a peer?

4. The nature of dialogue between the group and the academic intellectual: In what situations, if any, is it necessary for the academic intellectual to take an active leadership role in structuring the dialogue by posing the critical questions? To what extent should the academic intellectual have or express a preconceived idea about the nature of oppression that is being experienced by the group?

5. Academic theory: What are the possibilities for formal critical academic theory and research to enter the group's process? When is it effective for just one or two people in the group to become engaged with relevant social scientific theory and

research? Under what circumstances is it possible for the academic researcher/participant successfully present her/himself as a "whole person" that includes both the persona as social theorist and as friend?

6. Analysis of experience: In recounting experiences for collective critical investigation, what kind of experiences are most useful to examine?

7. Epistemology: What are the comparative advantages of various epistemologies in contributing to the group's emancipatory knowledge: e.g. action research (in which there is a deliberate manipulation of circumstances to see what happens); analysis of individuals' past experiences and history; gathering of empirical knowledge gained through positivist research methods?

8. Different forms of collaborative research: What are the various possibilities for research collaboration between an academic intellectual and an oppressed group?

Toward a Broader Emancipatory Praxis

My journey back and forth between practicing small emancipatory groups and critical academic literatures has led me to envision a larger emancipatory praxis in which many groups and literatures can participate. I outline this larger praxis in more detail in Chapter 12. I now see emancipatory participatory research not only as a small group research and social transformation process in which the praxis of an academic intellectual is centered around working with a concrete group. In a broader

formulation of the concept, emancipatory participatory research is a conceptual umbrella for a number of theoretical and practical approaches to research, drawn from several different disciplines, sub-disciplines and perspectives on power. All of these seek knowledge and emancipation from oppressive conditions, each represents an internal critique of power from its own groundings, and each incorporates many of the characteristics of the emancipatory participatory research process described above. To formulate this broader project, I draw on three major concepts: praxis, dialogue, and epistemic communities. The project is essentially to create a dialogue at the theoretical level among differently positioned epistemic communities.

In this broader project, the concept of emancipatory participatory research refers to a methodology for social science that is consistent with, and contributes to democratic process. Within this formulation, the small group-based emancipatory participatory research framework plays a major part by realizing some of the potential of grassroots popular intellectuals to produce emancipatory knowledge and participate in democratic social change movements in ways that increase both the democratization of knowledge and the democratization of social relations. But in addition, the larger project brings small groups engaged in emancipatory participatory research praxis into dialogue with other epistemic communities about their common project.

Each small group and each academic literature represents its own epistemic community with its own formulation of the relationship between academic intellectuals and struggle. Each has its own definition of the emancipatory project at hand, stated in terms of the discourse of its own discipline or orientation. For example, the

anthropological fieldwork literature seeks to "reverse the machinery" of anthropology by democratizing the research process in certain ways, especially by adjusting the outside researcher's role, and the anthropologists from that literature are mainly concerned with addressing the structure of class and colonial relations of domination. Brian Fay (1987) attempts to re-define critical theory as a critical social science by creating some new principles that would define such a critical social science. His project is consistent in many ways with the anthropologists', but addresses many of the same problems from a different epistemological discourse--the philosophy of science. Similarly, feminist methodology seeks to make social science methodology more responsive to the needs of women, and provides several examples of approaches that address this problem. However, most feminist approaches are concerned mainly with patriarchy as the major form of oppression.

My larger project would leave intact the individual projects each of these approaches has for itself, yet bring them under the umbrella of a theoretical framework for emancipatory participatory research so that a dialogue grounded in the themes emerging from the generalized small-group emancipatory participatory research framework might provide an ongoing process of critique, counter-critique, and elaboration at the theoretical level. In this way, the epistemic communities would continue to develop from their own grounds, guided by their own definitions of their projects, but each epistemic community could provide valuable insights and critique to others if an overall project can be articulated that would reasonably bring these approaches into dialogue with each other. As Chapters 10 and 11 show, much in

these literatures does indeed share a common project that might fit under the proposed umbrella. It is, after all, these literatures that helped me elaborate the generalized small-group version of the emancipatory participatory research project.

Chapter 12 describes in more depth this broader model for emancipatory participatory research. It aims at creating a dialogue of models that would 1) work to develop a critical social science in which various forms of emancipatory praxis by trained academic intellectuals work in conjunction with oppressed groups in the production of better emancipatory theory and more effective social change; 2) promote cognitive democracy while working toward a more fully participatory and substantively democratic political and economic democracy; 3) work toward a non-"totalizing" theory of domination that takes into account multiple sources of domination operating at both the macro and micro-levels of society and that grounds analysis in dominated groups' everyday experiences of oppression; 4) elaborate a theory of emancipatory praxis involving research and avoiding as much as possible the reproduction of forms of domination through its methodologies; 5) develop knowledge through a dialogue of standpoints and epistemic communities; and 6) develop a theory of knowledge based on a dialogue of epistemologies, thereby enriching the bases for producing knowledge, legitimating the epistemologies and epistemic communities of dominated groups on the margins, acknowledging the political embeddedness of all epistemologies, and providing multiple sources for a critique of objectivity.

A Link to Critical Academic Literatures

The following chapters link the generalized small-group emancipatory participatory research model to a set of academic literatures that engage with issues of oppression and emancipation and that can potentially participate in the larger project of dialogue between academic models and forms of praxis developed by groups like the prisoners' and parents'. As already noted, the generalized small-group model extends the prisoners' model by finding a more prominent place for the participation of academic intellectuals and the inclusion of relevant academy-based critical discourse. It thus begins to build a bridge between the prisoners' model of praxis and an academic intellectual's emancipatory praxis. It engages many issues of concern to practicing academic intellectuals, such as what kinds of relationships with marginalized grassroots groups might contribute to better emancipatory theory and practice. Because it engages with the work of academic intellectuals who are concerned with emancipatory theory and practice, the framework can be elaborated and critiqued by other emancipatory academic models for research and education.

Before discussing the academic models, however, it is important to note that the entire dialogue I am attempting to encourage rests on assumptions called into question by postmodern critique. The following discussion identifies these aspects of postmodern critique and addresses the issues they raise.

POSTMODERN CRITIQUE: A CHALLENGE TO THE PROJECT OF EMANCIPATORY PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Developing an emancipatory participatory framework at all, and doing so by engaging in a dialogue involving academic intellectuals and grassroots groups working for emancipation, may seem an odd enterprise coming at the present moment in intellectual history, in which postmodern critique has emerged as a prominent theme. It is difficult to summarize postmodern critiques, as they cover so much ground and are very different from each other. For a more comprehensive discussion of postmodernism, see, for example Harvey (1989) and Turner (1990). By "postmodern," I refer to the "larger cultural shifts of a post-industrial, post-colonial era" (Lather, 1991, p. 4) that have emerged in contrast to the "modern" condition in which "... science... legitimates itself... making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative... such as the emancipation of the rational or working subject" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 108); by postmodern critiques or discourses, I mean those that are "deconstructive in that they seek to distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary Western culture" (Flax, 1990, p. 41). By these deconstructions, postmodern critique makes several aspects of an emancipatory project and emancipatory praxis seem problematic, yet it clears a space on which an emancipatory praxis might reconstruct concepts of power, identity, and knowledge. I touch here on only a few aspects of postmodern critique,

to identify some legitimate problems it raises about the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework for praxis and to begin to show how such a framework and praxis might address the problems.

Problems Raised by Postmodernist Critique

A list of some problems raised by postmodern critique helps demonstrate the relevance of the development of the emancipatory praxis framework to that critique. I wish to address a critique, or rather, several overlapping critiques, put forward by theorists in the postmodernist tradition. It is a critique: 1) of the possibility of emancipation given that, among other things, many forms of domination exist that have not been adequately explored and many purportedly emancipatory methods are embedded in systems of domination which inadvertently perpetuate rather than eradicate oppression; 2) of existing theories of power as "totalizing" or "essentializing," and therefore distorted or inadequate; 3) of the Enlightenment idea that science and reason can be usefully brought to bear on eradicating human oppression; 4) of standard epistemologies that wrongly confer cognitive authority on those from dominant groups participating in the dominant discourse(s); 5) of existing scientific assumptions, definitions, and methods concerning the nature of objectivity; 6) of emancipatory movements that keep marginalized minorities from forming their own epistemic communities and developing the terms of their own discourse, and thus from finding their voices and emerging forcefully; 7) of the possibility of attributing

epistemic privilege or cognitive authority to marginalized groups when such groups have conflicting experiences and perspectives, and 8) of the position of academic intellectuals vis-a-vis marginalized groups. I discuss these critiques below, though not point by point. My purpose is to partially situate the framework for emancipatory participatory research in the context of current intellectual history, to show how its assumptions and methods might be questioned by contemporary critique and what its contribution might be to resolving the dilemmas postmodern theory raises.

The Problem of Enlightenment Assumptions Underlying Emancipatory Theory

The most basic of these critiques in terms of the present project is, of course, the critique of the possibility of emancipation. The prisoners', the parents', and many academic intellectuals' models for emancipatory participatory research and education praxis assume quite unproblematically the possibility of the emancipatory project at hand. Postmodern critique forces one to look more carefully at problems with the modernist Enlightenment assumptions that underlie emancipatory theory. As Lather (1991, p. 87) states, postmodernism challenges the modernist Enlightenment "central assumption of human capacity to shape ourselves and our worlds." Flax summarizes the Enlightenment beliefs that underlie emancipatory theory and that postmodern critique throws into doubt: the assumption of "the existence of a stable, coherent self"; the assumption that "reason and its 'science'--philosophy--can provide an objective, reliable, and universal foundation for knowledge;" the beliefs that "the knowledge...will represent something real and unchanging (universal)...", that

"reason itself has transcendental and universal qualities...", that "...the rules that are right for me as a rational being will necessarily be right for all other such beings...", that "grounding claims to authority in reason" can overcome "the conflicts between truth, knowledge, and power," that "science...is the paradigm for all true knowledge," that "science is neutral in its methods and contents but socially beneficial in its results," and that "language is in some sense transparent...(that)...objects are not linguistically (or socially) constructed..." (Flax, 1990, pp. 41-42).

The Deconstruction of "Totalizing" and "Essentializing" Theories of Power

Postmodernist critics have asserted that broad theories of power, including emancipatory theories and strategies based on them, have been blind to their own dominating tendencies (Sawicki, 1991). For example, Giroux, quoting Robert Young, writes, that "dominant and radical theories 'have themselves been implicated in the long history of European colonialism...and...continue to determine both the institutional conditions of knowledge as well as the terms of contemporary institutional practices...'" (Giroux, 1992, p. 20). "They have often unwittingly imitated the colonial model of erasing the complexity, complicity, diverse agents, and multiple situations that constitute the enclaves of colonial/hegemonic discourse and practice" (p. 20). Postmodern critique has revealed the "totalizing" or "universalizing" tendencies of existing theories of power. Theories, "especially Marxism, Hegelianism, Christianity, and any other philosophy of history based on notions of causality and all-encompassing global resolutions regarding human destiny"

are referred to as "totalizing" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, p. 68) or "universalizing" (Lather, 1991, p. 27). By attending to a particular form or forms of domination that emphasize a central source of power, other perhaps less visible and more diffuse forms of domination are ignored, and people's experiences are incorrectly "essentialized". The criticism that "totalizing" theories "essentialize" women's experiences has come especially strongly from non-white feminists, who feel their voices have been suppressed within an overarching analysis that reduces women's oppressions to that by patriarchy. For example, Di Stefano notes that "for some writers, gender is no more and perhaps not even as basic as poverty, class, ethnicity, race, sexual identity, and age, in the lives of women who feel less divided from men as a group than, for example, from white or bourgeois or Anglo or heterosexual men and women" (Di Stefano, 1990, p. 65, referring to Hooks, 1984; Jordan, 1981, and Lorde, 1984). The corrective has been the call for multiple voices from the margins to emerge more prominently in the discourse about resistance and domination. Such voices from the margins can show the many ways that systems of oppression affect groups in different ways depending on the specific contexts at hand; the complex interactions of circumstances that make some sources of oppression more potent than others, other factors being equal.

The Deconstruction of Identity

This postmodern critique of theories of power as being "totalizing" is closely associated with the deconstruction of traditional concepts of subjectivity and identity,

especially the subjectivities formed by class, race, and gender oppression. As Bar On notes, Foucault and other postmodern theorists propose that "power has multiple and not necessarily systemically related forms..." (Bar On, 1993, p. 88). In addition, the focus on relations of power in postmodern critique moves away from large groups (classes) and toward individuals (Hartsock, 1990). Accordingly, the possibilities for subjectivities and group identities formed by understandings of oppression based in class analysis, patriarchy, racism, ethnocentrism, heterosexuality, etc. are undermined by postmodern theory's attack on such "central" sources of domination. This has caused a crisis for theorizing how the formation of subjectivities required for effective resistance might occur, if not at the "centers" formed by major systems of oppression. Rather than collective voices, multiple voices representing multiple identities and subjectivities subdivided into smaller and smaller subgroups are now struggling to be heard, having been suppressed by traditional movements of resistance that emphasized the common elements of oppression rather than the differences. The future of broad-based social movements based on widely shared subjectivities such as class, race, gender, or national identity is made problematic by these theoretical innovations; although the critique of the "totalizing" effects of major theories of oppression is well taken, it is far from clear how resistance to the sources of power responsible for common elements in peoples' oppressions can be mobilized if the emphasis is on seeing power as multi-centered, and subjectivities partial and fragmented.

The Lack of Method for Reconciling Multiple Claims for Autonomy in the Postmodern Condition

In critiquing this postmodernist critique, Nancy Hartsock notes that:

> it seems highly suspicious that it is at the precise moment when so many groups have been engaged in 'nationalisms' which involve redefinitions of the marginalized Others that suspicions emerge about the nature of the 'subject', about the possibilities for a general theory which can describe the world, about historical 'progress.' Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be theorized" (Hartsock, 1990, p. 165).

In creating an emancipatory participatory research framework, it is important to consider how power might be theorized in a way that simultaneously acknowledges various sources of power in a given situation, so that people's lived experiences of power relations might be theorized in ways that accurately parallel those experiences without diminishing variations of experience within and between groups. In addition, the tension between the creation of individual and collective subjectivities of resistance must be taken into account in such a way that effective resistance can be mounted to the sources of power responsible for collectively experienced oppression, but that gives expression to, and does not suppress, individual and small-group experiences of sub-oppressions. Yet, the problems the postmodernist critics theorize seem to lie at a great distance from the living concerns of the marginalized groups, and even from the interactions between academic intellectuals and such groups. In contrast to the difficulties the postmodernists theorize, the prisoners' and parents' models for emancipatory participatory research situate the analysis of power in a discourse and a

concrete praxis of struggle which allow differences as well as commonalities of experience to emerge. The formation of subjectivities takes place within a fairly flexible framework for the understanding of power relations which allows both variations and commonalities to emerge.

Sawicki suggests that we should take Foucault's critique not so much as a rejection of existing theories of power, leaving a vacuum, but as an opportunity to expand our theories of power. She asserts that "Foucault expands the domain of the political to include a heterogeneous ensemble of power relations operating at the microlevel of society.... the practical implication of his model is that resistance must be carried out in local struggles against the many forms of power exercised at the everyday level of social relations" (Sawicki, 1991, p. 23). In Sawicki's analysis, the important contribution Foucault makes to a theory of power is to focus attention on a "bottom-up" analysis of power "to show how power relations at the microlevel of society make possible certain global effects of domination, such as class power and patriarchy" (p. 23). She cites this passage:

> One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been--and continue to be--invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by even more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination. It is not that this global domination extends itself right to the base in a plurality of repercussions (Foucault, 1980a, p. 122).

Such "bottom-up" theories of power--those building from the direct experiences of people at the margins--represent the emergence of subjugated knowledges into mainstream discourse. The production of subjugated knowledges

from the margins appears to provide a needed correction for the inherent dominating tendencies of "totalizing" theories of power and for the discourse of expertise. Such subjugated knowledges might provide the content for a counter-hegemonic discourse. Yet, a set of problems is posed by this correction as well: Which marginalized discourse or discourses should be legitimated over others? Who should/could determine a process to choose? These questions are especially problematic if the marginalized discourses and subjugated knowledges are, as Foucault characterizes them, "disordered", "fragmentary," and lacking "autonomous life" (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 81, 85-86, quoted by Hartsock, 1990). Postmodernist critiques on the one hand discredit claims made by those (often social scientists) participating in the "discourse of expertise," and on the other, consider subjugated knowledges as "disordered", "fragmentary", and at times contradictory. How is a "bottom up" theory of power relying on the analysis of "infinitesimal mechanisms" at the "everyday level of social relations" to be reconciled with "top-down" theories of power in which the sources of power are understood to be emanating from the "top" downward? How are local struggles against local conditions to be connected with struggles to change power relations at the "top"?

The strong emphasis on deconstruction has reinforced a trend within postmodernist theory to give theoretical justification for subjugated groups to speak on their own, in their own voices, in their own discourses, from the basis of their own experiences, and defining their identities and subjectivities unmediated as much as possible by dominant discourses, theories of power, and the cognitive authority of

outside experts.

This theoretical development generates contradictions parallel to those of nationalist movements within multiethnic states or arguments for individual advancement within subjugated classes. Autonomy of the individuals or smaller groups is promoted as the most valued goal, while vision and method are lacking for how multiple autonomous claims might be reconciled. (At the level of knowledge, these would represent epistemological claims for ever-fragmenting communities of knowers; at the level of politics, they might represent claims of ethnic groups for national self-determination within a multiethnic society.) Any "new society" that emerges from such extreme autonomy movements would consist of a collection of separatisms rather than unity and heterogeneous community, even among subjugated groups. In this vision of cognitive (or geopolitical) terrain, the primary concern is that each micro-group assert the freedom to voice its own identity and its own perspective in its own special discourse, asserting its own cognitive authority against other identities, perspectives, and discourses rather than engaging in dialogue with other such groups in search of a mutually shared discourse, a complexly held overlapping set of identities, and so forth. In this vision, no priority is given to the development of spaces, contexts, or structures for dialogue to encourage mutually shared understandings of oppression, complex and overlapping subjectivities, and a cooperative movement of resistance aimed at undermining various sources and mechanisms of power. The role intellectuals might play in participating with subjugated groups in promoting more complexly defined definitions of oppression,

identity, and movements of resistance is undertheorized by postmodern critique.

An emancipatory participatory research praxis that unites the praxis of academic theorist/intellectuals with that of marginalized grassroots groups would seem to hold some promise for working toward the resolution of these problems. The prisoners' model provides for both "bottom-up" and "top-down" theories of power to be employed and developed simultaneously. Knowledge produced in praxis by grassroots groups working with academic intellectuals takes advantage of a favorable context for holding in tension and incorporating the discourse of expertise with the discourse of everyday life. The prisoners' and (especially) the parents' models offer ways to avoid the dichotomy of bottom-up or top-down by placing the theorizing of power squarely in the praxis of everyday life and in the dialogue of academic intellectuals with grassroots groups.[3]

The Deconstruction of Epistemology

Working in a deconstructionist mode, some feminist philosophers have noted, and perhaps provoked, "upheavals in epistemology" (Code, 1993, p. 37) by revealing the political embeddedness of knowledge production at the level of the very definitions of knowledge. These feminist philosophers, in deconstructing traditional epistemology and constructing a feminist epistemology, have mounted a challenge to the epistemological assumptions of traditional philosophy. Alcoff and Potter (1993) note that postmodernist feminist critique has questioned "the nature of knowledge itself, epistemic agency, justification, objectivity, and whether and how epistemology

should be naturalized" (p. 1). Dalmiya and Alcoff (1993) write of "epistemic discrimination," by which they mean that women's knowledge has not been legitimated because it does not meet "traditional definitions of knowledge and...requirements for justification" (p. 217). In a political/epistemological analysis contrasting physicians' knowledge of childbirth with midwives' knowledge, Dalmiya and Alcoff show that midwives' method for constructing knowledge depended heavily on their own embodied experience of childbirth and on the process of empathizing with women they assisted going through labor, rather than on codified professional obstetric knowledge. Midwives' knowledge was considered to be "hearsay" rather than true knowledge because, according to Dalmiya and Alcoff, it was transmitted orally, was gained through direct and empathic experience, and was unrecorded, undocumented, and unauthorized (not legitimated by the medical establishment). The midwives were not institutionally trained (nor legitimated as "experts"), although clearly they possessed valuable knowledge the professional male obstetricians did not have, such as how to turn the baby in the womb.

The Politics of Epistemology. These and other aspects of the deconstruction of traditional epistemology have led some feminist theorists to acknowledge that the advancement of knowledge claims is a political act as well as an epistemological one (Code, 1991). They note that women's "ways of knowing" (Belenky et al., 1986) have been devalued in the dominant forms of discourse, and call women to resist "epistemic oppression" (Code, 1991, p. 218) and work for "epistemic empowerment"

(p. 220). They now understand the effort to deconstruct traditional epistemology and replace it with a feminist alternative to be a political project to be integrated with other parts of the feminist movement; they understand the task of reconstructing epistemology as part of the project of freeing women from oppression.

Such feminist critiques have supported attempts to radically reconceptualize epistemology. Standpoint theory, which was initially formulated before the current attention to postmodernist critique and continues to be reformulated in light of it, has contributed greatly to this reconceptualization. The standpoint approach presented a more radical alternative to what Harding has called "spontaneous feminist empiricism", referring to the "'spontaneous consciousness' of feminist researchers in biology and the social sciences who were trying to explain what was and what wasn't different about their research process in comparison with the standard procedures in their field" (Harding, 1993, p. 51). "Spontaneous feminist empiricism" was an attempt to use existing scientific methods more rigorously to ferret out sexism from research, whereas standpoint epistemology holds that "stronger standards (are required) for 'good method'...to maximize objectivity" (Harding, p. 52). As Harding relates, feminist standpoint epistemology is built on Hegel's theory of the master/slave relationship from which Marx's epistemology was itself developed, wherein the "standpoint of the proletariat" was theorized as the best position from which to understand class relations. In contrast to the standpoint of the advantaged classes, that of the dominated class or classes provides the "problems to be explained or research agendas" (Harding, p. 54), whereas the privileged situations of dominant

classes leave little incentive to "critically and systematically interrogate their advantaged social situation..."(p. 54). Elaborating the epistemological implications of the argument of Hartsock (1983a), who proposed that a feminist standpoint revealed truths concealed by both the dominant ideology and the proletarian standpoint proposed by Marx, Longino notes that:

> there is no one position from which value-free knowledge can be developed, but some positions are better than others. Standpoint epistemologies notice systematic distortions in description and analysis produced by those occupying social positions of power. Traditional Marxists identified the standpoint of the bourgeoisie as producing such distortions whereas feminists have identified the standpoint of men...as equally distorting...(B)y valorizing the perspectives uniquely available to those who are socially disadvantaged, standpoint theorists turn the table on traditional epistemology; the ideal epistemic agent is not an unconditioned subject, but the subject conditioned by the social experiences of oppression. The powerless are those with epistemic legitimacy (Longino, 1993, p. 106).

Standpoint theory suggests the importance of starting analysis from the experiences and lives of dominated groups. It disputes the possibility of the "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986). Feminist standpoint theory, however, has also been a focus of postmodern critique. Black feminists such as bell hooks (1989) have shown the essentializing tendencies of any concept of a "feminist standpoint". A quagmire of questions has emerged in the feminist debate over the related problems of standpoint and epistemic privilege in the face of recognition that many standpoints "from below" are competing for legitimacy to resist dominant hegemonic views reflecting existing class, race, gender, ethnic, heterosexual, and other perspectives of domination. In discussing the problem of how to address this very complex set of questions, Harding (1993) advocates paying close attention to and extending Collins'

(1990) suggestion for a "collaborative enterprise with Black women at the center of a community based on coalitions among autonomous groups" (Collins, 1990, p. 36).

The debate about the limits and possibilities of standpoint theory is continuing full force, at least in the feminist literature. Unfortunately, the issues surrounding standpoint epistemology have not yet been fully developed from a primary grounding in the perspectives of class, or, more pertinent to my work with the parents, racism. Women are understandably at the center of feminist theory, and the feminist perspective serves as the primary grounding of this debate about epistemology and power, with race, class, and other forms of domination understood as cross-cutting categories.

Nevertheless, standpoint theory contributes to the development of an alternate epistemology relevant in many ways to the development of a framework for emancipatory participatory research. Harding summarizes the differences between the dominant empirical scientific paradigm and standpoint epistemology (as she defines it) by the following four observations. First, the subjects of standpoint epistemology are "embodied and visible, because the lives from which thought has started are always present and visible in the results of that thought", whereas in empiricism, "the subject of knowledge is disembodied or invisible..." Second, standpoint epistemology considers the objects of knowledge to be socially constructed in that the meanings the objects have for those studying them are shaped by the same social forces that shape the observer/scientists. Third, the subjects of knowledge are considered to be communities, not individuals. And fourth, "the subjects/agents of knowledge for

feminist standpoint theory are multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory or incoherent, not unitary, homogeneous, and coherent as they are for empiricist epistemology" (Harding, 1993, p. 65).

Possibilities Raised by Postmodern Critique

The feminist epistemological critiques that acknowledge the political nature of knowledge production serve to validate the prisoners' and parents' models for producing knowledge. The emancipatory participatory research framework, like these critiques, assumes the epistemic legitimacy of the view from "below." Like the postmodern critiques and standpoint epistemology, it values theorizing from embodied experience, from a social-constructionist perspective, as epistemic communities rather than as individuals, and in ways that acknowledge the "multiple, heterogeneous," etc. nature of the subjects of knowledge.

The development of an emancipatory participatory research framework can benefit from and contribute to the deconstruction of traditional epistemology and the reconstruction of an alternative approach to knowledge production. This reconstruction would recognize the political relations involved in knowledge production at the deepest level of epistemological assumptions, rather than ignoring them as in the "view from nowhere". An analysis of power relations would proceed in a "bottom-up" way from the discourse, standpoints, and experiences of knowledge producers at the "margins", but also in "top-down" fashion; these two directions of

analysis proceed in dialectical tension with each other. Differences of experiences of power relations within and between groups would not be "essentialized", but examined empirically in a dialogue among different standpoints and fields of view so that the subjugated knowledges representing each group's or sub-group's picture of reality is not understood to be the whole and eternal truth, but the partial and tentative truth.

Reconstructing Objectivity

The postmodern critique of objectivity is of special interest to the development of an emancipatory participatory research praxis. This critique is complex, and can only be discussed in a very superficial way here. Nevertheless, much of the postmodern critique of objectivity overlaps the issues discussed above. In a statement indicating the depth of the postmodern critique of objectivity, Nicholson writes,

> Postmodernists have gone beyond earlier historicist claims about the inevitable 'situatedness' of human thought within culture to focus on the very criteria by which claims to knowledge are legitimized...The more radical move in the postmodern turn was to claim that the very criteria demarcating the true and the false, as well as such related distinctions as science and myth or fact and superstition, were internal to the traditions of modernity, and could not be legitimized outside of those traditions. Moreover, it was argued that the very development and use of such criteria, as well as their extension to ever wider domains, had to be described as representing the growth and development of specific 'regimes of power' (Nicholson, 1990, pp. 3-4).

The nature of the connections between epistemology, power, and the definition of objectivity are becoming ever more exposed. Starting from an analysis of knowledge as socially constructed,[4] feminists have shown that traditional epistemology has supported elites' cognitive authority (Addelson, 1993), and have

emphasized the importance of attending to the problem of power with regard to who makes epistemic decisions (Alcoff and Potter, 1993). The relationships among epistemology, power, and the definition of objectivity address the political/epistemological nexus of who makes public knowledge.

The development of an emancipatory participatory research framework acknowledges the politics of knowledge production as noted in the literature, extending to the very definition of science and objectivity. The framework goes beyond theorizing about these power relations, however, by observing and dealing with them in active praxis where they are kept in dialectical tension with each other. The struggle to define objectivity by entertaining the different and sometimes contradictory claims of "top-down" theories and "bottom-up" theories, of academic intellectuals and marginalized groups, of academic discourse and everyday "people's" discourse, and of different views from the margins, takes place in the context of the dialectics of a complex praxis. The goal is not to try to extract "objectivity" from the many different kinds of politics involved in the production of knowledge, but to make clear what the various kinds of politics are, and to provide a method for bringing them into the open and collectively constructing an objectivity in the face of competing standpoints.

Given the recent developments in the feminist philosophy of science, with the many shifts of understanding and uncertainty about the nature of science itself, who has and should have cognitive authority, the fragmentary and partial nature of "subjugated knowledges", etc., the search is on for a paradigm for knowledge

production that somehow takes into account these new concepts and critiques and avoids reproducing domination by promoting dogmatism or its own reification. How is this to be accomplished? Lynn Nelson (1993) builds a case for a theory of knowledge that regards the co-existence and interdependence of several paradigms of knowledge construction as necessary for the production of at least some kinds of knowledge. She uses the example of the development of the concept of the proton to illustrate this case; the proton would never have been "discovered" if interactions between different epistemological communities with different paradigms for producing knowledge had not taken place (Nelson, 1993, pp. 137-138). For example, both experiential knowledge and abstract scientific theory formed the basis for the "discovery".

Nelson's analysis lays the groundwork for a dialogue of epistemologies and epistemic communities as the basis for developing knowledge. She elaborates her theory by suggesting the importance of epistemic sub-communities as well, and of the importance of inter-relationships among these sub-communities for constructing knowledge:

> My arguments...require that we abandon individualism in all of its guises. They require a communal and more inclusive understanding of evidence than objectivist and relativist positions allow and, deeply related to this, the recognition of communities as the primary agents of epistemology; the primary generators and repositories of knowledge. (Nelson, 1993, p. 151)

Her analysis provides a positive way to conceptualize the dialectical tension between the seemingly opposing needs to collectivize and individualize experiences; to form collective and individual subjectivities; to avoid fragmentation's threat to solidarity.

The prisoners' and parents' framework similarly suggests the importance of building in more than one epistemological community and more than one epistemology for producing knowledge.

The Place of Academic Intellectuals in Emancipatory Movements

Postmodernist criticism problematizes the role of academic intellectuals who are embedded in institutions, forms of discourse, and forms of relationship with dominated groups that tend to perpetuate domination. Foucault (1977) suggested that the intellectual should "no longer ...place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness' and 'discourse'"(p. 208). Althusser among many others has criticized the role of intellectuals as unwittingly acting as the proponents of ruling ideologies.

Carl Boggs writes of the problematic location of transformative intellectuals in the postmodern crisis and the crisis in the development and content of oppositional discourse. He notes a

> resulting ideological void mak(ing) imperative a fundamental reconceptualization of the role of intellectuals in politics...(T)he explosion of new social movements..., the spread of grassroots dissidence in other parts of the world, (and) struggles for democratic empowerment...enlarge the strategic role of intellectuals while at the same time denying them Jacobin aspirations that were so often the hallmark of leftist politics (Boggs, 1993, p. 6).

The role of transformative intellectuals in transformative politics must change in several ways, according to Boggs. Among others, the public sphere within which

critical discourse takes place must be broadened such that there be an "engaged, critical, public intelligentsia" (p. 8). In his estimation, "the crisis...brings intellectuals closer to the local sphere where mobilization from above loses its rationale...it becomes commonplace for critical intellectuals to perform more distinctly local and organic functions tied in some way to social movements" (p. 10). Such intellectuals "are immersed in the world of collective action" (p.178) as they contribute in a "less structured" way to radical democratic politics. For Boggs, the "most imposing" dilemma today is "how to raise local struggles to the political terrain without resorting to a Jacobin 'solution' that establishes a false unity through bureaucratic-centralist control" (p. 183). He concludes that local participation, grassroots popular movements, and critical and organic intellectuals are central to the resolution of this dilemma, but does not propose how the formation of an "engaged critical public intelligentsia" might be linked to local participation and the reconceptualization of the role of critical intellectuals. Boggs does not directly address the problem of knowledge and epistemology, which is also integrally related to these other elements, and central to the dilemma he identifies.

Aronowitz and Giroux also raise the issue of the vanguardist position intellectuals have often assumed in emancipatory movements. They critique the role of academic intellectuals acting as "the emancipatory vanguard, an intellectual elite who have deemed themselves above history only to attempt to shape it through their pretensions to what Dick Hebdige (1986) calls an 'illusory Faustian omnipotence'" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, pp. 68-69).

Hartsock (1987) writes about the need to rethink the relationship of feminist academic intellectuals to activists. Her thoughts about this relationship parallel many earlier similar critiques made by progressive intellectuals, both inside and outside feminist theory (e.g. Roszak, 1967; Lynd, 1964; Ladner, 1973; Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982). What Hartsock adds to these pre-existing critiques is a perspective on how the problematic relationship between academic intellectuals and activists plays out in the postmodern context. She reports that the history of the relationship between activists and academic feminists has been one of "misunderstandings, failed expectations, and bitterness" (p. 187). Among the problems in this history, Hartsock mentions that neither side often understands what the other does, activists see academic intellectuals as privileged partly because activists work long hours for low wages while academic intellectuals have the summers off and have access to resources and privileges, activists question the relevance of academics' research, and academic intellectuals envy the comparative lack of institutional restraints activists work under. Her point, however, is the need for each practice to inform the other, the need for more collaboration. On the one hand, she notes that activism can benefit from theory by "help[ing] us understand which issues are shared by all women and which issues affect different women differently" (p. 188) as well as by providing insights and perspectives about the effectiveness and repercussions of activist efforts that can easily be lost when activists submerge themselves in the narrower perspective of day-to-day struggle. On the other, she notes the dangers of academic intellectuals being cut off from their links to activists:

> If we become cut off from the political perspectives provided by links with activists, we are more likely to be caught up in the questions that move other academics who have never shared our political commitments. We need to inquire of our research and teaching: Who is it for? To whom are we ultimately accountable? How can we recognize and assess the political stakes involved in seemingly irrelevant academic distinctions. What are the political issues on the agenda for feminist academics?" (Hartsock, 1987, p. 189)

Hartsock then speaks to the issue of creating a common space for such collaboration: "We need to develop our understanding of difference by creating a situation in which hitherto marginalized groups can name themselves, speak for themselves, and participate in defining the terms of interaction, a situation in which we can construct an understanding of the world that is sensitive to difference" (p. 189). Though she does not suggest specific contexts or forms of interaction between academic intellectuals and activists for this to occur, she critiques Rorty's view of culture as conversation as the kind of conversation whose participants are, in Rorty's words, "simply those whose paths through life have fallen together, united by civility rather than by a common goal, much less common ground" (Rorty, 1979, p. 318). Hartsock suggests that the conversation's participants should be those from the margins, to "build an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which can transform these margins into centers" (Hartsock, 1987, pp. 204-5). Furthermore, she asserts that we need a kind of conversation that is premised on an epistemological assumption that systematic knowledge is possible, that the material life conditions forming the context for the kinds of everyday knowledge by subjugated minorities provides the standpoint(s) necessary for understanding the world (forming the content of the conversation?), and that such a conversation assume an "engaged

vision," one which involves participating in efforts to change power relations (p. 205-6). The above argument calls for activists and academic intellectuals to engage in "conversation" to build a theory of the world from the margins, and to do so by grounding knowledge in emancipatory praxis.

Giroux, a critical educator, raises another issue about the location of intellectuals, namely their isolation within their own disciplinary boundaries, and suggests that critical pedagogy "decenter", becoming "border pedagogy". This would "...shift the emphasis of the knowledge/power relationship away from the limited emphasis on the mapping of domination toward the politically strategic issue of engaging ways in which knowledge can be remapped, reterritorialized, and decentered...(B)order pedagogy extends the meaning and importance of demystification as a central pedagogical task" (Giroux, 1992, p. 30). For Giroux, this "border pedagogy" is a method that allows for "ways in which those master narratives based on white, patriarchal, and class-specific versions of the world can be challenged critically and effectively deterritorialized" (p. 31) (presumably by students in concert with their teachers, critical educators). Giroux's understanding of the nature of the crisis brought about by the postmodern condition brings him to the insight that critical teaching is linked to the production of emancipatory knowledge in part through the process of students' critique:

> Postmodernism radicalizes the emancipatory possibilities of teaching and learning as part of a wider struggle for democratic public life and critical citizenship. It does this by refusing forms of knowledge and pedagogy wrapped in the legitimizing discourse of the sacred and priestly...and performing a critical reading on all scientific, cultural, and social texts as historical and political constructions....a political project that links the creation

of critical citizens to the development of radical democracy" (p. 134). Giroux's "border pedagogy" concept implies bringing transformative academic intellectuals out of "their classrooms or symposiums" and into contact with "broader social concerns that deeply affect how people live, work, and survive" (p. 82). It suggests that academics should help develop grassroots groups' capacities to become critical communities. It does not go so far, however, as to suggest what role academic intellectuals might take with respect to conflicting marginal perspectives outside of the role of educator; nor how people who are neither academics not "cultural workers" can take leading roles in transforming the broader critical discourse, including critical academic discourse; nor how academics and grassroots groups together can address concrete oppressions after "educators combine with other cultural workers engaged in public struggles in order to invent languages and provide critical and transformative spaces both in and out of schools that offer new opportunities for social movements to come together" (p. 82). Giroux's vision would take the educator out of the classroom, but does not cross the bridge from discourse to concrete action, to engagement with social movements in developing and using knowledge to attain their concrete objectives.

Like other recent work in the literatures of feminist epistemology and critical pedagogy, Giroux's response to postmodern critiques of the intellectual's role enters level of theoretical innovation, but not the level of concrete practice for intellectuals outside theory-building. Moving a step farther is Bonilla's (1994) statement on graduate and post-graduate training in Latino Studies, which addresses institutional

change. Bonilla notes "the breakdown in the years since 1960 of the intellectual consensus supporting both sets of boundaries--that around the domains of the distinctive scientific 'cultures' as well as the proper fields of the main social science disciplines other than history (economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology)" (p. 1). He quotes Featherman's (1993) question: "How should we design our universities and our curricula in higher education in order to bring the skills of analysis, problem finding, and problem solving more in alignment with the problems and solution strategies that will be encountered and required in an increasingly transnational world?", and asserts that the approach used to establish Latino Studies programs within the Inter-University Program for Latino Research is useful as a paradigm for addressing the problem. The paradigm addresses not only disciplinary boundaries, but also differences among those at the "margins" (such as those between Chicanos and Puerto Ricans), whose voices have long been suppressed and need to be recognized and permitted to co-exist within a unified Latino Studies program.

The ways in which these differences were addressed in the creation of the Inter-University Program suggest some possibilities at the level of practice for how intellectuals can encourage voices from the margins to come forward in both commonality and difference, in recognition of both the postmodern condition and the need to overcome fragmentation. For example, Bonilla relates that the common research agenda of the program emphasizes recognizing: (1) the distinctive features of the experience and present positioning of each Latino national origin community;

(2) the peculiarities of the ways in which U.S. definitions and perceptions of race have shaped each group's incorporation into U.S. society; (3) the importance of regional and locational settlement and patterns of concentration in defining the economic (class) and political placement of Latino groups; (4) the history and political economy of migration--that is, the forces determining the magnitude, composition and specific circuits of (im)migration flows; and (5) language and cultural adaptations accompanying geographical displacements and entry into key institutional settings. As Bonilla implies, together with other aspects of the program's paradigm (especially including the close association of academic intellectuals with community activists), this approach suggests how structural innovation in academic institutions might address the nexus among oppressed peoples' real and everyday concrete problems, the problematic location of progressive academic intellectuals, the division between social scientific disciplines, the difficulty building consensus about the definition of "the problem", and the questionable usefulness of existing academic disciplinary paradigms of explanation.

The Inter-University project and Giroux's suggestion for "border-crossing" intellectuals are unusual in the present period of postmodern critique in suggesting concrete practices for intellectuals' interactions with subjugated groups. It appears we are at an awkward juncture. Postmodern critique's strength has been to show what is problematic about many aspects of scientific assumptions and methods. Its primary purpose, or at least its function, has been to deconstruct existing dominant paradigms rather than to construct. In other words, postmodern critique, despite the concerns of

many of its advocates with issues of domination, pays almost no attention to the development of new forms of emancipatory praxis. But there is an additional problem as well. To the extent that academic intellectuals have attempted to resolve the problems raised by postmodern critique, they have often done so in the context of theory itself rather than of the concrete conditions of oppression affecting real people in everyday life. In these formulations, the crisis seems to be one primarily of theory rather than concrete circumstances. This orientation is partly expressed by Flax's (1990) statement of what is problematic. Flax writes that three kinds of thinking best represent thought at this time: psychoanalysis, feminist theory, and postmodern philosophy. "Each of these ways of thinking takes as its object of investigation at least one facet of what has become most problematic in our transitional state: how to understand and (re)constitute the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being" (p. 39, emphasis added). In such formulations, the problem of the era is defined as one of intellectuals' understandings rather than one of real people's concrete circumstances in various forms of struggle. Consequently, knowledge production tends to become defined as a task by and for intellectuals. In the current academic debates, community-based emancipatory social practice is not a prominent location for examining the relations of domination, deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge, and relating knowledge to practical struggle.

Some participants in these debates recognize that despite the contradictions that make the development of a postmodern emancipatory research praxis problematic,

transformative intellectuals need to move from deconstruction to reconstruction. They reject the tendency to focus exclusively on critique, declaring that we need "a political strategy that is attentive to differences, to using and bridging them...if we are to build the global networks of resistance necessary for resisting global forms of domination" (Sawicki, 1991, p. 9). Harding expresses concern about the most pessimistic streams within feminist theory that all but give up hope about science's ability to advance women's situations. She asserts that it is important to "defend the viability and progressiveness of the feminist science and epistemology projects against their postmodern critics" (Harding, 1990, p. 83); that feminists need and "want less false stories about nature and social life...(and)...scientific explanations that can provide useful guides to improving the conditions of women" (p. 83).

Emancipatory Participatory Praxis as a Method for Reconstruction

In light of postmodern critique, a praxis that is relevant to the crises people face in the concrete conditions of their lives, and not only to abstract theory, must help: to develop a method for recognizing, analyzing, and confronting a complex set of power relations emanating from several sources at once and marginalizing people variously depending on their placement on several power axes at once; to develop knowledge from the "margins"; and to address the problematic location of academic intellectuals. Certainly, a framework for emancipatory participatory research cannot hope to resolve all of the problems raised by postmodern critique (or other earlier

critiques). However, situating the problems posed by postmodern critique within the realm of concrete emancipatory practice can make possible a different kind of discussion concerning the relationship of knowledge to power in the interest of emancipatory goals. For example, Giroux notes that at issue are questions of "who speaks, under what conditions, for whom,...how knowledge is constructed and translated within and between different communities located within asymmetrical relations of power,...how identity...is constituted, and what the enabling conditions might be for human agency..." (Giroux, 1992, p. 26). But as Giroux notes,

> The struggle against racism, class structures, sexism, and other forms of oppression needs to move away from simply a language of critique, and redefine itself as part of a language of transformation and hope....At issue here is the need for cultural workers to create a politics that contributes to the multiplication of sites of democratic struggles. Within such sites cultural workers can engage in specific struggles while also recognizing the necessity to embrace broader issues that enhance the life of the planet while extending the spirit of democracy (Giroux, 1992, p. 82).

Developing a framework for emancipatory participatory research praxis represents such an attempt to create some new spaces for democratic struggles to take place. These democratic struggles would hold together the politics of knowledge production and the politics of social change in dialectical relationship with each other in the realm of concrete practice as well as theory.

Although the preceding discussion of several aspects of the postmodern crisis is fragmentary, partial, and incomplete, it helps to situate the attempt to develop an emancipatory participatory research praxis in the context of recent historical and theoretical developments. Several key issues now unresolved in the literature might usefully be addressed by methods that synthesize popular emancipatory praxis (as in

the prisoners' model) and models for academy-trained intellectuals' emancipatory praxis.

Among other things, such an emancipatory participatory praxis would provide a method for allowing the subjugated knowledge from various dominated groups to emerge more prominently in public critical discourse. It would place these "fragmentary" claims into a kind of dialogue that allows them to be subjected to critique both from within and without--from standpoints and perspectives variously grounded. An emancipatory participatory research praxis that unites in critical dialogue practical emancipatory work (conducted by critical intellectuals and grassroots groups) and knowledge produced in critical discourse (both within the academy and in dialogue involving oppressed grassroots groups) might help develop both better theories of power and better practices of social transformation.

Such a praxis would combine the prisoners' multi-praxis education, research, therapy, and action approach (though in different ways and to different degrees depending on the concrete situation) with various forms of praxis for critical social scientists. It would start from ongoing struggles and popular everyday investigatory discourse based in friendship-dialogue methods, and would bring academic perspectives from critical theories into dialogue with the grassroots group's own investigatory process, thus advancing both grassroots action-oriented analysis and academic discourse. It would contribute to the broad emancipatory project by better identifying sources and mechanisms of power, by determining "cognitive authority" according to the ways that oppressive relations become revealed, and by joining the

practical emancipatory efforts of academic intellectuals with grassroots groups. A generalized emancipatory participatory research model for praxis provides a method for revealing, acknowledging, and transforming the relations of power in knowledge production and in the emancipatory process by facilitating mutual dialogue, critique, and conflict between grassroots groups and intellectuals. Although such a generalized emancipatory praxis cannot be expected to dissolve the politics of knowledge production or of emancipatory movement formation, it can democratize them by increasing the power of "ordinary" people, especially marginalized groups, in these contested processes.

While it is beyond the scope of this work to demonstrate in detail how the generalized framework for emancipatory participatory research praxis might contribute to the resolution of the issues raised by postmodern critique, a number of relevant general implications would seem to follow from such a framework. In approximate parallel to the list of problems raised by postmodern critique offered above, these implications include:

1) A praxis-based method relying heavily on the participation of grassroots groups in the midst of concrete struggles can discover, through continual critical dialogue, sources and mechanisms of oppression; and a democratic, participatory method employing various kinds of critical, reflexive, and empirical investigative methods and a peer-based model for an intellectual's involvement with a grassroots group can blunt the dominating effects of intellectuals' vanguardism and academy-based cognitive authority.

2) Less "totalizing" or "essentializing" theories of power can emerge when grassroots groups whose members are oppressed by different combinations of power relations act as epistemic communities that analyze their experiences of power relations, define their collective identities in the context of their struggles, and use their voices and experiences in the construction of theory.

3) Emancipatory participatory research praxis grounded in the struggles of grassroots groups can carry forward the Enlightenment hope that science and knowledge can address human dilemmas by tying the methodology of knowledge production to a methodology for emancipatory action.

4) It is possible to construct an epistemology or epistemologies that do not confer cognitive authority on those with power by grounding knowledge production in the everyday discourse, experiences, and standards of truth of groups of oppressed grassroots people acting as their own epistemic communities and checking and augmenting it by including in the discourse other epistemic communities, including other disadvantaged grassroots groups and academic scientific disciplines and perspectives.

5) Reconstructed standards for objectivity can emerge from a dialogue of standpoints and epistemologies drawn from the praxis of grassroots groups, academic individuals, and the interactions of the two. In the reconstructed objectivity, knowledge is validated in a dialogue of standpoints and notions such as catalytic validity are used that test putative knowledge against the practical needs of grassroots groups to understand and transform themselves and their situations, but conventional

scientific standards are not completely abandoned. By building knowledge from a dialogue of standpoints, it is possible to address creatively several key contradictions raised by the postmodernist critique: that reality is a social construction (its definition thereby subject to the interpretations of differently located knowers) as well as something "for real" outside such interpretations; that despite the impossibility of separating subject from object, communities need valid, "objective" knowledge to function effectively in the world; and that despite the multiple perspectives of different communities of knowers and the disparity of knowledges accepted in those communities, ways must be found to validate some knowledge claims above others so as to identify principles for acting in and on the world.

6) The emancipatory participatory research praxis lends itself to broad democratic participation and democratizes the process of knowledge production by encouraging the emergence of multiple marginalized voices variously positioned in the social structure.

7) The framework for praxis creates a reflexive space for academy-based intellectuals who can, in a participatory cooperative praxis with marginalized groups, provide some academy-based theoretical guidance for these groups while testing and improving their own theorizing by exposing it to critique by the group's experience and theorizing.

NOTES

1. I draw on Buker's definition of praxis as (the creation of) "theory both relevant to the world and nurtured by actions in it, and an action component in its own theorizing process that grows out of practical political grounding" (quoted in Lather, 1991, p. 11).

2. Both the prisoners' and parents' "emancipatory" projects could be viewed as either reformist or worse, as contradictory and anti-emancipatory or potentially repressive. This is because in both cases, the groups' struggles to change external circumstances were focussed primarily on obtaining equal rights given existing structural arrangements. Such a formulation fits within traditional interest-group politics, and does not seek to radically change (in these cases) the education system to accommodate the critiques of critical education theorists and practitioners such as Apple (1985), Giroux (1992), Shor (1980), and Freire (1970, 1973). In addition, gaining these rights was potentially at odds with the cross-cutting interests of other structurally disadvantaged groups. Further, postmodern critique makes the realization of "emancipation", "democracy", "justice", or other such desirable social ends problematic. I consider both projects emancipatory nevertheless. Though both groups sought educational justice within a framework of rights in an overall unjust system, I believe the emancipatory project of both groups' projects to gain equal educational footing in an unequal system cannot be easily dismissed (especially by those of us who by our class, race, or gendered circumstances have benefited from the system of unequal schooling). Finally, that any disadvantaged group's efforts to advance its own interests may result in the oppression of another's and that any emancipatory efforts may yield incomplete and contradictory results are both problems that point more to a need to understand and address the problems of emancipatory theory and practice than to relinquish emancipatory efforts, in my estimation.

3. Neither the prisoners' nor the parents' praxis fully developed the possibilities for encouraging the emergence of a plurality of heretofore subjugated knowledges, developed in concert with one another and each producing a view of a different "piece" of reality. Such an approach would have entailed, for example in the parents' model, an effort to bring out the special views of the parents' experiences as women, the understandings and experiences of the Black teachers, the African-American principals, etc. This sort of effort, however, might have been at cross-purposes with the group's need to arrive at an understanding of its oppression that included a collective self-definition that promoted solidarity by highlighting similarities within the group and differences from those seen as oppressing it.

4. I follow Nelson's usage: "The term 'construct' reflects the view that knowledge, standards of evidence, and methodologies are 'of our own making'...and that these are constructed in the contexts of our various projects and practices." (Nelson, 1993, p. 141).

CHAPTER 10

FEMINIST MODELS FOR EMANCIPATORY PRAXIS

This chapter and the next focus on forms of practice and theoretical models that were developed prior to, or in the early stages of postmodern critique. These approaches can be seen as participating in the broad project defined above, in which grassroots groups and intellectuals participate together in building "substantive democracy," the project for which I have been working to define a framework for participatory emancipatory praxis.

These chapters parallel my theory of emancipatory participatory research in that they present a dialogue at many levels at once--of standpoints, of epistemologies, of theories of science, and of concrete forms of emancipatory praxis. I discuss several models of praxis that share common objectives with my own praxis, although I do not claim to discuss all such models. Although the models I discuss are diverse, all contribute to a theory and practice of emancipatory participatory research. All share concerns with inequality and injustice, the relationship of knowledge to power, democratic process, the democratization of knowledge, the importance of dialectivity, and a goal of reconceptualizing methods and reworking practices for producing knowledge and achieving social change. Some of the models contain elements that can broaden the parents' and prisoners' framework in both theoretical and practical ways, making it more comprehensive. Some can in turn be enriched by reconsidering

them in light of practices like the prisoners' and the parents'. Some provide theoretical rationales for the sort of praxis developed by the prisoners' and parents' groups, where the groups themselves were not trying to be theoretical. Many, though not all, provide examples of forms an academic intellectual's praxis might take while working with a grassroots group. All provide illuminating contrast with my practice with the parents and the prisoners. They have influenced my thinking in developing the framework I describe in this work and, in continuing dialogue with the praxis of grassroots groups, such models can contribute to further development of frameworks for emancipatory participatory research praxis.

Developing a model of emancipatory participatory research praxis by grassroots groups and academic intellectuals may seem far from the project of postmodern critique, especially inasmuch as postmodernist analysis takes place in contexts distant from the lives of most oppressed people. Yet like much in that critique, the present project is concerned with the problematic nature of the relationship of knowledge to power, and especially with the problem of how existing scientific assumptions and methods serve to perpetuate rather than interrupt existing dominant/subordinate relations. The task at hand is to link the theory and practice of democratic knowledge production to concrete democratic movements for social change. For example, Alcoff and Potter write of "cognitive democracy" as a goal: their concern is, "to contribute to an emancipatory goal: the expansion of democracy in the production of knowledge" (Alcoff and Potter, 1993, p. 13). But they fail to connect cognitive democratization to democratization in social relations. Patricia Hill

Collins (1991) shows how these two projects can be connected through the participation and intervention of critical intellectuals working with oppressed groups. Her vision is of "...collaborative, democratic, community enterprises with marginal peoples,...a project (that) requires learning to listen attentively to marginalized people...it requires critical self-examination to discover how one unwittingly participates in generating disadvantage to them..." (Harding, 1993, p. 68). Developing an emancipatory research praxis for grassroots groups and intellectuals is one way of linking the project of cognitive democracy to democratic movements for social change. A discussion of concrete processes and practices helps reveal how the two projects can be connected in practice.

I hope that by showing how several common elements are shared among the various approaches, it will become more apparent that an attempt to create an emancipatory participatory research praxis requires an interdisciplinary effort. It also requires an effort combining the strengths of within-disciplinary approaches (e.g. feminist epistemology and feminist consciousness-raising; and activist anthropological fieldwork approaches and critical ethnography). Academy-based theory (such as feminist epistemology and critical social science) and forms of emancipatory pedagogy should both contribute to such a framework--and benefit from it.

This chapter discusses bodies of literature in the tradition of feminist theory: feminist consciousness raising, feminist methodology, and feminist epistemology. Chapter 11 addresses a range of other literatures in critical social science, philosophy of science, and critical education studies.

FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

I begin with the praxis of feminist consciousness-raising groups, which is not strictly speaking an academic model for alternative praxis in that its development took place largely, if not entirely, outside academic institutions even though some of its participants were or became academic intellectual feminists. Consciousness raising is a process that comprised an important part of the most recent feminist movement. According to Mitchell (1973), consciousness raising was a reinterpretation of the Chinese revolutionary practice of "speaking bitterness" in which peasants began to reject the inevitability of their predicaments by speaking about their situations. The theory of consciousness raising rests on the links between the repression of speech and consciousness of oppression, and the belief that reviving consciousness of oppression will allow oppressed people to find ways to resist the inferior definitions of themselves they have unwittingly incorporated from their oppressors. The method is to make taken-for-granted self-definitions and understandings problematic, and to do so by starting from the situations of everyday life (Smith, 1987) and encouraging women to find their own voices. In naming the problem consciousness raising addressed, Kramer, Thorne, and Henley (1978) wrote, "...[T]here is a problem [for women] both of concept formation within an existing male constructed framework and a problem of language use in developing and articulating an authentic understanding of the world and one's relationship to it" (p. 644, quoted by Code, 1991). Smith (1987) describes a "process of opening up what was personal, idiosyncratic, and

inchoate and discovering with others how this was shared, was objectively part of women's oppression, finding ways of speaking of it and ways of speaking it politically" (p. 58).

Consciousness raising was an approach that sought to address the problem of women's lack of power over mental production and the penetration of dominant (patriarchal) ideology into women's consciousnesses. It gave women the opportunity to develop a language of opposition to describe their experiences, and to recover or re-appropriate knowledge hidden by dominant ideology.

Consciousness raising was the process used to facilitate the development of feminist consciousness. Stanley and Wise note that there are "few formal analytic attempts to chart the nature and content of feminist consciousness" (Stanley and Wise 1983, p. 121), but that Sandra Bartky (1977) had described four "facets": the consciousness of 'anguish', 'victimization', 'constant exposure', and 'the double ontological shock'. Stanley and Wise go on to say that they conceptualize feminist consciousness as much as a process of becoming as much as a state of being.

It should be noted that consciousness raising as practiced in feminist groups has been criticized for its inherently dogmatic assumptions about "true" and "false" consciousness. Stanley and Wise (1983) articulated this critique by noting that the idea of a pre-revolutionary or pre-feminist consciousness is linked to the concepts of "false consciousness" in marxist theory, and that "true" or "revolutionary" consciousness is associated with the "possessors of that consciousness which is closest to truth", who are the vanguard, in marxist-leninist revolutionary theory. For Stanley

and Wise, the notion of "the vanguard" is unacceptable to feminist principles because "it is grossly elitist and is based on a belief in the invalidity of the 'subjective' compared with the 'objective'" (p. 119). Stanley and Wise reject the idea of true and false consciousness, but support changes in consciousness, leaving open a definition or definitions of feminist consciousness that would be determined by those engaging in the consciousness-raising process. My work with the prisoners and parents leads me, too, to question any kind of consciousness-raising process in which it has already been decided what the "correct" consciousness should be. However, I think it likely that consciousness-raising groups themselves had varying ideas about whether there was a "correct" or "true" consciousness, and that Stanley and Wise's critique may have been appropriate for some groups but not others.

Feminist consciousness-raising groups had many characteristics in common with the prisoners' method. Consciousness raising took place in the context of small-group discussions among peers. Individuals' life histories provided the data from which the group collectively theorized both their individual and collective oppression (Mies, 1983, pp. 126-135). The process was at once a way of producing the foundations for an alternate counter-hegemonic history of the subjugated group from its own perspective and of creating solidarity by "transforming the hidden, individual fears of women into a shared awareness of the meaning of them as social problems" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 61).

Like the prisoners' model, consciousness-raising groups reflected a "bottom-up," democratically organized form of movement. As Rowbotham, Segal and

Wainwright (1979) note, consciousness-raising groups rejected the undemocratic features of "training", vanguardism, and the Party in the Leninist tradition. Instead, they embraced the idea of everyday struggle and intellectual leadership by grassroots people as a form of resistance consistent with the kind of society they wished to create. Like the prisoners' model, feminist consciousness-raising groups assumed that their participants as "ordinary people" could engage in social critique and theorizing.

Nancy Hartsock underlines the fundamental importance of consciousness raising to the feminist movement:

> (T)here is a methodology common among feminists that differs from the practice of most social movements, particularly from those in advanced capitalist countries. At bottom, feminism is a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women. The practice of small group consciousness raising with its stress on examining and understanding experience and on connecting personal experience to the structures that define our lives, is the clearest example of the method basic to feminism...important to build an analysis of patriarchy from the ground up --beginning from our own experience. We examined our lives not only intellectually but with all our senses...The power of a feminist method grows out of the fact that it enables us to connect everyday life with an analysis of the social institutions which shape that life (Hartsock, 1981a, pp. 35-36.)

In this statement, Hartsock highlights the close connection between two meanings of "method" consciousness-raising draws together: the method of producing knowledge, and the method of struggle. The method Hartsock describes as "basic to feminism" was, in fact, one of the major methods used by the (initially all-male) prisoners' group, though the focus for the analysis of oppression was different. Unfortunately, as Barbara Ehrenreich notes, "the academicization of feminism has meant the end of the exciting feminist intellectual milieu [I] once moved in....There is no setting, or

very few settings, that allows for wild speculation and unrestrained curiosity..." (Ehrenreich, 1990, p. 176). Feminist consciousness-raising groups as a method for social change and producing new knowledge no longer have the vibrant presence they did not so long ago.

Feminist consciousness raising took seriously the idea that personal politics at the microlevel were important; experiences in neo-marxist movements had made feminists especially aware of how patriarchal domination operates in interpersonal relations. Consciousness-raising groups made efforts to restructure interpersonal relations by eradicating hierarchical mechanisms suppressing women's voices. Although the effectiveness of consciousness-raising groups as a method of resistance has been criticized as limited because of their "emphasis on group dynamics, role-specific behavior and relationship problems" (Mies, 1983, p. 127), the emphasis in the consciousness-raising model on micro-level process was also a major strength in terms of resistance. The prisoners' model shared the same limitation and the same strength.

Several elements of the prisoners' and parents' models can be found in consciousness raising. I describe some of them below partly to show how the prisoners' and parents' process shares important characteristics with consciousness raising, even though the latter is a process most often assumed to be a praxis particular to women. The similarities between a process developed by Puerto Rican men and feminist consciousness raising illustrates that consciousness raising can be an element of emancipatory participatory research practices outside strictly feminist

approaches. These similarities also allow one to consider the prisoners' praxis in the framework of feminist thinking and emancipatory participatory research in general as, in part, a feminist project. I also highlight an aspect of the consciousness-raising model that is not as well developed theoretically in the prisoners' model. The prisoners clearly used the "knowing-a-person" paradigm described in the feminist literature for developing knowledge, but had no theory demonstrating its relevance or importance. Feminist theory has provided a way to understand and appreciate this part of the prisoners' praxis.

Some Characteristics of Consciousness Raising

It is Emancipatory and Justice-Oriented

Consciousness raising emerged as a feminist method of resisting patriarchy. Patriarchy might be defined as "any system in which men as a group oppress women as a group, even though there may be hierarchies among men...patriarchy has a material base in men's control of women's labor power and reproductive power and a psychodynamic base...(Flax, 1983, p. 272). Consciousness raising focussed on women's emancipatory and justice-oriented needs as did the prisoners' and parents' processes, although patriarchy was the primary focus only of the feminist groups.

It is Democratically Participatory

Consciousness-raising groups were grounded in participatory, egalitarian forms

of organization where leadership was shared among peers. Like the prisoners' model, the democratic and participatory form of feminist consciousness-raising groups was understood to embody the desired social organizational form of a new society.

It is a Counter-Hegemonic Process

Consciousness raising was a counter-hegemonic process. Gramsci's concept of hegemony was as the "...'bourgeois domination of the thought, the common sense, the lifeways, the everyday assumptions' of large groups of people in a society...that reproduce class domination and inequality" (Apple, 1982, p. 507????). Although Gramsci's formulation of hegemony referred to class domination, feminists saw consciousness raising as anti-hegemonic process in undermining women's taken-for-granted assumptions about the inevitability of their domination under patriarchy. As hegemony causes the consent which "is a fundamental ingredient in all power" (Fay, 1987, p. 138), consciousness raising challenges such consent by encouraging a subordinate group to re-name its experiences with a new vocabulary.

It is a Collaborative Dialogue Based in Interpersonal Friendship

Consciousness raising relied on friendship-based dialogue as its primary method for communicating and creating knowledge. The friendship model for developing knowledge is discussed at length below. Both data gathering and theory building proceeded from conversations using forms of everyday discourse familiar to the participants[1]. This dialogue can be characterized as collaborative dialogue, which

Lather (1986b), referring to Mies, describes as a process seeking for greater clarity. Collaborative dialogue has different goals from other forms of dialogue. It is sharply distinct, for example, from competitive forms of dialogue in which conversants use dialogic interaction to establish the superiority of one over the other. Although interpersonal dialogue comprised the basic method for consciousness raising, according to Cook and Fonow (1990), psychodrama, role-playing, and simulations provided additional methods for facilitating the consciousness-raising process.

It Relies on Experiential Knowledge

Feminist consciousness raising relied heavily on the analysis of direct experience to produce knowledge. Experiential knowledge "can be described as knowing 'from the inside' or 'what it is like to be...'" (Dalmiya and Alcoff, 1993, p. 228). The rationale for developing knowledge based on experience was articulated by the Redstockings Collective: "We regard our personal experiences and our feelings about that experience as the basis for an analysis of our common situation. We cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of male supremacist culture. We question every generalization and accept none that are not confirmed by our experience" (Redstockings, no date, quoted by Grant, 1993, p. 31). This kind of knowledge relies heavily on subjective criteria: "The solution that prevailed was to define "oppression" subjectively. Oppression included anything that women experienced as oppressive" (Grant, 1993, p. 30). The prisoners and parents depended heavily on experiential knowledge, but on other kinds of knowledge as well.

It Seeks Emancipatory Knowledge

Feminist consciousness raising aimed to produce insights about the nature of patriarchy as a source of power. The prisoners' process produced knowledge about oppressive conditions and other kinds of emancipatory knowledge as well, including various kinds of practical knowledge.

It Instigates a Dialectic Between Epistemological Systems

As indicated above, consciousness-raising groups deliberately relied on the analysis of women's direct experiences as a way to build theory outside the confines of existing theories of oppression that ignored patriarchy. Creating knowledge by talking about and analyzing direct experience was the primary epistemological method consciousness-raising groups used. Clearly, the knowledge produced by consciousness raising had a profound effect on the development of feminist theory, both in terms of content and method. It is abundantly clear that the knowledge produced by consciousness raising provided a great wealth of feminist critique, insights, and data to inform feminist academic theorizing. It is not as clear from the literature how formal academic theory--either marxist, neo-marxist, or feminist--entered into the consciousness-raising process. Marxist and neo-marxist theory provided the theoretical backdrop for at least some women in consciousness-raising groups, and presumably at least some groups used the context of consciousness-raising groups to critique marxist and neo-marxist theory in the process of creating feminist and socialist-feminist theory.

In contrast to feminist consciousness-raising groups, the prisoners' process relied especially on marxist theory to inform its theorizing-on-the-basis-of-direct-experience process; it used other epistemological systems to develop knowledge as well. However, the prisoners' isolation from academic institutions precluded their theorizing from having any effect on the development of formal academic theory.

It Promotes Formation of an Alternative Epistemic Community

Rather than considering the knowledge-production process as located within the individual, consciousness raising demonstrated the social character of knowledge construction. Consciousness-raising groups provided the grounds for the formation of a feminist epistemic community or communities capable of articulating a feminist perspective on power relations. In response to postmodernist critiques asserting that the development of any one feminist perspective universalizes women's experiences and suppresses differences among sub-groups of women, feminist theorists have increasingly described feminism as a collectivity of epistemic communities with their own forms of indigenous discourse and their own standpoints. The prisoners' process also provided the grounds for the development of an epistemic community. However, feminist consciousness-raising groups were more effective in developing their potential to create an alternative epistemology because the movement created a network of consciousness-raising groups rather than taking the prisoners' more isolated approach.

It Promotes Critical Transformative Dialogue

Individuals with different experiences and different points of view engaged in a kind of dialogue with each other that allowed each to be transformed. The prisoners' and parents' processes, which may have been more deliberately interpersonally confrontational, may have provided more possibility for critical transformative criticism than feminist consciousness-raising groups, although this is not clear form the literature. The nature of this aspect of the consciousness-raising process is described more fully below in the discussion of the friendship paradigm for producing knowledge.

It Relies on Horizontal Dialogue in Peer-Directed, Self-Organized Groups

In both feminist consciousness-raising groups, and in the prisoners' model, dialogue was horizontal among co-participant peers sharing similar situations of oppression rather than between leaders and led or teachers and students occupying different places in a social hierarchy. The groups were self-organized and peer-directed, and incorporated an ethic of self-help. Outsiders did not organize the groups, set agendas for discussion, impose outside forms of discourse, or control the groups' processes.

It Makes Researchers of Grassroots, Indigenous Participants

In the prisoners' and parents' groups and in feminist consciousness raising, the participant-researchers are drawn from the groups themselves. The participants,

acting as researchers, engaged in a process of "constructing meaning through negotiation" (Lather, 1986b, p. 265).

It Involves Academy-Trained Intellectuals Only as Peers

Consciousness-raising groups included some women who had advanced academic training and who were involved in developing feminist theory within advanced academic institutions. However, the participation of such individuals in consciousness-raising groups was as peers rather than outside leaders. The prisoners' process did not include participants engaged in academic theory-production.

It Relies on Collective Self-Reflection

As in the prisoners' process, the content of dialogue included reflection on one's own and each others' experiences. The immediate goal of self-reflection was to transform oneself, but the ultimate goal was to change the society as well. This element of consciousness raising is more completely addressed below, in the section about the "knowing-a-person" paradigm.

Subjects and Objects of Investigation are Fused

Members of consciousness-raising groups doubled as scientific subjects and as the objects of investigation. Like the prisoners, women in consciousness-raising groups investigated both their own and each others' experiences. The prisoners' process assumes that other people, as well as concrete mechanisms of oppression can

be the objects of investigation.

It Uses More Than One Standpoint

The feminist consciousness-raising process takes a standpoint "from within" and "below" in terms of patriarchy, but often employed "doubled vision" (Stanley and Wise, 1983, p. 54), recognizing that most group members were both oppressor (as white and middle class people) and oppressed (as women). The prisoners' standpoint was from within multiple oppressive systems of class, race, and national (ethnic) relations. Both consciousness-raising and the prisoners' (and parents') processes take the examination of the relations of everyday life as the standpoint from which power relations can be analyzed.

It Unites the Personal as Political

It treats the emancipatory process as a dialectic uniting individual and social change. In Hartsock's account,

> A fundamental redefinition of the self is an integral part of action for political change. But our selves are social phenomena, and take their meaning from the social whole of which we are a part. We do not act in a vacuum to produce and reproduce our lives; changed consciousness and changed definitions of self can occur only in conjunction with restructuring the social (societal and personal) relationships in which each of us is involved" (Hartsock, 1981a, p. 36).

According to Cassell (1977), one group attempted to connect the processes of personal change to broader social structural change by creating a four-step process in which the first step was to develop personal critical consciousness, the second to read

movement literature, the third to apply to join the Radical Feminist organization, and the fourth, to undertake political action. This particular account may or may not be characteristic of most consciousness-raising groups. It is not clear whether this group or other groups overlapped the stages of this process, as the prisoners' group did. Although the literature does not specify a particular view of the "system" that people in feminist consciousness-raising groups may have had, this four step process suggests a similar approach to that of the prisoners in which the individual, the group, and the social structure were viewed as interrelated parts of the "system" to be changed.

It Uses Overlapping Processes to Achieve Change

The feminist consciousness-raising groups appear to have combined solidarity building, educational, therapeutic, and research in a formulation possibly similar to that of the prisoners. The literature does not make clear whether or not these processes were recognized or theorized at the time as semi-independent but overlapping elements of the consciousness-raising process. However, after the fact, the research and therapeutic elements have been interpreted as important interrelated elements of the consciousness-raising process. For example, Lather, referencing Fay (1977), refers to people in consciousness-raising groups as "research participants" when observing that, "...feminist consciousness-raising groups provide a model for how to ... involve research participants in construction and validation of knowledge" (Lather, 1986b, p. 265). The importance of the therapeutic function of consciousness-raising groups has also been noted. These groups require "an

environment of trust, openness and support in which one's own perceptions and feelings can be made properly conscious to oneself, in which one can think through one's experiences in terms of a radically new vocabulary" (Fay, 1977, p. 232).

In comparison with the prisoners' process, feminist consciousness raising primarily emphasizes the overlapping of therapeutic and research processes. However, the action element in consciousness raising is evident from Cassell's description of the fourth stage of involvement in one group. And the educative process can be inferred from other descriptions of consciousness raising in which women are said, for example, to have used the process to find the objective social basis for their circumstances, and as a way to document women's oppression by examining individuals' life histories (Mies, 1983, 126-135).

It Emphasizes Process Rather Than Product

Consciousness-raising groups, like the prisoners' and parents' groups, did not theorize for theory's sake so much as to engage people in a process of understanding and changing themselves and their circumstances. As Harding puts it, they saw knowledge seeking and theorizing as a journey, one which "start(s) off thought from women's lives" (Harding, 1993, p. 78). In a statement that shows how theorizing is conceptualized as part of an ongoing dialectical process that involves both experience and other theory, Rowbotham points to the need for better maps for our journeys: "In order to explore, we need good maps...to take stock of the situation and communicate any general principles to other wanderers. We have to establish certain

staging posts to refuel and assess the journey... sit back...(and)...sum up...both from our experience (and) ..with information from other travellers' tales and from any existing maps" (Rowbotham, 1979, p. 54).

Stanley and Wise comment that, "Ongoing theorizing is... what consciousness (itself) is all about" (Stanley and Wise, 1983, p. 161). This view of theory, as a process rather than a product, has been developed more fully in more recent feminist theory, in which "scientific knowledge from this perspective is not the static end point of inquiry, but a cognitive or intellectual expression of an ongoing interaction with our natural and social environments" (Longino, 1993, p. 116).

"Second-Person" Epistemology in Consciousness Raising

Lorraine Code, following Baier (1985), has developed a theory of knowledge based on the paradigm of friendship which helps define, and provides at least part of the epistemological rationale for consciousness raising as a knowledge-production process (as well as a therapeutic, activist, educational one). She refers to this paradigm as the "friendship/second-personhood model" (Code, 1991, p. 220) or "knowing-a-person."[2] According to Code, consciousness raising embodies an alternative epistemology that can generate and legitimate counter-hegemonic knowledge and theory and that can assume a prominent, though not exclusive, role in emancipatory participatory research. The friendship/second-personhood model for creating knowledge also operates as an oppositional discourse that empowers

participants directly, such as those involved in consciousness-raising groups.

Code's theory is very complex and yet not thoroughly elaborated, as it is still relatively new. As I interpret the theory (presented primarily in Code, 1991), eight principal features of the friendship relationship form the basis for an alternative epistemology. Other features may later emerge as equally important. 1) Friendship is an "in-depth" process that may include knowing particular "facts" about a person, but goes much farther, attempting to grasp deeper essences or meanings about the person. 2) Friendship is a peer, non-hierarchical relationship in which connectedness, subjective involvement, and interdependence prevent mutual objectification. 3) Friendship is a motive for knowing that is not based on the need to control. 4) Friendship is a motive for knowing that is premised on respect and the need to understand each other's differences in order to maintain the relationship. 5) Friendship is a relationship in which definitions of one's self, each other, and other aspects of the world are negotiated and re-negotiated through empathy and mutually shared. Friendship dialogue is a process that provides a source and method for continual testing of knowledge, that recognizes that defining reality is a neverending process, and that apprehends the fragmentary and partial nature of knowledge claims. 6) Coming to know a friend and other objects in the world <u>with</u> that friend is a reciprocal, ongoing dialogical shared investigation process in which there is a close interaction (subjective involvement) with one another. 7) One gets to know a friend and things about the world with the friend through "everyday" or "everyperson" discourse using language forms indigenous and comfortable to both (rather than

"alien" or hegemonic forms of discourse such as those of scientific or social scientific expertise or languages of colonial domination). 8) Friendship develops in the context of everyday, local, shared experiences in the nooks and crannies of social spaces left relatively unstructured by organizational intervention.

The first four characteristics are particularly indebted to Keller's (1985a) analysis of McClintock's research with maize (Code, 1991, p. 150-154). Code remarks that "even if one could know all the facts about someone, one would not know her as the person she is" (p. 40). This is a primary basis Code employs for contesting the epistemological status of observation-based knowledge of material objects. Keller's analysis of McClintock's work on corn provides an example of the kind of deep knowing that expresses this aspect of friendship: "McClintock speaks of her need to 'listen to the material,' declaring that she knows every plant intimately and finds it 'a great pleasure to know them'" (Keller, 1985a, p. 164, quoted by Code, 1991, p. 152).

In the objectivist model, the nature of the subject-object relationship assumes a "nonsymmetrical power relation over the object of knowledge [which] precludes any possibility of reciprocal interaction" (Code, 1991, p. 51). A different subject-object relation is posited in Code's alternative paradigm, wherein the reciprocity relation in friendship is recognized as an "integral part of knowing a friend" (p. 51). "Cognitive autonomy" and "epistemic control" characterize the subject's (observer's) position in the objectivist model. In contrast, the alternative model requires a cognitive or epistemic community in which knowledge is conceived of as "an intersubjective

product constructed within communal practices of acknowledgement, correction, and critique" (p. 224).

The knowing-another-person paradigm incorporates a critique of epistemological assumptions commonly attributed to positivism, especially that of the ideal of "pure objectivity" and value neutrality. Code's critique is built on earlier feminist deconstructions of objectivity, sometimes referred to as "objectivism" (p. 51). She cites Susan Bordo (1986) and Naomi Scheman (1987) in particular, but many other feminists have contributed to this critique. The paradigm is especially critical of the subject/object dichotomy (detachment of the observer from the object of investigation) and the concept of "observational simples" based on physics: the "conviction that all knowledge, scientific and 'ordinary', can be broken down into observational 'simples'"...(Code, 1991, p. 36).

The knowing-a-person paradigm as an epistemological alternative to positivist epistemology parallels feminist critiques of the model of "rational economic man" as an "independent, frequently isolated, and presumably hostile being...whose very humanity is based on [his] independence from the wills of others" (Hartsock, quoted by Code, 1991, p. 79). An alternative construction of personhood, like the construction of knowledge in the "knowing-a-person" paradigm", would not "posit a contradiction between self-sufficiency and interdependence, on the assumption that a person has to buy interdependence at the cost of...autonomy" (p. 79). Instead, subjectivity in both its epistemological and broader meaning is constructed as the function of inter-relationship and interdependence.

Code's work is at once an effort to deconstruct mainstream (patriarchially dominated) epistemology and to create a feminist alternative epistemology. It also provides vision of democratic process based not on the independent autonomous isolated individual, but on interdependent, mutual, reciprocal relationships, and a cognitive democracy in which subjugated "minorities" can gain cognitive legitimacy and develop knowledge through the "second-person" model. Code asserts that patriarchy has penetrated traditional epistemology: "Malestream philosophical methodology is shaped...by an adversarial paradigm defined in terms of rational autonomy and defensiveness. This is the paradigm Moulton documents, with its capacity to limit the scope of inquiry and to foreclose possibilities of understanding. In philosophy practiced under its aegis, 'the only problems recognized are those between opponents, and the only kind of reasoning considered is the certainty of deduction, directed to opposition'" (Code, 1991, pp. 132-133). Moulton (1983) referred to this as the "Adversary Paradigm" (p. 153).

Code defines the "knowing-a-person" friendship paradigm in part as, "knowledge seeking as a communal, dialogic activity marked by interdependence and intersubjective critique in which inquirers are, plainly, second persons" (p. 123). Friendship serves as a basis for the paradigm by serving as a way to know that is "careful, reciprocal, [and] nonimperialistic" (p. 105). Much of the basis for using friendship as the paradigm is captured by Code's observation that, "only by taking the trouble to know other people well, in <u>their</u> circumstances, sensitive to what their circumstances mean <u>to them</u>, can people participate responsibly in each other's lives"

(p. 312). She notes that in such a relationship, "understanding precedes criticism". "Second personhood" refers to a theory of personhood that assumes human beings acquire their personhood through contact with other human beings; that, in Baier's words, "persons are the creation of persons" (quoted in Code, p. 85). This theory is counterposed to patriarchal forms of knowing (often equated with positivism in feminist epistemological critique) in which disinterested neutrality is the desired epistemological stance.[3]

Although the "knowing-a-person" paradigm argues for subjective involvement in knowledge production, it does not take a "radical subjectivist" position (such as Code describes Stanley and Wise [1983] as taking), asserting "that there is no such objective reality: [that] there is only my reality, or yours, or ours" (p. 43). Code makes the argument that "a contention that there are no objective social realities would obliterate the purpose of feminist political projects" (p. 45). The same could and should be said of the politics of class and race. "Ideal objectivity may institutionalize stereotypical male subjectivity; but displacing it with an analogous female subjectivity in just the same role is assuredly not the best solution" (p. 55). Yet, Code also cautions, taking feminist postmodern critiques into account, that although the social realities of oppression exist, "...the same truths [realities] may not hold in just the same way for all women" (p. 45). She also warns that relying on everyday experience alone as the basis for creating knowledge (a substantial part of the method underlying subjective forms of knowing and the friendship model for developing knowledge) is overly limited: "Analysis of women's exploitation, as Jean Grimshaw [1986] notes, 'cannot always be worked out by the explication of everyday

experience alone. The activities of things such as multinational corporations are usually extremely remote from everyday experience, yet they have profound effects on women's lives'" (Code, p. 45). Instead of taking the "radical subjectivist" position in which "the owner or author of an experience is uniquely and solely [thought to be] in a position to manage and negotiate...'reality'" (p. 44), Code's paradigm underscores the importance of coming to a better understanding (developing a more truthful account of a reality that is really "out there") by relying on "a reconstructed social science [which] can offer a better paradigm than natural science.... My proposal is that social scientific practice based on a commitment to knowing people as well as possible is a worthy epistemological paradigm tout court" (p. 41).

Code describes this model as a "strategy for claiming...cognitive competence and authority" (p. 218) by

> disrupti[ng] the discourse of expertise [by] drawing on dialogic, conversation models, informed by assumptions of second personhood...in which, through processes of mutual--tu quoque--recognition, women learned how to acknowledge their experiences. The friendship/second-personhood model enables women to recognize their commonalities and differences, to trust themselves and one another, to know hitherto suppressed truths about their social positions. This trust can develop into the power women need to reposition themselves in relation to authority and expertise (p. 220).

The implications for such a model go far beyond the empowerment of women in the context of consciousness-raising groups, however; Code suggests that Baier's theory provides broader model for producing knowledge that "allows it to extend into a political discourse that avoids the immobilizing implications both of cultural and of poststructuralist thinking...Second-person discourse can be productive across contexts in which the identities of the interlocutors vary widely; they can be groups,

institutions, practices, as well as particular subjects" (p. 87). This implication is important to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework as it provides a concept for how a dialogue of standpoints, epistemologies, and paradigms can be theorized and institutionalized within emancipatory participatory research as a way to create more complete and more truthful knowledge. This metatheoretical epistemological approach takes into account postmodern critique showing the fragmentary, incomplete, and contradictory nature of knowledge, and creates a way to accommodate a "grand" level of critique within a dialogic framework. The dialogic interactive concept provides a theoretical basis for mutual investigation and critique at the metatheoretical level. The challenge, for emancipatory participatory research, is to bring this kind of metatheoretical critique into forms of praxis in which grassroots people are involved.

Unfortunately, Code does not offer a close analysis of the nature of friendship discourse that would show in depth how such discourse might better inform the "knowing-a-person" epistemological paradigm. For example, she does not develop a detailed account of how mutual critique and negotiation of meaning proceeds in friendship dialogue. Such an analysis of friendship discourse would contribute greatly to the theory and especially to the practice of knowledge production.

Code's problematic is the oppression of women, and she proposes the "knowing-a-person" paradigm to advance the emancipation of women. The paradigm was developed on the basis of Code's analysis of consciousness raising and on other feminist theory about women's ways of knowing. Code implies that this epistemology

is a feminist method, both in terms of its origin and its emancipatory implications. However, both the prisoners and parents also relied on everyday discourse based in friendship as a primary way of developing knowledge. It seems clear that Code's description of the "knowing a person" paradigm applies very well to not only the (mostly female) parents' but the male Puerto Rican prisoners' process as well. This observation suggests that the "knowing-a-person" paradigm for producing knowledge, though it was defined on the basis of an analysis of a feminist praxis, is not only a feminist way of knowing and not only a feminist mode of resistance. It further suggests that the many groups resisting dominant sources of power and the associated dominant epistemology might together develop an alternative epistemology and alternative modes of knowledge production that would assist them in resistance.

Contributions of Consciousness Raising to Emancipatory Participatory Research

The previous section notes several similarities between consciousness raising and the prisoners' and parents' models that can be seen as contributions of the consciousness-raising approach to the common project of developing an emancipatory participatory research praxis. Some differences between feminist consciousness-raising groups and the prisoners'/parents' model also help clarify how consciousness raising is a key aspect of such a praxis.

Perhaps the most obvious difference is in the sources of oppression the groups address. Feminist consciousness raising by definition involved women trying to understand patriarchy and its implications for women. The male prisoners (and female participants in the former prisoners' group) used a similar process to understand the interrelationship of racism, colonial oppression, class relations, (and to a limited extent, gender relations); and the parents' group's focus was primarily on oppression by race. Clearly, the consciousness-raising approach can address a variety of oppressions.

Another difference was that at least some of the participants in feminist consciousness-raising groups had advanced academic training, and were already, or were becoming, academic feminist theorists. In this way, the problems of hierarchical and "inside"/"outside" relationships between grassroots groups and academic intellectuals had a somewhat different resolution in feminist consciousness-raising groups than in either the prisoners' or parents' model. Nevertheless, all the forms of consciousness raising resolve these problems through a peer-participatory approach.

Feminist consciousness-raising groups often emphasized the psychological sphere of interpersonal relations, and were especially attentive to group process issues. They used a theory of social transformation that relied in large part on changing micro-level interpersonal interactions. The prisoners' and parents' model included this theory of social change, but the need to be directly engaged in social activism was also present. In fact, the parents' group would not have existed without

conditions requiring activism. Because of its emphasis on psychological aspects, consciousness raising has sometimes been criticized as being more concerned about how to live a liberated life than how to create broad social change (Hartsock, 1981a). The framework for emancipatory participatory praxis points a way back to the original potential of consciousness raising as a tool for social transformation: it is a crucial part of a praxis that unites educational and therapeutic processes with research and action.

Feminist consciousness raising also differed from the prisoners' and parents' process in the ways it produced knowledge. Consciousness raising relied almost exclusively on group reflection on experience as the source of data. It used examination of participants' experience as a way to reveal the hidden assumptions (ideology) embedded in their everyday lives. The prisoners' and parents' groups relied heavily on this method, but also included interviews with people outside the group, examination of documents, analysis of the groups' collective action efforts, and other bases for discovering and analyzing the structure of ideological control.

Consciousness raising as conceived within the emancipatory participatory research framework differs from most depictions of it in the feminist literature (Fay, 1977 and Lather, 1986b are exceptions) in that it is explicitly a research method. In the prisoners' and parents' models, it revealed aspects of oppressive ideology and provided a perspective that, combined with other participatory research methods, increased understanding of oppressive conditions and of the barriers ideology created to effective group action.

The feminist consciousness-raising model shares with the prisoners' and parents' models a reliance on a "bottom-up", knowledge-based, peer-directed democratic emancipatory process. Consciousness-raising models of social change understand "methodology" as praxis (a joining of theory with practice), so that the methodology for producing and distributing knowledge is very closely integrated with the methodology for organizing and mobilizing grassroots groups for social transformation. In consciousness raising, the praxis is one of grassroots groups (sometimes in collaboration with involved intellectuals) rather than of intellectuals distanced from the groups' struggles.

Finally, all the consciousness-raising practices embody a strong participatory model for developing knowledge. The style for producing knowledge parallels the political goals of consciousness raising; the democratization of knowledge production goes hand in hand with political democratization.

FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

Feminist methodology is a term that no longer appears prominently in feminist literature, but that enjoyed a brief period of attention after the emergence of consciousness-raising groups and feminist critiques of science, but before innovations in feminist theory of epistemology and postmodern critique. According to Jayaratne and Stewart (1991), the earliest discussions about feminist methodology resulted from feminist critiques of traditional quantitative research. The criticisms as they

summarize them are as follows:

> 1. The selection of sexist and elitist research topics (Cook and Fonow, 1984; Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, and Zellman, 1978; Grady, 1981; Jayaratne, 1983; Scheuneman, 1986) and the absence of research on questions of central importance to women (see Parlee, 1975; Roberts, 1981)
> 2. Biased research designs, including selection of only male subjects (Grady, 1981; Lykes and Stewart, 1986)
> 3. An exploitative relationship between the researcher and the subject (Jayaratne, 1983; Mies, 1983; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1979; Stanley and Wise, 1983) and within research teams (Birke, 1986; Harding, 1987)
> 4. The illusion of objectivity, especially associated with the positivist approach (Bleier, 1984; Jayaratne, 1983; Lykes and Stewart, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1983; Wallston, 1981)
> 5. The simplistic and superficial nature of quantitative data (Jayaratne, 1983)
> 6. Improper interpretation and overgeneralization of findings (Jayaratne and Kaczala, 1983; Lykes and Stewart, 1986; Westkott, 1979), including the use of person-blame explanations and application to women of theory tested on exclusively male subjects
> 7. Inadequate data dissemination and utilization (Jayaratne, 1983; Tangri and Strasburg, 1979). Mies (1983) nicely sums up these criticisms by noting a fundamental contradiction between methodological theories which are currently accepted in the social sciences and the goals of the feminist community. (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991, p. 86)

The attempt to develop an alternative feminist methodology was grounded both in this critique and in women's experiences in consciousness-raising groups.

Feminist methodology's roots in consciousness-raising groups gave it the potential, in Hartsock's words, to enable "us to connect everyday life with an analysis of the social institutions which shape that life" (Hartsock, 1981a, p. 36). I suggest in this section that that potential was not fully realized, largely because as feminist theorists moved into academic lives it became more difficult for them to build theory from ordinary women's experience--or even to imagine how that might be done. This

alienation of academic feminist discourse from grassroots groups' experiences is evident in the development of that discourse in the direction of feminist epistemology, a field that has made important contributions to theory, but is quite removed from concrete struggles. I discuss the work of several writers who, noticing the problem of alienation, proposed solutions at the level of research technique, and of others who proposed solutions at more fundamental levels. The concepts developed by these theorists of feminist methodology make contributions not only in their own terms, but by defining concepts and establishing contrasts that clarify the nature of the prisoners' and parents' methodologies. In turn, the perspective of the prisoners' and parents' processes, which embedded consciousness raising as a research method in other forms of emancipatory praxis, can show a way to develop forms of emancipatory research methodology that reattach to roots in several of the critical defining characteristics of consciousness-raising groups, most importantly in the inclusion of grassroots groups in the research process and the unity of knowledge production and emancipatory struggle--the idea of research as a way of life exemplified by the prisoners' process.

As noted in the previous section, consciousness raising was developed as a method that drew the dual goals of (feminist) knowledge production and social transformation together in a single process. The methodology was deliberately created to be different from neo-marxist and other "male" models for developing knowledge and organizing for concrete social change. Hartsock's (1981a) statement about methodology quoted above gives a sense of the importance feminists attached to such a different methodological approach. As in Hartsock's statement, the term

"feminist methodology" can refer very broadly to the constellation of efforts comprising the feminist project of social transformation. In the 1970's and early 1980's, however, the literature proposing models for feminist methodology developed along two narrower, interrelated lines, both concerned with how to link research with feminist political and social goals and processes as they had been defined through consciousness raising. One literature emerged about women's studies, and one about research per se.

The strand of feminist methodology concerned with women's studies developed when an opportunity arose to institutionalize the feminist movement in university women's studies programs (e.g. Bowles and Klein's Theories of Women's studies (1983), and contradictions between activism, research, and teaching became more apparent. The feminist academics' contradictory location within academic institutions but with ties to the feminist movement generated issues about to whom they should be accountable and from whom they should try to gain legitimacy (the academy? the activist feminist community? the students?), and about what kinds of research and teaching they should develop. For example, Rutenberg asks: "How does Women's Studies...offer students a fulfilling learning experience?...Its concerns are not strictly academic and its legitimacy is dependent on its acceptance by the feminist community as well as by the standards of the academy" (Rutenberg 1983, p. 75). The relationships among the feminist academic as researcher, the feminist academic as professor, the students of Women's Studies, women as objects of research, and the feminist movement, were all being reconsidered and restructured as part of an attempt

to define feminist methodology. This strand of literature emphasizes the emancipatory praxis of academic intellectuals doing research in concert with their students in the context of the feminist movement. My aim here is different. My emphasis is on developing a framework for emancipatory participatory research in community settings rather than academic ones.

The other strand of feminist methodology sought to address issues more directly related to research, so is more relevant to my project. This strand represented a theoretical move beyond earlier feminist critiques of traditional social science research that had revolved around the absence of women as research subjects and objects--the critique Harding has referred to as "spontaneous feminist empiricism" (Harding, 1993, p. 52). This "add women and stir" critique did not address the lack of control women had over other aspects of the politics of knowledge production, especially over the epistemological and ontological assumptions built into most research based on "standard" (i.e., positivist) assumptions and a male-centered standpoint.

Feminist standpoint theory developed in response to this lack of control. It argued that women's standpoint(s) were needed to reveal aspects of overall reality not otherwise visible. Early feminist standpoint theory developed during roughly the same period of time as the rest of the literature in feminist methodology began to develop, and to some degree overlapped with that literature. This work (e.g. Hartsock, 1981a) was part of a feminist effort to construct an alternative methodology and was the principal theoretical forerunner of later work in feminist epistemology.

Feminist epistemology seems by now to have almost completely displaced what was previously referred to as "feminist methodology". As Stanley and Wise remark, "'Methodology' has been well and truly placed on the academic feminist agenda in its new guise of 'epistemology'" (1993, p. 13).

One reason the concept of feminist methodology has become outdated is that many feminists recognized the difficulty of developing a single feminist methodology once it had become abundantly clear that there are many feminisms. Nevertheless, feminist methodology contributes to the project of developing a framework for emancipatory participatory research because, grounded as it was in consciousness-raising, it sought to connect an alternative research methodology to a "bottom-up", knowledge-based grassroots movement (the feminist movement). This effort brought certain kinds of contradictions inherent in such a project into view, producing some interesting ways to accommodate the contradictions. This section shows how some of the work in the stream of feminist methodology that focused on research contributes to the project of elaborating and explicating a framework for emancipatory participatory research.

Cook and Fonow suggest that the following principles should be included in characterizing feminist methodology:

> 1) the necessity of continuously and reflectively attending to the significance of gender and gender asymmetry as a basic feature of all social life, including the conduct of research; 2) the centrality of consciousness-raising as a specific methodological tool and as a general orientation or "way of seeing"; 3) the need to challenge the norm of objectivity that assumes that the subject and object of research can be separated from one another and that personal and/or grounded experiences are unscientific; 4) concern for the ethical implications of feminist research and recognition of the exploitation of women as objects of

> knowledge; and 5) emphasis on the empowerment of women and transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research (Cook and Fonow, 1990, pp. 72-73).

These principles serve as a representative partial summary of the issues addressed in feminist methodology. Following Harding (1981a) and Jayaratne and Stewart (1991), I use the concept of feminist methodology to refer to a very broad theory of how to do feminist research. It is this broad approach that I see as relevant to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework.

Problems of Alienation in Feminist Methodology

I begin with Sandra Harding's article, "Is There a Feminist Method?" In this introduction to her edited volume, Feminism and Methodology (1987), Harding supports the project of defining feminist methodology, but opposes the development of strictly feminist methods for research, distinguishing between "method" and "methodology". Harding defines "method" as "techniques for gathering evidence" and "methodology" as "a theory and analysis of how research should proceed" (p. 2). She suggests that attempts to develop a set of specifically feminist methods are beside the point, as most evidence-gathering techniques "fall into one of the following three categories: listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behavior, or examining historical traces and records" (p. 2), and feminists avail themselves of these same traditional methods. Harding claims that what is special about feminist research is not its methods per se, but other characteristics having to do more with

methodology and epistemology.

Harding identifies three characteristics of feminist research methodology that differentiate it from standard research approaches: 1) generating the problematics for research from the perspective of women's experiences; 2) designing research so as to "provide for women explanations of social phenomena that they want and need..." (p. 8); and 3) avoiding the "objectivist" stance by placing "the inquirer her/himself...in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research...[so]...the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests" (p. 9).

Harding is a central and important figure in feminist theory, and an examination of the characteristics she lists serves to illuminate the turn away from the primary grounding of feminist knowledge production in the lives of non-academic women participating in consciousness-raising groups to an academy-based feminist research praxis grounded more in participation in academic debates about the "needs" or crises of theory (especially feminist standpoint theory) than in the concrete experiences of ordinary women.

In Harding's account, this change in the theorist's point of view may not be immediately obvious because all three of the characteristics she emphasizes bear the imprint of consciousness-raising's influence: Feminist consciousness-raising groups were largely responsible for showing the importance of creating knowledge out of the problematics of women's experiences; they sought to create knowledge for women's

needs; and they provided a context for the dissolution of the subject/object dichotomy, making women as peers and equals both the subjects and objects of their own and each others' investigation. Nevertheless, Harding's list of characteristics foreshadows the evolution of feminist methodology along a pathway that marginalized other aspects of feminist practice embedded in consciousness-raising and that led to the current formulation of feminist methodology as a purely theoretical practice occurring in academic discourse. In characteristic no. 1, which describes the feminist standpoint, the importance of the continued participation of non-academic women in the feminist epistemic community has dropped out of the concept of feminist methodology--the connection to the grassroots that was a central characteristic of consciousness raising has been cut. In characteristic no. 2, which describes the purpose of feminist research as "to provide [knowledge] for women," the purpose of making women actors, both in knowledge production and in social transformation, has been omitted. In characteristic no. 3, which describes the view of subject-object relations in feminist methodology, the notion that knowledge production is a friendship-based small-group process is not mentioned, leaving readers and writers free to conceive of it as a professionalized, academy-based one. (Subsequent work in feminist epistemology, even when it recognizes the importance of friendship-based knowledge production [e.g., Code, 1991], does not fully recover the grassroots standpoint or the empowerment goals of the early consciousness-raising groups.)

These shifts in emphasis flow from the change in the standpoint of feminist knowledge producers from one in the grass roots to one in the academy.

Contemporary feminist theory, which started in consciousness-raising groups, is now primarily ensconced within academic institutions. Stanley and Wise remark on one implication of this development, namely that the language employed in the contemporary discourse of feminist epistemology is alienating: "...key among the master's tools is the mystification of 'science', so that not only do many people feel alienated from it , but they also fail to recognize their own behaviours as actually 'researching' and 'theorizing'...it has become increasingly the case that unless this specialist language is used, then ideas are not taken seriously as a contribution to feminist social theory..." (Stanley and Wise, 1993, pp. 230-231). Possibly bowing to this trend, Stanley and Wise now retrospectively "read" their own early (1983) work, which was relatively free of academic jargon, to be primarily a work in feminist epistemology (1993, p. 5).

Harding's description of feminist methodology, together with the body of her own work, shows the strongly philosophical and epistemological direction feminist theory of methodology has taken, and its failure to address the importance of re-grounding a feminist methodology at least in part, in the practices, discourses, and lives of communities of grassroots, non-academic women. The implications of this failure have only recently begun to become noticed within feminist epistemology, although the realization has not yet been linked to a need to reconceptualize feminist methodology more comprehensively--redefining not only feminist epistemology, but other forms of research practice, so as to reconnect academic theory making to popular theorizing and most of all to concrete action and struggle.

Addelson's (1993) recent effort to delineate a descriptive feminist epistemology reveals some of the ironies in the present relationship of academic epistemology to the broader feminist movement. On the one hand, Addelson work demonstrates the capacity of feminist academic epistemology to be self-reflective enough to recognize problems with the academicization of feminism and to suggest some important, theoretically grounded visions for how these problems might be resolved consistently with a grounding in forms of emancipatory participatory research praxis that would unite the work of academic intellectuals with that of grassroots groups engaged in community struggles. On the other hand, her work demonstrates the profound loss of connection academic feminists have with non-academic women and others, who are accorded epistemic legitimacy by the academics in theory only. It appears that feminist epistemologists may have become so removed from extra-academic contexts that they have lost the ability to "see" that a dialogue with grassroots women engaged in community struggles might help create better theory.

At almost every turn in Addelson's argument for feminist epistemology, an idea appears that would seem to suggest her support for creating such a dialogue, but the idea is never fully realized. I would suggest that Addelson's argument reveals both the promise and the paralysis of academic feminist epistemology, and that her writing implies an argument in support of the kind of connection and interaction between academic theory and theorists on the one hand and grassroots theory and theorizers on the other hand that the parents' model partly realizes.

Addelson begins by making some pertinent comments about traditional

epistemology and feminist epistemology: "...traditional epistemology was a theory for knowledge makers in a straightforwardly political sense; it supported the elites who in fact exercised cognitive authority through knowledge-making institutions. Feminist scholars point this out by saying that traditional epistemology supported male dominance and patriarchy. The aim of a feminist epistemology was to criticize the patriarchal epistemology in ways that subverted it and led to the overthrow of male dominance." But in her next breath, Addelson rushes to say that although a feminist epistemology should be an epistemology for knowledge makers, "all women" are not to be included "in the epistemology [I] sketch here--although [I] believe that all women are knowledge makers and should be respected as such...in this academic anthology, it makes sense to speak of (and to) academic knowledge makers" (p. 265).[4] Yet, she quickly asserts the seriousness of the problem of academic feminists' cognitive authority as an academic elite, and the importance of being, "...accountable for our work...to all women, children, and men and responsible in particular to our sisters doing activist work outside the academy..." (p. 268).

Next, she suggests that in the construction of a descriptive epistemology "for feminist knowledge makers, particularly in the academy" (p. 269), she will set out the units required ["what is known, how it is known, and "who knows" (Nelson, 1990)]. In the course of discussing the units, she clearly underlines the dangers of academic isolation which reveals her understanding of the contradiction academic feminists find themselves in, and which they need to address: "The academic disciplines are constructed to preserve themselves, their bailiwicks, and the careers and authority of

their members" (p. 273). She uses this observation to make the point that communities or "social worlds" should be taken as one of the units of epistemology. (It appears from her discussion at this point that she might suggest that some of these "social worlds" consist of grassroots women, but she does not). She then introduces a theory of epistemology as a contest process among "knower/doers" as social worlds (p. 276), which would seem to suggest the possibility of a dialogue (albeit articulated here as a "contest") among different communities of "knower/doers," including grassroots groups, in a collective effort to create and test knowledge. But in her vision, the nonacademic "social worlds" of "knower/doers" are activists, bureaucrats, experts, and individuals experiencing the social problem at hand; not grassroots groups theorized as potential epistemological communities. She even goes so far as to theorize further about "social worlds", remarking for example that "the relations among members of a social world are founded in communication, whether it be face-to-face activity with little talk (pick-up basketball, manual work), regular meetings, electronic mail, telephone calls, or form letters" (pp. 280-281). The social worlds are described as coming together to struggle things out (Strauss et al. 1964, p. 377) in an arena. But again, Addelson has a limited conception of social worlds. In the women's movement, the social worlds she mentions include national women's organizations that meet in Washington to strategize, other women's organizations like The National Council of Jewish Women, and individuals who receive mailings, make contributions, and go on marches. Grassroots groups of women like the predominantly Black PTA parents, who are organized out of concrete needs to address

problems of everyday oppression, but not specifically labelled "feminist groups," are left out. Groups like the African-American parents' are not imagined as a possible "social world," though in fact the group established its own special forms of communication, such as the telephone network, and its own forms of knowledge production.

The final irony in Addelson's article is in her two main points. One is to find ways for feminist epistemologists to "do their work responsibly" and be accountable. Her solution for this problem is for feminist epistemologists to become "more fully engaged with the social worlds we serve..." (p. 286). The other is to create a new social organization of knowledge in an effort to construct a feminist epistemology (p. 287). The solution for this problem is for "feminists within the academy [to] institute new and responsible practices of making knowledge...It requires dissolving the walls of the academy to learn how to make knowledge with the women we serve" (p. 287).

Creating a new social organization of knowledge is right on the mark in terms of re-situating feminist epistemology in ordinary women's experience. Doing this might lead feminist epistemologists to take part in everyday concrete struggles with their neighbors ("becoming more fully engaged with the social worlds we serve") instead of serving as the knowledge producers for others who passively receive it, and it might put academic feminists in contact with grassroots epistemological communities to produce knowledge together ("learn[ing] how to make knowledge with the women we serve"). Yet, Addelson's solutions are in large part compromised or limited by her assumptions: "all women" as knowers are deliberately left out of the

framework for restructuring feminist epistemology, and academic feminists are assumed to be the principal (feminist) knowledge-producers, the "social worlds" that interact for knowledge-production do not include grassroots community groups in the midst of struggles, the process taking place in the arena is construed as a "contest" rather than a dialogue, and the "social worlds" are not viewed as having their own epistemologies, so that a dialogue of epistemologies is not made theoretically possible.

Despite this rather critical assessment, I believe Harding, Addelson, and other feminist epistemologists have made a major contribution to feminist theory in general and to the development of an emancipatory participatory research project. Standpoint epistemology in particular is very useful in providing a theoretical justification and explanation for the development of knowledge grounded in marginalized grassroots groups' experience--in providing a theoretical 'vehicle' for transporting subjugated knowledges from the hinterlands to the foreground where they can be legitimated as valued standpoints from which to view the world. My point is rather to demonstrate that feminist methodology developed along one primary route to a place where, though changes in direction are needed, and though the need is recognized, theorists are unable to find their way. The field seems to require a perspective and grounding from outside academic feminist epistemology, in everyday friendship discourse among non-academic feminists, though in dialogue with academic feminists and academic theory (as exemplified in the parents' process). Traveling this road not taken could provide a much needed source of dialectical reflection for feminist theory, making feminist theorizing once again appropriately responsive to the needs of women and

providing needed tests for theoretical validity in concrete praxis.

In another recognition of the problems in the field of feminist methodology, Stanley and Wise (1993) look back at the early 1980s, when their early work (Stanley and Wise, 1983) was one of a number of important works appearing in the field (e.g., Roberts, 1981; Bowles and Klein, 1983), and notice "[the massive contradiction...for feminist social science [that]...[o]n the one hand feminist social science proclaimed its egalitarian impulse, but on the other it seemingly welcomed a very traditional and elitist notion of 'us', the theorizing researching elite (feminists), and 'them," the experiencing researched (women)" (1993, p. 7). "...[F]eminist academics seem to see a difference between themselves and other women. They seem to be saying 'I can see and conceptualize the truth about things, but those poor falsely conscious morons can't" (1993, p. 19). Stanley and Wise fail, however, to relate these observations to two trends taking place at the same time, namely the decline of consciousness raising and the institutionalization of feminism within academic institutions. In this omission, Stanley and Wise are similar to many other theorists. But clearly, the development of academic feminism, like the parallel developments of Black and ethnic academic programs, created a separation between academic feminism and the rest of the feminist movement. In my view, that separation proved problematic for knowledge production. In the case of academic feminism, the effects of the separation were compounded by an incompatibility between the assumptions embedded in consciousness-raising and those of academic life.

Consciousness raising was a peer-based egalitarian self-study process whose

ideals, at least, aspired to erase traces of hierarchy, elitism, and vanguardism. As Cassell put it, "Women's liberation ideology...is...based on principles of...self-actualization, radical egalitarianism, consensus decision making, and a ban on leadership, structure, and the exercise of power" (Cassell, 1977, p. 146). In feminist consciousness-raising groups, women as peers shared and investigated their own and each others' experiences, and collectively worked to define the nature of the "problem without a name" (Friedan, 1963) in ways that did not separate the "knowers" from the "known," whereas academic feminism identified academic feminists as the "researchers" and other women as the research objects, and took on itself the major responsibility for defining patriarchy. The academic stance, separating researchers from researched, exemplified not only an unequal status hierarchy in terms of personal relations between the now "elite" academic feminists and other women now implicitly defined as non-knowers, but also the objectification of those women serving as research objects by women now socially defined as the "researchers."

In terms of the politics of epistemology, the shift from consciousness-raising groups to the academy as the primary context for knowledge production also shifted both the standpoint and discourse from which women's oppression was viewed and articulated: from the home and community in non-academic discourse to the academy in academic discourse. Formerly, women's everyday lived experience had served as the grounds for theorizing in consciousness-raising, so knowledge production reflected collective needs both to understand their predicaments and to develop theory: "...the challenge to begin with our own experience arose out of our frustration at the

realization that women's lives, their history, their struggles, their ideas constitute no part of dominant science" (Mies, 1991, p. 66). The perspective, or standpoint for academic feminist research could be referred to as "from below and within", (in terms of academic women's inferior status both in the society at large and in the academy), but not below or within the experiences of those groups of women whose material circumstances were outside the academy. This shift created a danger of academic feminists imposing their view of reality both on women as their research objects and for women as their "clients". The danger did not go unnoticed (e.g., "As researchers, we must not impose our definitions of reality on those researched" [Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, 1991, p. 425]), but no redirection occurred within feminist methodology to ground theorizing amidst nonacademic women engaged in struggles of their own. (There are some exceptions to this generalization, among them Mies [1983]).

Consciousness raising also diverged from academic norms by emphasizing the importance of process and the unity of theory and practice, with women working collectively to appropriate their experience to create feminist theory in contradistinction to the mode of organizing employed by the male Left[5], in which theory was treated more as a product created by 'experts' to be appropriated. As Addelson's (1993) analysis reveals, however, feminist academics began to reproduce the separation and hierarchical relations that had previously been rejected, to accept their role as the theory-producers for other women, and to implicitly accept the theory-as-product concept, in which theoretical products can be either appropriated by

others, or applied to situations. The language in Addelson's argument above illustrates this trend convincingly. This eventuality in the development of academic feminism (as in Black Studies, Latino Studies, etc.) can be viewed as an outcome of contradictions within the state, in that once the state is forced to provide spaces and to legitimate women, African-Americans, etc. as knowledge-makers within the university so that subordinated knowledges can be developed, it necessarily controls and restricts their development by isolating them behind the walls of the academy.

Solutions at the Level of Technique

Several theorists have offered solutions to the alienation of feminist theory from concrete struggles that depend on changes in research techniques, venues, methods, or subject matters. I discuss some representative examples.

Michelle Russell

Michelle Russell (1981), an African-American feminist, noticed these problems early on, and noted a third major negative transformation, the situating of the production of feminist theory in a context where ordinary women cannot influence its development. In her "Open Letter to the Academy" she asserts that she "would like to widen the discussion to address the responsibility of women's studies to those outside the academy's walls: the mass of women whose lives will be fundamentally affected by the version of reality developed there, but who, as yet, have no way of

directly influencing your direction" (p. 101). Russell did not suggest reviving consciousness-raising groups, but instead related that she decided to "pursue work outside of the institutional framework of a university" and called for forms of "engaged scholarship" outside academic institutions which would "...require[s] meeting...people on their turf, and on their terms. Interaction. Not 'lectures to' or 'reading about' or 'observations of'--but working with...over kitchen tables. In employment offices where women stand and wait for hours..."(p. 108). In her words, "the academy has become a mental ward...its social isolation is technologically masked by the availability of WATS lines, xerography, and archives. But these act only as surrogates and substitutes for direct contact with the world" (p. 101).

Russell's implicit alternative model was for academy-trained feminist theorists to remain grounded primarily in the community context. They would work together as peers with women the community to produce knowledge, rather than doing research on these women from the academy. Although her model is not very well elaborated, it provides a theory of feminist methodology in which feminist and non-academic women join together in community-based contexts for producing knowledge that is grounded in their shared experience. It is a model which resolves the subject/object dichotomy, avoids the elitism of academic feminist research models, grounds the standpoint for research in women's everyday lives, and allows for "ordinary" women to be theorists as they were in consciousness-raising groups. Russell's model exemplifies an alternative direction feminist methodology might have

taken alongside the one taken by academic feminist methodology. Her assumption, however, seemed to be that for academy-trained feminists to be engaged in this form of feminist methodology it was necessary to leave the academy altogether, a view which I do not share.

Russell contributes to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework by developing an alternative model in response to the institutionalization of feminism in academia in order to re-ground feminist theory (and by analogy, other emancipatory theories as well) in the "field." However, her model does not attach value to the development of feminist theory as a specialized activity or to the role that might be played in that development by women who have academic training and expert knowledge. My work with the parents illustrated to me the value of "expert" academic knowledge, both empirical and theoretical, in our grassroots struggle at hand; "expert" academic knowledge helped inform our work, both our work to define the problem at hand, and to change our material circumstances.

Russell's model can be viewed as an attempt to recapture at least some of the primary characteristics of consciousness-raising lost when feminism became institutionalized in academia. But in order to reclaim some of consciousness-raising's most important functions and characteristics, her alternate model for feminist methodology requires intellectuals to leave the academy altogether. Russell's model provides a partial solution to the contradictions of academicization that even today might serve as a useful guide for some academy-trained intellectuals working with an emancipatory participatory research framework outside academic institutions.

Stanley and Wise

Liz Stanley and Sue Wise approached the problems of contradiction and alienation in another way. Their central concern was the objectification of research subjects into object status. In their 1983 work, the personal politics of this objectification seemed most problematic: ("Treating people as research objects is morally unjustifiable" [Stanley and Wise, 1983, p. 170]), but they were also clearly concerned about epistemological implications as well: "Feminism seems to be slipping back into what it previously rejected--'expert' analytical and theoretical approaches which are seemingly divorced from personal experience" (p. 56). Their 1993 retrospective states that epistemological concerns about objectification had always been primary: "Breaking Out was a book about feminist epistemology" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 5), a statement that may reflect the dominance of standpoint epistemology as the current statement of feminist methodological concerns.

The principal problem Stanley and Wise name as the one requiring a distinctly feminist methodological approach was the power relationship between researcher and researched:

> A number of things worried us about the methodological basis of this emergent feminist [empiricist] research programme. Predominantly it adopted a 'scientific' stance towards women as the objects of its study; it ignored the power dimensions of the research relationship and of writing as perhaps the key means by which academic feminists establish authority and power over 'Women'; it drew a line between the lives of women, to be researched, and the lives of feminist researchers, which remained hidden from analytic scrutiny" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 3).

They propose a particular solution to the objectification problem--self-study.

While recognizing that "feminist research...com[es] from within a tradition which expressly supports self-examination and sharing..." (Stanley and Wise, 1979, p. 361), they choose the self-study rather than the grassroots participatory aspect of the consciousness-raising method of knowledge production as the centerpiece for their alternative feminist epistemology. They reject suggestions for participatory forms of doing research with women rather than on them because they seem to assume that participatory research is positivist research.[6] They do not consider that involved women coming together might act as a collective epistemic community and develop a non-positivist participatory research methodology, but instead seem to have defined in a rather individualistic way the insight from consciousness raising that "'the personal', direct experience, underlies all behaviors and actions...we need to reclaim, name, and rename our experiences...we need to construct our own social science...which starts from women's experience and women's reality" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 164). Stanley and Wise seem to have "forgotten" the collective and grassroots-based nature of the consciousness-raising process, in which non-academic women participated equally with one another in the analysis of their experiences. Instead, they take the personalistic aspect of consciousness-raising and develop it into a feminist methodology that primarily involves the researcher herself doing "experiential research" on herself.

Stanley and Wise's solution is to remove researchers from the power relationship implied in doing research on other women by turning their own experiences into the data. In this way, they appropriate the self-reflective method of

analyzing experience from consciousness raising, and avoid the personal and epistemological dangers of the hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched. They advocate that feminist researchers do research on problems such as "mental illness, rape, depression, women at work, etc" (1983, p. 50), doing so in a way that focuses on the development of the researcher's feminist consciousness in the process of doing the research rather than on the subject matter per se. "...[I]t is one's own experience which should form the basis of both theory and practice" (1983, p.82). In short, the strategy is for the researcher to subject her own experience to analysis. "Feminist research as we envisage it would..explore the basis of our everyday knowledge as women, as feminists, and as social scientists. And as we do this we must make available to other people that reasoning procedures (sic) which underlie the knowledge produced out of research. We must tap our experiences of 'being a researcher', and as feminist researchers with feminist consciousness this involves tapping our experiences as feminists in any social situation" (1983, p. 167).

This solution is largely based on a foundation of ethnomethodological theory (Schutz, 1972; Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1959; Garfinkel, 1967), including the following ideas, which Stanley and Wise refer to: a concern with everyday life and face-to-face relationships; a non-deterministic view of behavior that takes social relations as socially constructed through interaction; and a view that social structure is to be found within interactions and events. Perhaps even more importantly, they adopt ethnomethodology's emphasis on using data as a topic rather than a resource; "...we shouldn't use people's accounts as unexplicated data...we

should examine in close detail how people provide us, themselves and others, with the accounts that they do" (1983, p. 140). And finally, they accept ethnomethodology's concept of members[7] and their ability to interpret reality: "The 'scientific, factual' nature of social science accounts is rather to be seen as yet one more interpretation of what goes on. These accounts aren't 'the' truth, or even necessarily preferable to the accounts provided by members" (1983, p. 141).

In this model, research is conducted among one's own oppressed group, studying a problem relevant to the group to help represent "the experiences of oppressed people." Stanley and Wise assert that the best way to understand how oppression actually occurs is to "represent reality as it is experienced and lived by the people that we carry out research on," but they believe that no one can or should represent anyone else's experiences. Accordingly, "[T]he best alternative is that researchers should present analytic accounts of how and why we think we know what we do about research situations...The only way we can avoid overriding other people's understandings...is not to attempt to present these....Instead, we should...present[ing] ourselves and our understandings of what is going on, by examining these in their context" (1983, p. 168).

It is perhaps important to note two principal personal factors that influenced the direction Stanley and Wise's model took. The first was their experience as radical lesbian feminists of being discredited by marxist feminists; they felt "ignored--or rather silenced," and believed that heterosexual feminist theory did not adequately account for the experiences of lesbian feminists (1993, p. 3): from this position, they

suggested "grounding feminist sociology in researching the everyday and analysing the researcher's constructions of this [reality]" (1993, p. 13). The second was their experience of receiving obscene telephone calls as a result of having posted their telephone number as a hotline for lesbians. The experience of having to deal directly with being lesbians in this way gave them the idea of researching their own experiences.

Stanley and Wise see their approach as a way of continuing the consciousness-raising process that allows the reader to apprehend the researcher's consciousness-raising experience as she interacts with the research situation. Stanley and Wise's approach might be viewed as a specialized form of "action research" in which the researcher reports on her own experiences resulting from the action of doing research on a topic relevant to the oppressed group of which she is part. This method makes the researcher's experiences of oppression available to the reader not in a 'hygienic' form, but as they were being processed by the researcher's consciousness (p. 153). Interestingly, even though Stanley and Wise choose to develop feminist methodology by returning to experience as the source of theorizing, they do this by presenting their own consciousnesses rather than using a more dialectical model based on social interaction, in which members of a group of knowers reflect on each other's consciousnesses.

Even though Stanley and Wise's model seems rather narrow in focusing only on the researcher's consciousness, the researcher's changing consciousness in the midst of a research experience (especially if that experience is one of community-

based struggle) seems a valuable source of data. The prisoners were not so self-reflective as to write about their own changing consciousnesses as a result of their attempts to do research on the "system." The parents' group, however, did compare individuals' experiences as a way to understand its oppression, and in presenting my work with both the prisoners' and parents' groups, I find it useful to employ Stanley and Wise's approach as part of my overall description. I have tried to write myself in in a way that shows some of the changes in my own consciousness as the work proceeded.

Shulamit Reinharz

Shulamit Reinharz describes her book (1979) as providing the background documentation of the "existential-methodological problems [she] encountered in the process of becoming a female social scientist" (1983, p. 162). She refers to the methodological approach she developed from her experiences reported in the book as "experiential research." Her approach is similar to Stanley and Wise's in that both focus on the researcher's self-reflection on her own experiences as she engages in the research process. However, the two models are "feminist" in two very different ways: Stanley and Wise's goal is to find a better way to investigate the oppression of women, whereas Reinharz's approach is feminist in style, but completely divorced from an emancipatory project. It is feminist only in its aspiration to draw on attributes, values, or characteristics often associated with women, such as "interdependence" (rather than "autonomy"), a "humanistic and egalitarian"

orientation (rather than "androcentric"), and "egoboundary diffusion" (as opposed to "ego-enhancement") (1983, p. 169). For example, she describes her research model as "broad and inclusive" rather than "limited, specialized, specific, and exclusive," as it is in "conventional or patriarchal" research models (1983, p. 171).

It is the "experiential" aspect of her approach that makes a short discussion pertinent here. Reinharz, like so many other feminist researchers at the time, drew on the consciousness-raising process as an inspiration; like many others, she appropriated only a part of that process for her feminist methodology. For Reinharz, as for Stanley and Wise, it was the analysis of experience that became the central focus: "Feminism...has confirmed the experience of women which had hitherto been denied as real or important. The recovery of experience began in the 'consciousness-raising' or 'rap groups' in which women talked to each other about their individual experiences and analyzed them communally" (1983, p. 167, emphasis in original).

For Reinharz, just as for Stanley and Wise, the examination of experience is primarily an activity of the individual (academic) researcher. She quotes Parlee: "One hallmark of the feminist research in any field seems to be the investigator's continual testing of the plausibility of the work against her own experience" (Parlee, 1979, p. 130). Reinharz, like Stanley and Wise, seems to have "forgotten" that in consciousness-raising, the self-reflective process took place in a context that allowed collective understandings to be constructed from several individuals' experiences.[8] "Experiential research," for Reinharz, has several referents: examining the researcher's "own previous experiences, intentions, hopes, prejudices to try to

understand what s/he is bringing to the study;" studying the researcher's feelings and ideas as ("a clue to the nature of the social environment being studied," p. 175); grounding oneself as a researcher in the experiences of the settings in which the researched people live; and posing self-reflexive questions to oneself as a researcher such as "How have I grown in this process?...what is the impact of my age, race, sex, or other attributes on what I believe I have found?" (p. 183). Reinharz credits Alvin Gouldner's reflexive sociology that responded to the need for 'heightened self-awareness among sociologists' (Gouldner, 1970, p. 25), Blumer's symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1962), Berger and Luckman's (1967) theory of the social construction of reality, and humanistic philosophy (Roche, 1973) for providing the theoretical antecedents for her experiential research model.

A great deal is lost in this "bracketing" of the analysis-of-experience characteristic of consciousness-raising, with both epistemological and political implications. First, although both Stanley and Wise and Reinharz do experiential research from a standpoint in women's experience, that standpoint is from the experience of the individual woman as researcher[9] rather than from the collective experiences of a group. Second, the dialectivity, or reflexivity built into the model consists mainly of the researcher's own within-person dialogue and does not include dialogue among several people. As a method for checking validity, Stanley and Wise's and Reinharz's models remove an important part of the dialectical process found in consciousness raising. Third, the empowerment aspect of the consciousness-raising process that provided a way for women to discover commonalities in their

experiences of oppression drops completely out of both models. Finally, in Reinharz's model, the experience of women's oppression has been "bracketed" completely out of field of interest, and the analysis of experience is relegated to reflection on the research process, which need not have anything to do with oppression/resistance.

Reinharz's model provides another example of a feminist methodological approach that draws on consciousness-raising. While the analysis of the researcher's experience is central to her method, and the analysis of participants' experiences was indeed an important part of consciousness-raising, Reinharz's has little resemblance to a feminist emancipatory process in which the methodology for research is strongly and dialectically related to a movement for social change. As such, it represents an extreme example of how the institutionalization of feminist research within the academy influenced the development of feminist approaches to research, which attempted to recapture important essences of the consciousness-raising process, but did so in ways that foreclosed the participation of "ordinary" non-academic women grounded in the everyday experience of oppression in a collective research process.

Ann Oakley

Ann Oakley's essay, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms," (1981) takes as its central problematic the objectification and subordination she sees as inevitable in research interviews of women. Helen Roberts, in her introduction to the essay, refers to the problems of feminist researchers whose "orientation is towards the

validation of women's subjective experiences as women and as people" (Roberts, 1981, p. 30). This "orientation," of course, can be traced to consciousness-raising, a process that provided a way for women to validate their subjective experiences. Oakley's thesis is that the standard research protocol "...assumes a predominantly masculine model of sociology and society...which cannot and does not work in practice, [and that] this lack of fit between the theory and practice of interviewing is especially likely to come to the fore when a feminist interviewer is interviewing women..." (p. 31). Her model primarily addresses the politics of the interpersonal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. The consciousness-raising process resolved the contradiction by establishing equality among all the participants as equal participant-researchers of each other's experiences, but the contradiction reemerged when feminist academic researchers became integrated as research faculty in higher academic institutions.

Oakley critiques the sociological interview by noting the inherent contradiction or tension between the interview as a friendly conversation and as a "pseudo-conversation." "The contradiction at the heart of the textbook paradigm is that interviewing necessitates the manipulation of interviewees as objects of study/sources of data, but this can only be achieved via a certain amount of humane treatment" (p. 33). She then quotes from several sources on sociological interview (Goode and Hatt, 1952; Selltiz, 1965; Moser, 1958; Sjoberg and Nett, 1968, and Galtung, 1967), all of which suggest the importance of maintaining professional distance during the interview. She summarizes the central characteristics of the "standard" interview

paradigm that she experiences as especially problematic: "a) its status as a mechanical instrument of data-collection; b) its function as a specialised form of conversation in which one person asks the questions and another gives the answers; c) its characterisation of interviewees as essentially passive individuals, and d) its reduction of interviewers to a question asking and rapport-promoting role" (pp. 36-37). She suggests that this standard paradigm expresses a "masculine social and sociological vantage point" rather than a "feminine" one in that it "appeals to such values as objectivity, detachment, hierarchy, and 'science'", and construes as "errors of poor interviewing...subjectivity, involvement, [and] the 'fiction' of equality..." (p. 38), and she holds that the masculine model has become socially defined as the correct one, because 'inevitably the dominant group is the model for 'normal human relationships'..." (p. 39).

Drawing on her experiences interviewing women about motherhood, Oakley proposes correctives intended to free process of the exploitive, manipulative, and other aspects of the standard model that reinforce the objectification and subordination of the interviewee by the interviewer, and to improve the quality of knowledge obtained through the interview as well. The principal correction would be the transformation "of the interviewer role...from being a data-collecting instrument for researchers to being a data-collecting instrument for those whose lives are being researched" (p. 49). In this model, the value of "sisterhood" derived from the women's movement, which "demanded that women re-evaluate the basis of their relationships with one another," (p. 48) is to be integrated into the research process so

that intimacy and reciprocity between interviewer and interviewee are maintained in authentic, rather than pseudo-conversation. One of the principal ways such authentic communication can be supported in the interview, according to Oakley's experience, is for the interviewer to answer as authentically as possible, the questions posed to her.

Oakley's article does not go very far in creating an alternative interview paradigm. It mainly demonstrates the contradictions that emerged in her interviews in the mothering study and develops a partial critique and partial alternative. To the extent that hers is an alternative model for feminist methodology, it assumes a standard model for research in which professional academic researchers do research on other people, who are the research objects; it is not a model that shares very much with consciousness-raising. I include it here because its emphasis on the need to rethink the interview process rings true with my experience with the parents' group. In my experience, and in my observation of the prisoners' process, the egalitarian and reciprocal relationship in those contexts between interviewer and interviewee was marked by some of the same factors she noted, establishing the interview conversation as an authentic rather than a pseudo-conversation (especially answering all kinds of questions asked by the interviewee without a professional distancing reserve). Although Oakley's formulation addresses only a single research method and does not propose the integration of (researched) women as equals in a consciousness-raising-like collective participatory experience, it can contribute to an emancipatory participatory research framework. It can do so by validating guidelines for

interviewing within an emancipatory participatory research project or describing the reciprocal nature of the interviewer-interviewee relationship that characterizes friendship discourse, thereby elaborating a theory of knowledge based on the "knowing-a-person" paradigm.

Attempts at Fundamental Solutions to the Problem of Alienation

Maria Mies

Maria Mies presents an approach to feminist methodology that goes a long way toward addressing the alienation that so easily arises between academic feminists and the grassroots. In her view, feminist research is part of the larger wholes of feminist praxis and a feminist theory of science, and both of these are closely linked to a social (the women's) movement: "The aim of the women's movement is not just the study but the overcoming of women's oppression and exploitation. It is for this reason that the present-day relationship (in which science is viewed as apolitical) must itself be revolutionized. Such a revolutionizing cannot be carried out solely within the realms of purely scientific self-reflection, as Critical Theory has attempted it...To this revolutionizing there belongs a social movement" (Mies, 1991, p. 61). For Mies, the development of Women's Studies programs is only part of the struggle; a feminist science requires a process and form of organization that goes far beyond the academy: "To fight for the involvement of more women in the scientific organizations and for the integration of women's issues into the existing disciplines cannot be our only goal.

It is much more a matter of creating an alternative scientific paradigm which supports emancipatory movements..." (1991, p. 65).

Mies, like many other advocates of feminist methodology, supports the integration of subjective experience into the research process. Like other feminist methodologists, she also links positivism with "repressive," anti-emancipatory research. Her criticism is based on the "scientific relevance and ethical justification" of positivism (Mies, 1983, p. 119). She cites three principal influences on her critique of positivism: her own experience as a teacher and researcher in a Third World country where she "realized that the research situation as such, due to colonialism and neo-colonialism, was a situation of clear dominance between research subject and research object, which tended to lead to distorted data" (p. 119); criticisms raised in the United States by anthropologists like Horowitz (1976), Wolf and Jorgenson (1970), and Huizer (1973) about the use of research as a tactical tool in counter-insurgency (as in Project Camelot); and the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism. Mies' own historical social analysis of the discovery of women as a "target" group for research as a result of the institutionalization of Women's Studies helps place the feminist critique of positivism in further historical perspective; as Mies relates, women scholars were forced to deal with a split existence inasmuch as they shared the privileges of the (male) academic elite, but still suffered from patriarchal oppression. This contradiction made it painful for women scholars to suppress their own feelings of being oppressed when studying other women.

Some more recent works in feminist theory are not so dismissive of positivist

methods, suggesting instead that different paradigms for knowing can sometimes provide complementary views of reality (e.g., Nelson, 1993). This view may represent a fundamental change in feminist theory brought about by standpoint theory. The research object in standpoint theory is not women so much as it is the world (other objects) from the standpoint of women. The reaction to the objectification of women fades when women are not the research objects. My own experience with the prisoners and parents squares better with Nelson's view than Mies', because these groups found positivist methods useful as part of an overall emancipatory participatory research approach, especially for investigating oppressive social institutions such as the prisons or schools. The grassroots groups found it entirely appropriate in such research situations to maintain some political-epistemological separation between the subjects and objects of knowledge. Despite this difference in view, I find Mies' theoretical overview of the relationship between feminist praxis, feminist research, the development of feminist science, and the feminist movement useful for developing a better theory of emancipatory participatory research. Her fieldwork praxis also offers some useful guides for the practicing academic intellectual.

Mies' suggestions for methodological innovations cover several general areas. She suggests taking some areas as subjects for research that had previously been ignored or neglected: "women's social history, women's perception of their own situation, their own subordination and their own resistance" (1983, p. 121). But her principal contribution is to provide seven "postulates" or methodological guidelines

for feminist research. These postulates express very broad methodological concerns; most are not easily reducible to specific concrete suggestions for alternative research. They are, however, quite comprehensive in their ability to relate the praxis of the academic researcher to an emancipatory movement, and they nicely complement and overlap the prisoners' approach in several respects.

The postulates are: 1) The replacement of the standard research paradigm's "value-free" position of "neutrality and indifference towards the research objects" with "conscious partiality which is achieved through partial identification with the research objects" (p. 122). 2) The replacement of the view from above with the view from below. (Her description of this postulate also includes a concern to alter the "vertical" relationship between the researcher and her research "objects" and a concern for research to serve the interests of the dominated rather than power elites.) 3) The replacement of "uninvolved 'spectator knowledge'...[with]...active participation in actions, movements and struggles for women's emancipation" (p. 124). (In this postulate, Mies asserts the importance of academy-based women "help[ing] those involved in these struggles to discover and develop their own theoretical and methodological potentials...integrat[ing]...research into social and political action for the emancipation of women..." [p. 125].) 4) The principle that one must change a situation to be able to understand it. Mies advocates that studies should be "an integral part of an emancipatory struggle" and that researchers "focus their research on the processes of individual and social change" (p. 126). 5) The understanding of research as a process of "conscientization", which is defined as

"learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970). (In Mies' interpretation, the essential element of conscientization--which will be discussed extensively in a section below--is that "The study of an oppressive reality is not carried out by experts but by the objects of the oppression." This shift requires that academic researchers "give their research tools to the people" and "inspire them to formulate the problems with which they struggle" [Mies, 1981, p. 126]). 6) The accompaniment of the study of women's individual and social history with Freire's problem-formulating method. Mies advocates that feminists appropriate women's history as an important part of developing a collective feminist consciousness, and that feminist scholars aid in this endeavor by helping women document and analyze their struggles, by remaining in close dialogue with nonacademic women, and by sharing their research results with other women, rather than treating the results as their own property. 7) The collectivization of women's experiences. Feminist scholars should select research areas "to take up issues that are central to the movement" and shift research emphasis from interviews to group discussions, so as to get more diversified information and overcome the structural isolation of women in families (p. 128).

Mies reports in a later article (1991) that the postulates generated a debate among feminist scholars, and that this "contribut[ed] to a renewed academicization of the whole complex of problems, which is precisely what the Postulates wanted to lead away from" (Mies, 1991, p. 61). In her retrospective discussion of the postulates, and in response to the critiques of her postulates, Mies suggests that her aim for the

postulates was primarily to develop a methodological approach that would work toward a feminist theory of science, a methodology that would produce a different relationship between science and social movements. The postulate that generated the most discussion seems to have been Postulate 4, which called for the researcher's "participation in social actions and struggles, and the integration of research into these processes..." (1991, p. 63). Mies cites an article by Anet Bleich and colleagues, among others, as criticizing this postulate on the basis that "it is the acquisition of knowledge which is the unequivocal goal of science..." (Mies, 1991, p. 63). Mies suggests, in response, that her goal is "to create a new definition of science from within the context of the women's movement, a feminist science [which] leads to a new definition of the whole constitution of society...because [standard social science]...leaves in darkness and detaches from societal processes those who are exploited and ruled over..." (1991, p. 65).

From the perspective of building a framework for emancipatory participatory research, six of Mies' points are perhaps most important.

"Consciousness-raising" research and "action research." Some writers have promoted a sharp distinction between these two types of feminist research, and there are writers who favor each approach to the exclusion of the other. Mies' response, like mine, is that various emancipatory research approaches should be used to critique and inform each other, to show both the limits and possibilities of each. She considers both forms of research to be part of emancipatory praxis and notes the

creative tension between them--a tension I recognize as having served the prisoners' emancipatory research model well. She criticizes the supporters of consciousness-raising as the proper research approach by noting that "many feminists believe that in order to overcome women's oppression it will suffice for a change to take place in the consciousness of as many women (and men) as possible. They often overlook the fact that women and men are bound by existing social relationships which do not simply change as consciousness does...the separation of consciousness raising from the struggle for an alternative to oppressive conditions...leads to a dead end" (1991, p. 68). She also critiques the supporters of action research to the exclusion of consciousness raising: "...[N]ot every 'action' is de facto emancipatory practice...'action' will frequently end in circular, fruitless activism and further...it can provide no thoroughgoing change in consciousness if it is not translated into an ongoing praxis" (1981, p. 68). She sees the existing understanding of action research as overly narrow and pragmatic; for Mies, action research refers to a broader methodological framework rather than just a "narrowly defined set of aims of a particular group..." (1991, p. 67). In sum, Mies suggests a dialectical relationship between these two methods as part of an overall praxis, but recognizes that she has no particular specific model in mind for how to do so--simply her own experiences of praxis and research and a general goal that would require a "reunification of life and though, action and knowledge, change and research" (1981, p. 68).

The academic researcher's role in field work. Mies addresses the issue of

how, with what purpose, and under what circumstances the researcher enters the "field" to do research; her point concerns the intersection of the researcher's work, which is embedded in her own interests and in academic theory and discourse, and the interests and needs of those dominated and oppressed people in the research "field." Mies' fieldwork with rural women workers of Nalgonda in India began with a research proposal on the relationship between capitalist development and patriarchal structures (Mies, 1991). Obviously, this topic represented the intersection of her own intellectual interests and a theoretical theme in academic discourse. Yet, it was also a topic whose exploration might likely be of interest to women in the area. To create a research context in which there was a high probability of finding a common interest in the research project, Mies decided to choose her research location in an area where there was already a movement among the rural working women.

My work with the parents provides a related, but also somewhat different organizing principle. I noticed that an emancipatory struggle was taking place even though it did not have a high profile--one does not have to go far, when oppressive conditions exist, to find contexts where there is a small resistance. Unlike Mies, I would search for low-profile, unorganized, resistance in everyday struggle, and enter there. To me, such a context appears to hold more promise for generating an authentic dialogue to produce a "people's" perspective on domination. A movement with minimal formal organization would appear to me to maximize the potential for developing a complex understanding of power relations and for the subjugated knowledge of marginal perspectives to rise to the surface because it has not yet been

stamped with the ideological view adopted by a movement organization.

To narrow the gap between the academic project and the grassroots, and to maximize the possibility that the project might further the interests of the local women, Mies and her research assistants employed a very highly participatory form of research, in which they "lived in their settlements, some of the time in a hut which had been placed at [their] disposal...slept on the clay ground like them...accompanied the women as they worked in the fields and took part in some of the work [them]selves" (1991, p. 71). This allowed, as Mies reports, the local women to get to know the researchers and provided a context for a mutual project to emerge. The context allowed the researchers to gain "partial identification" with the local women ("which does not mean...that I attempt to 'become like' the 'other' women, since this is not possible..." [1991, p. 70]), so that the "view from below" was more available. The living arrangement also allowed the local women to carry out "their research on us" (1991, p. 71). Conversations between the researchers and local women combined built the kinds of knowledge one needs for friendship and for jointly creating knowledge about the subject being studied. The local women asked the researchers "whether we were married, had children, what we did during menstruation, whether all the women in my country wore trousers, why we were doing this research, what a woman rural worker earned in my country, whether the people there also ate rice, etc...." Mies refers to these conversations as "reciprocal research" (1991, p. 71).

The range and substance of topics Mies reports, the intermingling of personal and "serious/political" conversation, and the method of feeding back research results

during conversation are strikingly similar to the kinds of interchanges I had with both the prisoners and the other parents, although of course the topics were different. I too responded to questions about my personal history, beliefs, circumstances, experiences, and culture as well as about the substance of our common research project (and my own research project, as it developed into the present work on an emancipatory participatory research framework). Throughout my experience with both the prisoners and the other parents, we freely intermingled "serious" subjects with personal ones; our investigations of each other explored emotional and intellectual territories simultaneously. Mies also notes that she passed on to the women the results of the research in these conversations, "which meant during the course of the research process itself." This, too, squares with my own experiences with the prisoners and other parents: the formulation of the research topics, the gathering of the data, analysis of the data, production of research results, and feedback of results were accomplished as part of a unified process. The process was carried forward through the forms of discourse associated with friendship, and these friendship conversations were based simultaneously on a mutuality of personal and political interests. I think it is noteworthy that my own experiences with these kinds of conversations included Puerto Rican men (who participated in similar personal/political conversations among themselves both before I arrived on the scene, and in my absence) and two African American men who were part of the parent network as well. Mies' experience documents that despite a difference of language, culture, class, and ethnicity, she was able to engage in these same kinds of

conversations with Indian women. Collins' (1990) work further elaborates this possibility in forms of conversation among Black women.

My experience with the parents is similar to, but also different from, Mies' model. By living in the same general neighborhood as the other parents, I automatically shared many of the same oppressive experiences with the school that the other parents faced. Even though I was non-Black and a newcomer, these experiences, which came as part of my life in the neighborhood, enabled me to understand much more about the situation than if I had just been visiting, even if I were to have visited for a very long time. I do not propose that emancipatory participatory research requires all of its academic participants to live in the "field," however. Mies' model is instructive because it provides, like other critical anthropological fieldwork models (e.g., Huizer, 1979), a way for academic intellectuals to experience first-hand to some extent the oppression suffered by those in the research context, and to come to know the local people in some depth.

Taking the system as the object of investigation. Although Mies does not make a separate point of this in her list of postulates, it may be the most singularly important characteristic of emancipatory participatory research. In Mies' project, as in both the prisoners' model and the parents' model, the academic intellectuals and grassroots people together (the outsiders and the insiders; those from the dominant Western social group and the dominated group) took as the principal object of study the "system", as the prisoners would say--and both had an authentic personally and

materially-grounded interest in investigating that system as a system of domination. Mies relates that "I found myself initially in a de facto commodity and power relationship with these women. I was being paid to do this research and to deliver some corresponding goods, namely research results. For their part, the rural women workers could not come to Germany and carry out research on us here. They were fully aware of the asymmetry of this relationship...[but] that which had brought us together on the one hand and separated us on the other, namely class, imperialism, skin color, language, and education was not total, [and] that there was a level at which we as women were similarly affected by patriarchal relationships and...there was room in this research process to talk with each other about this common experiential perspective" (1991, p. 80).

The prisoners' model is the most extreme case of taking the system as the object of investigation, as there were no "outsiders" (as for example, ethnographers) involved in doing research on "them", making "them" research objects; instead, "we" were clearly doing research together on the "system". There could be a "we," because although we were not oppressed equally or in the same ways, the prison as an institution exercised its domination over me as well as the prisoners. Furthermore, resisting the prison's domination was in our mutual interest as we were all attempting to maintain our class, and expand the bilingual education program.

In the prisoners' model, we also did research on ourselves and each other within the broader project of doing research on the system. The point was to get to know each other in a way that would provide personal support and build solidarity

and to use each other's experiences to learn about the system in order to change it (for example, by learning how oppression "played on the mind," we could strengthen each other in resistance while building a social analysis of our personal responses to oppression). In the parents' process, we also investigated (did research on) each others' experiences in ways that were integrated into the everyday friendship and struggle process. In Mies' model, even though the researchers were not permanent residents of the area, researchers and local women could build on a common material and personal interest (in Mies' case, being a woman seems to have been the primary common material bond). Mies used the common bond as a basis for a research process that could unite the "outside" researchers and the indigenous women in a common project. Her research "on" the women, and their research "on" her was not alienating because it was part of a relationship in which all participants had an interest in the subject matter--oppression--and a common friendship discourse to investigate it.

Mies does not relate the extent to which she attempted to incorporate her own reflections or others' reflections on living in the "field" into the research process. As Stanley and Wise and Reinharz point out, the researcher's reflections on her own experiences can serve as data. My experience with the prisoners' and the parents' groups was that the data from my own ongoing reflections on my experiences in the "field" were an important part of the research process. By exposing my own reflections about my experiences to the prisoners and the other parents, I provided a source for comparison that stimulated further discussion and helped us test our conclusions. It would have been interesting for Mies to have included a discussion of

this issue, as my own experiences suggested that my not being Black in my work with the parents' group provided a useful additional perspective.

A postscript to Mies' project with the Indian women bears a striking resemblance to my work with the parents. Mies reports that

> toward the end of the research phase in this area we arranged, together with the organizers of the movement, several weekend camps for the rural workers. Through these camps we hoped not only that women from other villages would discover something about us and our research, but above all that women from the individual village-Sangams, who to this point were organized only at the village level, would be able to exchange their experiences with women from other villages, i.e. that they would carry out 'research' among themselves...The women were so enthusiastic about these regional women's conferences that they wanted to make them monthly occurrences...When I visited the women again at the end of 1980 they had already arranged 13 such conferences..." (1991, p. 72).

Mies reports that the women

> used these conferences not only for discussion but also for the solution of class and man-woman problems,... e.g. the problem of violent men. Whereas, during our first year there, male violence was treated more or less as an everyday thing which women simply had to accept, one year later it was being hotly debated in the whole area, by women and men...Because the women now had a communications network and an organization of their own and because their consciousness had changed over the course of time, they now said, 'Enough is enough. The beatings must stop'...These women had still never heard anything of feminism and were naturally unaware of the slogan, 'the personal is political.' Yet...they put out the following call: If this man does not apologize, he will receive no more food or water from any woman in the village..." (1991, pp. 72-73).

My experience was similar with the parents' network, though not so dramatic: the conversations and investigative process between and among the parents continued both within the local PTA and diffused to another three schools beyond the network, and the parents in the three schools organized to prevent a vocational high school program from being imposed instead of the academic one they wanted.

Mies' points about building links between the academics and grassroots groups and about studying the system together emphasize the possibilities for a productive dialectical relationship between the praxis of a grassroots group and academic researchers. When the researcher and the grassroots group perceive themselves to be trying to understand a common problem, and when the research relationship is grounded in a friendship relationship in which "ordinary" conversation can carry the research forward in a spirit of reciprocity relations, the separations that occur in traditional ethnography or sociological research can be worked out in a unified praxis. This kind of formulation transforms "participation" in research into a joint emancipatory praxis bringing academic researchers together with marginalized groups in friendship and common goals.

Developing various kinds of emancipatory knowledge. Both Mies' model and the framework that emerges from the prisoners' process emphasize that there are several forms of emancipatory knowledge. These models contrast with the formulation of emancipatory knowledge in critical theory, which focuses only on the development of critical consciousness from "false consciousness." Fay defines a theory of false consciousness as one that contains an 'ideology critique,' that is, demonstrates how the self-understandings of a group of people are false or incoherent; explains how group members came to have and maintain these misunderstandings; and contrasts them with an alternative, superior self-understanding (Fay, 1987). For both Mies and the prisoners, this kind of knowledge (which is also the kind of

emancipatory knowledge Freire' "conscientization" develops) is only one of several kinds of emancipatory knowledge. Mies devotes only a short paragraph to this point, which I consider to be extremely important. Those she lists are: "practical, everyday knowledge, political knowledge and political 'skills,' self-recognition (insight into one's own strengths and weaknesses), critical knowledge (the ability to critique ideologies, to demystify), theoretical knowledge (the ability to relate empirical findings to theoretical statements), [and] social knowledge (the ability to relate to others, to recognize social conditions and develop social relationships with 'others'" (Mies, 1991, p. 77). The prisoners' process generated similar kinds of emancipatory knowledge.

Integrating research, organizing, education, and therapy. Although Mies does not make this point explicit, the description of her work with the Indian women makes clear that her process shared this characteristic with the prisoners' approach. Mies makes clear that the women supported each other, organized, and educated each other in a process that flowed easily in, around, and through research. From Mies' description, it appears that her research project had a beneficial effect on the group in terms of each of these elements as well as on the research project itself. She does not explicitly refer to overlapping processes however, except to refer in a description of another fieldwork project to the process as an "emancipatory research and learning process" (1991, p. 77).

Research by grassroots intellectuals. Finally, it is noteworthy that in Mies's model, as in both the prisoners' and parents', the grassroots participants are not elected, appointed, or paid indigenous leaders with personal or organizational interests that might be in conflict with the other people with whom they share oppressive conditions. Mies does not mention making a conscious decision to work with such individuals, for me, it has become a conscious decision to base emancipatory participatory research on the experiences and theorizing of people whose analysis reflects self-reflection and second-person knowledge, relatively free from personal power considerations or organizational agendas.

Despite the above characteristics of Mies' theory and experience, she does not make the claim that all academic researchers contributing to what she refers to as "feminist science" and I call "emancipatory participatory research praxis" should use the methods she describes. There is room in Mies' model for specialized research as well: "This is not to say that every single women's research project must have direct relation to an action...The integration of research into emancipatory processes also calls...for theory work, for work in libraries and archives, and also for the study of history. However, in contrast to dominant science, this theory work is not an end in itself but remains linked with the social movement for the liberation of women" (1991, p. 68).

Contrast with my emancipatory participatory research model. Though Mies' approach bears a great deal of similarity to the prisoners' and parents' process, a

subtle difference of perspective between the two may have important implications for the development of other such indigenous research projects. Mies' approach still has somewhat of a "we-they" frame of reference, in which "we" (academic researchers) bring research to the group, or initiate a research process. A textual analysis is revealing. For example, as she relates the story of how the process with the women began, she says, "Alongside this direct participation in their lives we (emphasis not in original) also carried out many discussions" (1991, p. 71). Later, she remarks, "Not only had we carried out some research, but also our Indian sisters...had succeeded in integrating it into their movement" (1991, p. 73).

By contrast, the prisoners viewed themselves as "doing research" as an integral part of life, a natural and very necessary part of life if living under oppressive conditions; research was a method of survival and hopefully a way to create a better society. "Doing research" was not a mysterious process to be accomplished by experts with special methods; "research" was an everyday affair in which one explored the "what", "how", "why", "where", and "who" of oppression: What is it (the system[s] of oppression)? How does it work? Why does it exist? Where is it? Who are the actors involved? But "research" was not only a way to define power as oppression; it was also a way to become empowered. So research from the prisoners' perspective was an organic and vital part of their methodology both to resist oppression and to empower themselves by creating (as well as they could, on their very small scale) a better society.

My work with the prisoners predisposed me to see the possibility that other

groups of people experiencing oppression might similarly "do research" as part of their life, and in fact, upon arriving at our new home and experiencing through our daughter, the abominable school conditions, I found exactly what I expected: other parents already doing what the prisoners would have called "research" on the "system"--a process which I could easily join as another parent. Although their "research" process was not systematic, and lacked any self-definition as "research" (unlike the prisoners') the parents had compared notes, expressed exasperation, and explored various theories about what was wrong at the school with each other, and were clearly doing what the prisoners' group would have called research. Like the prisoners, the parents' actions and dialogue with each other manifested their research process. I tried to build on the already-existing process using the method for knowledge production already at hand--friendship discourse--but with a mutually understood underlying common purpose to deal with the oppressive school conditions.

Mies appears not to assume (or to search for) an indigenous research process already in place that she might join. Perhaps this is a moot point, insofar as Mies' own work is concerned, because she seemed able to engage successfully in a similar kind of personal/political conversation that brought about a reciprocal interpersonal research process grounded in everyday friendship conversation. In addition, the women's preexisting involvement in a movement may have made it easier for Mies to have these kinds of conversations. Moreover, some (academic) researcher initiative in structuring discussion seems inevitable if the researcher is connected to academic discourse. I took some initiative, as well, with the parents in structuring the content

of conversations, as recounted in Chapter 8. In terms of developing a framework for emancipatory participatory research, however, I think the distinction between seeing the research process as something already occurring and seeing it as something the academic researcher initiates probably has important implications for the amount of control the indigenous group has in defining the research problem and for issues of alienation and domination in the research relationship.

Mies' model is similar enough to the prisoners' and parents' methods that it helps identify some characteristics of those methods that might not otherwise be apparent. And similarly, subjecting Mies' model to critique from the perspective of the prisoners' process reveals aspects of her model that bear some additional thought for developing an emancipatory research praxis involving both grassroots groups and academic intellectuals. Perhaps the most critical discrepancy between Mies' model and my own project is that Mies' project is specifically feminist, whereas my own seeks to find a way to accommodate what Collins refers to as the "matrix" of domination. Neither the prisoners' model nor the parents' method resolved this issue, but Collins' work below provides a possibility for its resolution.

Mies concludes that:

> if we want to move forward with the women's movement...then it is important to understand that feminist research cannot simply be inserted into or added onto the old scientific paradigm, a scientific paradigm that everywhere splits up living unities into life and thought, politics (morality) and science...If we want to arrive at a new paradigm, a new horizon of thought and action in which these divided and subjugated parts coexist in a living, which is to say integrated, relationship, then we must "go beyond" the old paradigm, transcend it. But this cannot be a going beyond in thought alone, in a permanent academic discourse. A new horizon of thought must be one which...can be and then indeed is experienced. Without a change of position

> in the concrete sense, without praxis, without a change in the status quo, no new horizon will become visible" (Mies, 1991, pp. 81-82).

I read Mies' conclusion as an argument, from a feminist perspective, for an integration of academics' and non-academic grassroots marginalized groups' praxes; for a dialogue of epistemologies; for a science that is based on an unalienated form of praxis in which research occurs as part of everyday life by people struggling to understand and resist domination; for a research process primarily conducted through extended friendship-based conversation among the local residents and between the residents and the academic researcher; for academic researchers to integrate their own study of the "system" with the ongoing "studies" oppressed grassroots people are already conducting; and for accomplishing this praxis in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, of equality and democratic principles. It is not practical nor desirable that all of academic research be fully integrated in this way with grassroots groups' daily activities. Specialized research requiring academic expertise should continue to be developed. Marginalized groups can appropriate and test the validity of these products in circumstances where an emancipatory participatory research approach is taking place.

Mies' work has in common with my own an interest in the connections between knowledge, consciousness, and social change. We also share interests in what constitutes emancipatory knowledge; in legitimating subjugated non-academic grassroots people as "knowers;" in determining how emancipatory knowledge can be developed as a cooperative and dialectical process among and between oppressed grassroots groups and academy-based intellectuals; in the complementary roles of

knowledge produced in everyday conversation and specialized academic knowledge in this process; in the importance of grounding emancipatory knowledge and action in the material conditions of people's lives who are experiencing oppression; in the need to make use of informal settings as spaces for a reciprocal education, research, and friendship (therapeutic) process to occur; and in the importance of friendship and a friendship paradigm for producing emancipatory knowledge and contributing to social change.

Patricia Hill Collins

Collins' work, Black Feminist Thought (1991) is concerned with many of the issues discussed above, although she frames her work in terms of two components she sees as peculiar to Black feminist thought: "its thematic content and its epistemological approach [which] have been shaped by Black women's outsider-within stance and by our embeddedness in traditional African-American culture" (Collins, 1991, p. 16). Bringing Collins' work into dialogue with Mies' attempt to develop feminist science and my effort to develop a framework for emancipatory participatory research praxis may help further elaborate each of our own projects; my goal here, however, is to use both Mies' and Collins' approaches to inform a framework for emancipatory participatory research.

In these terms, a primary contribution of Collins' work is to furnish a legitimation for and an elaboration of an epistemology grounded first in the everyday discourse, artistic expression, and political action of Black women as "mothers,

othermothers, and grandmothers"--women whose experiences are grounded in a culture and history of oppression and resistance, and whose epistemology produces a "bottom-up" process and perspective. Closely associated with this primary contribution is her theory of the relationship of academic Black feminist intellectuals to these grassroots Black women intellectuals in producing Black feminist thought. Collins' and Mies' work are mutually complementary in terms of my project. Collins' work details a "bottom-up" epistemology and a theory about the relationship between Black feminist intellectual work and grassroots Black women that supports a blended epistemology for Black feminist thought. This work lacks, however, a description of the actual processes academic Black women might employ to do research with grassroots Black women in order to help in the latter's struggles and to develop better academic theory of domination. Mies lacks Collins' level of theory, but she describes a process of interaction among grassroots women and academic researchers to produce knowledge useful to both. As a whole, Collins focuses more on Black feminist thought in terms of a theory of thought than as a form of praxis to produce knowledge, whereas Mies' approach is rather the opposite. Yet, implicit in Collins' work, especially in her theory of Black feminist epistemology, is a theory of research praxis that is grounded first in the non-academic experience of grassroots intellectuals. Both Mies and Collins are concerned about where academic intellectuals fit in relation to marginalized groups in the production of knowledge, but their work addresses different aspects of this issue.

Collins' theory of Black feminist thought consists of several interrelated

elements or building blocks. Those which appear to be most pertinent to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework include: 1) the legitimation of non-academic Black women as knowers; 2) a definition of the Black feminist standpoint; 3) a description of the non-academic epistemological spaces or contexts for the development of Black women's thought; 4) the assertion of the importance of everyday personal non-adversarial conversation as the basis for the formation of Black women's epistemic community and as a method for assessing truth claims; 5) the special importance of storytelling in a Black women's epistemology; 6) the concept of voice (the individual as part of the community) in Black feminist thought; 7) the convergence of Afrocentric and feminist standpoints in Black women's thought in a "both/and" orientation; 8) the incorporation of an ethic of caring in Black feminist epistemology; 9) two levels of knowledge as important for Black feminist thought (fundamental and specialized); 10) a different theory of consciousness and the relationship of Black feminist intellectuals to such consciousness; 11) reclaiming the history of Black women's activism in everyday resistance centered around family, education, children, and community as well as in formal organizations; and 12) the view of domination from the Black feminist perspective as overarching, and consisting of interlocking forms of oppression. I discuss these points roughly in the order above.

Reconceptualizing who is an intellectual. Collins identifies the Black feminist intellectual tradition as one that developed largely outside academic institutions.

Identifying the thought of nonacademic Black women as "intellectual" holds implications for the definitions of a Black feminist standpoint and of Black feminist thought. Referring to the historical suppression of Black women's ideas, Collins asserts the importance to feminist theory of the class and racial origins of most of contemporary feminist thought. Referring in part to the position of many Black women as domestics in white households, she observes that "As outsiders within, Black women have a distinct view of the contradictions between the dominant group's actions and ideology...an outsider-within stance functions to create a new angle of vision on the process of suppression." Collins suggests that:

> Assuming new angles of vision on the definitions of who can be a Black woman intellectual and on what constitutes Black feminist thought suggests that much of the Black women's intellectual tradition has been embedded in institutional locations other than the academy...African-American women not commonly certified as intellectuals by academic institutions have long functioned as intellectuals by representing the interests of Black women as a group and fostering Black feminist thought...Reclaiming the Black women's intellectual tradition involves examining the everyday ideas of Black women not previously considered intellectuals." (Collins, 1991, p. 15).

Throughout her work, Collins explores the many ways to reclaim Black women's intellectual tradition. Part of this effort consists of discovering and analyzing the written works of Black women who were able to publish their work; part consists of using new theoretical frameworks to analyze the written works of Black women. Of most interest here, however, is her assertion of the need to look to the spaces in women's everyday lives as contexts for intellectual work to occur: "The ideas we share with one another as mothers in extended families, as othermothers in Black communities, as members of Black churches, and as teachers to the Black

community's children have formed one pivotal area where African-American women have hammered out a Black women's standpoint" (Collins, 1991, p. 15).

By demonstrating the implications for feminist theory of the suppression of Black women's thought as well as the possibility for reclaiming and gaining access to "ordinary" Black women's intellectual traditions, Collins provides some theoretical grounds for generating knowledge based in part on "ordinary" (non-academic) Black women's theorizing. Her view values "ordinary" people's intellectual work as important to the broader theoretical project of developing an overarching theory of domination that takes into account a matrix of interlocking oppressions--a view that is particularly available from Black women's everyday lives.

Standpoint. Collins emphasizes the importance of the standpoint from struggle as integral to the development of an Afrocentric epistemology. Her identification of this aspect of Black women's thought helps make clearer the connections between the prisoners' process, Black women's thought, and a framework for emancipatory participatory research. The standpoint from struggle is more than one "from below," which implies a consciousness of oppression, but does not necessarily imply that there is consciousness of power as a relation, and of resistance taking place. Collins differs from most academic discussions of standpoint because of the concept of the standpoint from struggle. For example, the activist anthropological fieldwork literature often refers to the need to substitute the "view from below" (e.g. Gedicks, 1979), and feminist standpoint epistemologists refer to the importance of the feminist standpoint

to address the issue of epistemic privilege in the construction of objectivity (e.g. Alcoff and Potter, 1993), and to express the perspective of women from everyday life as problematic (e.g. Smith 1987).

Collins' emphasis on struggle as a crjtical element in a Black women's standpoint reflects her "Afrocentric" perspective. Collins reports that Africanist analyses agree on two fundamental elements of an Afrocentric standpoint (Okanlawon, 1972): "a core of African value system that existed prior to and independently of racial oppression...[and] a common experience of oppression [based in colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination]" (Collins, 1991, p. 206). These factors contributed to an Afrocentric consciousness that in turn formed the basis for an Afrocentric epistemology (Turner 1984).

Collins details how Black women intellectuals' work has historically taken place in situations outside the academy in contexts where they were involved in the actions of everyday life, which for them implied activism: "Denied positions as scholars and writers which allow us to emphasize purely theoretical concerns, the work of most Black women intellectuals is influenced by the merger of action and theory....Anna J. Cooper, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church...produced analyses of Black women's oppression and worked to eliminate that oppression. The Black women's club movement they created was both an activist and an intellectual endeavor" (Collins, 1991, p. 29). Hooks (1981) and other contemporary Black women intellectuals (e.g. Brown, 1986) are described as carrying on this standpoint from struggle. Collins observed that, "Black women's work and

family experiences and grounding in traditional African-American culture suggest that African-American women as a group experience a world different from that of those who are not Black and female. Moreover, these concrete experiences can stimulate a distinctive Black feminist consciousness concerning that material reality (Collins, 1991, p. 24)."

The standpoint from struggle is based largely, but not exclusively in everyday resistance, in Black women's thought: "Strategies of everyday resistance have largely consisted of trying to create spheres of influence, authority, and power within institutions that traditionally have allowed African-Americans and women little formal authority or real power (Collins, 1991, p 146)." This standpoint in everyday life outside formal institutions reflects Black women's structural exclusion from institutions on the basis of both their race and gender. Black extended families, and the African-American community as a 'family' are given as examples of settings where Black women's standpoint in struggle is forged.

Collins elaborates the meaning of the standpoint from struggle. As she observes, "Black women cannot afford to be fools of any type, for our objectification as the Other denies us the protections that white skin, maleness, and wealth confer" (Collins, 1991, p. 208). In Black women's experience, knowledge that is key to survival is most highly valued, and can be considered wisdom, to be distinguished from "knowledge", which signifies "book learning." Collins quotes Smitherman as suggesting that "from a black perspective, written documents are limited in what they can teach about life and survival in the world. Blacks are quick to ridicule 'educated

fools,'...they have 'book learning' but no 'mother wit,' knowledge, but not wisdom" (Smitherman 1977, p. 76). The standpoint from struggle produces "wisdom essential to the survival of the subordinate" (Collins, 1991, p. 208). Regrettably, from the perspective of my particular project, Collins does not elaborate the kinds of valued wisdom that would be elevated to the status of "knowledge" by legitimating Black women as knowers and their epistemology as a system for producing knowledge. Knowledge required for survival is certainly "emancipatory knowledge." The prisoners produced several kinds that I was able to identify, having been able to observe closely and participate to some extent, in their struggle. An analysis of the various kinds of Black women's wisdom needed for survival would serve as a valuable contribution, to the project of Black women's thought, to a feminist science (Mies' project), and to a framework for emancipatory participatory research.

In characterizing the relationship between Black feminist intellectuals and grassroots Black women, and between academic Black feminist knowledge and grassroots Black women's knowledge, Collins makes a distinction with examples, which bear on this issue. She states that,

> The relationship of Black women intellectuals to the community of African-American women parallels the existence of two interrelated levels of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The commonplace, taken-for-granted knowledge shared by African-American women growing from our everyday thoughts and actions constitutes a first and most fundamental level of knowledge. The ideas that Black women share with one another on an informal, daily basis about topics such as how to style our hair, characteristics of "good" Black men, strategies for dealing with white folks, and skills of how to "get over" provide the foundations for the taken-for-granted knowledge (Collins, 1991, p. 30).

Although she emphasizes Black women's value on wisdom, her description of

the kinds of knowledge "growing from our everyday thoughts and actions" does not mention the kinds of knowledge, or indicate the kind of shared investigative process that elaborates the relations of the struggle (something parallel to the process I found the PTA parents participating in). Naples, however, (1988) documented through interview the kind of "everyday" investigative process I found operative among the parents in my neighborhood. Naples reports,

> Vera Green currently directs the same education program in East Harlem where she was first employed as a bus driver in 1969. She is separated from her husband and has one child. Her mother fought for other children's rights as well as her own. Vera said that her mother, who is still very active in her neighborhood, is 'a frontier community person'.
>
> > Back in the '50's and early '60's, when it wasn't right for parents to get involved, to be in the classrooms, and to question teachers, and to be there, you know, she was doing that. She'd ask: "Why? How come? Give me a reason. I won't take it just because you said it. Show it to me. Let me read it so I can understand what's going on, because verbally that doesn't connect with me. Let me read it then I can really understand." And she used to do things like that. And I used to look at her, and she got her point across. And she would fight for different children's rights, and she didn't care whose child it was. (Naples, 1988, pp. 121-122).

This kind of wisdom and investigative process represents the standpoint from struggle of Black community women.

The observation that Black women's standpoint is grounded in struggle gains additional significance both for the development of a theory of standpoint and for a theory of Black women's critical consciousness when Black women's experiences are contrasted with those of white women with respect to Black women's taken-for-granted perspective from struggle and white women's typical lack thereof. As I reported in the chapter about the parents' research, there was never any question that

the African-American parents were aware of racism; racial oppression was a taken for granted fact of life, a matter of history, and as a general concept did not need to be discovered or "unveiled". Connecting that general experience to more specific theories about how race and class relations are embedded in concrete mechanisms of oppression did require a discovery (or research) process, but this problem of consciousness is quite different from the problem of a consciousness that is not aware of the reality of oppression, whether by racism or patriarchy.

Friendly spaces and culturally grounded methods for Black women's intellectual work. A major contribution Collins makes to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework is her description from inside Black women's culture of the spaces and methods for producing Black women's thought. I found that similar kinds of social spaces made it possible for the prisoners' and parents' groups to find voices and to produce (subjugated) knowledge. Collins notes that, "Extended families, churches, and African-American community organizations are important locations where safe discourse potentially can occur" (Collins, 1991, p. 95). A primary location where Black women have found a safe space in which to find a voice

> involves Black women's relationships with one another. In some cases, such as friendships and family interactions, these relationships are informal, private dealings among individuals. In others, as was the case during slavery (D. White 1985), in Black churches (Gilkes 1985), or in Black women's organizations (Gilkes 1982; Giddings 1988), more formal organizational ties have nurtured powerful Black women's communities...In the comfort of daily conversations, through serious conversation and humor, African-American women as sisters and friends affirm one another's humanity, specialness, and

right to exist (Collins, 1991, p. 97).

It was the space provided by friendship that I found to be the most important context for theorizing in my work with the parents. Collins reports that the social science literature on Black women's friendships is scarce. My own work, together with that of Collins and Mies (who clearly saw the importance of friendship as a basis for producing knowledge, although she did not theorize about how the dynamic of friendship discourse benefited the participatory research process), suggests the importance of research on non-white women's friendships.

Of central importance in Collins' development of a Black feminist epistemology is her observation that Black women's dialogue contains a method for redefining standards for objectivity or truth. She attributes much of the importance of dialogue in Black women's thought to Afrocentric tradition: "Not to be confused with adversarial debate, the use of dialogue has deep roots in an African-based oral tradition and in African-American culture (Sidran 1971; Smitherman 1977; Kochman 1981; Stanback 1985)... (Collins, 1991, p. 212)." The importance of dialogue is described in terms of the discourse expectations in African-American culture for both verbal and nonverbal interaction between speaker and listener, and the expectation that "for ideas to be tested and validated, everyone in the group must participate. To refuse to join in, especially if one really disagrees with what has been said is seen as 'cheating' [Kochman 1981, p. 28] (Collins, 1991, p. 213)." Collins develops this further: "For Black women new knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation from other individuals and are usually developed through dialogues with other

members of a community" (Collins, 1991, p. 212).

Black feminist thought, according to Collins, contrasts epistemologically with positivism in its reliance on "connectedness" rather than separation. She attributes the Black feminist methodology of "connectedness" to the convergence of women's ways of knowing and the Afrocentric tradition. Afrocentric tradition emphasizes the importance of connectedness and the use of dialogue, in that "People become more human and empowered only in the context of a community, and only when they 'become seekers of the type of connections, interactions, and meetings that lead to harmony' (Molefi Asante 1987, p. 185). Belenky (1986) also considers connectedness a primary element of feminist epistemology.

Dialogue can be viewed from the perspective of Black women's thought as an important form of life and method of knowledge production rooted in Afro-American tradition and providing a foundation for emancipatory praxis. Collins refers to Hooks: "Dialogue implies talk between two subjects, not the speech of subject and object. It is a humanizing speech, one that challenges and resists domination, (Bell Hooks (1989, p 131)." It is interesting to note that "talking back" (Hooks, 1989) (a form of interactive dialogue) occurs because of the history of oppression as part of Afro-centric culture; an "outsider" may therefore be unnecessary to stimulate the dialogue process among African-Americans (in contrast to the conclusion one might draw from Freire's work among Latin American peasants). Certainly my experience with the Black parents showed me that dialogue was already taking place, and proceeded easily even in my presence, although I was clearly an "outsider." Mies'

description of the conversations among the Indian women and between the researchers and Indian women do not reveal the kind of detail that would make it possible to draw comparisons between the Indian women's dialogue and Black women's dialogue. Collins' discussion of the importance of dialogue in Black women's thought makes an important contribution to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework by showing how at least among African-American women, there is a form of dialogue and knowledge production already existing that has a deeply emancipatory potential. The Latino men seemed to use a similar dialogue-based methodology and epistemology, which poses some theoretical questions that might be explored further elsewhere, for example: Is Latino culture similar to African-American culture in terms of this epistemological feature, and if so, what are the implications for the place of a Freirean "conscientization" process in either or both cultures?

Almost in passing, in discussing the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims and the role of connectedness in Black feminist epistemology, Collins mentions the importance of storytelling in Black women's thought. She refers to the oral traditions of storytelling in African-American culture with special reference to the importance of the hearer in dialogue (Tate 1983, p. 91). Although Collins does not make a major point about storytelling as an important method for producing Black feminist knowledge, my experience suggests to me that storytelling is, in fact, a very important element in friendship-based emancipatory dialogue, at least for the Latino male prisoners and the African- American parents, both men and women. Exchanging stories about everyday life's happenings provided the data for much of

our discussions. It strikes me that storytelling in Latino and African-American culture, however, may not bear much resemblance to storytelling in middle class white culture; my own middle class white background did not anticipate the hearer, or expect nearly so much response as I found with wither the Latino prisoners or the African-American parents.

Among both the Latino men and the African-American parents, storytelling was a form both of conversational discourse and a method for producing knowledge. Theory was built during the story, as the interactive process brought complementary fragments of other stories into the original storyline, making the story a joint project, reflecting a complex of stories and story-fragments rather than a single story line (as is my experience in middle class white culture). In terms of developing an emancipatory participatory research framework, the use of storytelling can be explored as an indigenous way of developing many kinds of emancipatory knowledge and creating solidarity, a model for developing a complex multi-standpointed view of reality that is at once a synthesis of many parts brought into a single "story" and a form that allows each story to exist on its own. This form of storytelling is beginning to emerge in the literature, e.g. Hooks and West's Breaking Bread (1991). What I suggest here is that storytelling provides a participatory form of emancipatory discourse that is already widely available to grassroots people as social actors and grassroots intellectuals, and that Collins' work helps show how dialogue as embedded in storytelling has its own epistemological system for validation, which elaborates storytelling's possibility as an epistemological process.

Collins suggests that the ethic of caring is a fundamental element of an Afrocentric epistemology (along with concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, and the ethic of personal accountability). I briefly discuss the ethic of caring here, because it rings true with my experiences with both the prisoners and African-American parents, and helps elaborate the emancipatory participatory research framework in a way that does not emerge from other academic models. Collins lists three aspects of the ethic of caring: the emphasis on individual uniqueness, the appropriateness of emotions in dialogues, and the capacity for empathy, and suggests that these also express a convergence of feminist and Afrocentric experiences. It is the appropriateness of emotions in dialogues that I find most interesting, in that, as Collins says, "Separate knowers try to subtract the personality of an individual from his or her ideas because they see personality as biasing those ideas. In contrast, connected knowers see personality as adding to an individual's ideas and feel that the personality of each group member enriches a group's understanding" (Collins, 1991, p. 217). In my own work, connectedness and the ethic of caring through friendship made the whole process possible. The knowledge-production process required that the network of knowers was connected by an ethic of caring as well as a common set of intellectual and social problems to solve.

The relationship of Black feminist intellectuals to grassroots Black women. Collins' theory of the relationship between Black feminist intellectuals to Black

women in the community at large is based on her analysis of the kinds of knowledge that each produces, and the relationship of these kinds of knowledge in the production of Black feminist thought. She suggests that

> The commonplace, taken-for-granted knowledge shared by African-American women growing from our everyday thoughts and actions constitutes a first and most fundamental level of knowlege...Experts or specialists who participate in and emerge from a group produce a second, more specialized type of knowledge....Black women intellectuals...are these specialists, and their theories clarifying a Black women's standpoint form the specialized knowledge of Black feminist thought. The two types of knowledge are interdependent (Collins, 1991, p. 30).

Thus, the nature of the specialized knowledge of Black feminist intellectuals seems be their ability to articulate knowledge Black women already have: "...Black feminist thought articulates the taken-for granted knowledge shared by African American women as a group" (Collins, 1991, p. 30). In turn, this knowledge "aim[s] to infuse Black women's experiences and everyday thought with new meaning by rearticulating the interdependence of Black women's experiences and consciousness...(Collins, 1991, p. 32)."

In Collins' formulation of the relationship of Black feminist intellectuals to grassroots Black women, the intellectuals' role is not viewed as "raising the consciousness" of Black women in the community. Instead, they are seen as articulating the standpoint and consciousness of Black community women who are the primary producers of Black feminist thought. Black feminist intellectuals' role in the production of Black feminist consciousness is, rather, to "stimulate consciousness by rearticulating consciousness" (Collins, 1991, pp. 31-32).

The process through which this is to be accomplished is left largely

unexplicated. For example, it is not clear to what extent or whether Collins means to imply that sometimes specific groups of Black women in the community might work with Black feminist intellectuals in some concrete way to develop knowledge and consciousness that would benefit that particular group. It appears that her concept of the relationship between Black feminist intellectuals and Black women is intended more as a description of historical reality than as a model for fieldwork practice. Nevertheless, Collins emphasizes the importance of a "collaborative enterprise". Such an enterprise requires a close relationship between the academic intellectuals and Black community women: "One danger facing African-American women intellectuals working in these new locations [e.g., universities] concerns the potential isolation from the types of experiences that stimulate an Afrocentric feminist consciousness--lack of access to other Black women and to a Black women's community" (Collins, 1991, p. 31). Collins does not suggest how to resolve this problem. My own work, and Collins' own observations about dialogue, the standpoint from struggle, and Black community women's knowledge as wisdom suggests that at least part of the answer lies (for a Black feminist epistemology) in forms of dialogue between Black feminist intellectuals and Black community women as they work side by side on community issues affecting them all.

Toward a broader theory of domination. Collins suggests, following Hooks (1981) that a Black feminist perspective reconceptualize the oppression of Black women in terms of an overarching theory of domination. In this way, the Black

feminist perspective explicitly takes into account not only patriarchy as a form of domination, but also race and class: "Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression. By embracing a paradigm of race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance" (Collins, 1991, p. 222). This stance "assumes that each system needs the others in order to function" (Collins, 1991, p. 222). According to Collins, a Black feminist theory of domination requires a comprehensive theory of domination. She quotes Bell Hooks, for example, as saying, "To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels --sex, race, and class, to name a few..." (Hooks, 1981, p. 194).

Collins notes that this stance is significantly different from standpoint approaches in that standpoint theory rests on the concept of a privileged perspective, taken from Marxist theory:

> Viewing an Afrocentric feminist epistemology in this way challenges additive analyses of oppression claiming that Black women have a more accurate view of oppression than do other groups. Such approaches suggest that oppression can be quantified and compared and that adding layers of oppression produces a potentially clearer standpoint [Spelman 1982]. One implication of standpoint approaches is that the more subordinated the group, the purer the vision of the oppressed group. This is an outcome of the origins of standpoint approaches in Marxist social theory...Ironically, by quantifying and ranking human oppressions, standpoint theorists invoke criteria for methodological adequacy characteristic of positivism (Collins, 1991, p. 207).

Collins asserts that no one standpoint can depict the true or objective picture (in contradiction to the concept of the "privileged" epistemological standpoint).

Instead, she suggests that, "Dialogue and principled coalition create possibilities for new versions of truth" (Collins, 1991, p. 37). For Collins, a method to begin building such coalition-based multi-standpointed versions of the truth from a Black feminist perspective would begin with "Black women at the center of a community based on coalitions among autonomous groups" (Collins, 1991, p. 36). Included in the coalitions would be a "wide range of groups, each with its own distinctive set of experiences and specialized thought embedded in those experiences", and the dialogues would "explor[e] how relations of domination and subordination are maintained and changed, parallels between Black women's experiences and those of other groups..." (Collins, 1991, p. 37).

Collins's concept of a dialogue among a wide range of groups with Black women's experiences at the center provides a model for creating a method to develop a theory of domination that better "understands" the interlocking structures of oppression than models oriented around any one standpoint. Grounding a theory in Black women's concrete experiences, but providing a way for specialized research and theory (not to mention other oppressed groups' experiences) to enter the dialogue remains a problem for practice. Questions still remain: Who is involved in the actual dialogue? To what extent and in what ways can Black women from the community participate in the dialogue to create theory? What is the role of the Black feminist intellectual, if any, in bringing research and theory to Black women, in addition to articulating and interpreting Black women's standpoint?

A partial solution to this meta-methodological problem in Black feminism

would appear to be for Black feminist intellectuals to work in concert with Black women from the community on concrete projects related to the struggles embedded in their everyday experiences. A standpoint from the everyday struggles of Black women in their communities would seem to offer a good view of the convergence of various systems of domination, especially bureaucracy. From the perspective of attempting to create an emancipatory participatory framework for research, such a project would make an important contribution. However, from this perspective, research grounded in the experiences of other subordinated groups would complement the overall project. I conclude this section by referring to Alice Walker, whom Collins quotes, "...Black writers and white writers seemed to be writing one immense story, with different parts of the story coming from a multitude of different perspectives...Walker refines this epistemological vision: 'I believe that the truth about any subject only comes when all sides of the story are put together, and all their different meanings make one new one. Each writer writes the missing parts to the other writer's story. And the whole story is what I'm after' [Walker, 1983, p. 49] (Collins, 1981, pp. 36-37).

NOTES

1. Feminist consciousness-raising groups were primarily a feature of the white feminist movement. Black and other "minority" feminists who were alienated from the mainstream feminist movement have shown the importance of relying on their own indigenous forms of discourse and expressing their own voices, (e.g., Lorde, 1984). As Collins (1990) writes, "much of the best of Black feminist thought reflects this effort to find a self-defined voice..." (p. 94). Nevertheless, although the term "consciousness raising" is typically applied to a practice used primarily by white women, it is instructive to note that Collins' analysis of epistemology and Black feminist thought also gives great weight to the importance of dialogue, tracing the

roots of the method to African-based oral tradition. According to Collins, "[African American] individuals develop their knowledge claims through dialogue...African-Americans reject the Eurocentric, masculinist belief that probing into an individual's personal viewpoint is outside the boundaries of discussion..." (pp. 217-218). Clearly, though Black feminists may not have described themselves as being involved in consciousness-raising groups, they found social spaces to find voice and speak freely. Collins cites extended families, churches, and African American community organizations as spaces serving this function in which Black women can "construct independent self-definitions" (p. 95).

2. As a non-philosopher, I find it easier to think of the concept of second-person knowledge as a "knowing-a-person" paradigm.

3. Presumably, conversation is not the only necessary basis for the kind of interdependent relationship necessary for the creation of "second persons." Concrete joint activity would also appear to be a necessary basis, and indeed an important aspect of friendship relationships. This additional basis is not developed in Code's work, which, like other works in philosophy, tends to deemphasize practical action and to conceive of praxis as primarily intellectual work.

4. The contexts do not exist for theorists like Addelson to speak of and to non-academic feminist knowledge-makers. My point is that she and most other feminist epistemologists do not take this state of affairs as problematic.

5. "The history of the male Left demonstrates that it has no concept of process. As a result, it has been unable to understand the fundamental unity of theory and practice. This separation of theory and practice surfaced in a very traditional form at the conference. 'Theory' meant reading and studying a few sacred texts...'Practice,' in contrast, meant organizing other people...the male Left has forgotten that 'it is essential to educate the educator himself. [Their] doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society'" (Hartsock, 1981a, p. 33, quoting Marx, 1970, p. 121).

6. "We do not want people, 'the researched', to have more involvement in designing questionnaires, interpreting statistical or other results" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 168). In both their earlier and later works, Stanley and Wise take a strong position against all positivist ways of knowing and forms of knowledge. This is a position I do not take, favoring instead Nelson's (1993) concept of epistemological communities and the model of knowledge as a product of interdependent knowledge communities and epistemologies.

7. "...membership involves the idea of a shared body of facts about the social world, shared in common between the people who are party to such knowledge..." (1983, p. 140).

8. Although her framework focuses primarily on the researcher's experience, Reinharz also suggests that research subjects (objects) might participate in the research process by helping to establish research priorities, and collect and interpret data. She draws on a participatory research model by Vaughter (1976) for this suggestion. I do not discuss this aspect of Reinharz's model here, as her concept for participatory research is based not on consciousness raising, but on standard forms for research in which the research subjects might participate.

9. Stanley and Wise's model differs slightly from Reinharz's in this respect, however, as Stanley and Wise's model seeks to ground the standpoint in the unity of the researcher-as-a-(lesbian)-woman, whereas Reinharz's standpoint is more clearly the researcher-as-researcher.

CHAPTER 11

OTHER CRITICAL APPROACHES

This chapter discusses several major classes of theory and practice (other than those related to feminist theory) that can be called "critical social science" in Brian Fay's (1987) sense: each attempts to combine knowledge production and emancipation, to develop and build on critical consciousness, and to link the praxis of academic intellectuals and the needs of grassroots groups. These approaches thus address the two principal goals of my efforts to define an emancipatory participatory research praxis. One is to find productive and democratic ways for academic intellectuals and grassroots-level marginalized groups to participate together in a knowledge-based effort to better understand and resist the imposition and reproduction of oppressive, inequitable, exploitative, and otherwise harmful social and economic conditions. The other is to simultaneously improve the quality, veracity, objectivity, and comprehensiveness, of social critique and analysis. These goals have guided my work as a function of my dual grounding in the community as an activist and in the university.

The models discussed here are not the only ones that address these dual goals. Absent from my analysis, for example, are approaches and models for workers' research, models of community activism, models for teaching feminist studies in higher education, and Black sociological research models. My choice of approaches

to review reflects my own "situatedness"--especially my past experiences with the prisoners, the Centro, my entry into graduate school, and the unresolved contradictions coming out of those experiences; my grounding in a residential community-based resistance effort; and my gender-based interest in feminist epistemology. In short, over the years I was involved with the parents' group, I focused on those academic models that seemed to offer the most for my own situation, life and practice.

BRIAN FAY: CRITICAL SOCIAL SCIENCE

The Concept of Critical Social Science

Fay's (1987) attempt to define a theory of critical social science represents a substantial theoretical contribution to the elaboration of an emancipatory participatory research framework. One major contribution is of process, and is exemplified by the way he presents his theoretical framework. He presents his understanding of his subject while critiquing it in a spirit of improving on the theory; he also critiques his final formulation of critical social science, finding some serious problems with it, and suggesting ways it should be improved by ideas from outside his own discipline (philosophy). Implicit in Fay's presentation is the idea that critical social science must emerge from an interdisciplinary dialogue as well as one of standpoints grounded in differing experiences of oppression. Although his project is theoretical,

he sees the importance of intellectuals working with progressive groups. He sees critical social science as contributing to an alternative model for the relationship between theory and practice and its process and content as carrying within it the possibility for contributing to the emancipation of oppressed groups.

Fay distinguishes critical social science from critical theory, and particularly from the usage of the term "critical theory" to refer to a particular "substantive, neo-Marxist theory of advanced capitalism whose parts have been propounded by some or all of the members of the Frankfurt School and its followers" (Fay, 1987, p. 4). Closer to Fay's concept of critical social science is the use of the term "critical theory" to refer to "a metatheory of (a certain type of) social science, a metatheory which has had its most sustained expression also by the Frankfurt School" (p. 4). In this usage, "critical theory" is a theory of science.

Still, Fay distinguishes the term "critical social science" from "critical theory as a theory of science" for two principal reasons. First, he wishes to avoid criticisms of critical theory, such as that it is not adequately responsive to empirical evidence and is overdetermined. Fay asserts that the term "critical social science" is more apt--that it is possible for a critical social science to be fully scientific by some criteria. Fay's concern here incorporates the postmodern fear that even seemingly emancipatory theories carry the seeds of their own oppressive tendencies (p. 209); a problem is how to create a method of critical social theorizing as an ongoing, open-ended process with a built-in process for continuous self-critique, but yet that provides needed theoretical guidance for people's emancipatory projects.

Second, Fay wishes to include in the category of critical social science more types of critique than usually covered by the term "critical theory." He would include, among others,

> Mihailo Markovic's theory of capitalism as outlined in From Affluence to Praxis (1974), R. D. Laing's theory of schizophrenia and political life as described in The Divided Self (1965) and The Politics of Experience (1967)...Dorothy Dinnerstein's theory of sexual arrangements and the human malaise as depicted in The Mermaid and the Minotaur (1976), Roberto Unger's theory of the welfare-corporate state as delineated in Knowledge and Politics (1975)...the socialist-feminist theory of capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1979),...[and] John Gaventa's Power and Powerlessness (1980). (Fay, 1987, p. 5).

Thus, Fay's use of the term "critical social science" is consistent with a framework for emancipatory participatory research that aspires to be self-critical and self-correcting, and that is open to being informed by various theories of oppression and various research methodologies.

Fay offers this summary definition of critical social science:

> By 'critical social science' I mean an endeavor to explain social life in general or some particular instance of it in a way that is scientific, critical, practical, and non-idealistic...By 'scientific' I mean the provision of comprehensive explanations in terms of a few basic principles which are subject to public evidence. By 'critical' I mean the offering of a sustained negative evaluation of the social order on the basis of explicit and rationally supported criteria. By 'practical' I mean the stimulation of some members of society identified by the theory to transform their social existence in specified ways through fostering in them a new self-knowledge to serve as the basis for such a transformation. And by 'non-idealistic' I mean a theory which is not committed to the claims either that ideas are the sole determinant of behavior..., or that emancipation simply involves a certain sort of enlightenment..., or that people are able and willing to change their self-understandings simply on the basis of rational argument (Fay, 1987, p. 26).

Fay identifies several aspects of critical social science that are relevant to the development of emancipatory participatory research. These, together with Fay's

definition of critical social science, contribute to the articulation of an implicit common project that joins the prisoners' and parents' models, feminist methodology, the critical anthropological fieldwork models, Freirean-based adult education, critical ethnography, and some participatory research approaches.

Relation to Emancipatory Participatory Research

Emancipatory Assumptions of Critical Social Science

Fay's definition of critical social science presumes that some groups of people suffer from oppressive social arrangements, that these arrangements should be changed, and that critical social scientific theory and activity should contribute to making social arrangements more democratic and just. Moreover, Fay defends the position that "there is no necessary conflict between science and political commitment, no compelling reason to reject the idea of a social theory which attempts to grasp the nature of certain sorts of oppression with the intent of liberating those suffering from it" (Fay, 1987, p. 212).

The Concept of Emancipation in Fay's Critical Social Science Model

In Fay's model, the goal of critical social science is "to effect the autonomy of the members of its audience so that their lives can become the direct, conscious expression of their own will" (Fay, 1987, p. 75). He grounds this goal in Marx's concept of the Communist society in which the workers have such autonomy as

"freely associated men" (Capital, quoted in Tucker, 1978, p. 327). To this end, he asserts that critical social science should help "dissolve the barriers" that "limit human freedom" and keep people from expressing their wills. According to critical social science, a principal barrier to freedom is people's own lack of understanding about how much their own misconceptions of themselves support and give power to the existing arrangements (Fay, 1987, p. 95). "Liberation [is] a state of reflective clarity in which people know which of their wants are genuine because they know finally who they really are, and a state of collective autonomy in which they have the power to determine rationally and freely the nature and direction of their collective existence" (p. 205). Yet, Fay recognizes that a more complete critical social science must recognize that extraneous material forces also limit people's freedom, and that people must use power to overcome these forces (pp. 78-9). The prisoners and parents also recognized the importance of subjective barriers to emancipation and the need to develop knowledge about them, while considering other barriers important as well.

The Activist Conception of Human Beings

Critical social science makes explicit the underlying assumption of emancipatory participatory research framework that human beings are at least partly able to construct their own meanings and lives. Fay also recognizes that people's intentions are limited by structural conditions. His theory is both skeptical and optimistic: "It is wrong to believe that humans can so develop their capacities of

activity that they can be independent of everything outside of them, that they can be fully self-determining. On the other hand, it is also an error to think that there is nothing important humans can learn about themselves, or nothing they can do to improve their lot" (p. 215).

Critical consciousness. Fay, like theorists of feminist consciousness or class consciousness, sees critical consciousness as apprehending dual levels of social reality: the unreflected reality as people experience it and the underlying order of social relations. Consciousness raising leads people to discover that "part of their role is to be ignorant of the role they are playing" (p. 71). But in Fay's theory, this critical consciousness cannot arrive at a final truth. He sees the development of critical consciousness as an open-ended process because any theory that might contribute to critical consciousness is understood as being only partial and tentative. Fay's model suggests a critical consciousness that seeks to understand multiple sources of power, interconnected in various ways, from which people might be marginalized in different ways depending on their historical and material circumstances. In this way, a critical social science can be viewed as a meta-methodological approach that appropriates postmodern critiques of emancipatory theory, and yet retains the emancipatory possibility of critical theory by allowing for a multiplicity of kinds of dominant-subordinate relations.

From Individual to Collective Autonomy

Autonomy, in Fay's model, is not in individuals, nor brought about by individuals acting alone. Rather, autonomy is collective: "...a collectively autonomous group can be defined as one in which rational and goodwilled people are involved in processes whereby a (critical) scientific understanding of their true interests and proper goals emerges and is continually re-established as situations change, and in which this understanding serves as the basis of the activities and arrangements of the members of this group" (p. 78).

This definition contrasts with critical theories of the Frankfurt School, which emphasize individual (psychological) enlightenment and emancipation rather than social enlightenment and broad based social action. As Fay points out, emancipatory theories based on individual enlightenment present a theoretical problem of explaining how individual emancipation can result in mass political movements (p. 108). The prisoners' emancipatory participatory research process was both an individual and collective process, at once a psychological and sociological endeavor. In this way, the prisoners' model is much more highly elaborated than either Freire's conscientization model or feminist consciousness-raising, both of which Fay suggests lay groundwork for overcoming this weakness in critical theory.

The Educative Function of Critical Social Science Theory

In Fay's model of critical social science, the aim is to achieve social transformation through a broad-based democratic movement that is informed by critical social science theory. The model emphasizes "educationally based social

transformation" (p. 114). It adopts what Fay refers to as the educative conception of theory and practice as opposed to the instrumentalist conception:

> The educative conception does not see social theory as useful because it allows people to manipulate causal variables so that they can get what they want in an efficient manner. Instead, social theory is seen as a means by which people can achieve a much clearer picture of who they are, and of what the real meaning of their social practices is....in this account, knowledge plays a role which is fundamentally different from that which it plays in the instrumentalist model: it does not increase the power of people by telling them how to achieve their ends by getting certain causal relationships to work for them (Fay, 1987, p. 89).

Feminist consciousness raising and Freire's conscientization stress the educative function of theory, with Fay. The prisoners' model and some anthropological models (see below) emphasize both the educational and the instrumental functions of critical knowledge.

The Importance of Concrete Grounding

Fay faults critical theory for its lack of ontological grounding in concrete life. A re-invented critical social science would produce theories "which were self-consciously local, particular, situated, experimental, and physical, theories whose values were not those of rational self-clarity and autonomy but were something far less grandiose" (p. 212). These theories would necessarily include, according to Fay, a theory of the body, of tradition, of force, and reflexivity. He holds that such a groundedness would support the transformation of critical theory into a critical social science more capable of furthering the emancipatory project. Fay does not, however, specify how critical social science can become grounded in concrete life. Obviously,

the prisoners' and parents' practices, in which knowledge is developed directly out of concrete struggle, are well suited to fill the need Fay identifies.

Fay's theory of critical social science contributes to a framework for emancipatory participatory research both by modelling a self-critical, open-ended dialogical method for developing theory and by calling for a grounding of emancipatory research in an ontology based in the praxis of people's historical, material lives. Although Fay's theory does not engage with concrete emancipatory praxis or address how academy-based intellectuals might work with grassroots groups, it provides a conceptual framework within which to elaborate a theory of emancipatory participatory research.

CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELDWORK MODELS

In the literature I refer to collectively as critical anthropology, many terms with overlapping meanings have been used to describe a family of forms of emancipatory fieldwork practice. "Committed research" (e.g. Huizer, 1979b, p. 21) and "liberation anthropology" (e.g., Onoge, 1979) are two of the more general terms. The latter term is associated with Frantz Fanon's (1966) theory of the internalization of the mentality of the colonizer within the colonized. Another general term is "action research," the term Stull and Schensul use to refer "to the association of anthropologists with ethnic minority community activists in the United States and the use of research to facilitate the empowerment of local communities" (Stull and

Schensul, 1987, p. 10). None of these terms has been consistently defined in the literature; I simply refer to them all as critical anthropological fieldwork models. I prefer the term "critical anthropology" because following Fay's description of "critical social science," critical anthropology connotes a connection between a methodology for doing research and an emancipatory project.

The critical anthropological fieldwork models developed, starting in the 1960s, from the internal critique of anthropology as a tool of colonialism and imperialism (e.g. Condominas, 1979; Lewis, 1973). Concepts based on the development model, such as "development," diffusion," "acculturation," and "modernization" (Frank, 1979), were viewed from this critical perspective as part of the functionalist paradigm exemplified by Malinowski (Onoge, 1979), which was to be challenged by a "new" anthropology--a "liberation anthropology" (Frank, 1979). The critics viewed anthropological knowledge as having primarily served the interests of powerful interests against those being dominated and exploited. Asad, among many others, criticized anthropology for having given the West "access to cultural and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated" (Asad, 1979, p. 91), concluding that "anthropologists...have contributed...to maintaining the structure of power represented by the colonial system" (p. 92). Accordingly, one aspect of the project of critical anthropology was to "reverse the machinery" of knowledge production to produce knowledge for emancipation rather than colonization (Stavenhagen, 1971, p. 19; Gedicks, 1979).

Critical anthropologists offered many general suggestions for practicing

anthropology in ways that would reverse the "machinery" by serving the interests of the colonized. Gedicks (1979) noted that the usual definitions of social problems were based on the perspectives of the powerful. Kielstra suggested that, "...[A]nthropologists should not only abstain from activities that might harm the people they studied: they should actively side with the underdogs and use scientific knowledge to support struggles for emancipation" (Kielstra, 1979, p. 282). In a similar vein, Stavenhagen observed, "It lies perhaps in the destiny of the social sciences that they should not only reflect the dominant forms of social organization of their times, but also--as they have done ever since they grew out of the social and political thought of the Enlightenment--that they should become major vehicles for the expression of the radical countercurrents and critical conscience that these very forms of organizations have brought forth" (Stavenhagen, 1971, p. 334). Huizer asserted, "It seems surprising so many social scientists have studied and observed rural life without discovering basic issues of class contradiction and exploitation and repression" (Huizer, 1979a, p. 403). And Mamak implored that "[S]ocial research [should be] more relevant to the needs of the researched, and [focus more]...on the causes of oppression and exploitation as opposed to a study of the oppressed" (Mamak, 1979, p. 450).

The critical anthropologists closely linked reversing the machinery of capitalism and colonialism to reversing the machinery of anthropological research. They accepted the Enlightenment assumption that knowledge could be harnessed to social change, and presumed that anthropology had emancipatory potential which had

been subverted by its relation to colonialist development, but that could be converted to an emancipatory project. They proposed two related projects to reverse the machinery: developing social knowledge to benefit oppressed groups rather than their oppressors, and adjusting the roles of field anthropologists so they would personally and professionally benefit the oppressed group among whom their research was being conducted. Stavenhagen summarizes the comprehensive attempt to reverse the machinery by noting that "social scientists can do little to actually control the process if they remain within the established rules of the scientific game (research, publish, teach). It is the rules of the game that must be changed" (Stavenhagen, 1971, p. 335).

Critical anthropological fieldwork is one of the earliest scholarly literatures to identify a constellation of concerns about contradictions involved in working in a research capacity to both help disadvantaged groups and to contribute to academic discourse. It provided key concepts for emancipatory participatory research, such as "looking up" (Nader, 1974) and "clinical research" (Jacobs, 1974). And most importantly, this literature provided a reflexive, critical perspective on itself (criticizing both standard anthropology and alternative anthropology), thus showing a way to frameworks for emancipatory participatory research that could build in structures for reflexive self-critique.

Parallels Between Critical Anthropology and Feminist Methodology

The critical anthropologists' focus on contradictions in the relationship between academic researchers and the dispossessed groups whose interests they wish to represent overlaps to a great extent issues raised by feminist methodologists, no doubt because of the links both have to academic institutions and wider systems of power. One set of concerns relates to questions of emancipatory knowledge: What kinds of knowledge are emancipatory? What is the emancipatory goal in the development of emancipatory knowledge? Who should direct it? In whose interest, from whose perspective, using what epistemology[ies], and through the participation of which epistemic community[ies] is emancipatory knowledge to be created? Another set of questions lies in the relationship between researcher and researched: Should the researcher or the grassroots group control the research? How can an academic do emancipatory research when sociology and anthropology are disciplines embedded in broader systems of power? To whom should academic researchers should be held most accountable--the group among whom the research is being conducted, the larger group (class, race, etc.) of which the group in the field is presumably a part, or the academic audience? What kinds of benefits or reciprocation should the group involved in the research project expect to derive from the research or researcher? What kinds of specialized knowledge can academic intellectuals offer to oppressed groups involved in an emancipatory research project? What kinds of knowledge might empower such groups, and who should produce it? What are the possibilities and implications for overlapping the roles of researcher, teacher, activist, and friend for an academic researcher working with a grassroots group? What are the

possibilities for a collaborative research relationship between the academic researcher and the host community?

These sorts of questions are, of course, crucial in the development of a framework for emancipatory participatory research praxis. Most of them imply a need to redefine both the research process and the praxis of the academic researcher in ways that would benefit both the development of emancipatory theory and grassroots groups' direct interests. The models for feminist methodology and critical anthropological fieldwork approaches both seek to address these questions either directly or indirectly, despite their different origins.

The literature of critical anthropological fieldwork complements feminist methodological approaches, though the origins of the two fields were very different. Unlike the feminist approaches, which were grounded in feminist consciousness raising groups, critical anthropology does not derive from an indigenous "people's" research (ethnography) process. Its version of emancipatory participatory research praxis is defined from the perspective of academic intellectuals from outside the oppressed group. Nevertheless, the two literatures run on parallel tracks, raising at least three principal sets of issues in common.

First is the source of oppression. Feminist methodology assumes that patriarchy is the most problematic source of oppression to be addressed by its alternative research approach, while the alternative anthropological models assume capitalism and colonialism are the most basic sources of oppression. Despite this difference, the parallels between these models and the prisoners' and parents' models

illustrates the basis for a common project to develop an emancipatory research praxis. Their different definitions of the main source(s) of oppression show the need for a broader emancipatory research project and a more broadly defined understanding of oppression than one defined by a single type of oppression.

Second is the relation of researcher to researched. Feminist methodology assumes a form of emancipatory research praxis in which the "outside" academic researchers are also "insiders": women studying the oppression of women. In contrast, anthropological alternative models, with the exception of "insider" anthropology, which is conducted by trained anthropologists who are members of groups oppressed in the wider society (e.g. Jones, 1970; Lewis, 1973), assume the academic researcher is not suffering under the same system of oppression as the group in the field. (Perhaps for this reason, the anthropological approaches are more concerned than the feminists with ethics issues and the exploitation of indigenous groups by outside researchers.)

Third is the issue of standpoint or perspective. Writers in feminist methodology have been developing what might be called an emancipatory epistemology. Critical anthropology is aware of the importance of standpoint, but does not develop epistemology as a major part of its alternative praxis. It does, however, more fully develop the issue of the variety of roles academic researchers might take in developing the different kinds of emancipatory knowledge grassroots groups need.

The literatures of critical anthropology and feminist methodology have in

common that the authors carry an allegiance to academia. By contrast, the prisoners' group, whose praxis initially framed my thinking, had no allegiance to academia whatever, and in fact believed that its research would proceed best if completely self-guided, without any more than marginal participation by academic social scientists. In this respect, the critical anthropological literature, despite its emancipatory intent, begins from a standpoint opposite from the prisoners'. It takes the importance of academics' research work as a given, and only rarely suggests that oppressed grassroots groups might engage in social research. Nevertheless, work in critical anthropology paralleled the prisoners' implicit critique of standard research and relations of knowledge production, and sought to connect the democratization of knowledge with emancipatory social change toward substantive democracy. The anthropological work sought to develop alternative forms of research-based emancipatory praxis for the academic intellectual--a task that faces all emancipatory participatory research models.

Knowledge to Benefit Oppressed Groups

Creating Knowledge in the Interest of the People: Looking Up

One class of knowledge to benefit oppressed groups would serve the general interests of dominated people, though it might be seen as useful by the specific groups among whom research was being conducted[1] directly. Galliher summarized the thrust of this set of anthropological fieldwork alternatives: "[W]e have not usually

addressed the underlying issue of the general ethical goals of social science... What is the use of social science?... Are the products of social science to be equally available to the very rich and to the very poor and to all nations equally, including South Africa?... Do social scientists have a vision of a just or ethical social ordering toward which they strive in their research?" (Galliher, 1980). A general research strategy for addressing these problems is to shift the direction of investigation from "down" (at the dispossessed) to "up" (at the structure of oppression). To some extent, the perspective taken on the social problem also shifts from "outside" and "above" to "within" (the oppressed group) and "below," although only a very few anthropologists attempted to engage indigenous people in the research process to gain an authentic view from within and below. The shift of attention to the examination of the structure of power represented an effort to democratize the production of knowledge by resisting the ideological biases inherent in top-down approaches, and substituting perspectives analyzing the macro-structural forces of power. A similar change of direction can be seen in critical works on feminist theory (e.g. Hartmann, 1981b), race and class (e.g. Marable, 1980), and political theory (e.g. Engler, 1961). The results of this kind of research are often not of great interest to disadvantaged groups, although they may be in their interest.

The call to look up was pervasive in the critical anthropological fieldwork literature of the 1970s. For example, Omvedt writes, "The very flow of information is generally from the bottom to the top, very few of the technical skills of social scientist are put at the disposal of radical organizers. The concern to reverse and

counteract this process ... has been growing up in the last decade" (Omvedt, 1979, p. 392). Huizer noted, "The most serious obstacle to peasant organization and people's participation...is the repressive power of the economic, political, and military elite strengthened by high technological, logistic, and material support from the 'power elite' of the rich metropolitan countries. This implies a need to 'study up' and search the global network of our own 'power elite' and its effects everywhere" (Huizer, 1979, p. 417). Similarly, Nash suggested the importance of studying the "structure and organization of the multinational corporation" (Nash, 1979, p. 422), and Nader proposed "study[ing] the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty" (Nader, 1974). Wolf noted that anthropologists had written about "patterns, themes, world views, ethics and values, but not power...[and that]...anthropologists must educate themselves in the reality of power--to engage in systematic writing of a history of the modern world in which we spell out the processes of power which created the present-day cultural systems and the linkages between them" (Wolf, 1974, p. 261).

These kinds of suggestions came on the heels of social scientific research, such as Project Camelot and the Moynihan Report, which were exposed as serving the interests of the powerful or rationalizing the disadvantaged circumstances of the less powerful. The concept of the "culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1961) provoked considerable controversy (e.g. Rainwater and Yancey, 1967; Leacock, 1971; Lewis, 1971) because of its top-down, "blame-the-victim" perspective. Social scientists like

Hylan Lewis had laid the groundwork for the later anthropological fieldwork critiques by counterposing critiques of power against blame-the-victim perspectives. Lewis (1967) wrote, for example, "A second quality that creates difference between Negroes and whites is, obviously, the impact of discriminatory treatment. If the rate of home ownership is higher for whites than for Negroes, even within income classes, can there be any doubt that discrimination by real estate and financing firms is responsible" (Lewis, 1967, p. 320). Mentioning the Moynihan Report in particular, Jones (1970) underlined the importance of Black sociologists' participation in these kinds of efforts because their perspective from "below" might serve as a corrective to distortions embedded in white stereotypes entering the research process.

Lewis's (1967) critique of the culture of poverty concept in which he supplies counter-statistics and counterarguments that explain the deleterious social conditions in the Black community in terms of social-structural factors represents a class of research done in the interests of disadvantaged groups, but not usually done for a particular grassroots group. This kind of research, which links the suffering of groups to the social structure, incorporates both "looking up" and "down": studying the structure of power by looking at it in relation to the effects it produces at the "ground" level. This approach is suggested, for example, by Gough: "We have failed to study Western imperialism as a social system or to explore the effects of imperialism on the societies we studied" (Gough, 1968, p. 19). Similarly, Davis proposed that anthropologists in Brazil studying the Indians both "document the social realities of the peoples they study...[and]...the role of powerful economic interests,

often international or multinational in scope who are directly implied in the ...expropriation of Indian lands" (Davis, 1979, p. 220).

Looking both up and down was an important part of the prisoners' research strategy. I attempted to incorporate this perspective in my work with the parents' group, and found, for example, that the critical educational research and theory, which helped illustrate the relationship of the poor school conditions to the structure of power (mostly race and class) (e.g. Apple, 1982; Carnoy and Levin, 1976; Oakes, 1982; Karabel, 1967; Wexler, 1982), was very helpful to the parents' process.

The prisoners' process demonstrates the complexity of "looking up." The power structure is to be found everywhere, in the prisoners' analysis, so looking "up" necessarily included looking within oneself (to see the oppressor within) and within one's own group (to see how some members reproduced the relations of oppression by exploiting or oppressing others within the group). In my work with the African-American parents, looking "up" required looking both looking away and afar (as in the critical educational analyses emphasizing a macrostructural perspective) and at the more immediate microsociological relations of oppression embedded, for example, in the Black teachers' mistreatment of Black parents.

The existence of internal colonialism can make it difficult to carry out a process of looking "up" if doing so comes too close to home. Schoepf noted this problem in 1979. In looking "up" at community advisory councils to see how representative they were of the community, he found that some community activists opposed his study. The community activists "urged us to study the powerful

institutions...rather than focusing on local communities and advisory boards" (Schoepf, 1979, p. 333). Jones had a similar experience, from which he concluded, "Too often, a sharp dichotomy is drawn between the structure of a local group and the larger society. But complex urban society is characterized by a continuous social hierarchy beginning at the higher-level institutions and their officials and extending into local communities... [There is]... the possibility of a local internal hierarchy, one that may parallel the relationship between the local group and the external institutions" (Jones, 1980, p. 103). In this vein, Schensul (1980) remarks that, "Studying up raises more questions than it answers. One question is: from whose perspective is the powerful sector to be studied?"

From my experience, these observations raise some of the most important and difficult issues in emancipatory participatory research. Counter-resistance from "within" to the group's resistance to its own oppression is the most difficult phenomenon to see clearly, document, and organize around, and it is sometimes difficult to determine which source(s) of power to concentrate research energy on. Knowledge of internal colonialism, though very valuable, is very difficult to produce and to disseminate within the oppressed group, both because the local "colonial rulers" (in our situation, many of the African-American teachers, principals, district school administrators, elected public officials, and heads of community agencies) actively resist being characterized as part of the oppressive system and because people in the group identify with these local power-brokers.

Looking up to create knowledge for disadvantaged groups produces knowledge

that is in some sense in their interests, but not for their direct use. This approach therefore falls largely, though not entirely, outside the prisoners' participatory research framework; the prisoners saw only themselves as researchers, and excluded almost all knowledge produced by academic researchers as irrelevant to their concrete struggle. But much important knowledge about the structure of power cannot be obtained by grassroots groups who view oppression only from the standpoint of their everyday lives; sociological expertise is required to produce this knowledge. Even if the research results of the looking "up" approach are not of immediate pragmatic value to grassroots groups, they may still serve those groups' interests. This suggests the need to reconceptualize the prisoners' model for emancipatory participatory research by enlarging the prospective community of participants to include academic researchers who produce studies of power. The parents' group found some of the work of such academics quite useful, both for increasing their collective knowledge and for consciousness raising.

Creating Knowledge for the People's Use

Another kind of knowledge that can benefit grassroots groups is knowledge intended for their direct use. Schensul summarizes the argument for producing such knowledge: "I shall argue that field researchers must... respond to the dialectic between their scientific objectives and the developmental needs of the community... I think we have reached the point in social science where we need to develop rules that will ensure that field research will be of direct benefit to the people under study no

matter what other agenda are also being met. Such mechanisms must be built into the design of the research" (Schensul, 1980).

One of the most interesting suggestions of this type was Polgar's observation that anthropology is a "store house of ethnological information," and that anthropologists should find ways to give some of this ethnological information back to communities to empower them by restoring the collective memory of forms of organization that "would encourage nonexploitative exchange relationships and restrict violent clashes" (Polgar, 1979, p. 264). One can imagine many kinds of specialized ethnographic and historical knowledge about groups that could be of interest to them and that might help them organize for social change. Szwed (1974), for example, suggested that anthropologists make descriptive and historical materials available to colonized groups who had been cut off from knowledge of their own cultural histories and traditions. In this model, the knowledge created and given back is about the group itself or its historical or cultural roots. The approach is similar to Collins' model for the role of the Black feminist intellectual who "...articulates the taken-for granted knowledge shared by African-American women as a group" (Collins, 1991, p. 30).

Another way of producing knowledge of use to a given grassroots group is for the anthropologist to work as an "action-advocate" in the "clinical" model for research. Jacobs (1974) suggested developing baseline data about the community that it could use, for instance, in writing grant applications to fund a local community health center. In Jacobs' model, the knowledge produced aims mainly to fulfill an

instrumental, rather than educational function. It might document need or inequality and be of indirect use to the community by justifying the creation of programs. In Jacobs' model, the anthropologist acts on behalf of the group by using knowledge to write grant proposals, but the group does not act on its own behalf using the information gathered by the academic researcher.

In contrast, Geilhufe (1978) suggests that anthropologists provide information that would empower groups to act on their own behalf. This model attempts to avoid the patronizing effect of outsiders acting for oppressed groups, but the distinction between this model and Jacobs' is not always clear. For example, the Committee for Hispanic Inmates provided baseline data to the prisoners that they used in their organizing process while the Committee used the same data to advocate on behalf of the prisoners with state prison officials.

Valentine and Valentine (1968) proposed a very different kind of "clinical" model in which the anthropologist seeks to create and provide knowledge of educational value to a community group. Among the kinds of knowledge they produced were reports of community news written from an indigenous perspective rather than the commercial media's. This model assumes that academic intellectuals might produce knowledge for a group in the form of information about the community in which the people live. When I was involved in working with the other parents to develop knowledge about our school system, I thought of the Valentines' model as a kind of indigenous ethnography for the people, in which knowledge was gathered about the community for those of us who were trying to identify the causes of the

poor school conditions.

Knowledge by the People and for the People

Schensul (1980), Borrero, Schensul, and Garcia (1982), and Schensul, Nieves, and Martinez (1982) suggest a more participatory model for producing and disseminating knowledge that benefits a disadvantaged community. Their group documented the kinds of crises that the Puerto Rican in Hartford, Connecticut suffered at the hands of an unresponsive health care system; developed knowledge about the special health problems being experienced in the community, such as otitis media (ear infections), a widespread health problem about which the community at large was unaware; and produced knowledge about existing resources so that weaknesses and strengths of the institutional support system could be defined and addressed.

The model combines an advocacy-clinical and an educational-clinical approach. Much of the knowledge was made available to the health care agencies so that personnel within the agencies wishing to work with or on behalf of the Puerto Rican community could make some needed institutional adjustments. The knowledge was produced and disseminated, however, by community participants, and was used to educate and mobilize the Puerto Rican community to organize on its own behalf.

Although the Schensuls' model seeks to make existing social institutions more responsive to the needs of oppressed minorities, it does not aim to raise consciousness about fundamental social relations of oppression. For instance, the model does not

seek to identify mechanisms of race, class, or gender oppression as part of its research process. Its strength is its level of specificity in elaborating a research model that not only redirects knowledge produced by academic researchers back to disadvantaged communities, but engages the community in the production of knowledge.

Porath suggests that anthropologists help oppressed communities discover both the "uniqueness of their community" and "the identification of their unique problems" (Porath, 1979, p. 302). In this somewhat participatory ethnography-for-the-people model (Porath refers to "mutual participation between the researcher and his subjects"), the anthropologist would produce knowledge with and for the community about itself. Porath's model resembles the Schensuls', though it appears to be addressed to a broader range of problems.

The above research models suggest democratizing the knowledge production process by making the results of research available to disadvantaged groups and involving them to some degree in the research process. The research results in these models are gained for the most part by standard social scientific methods, and they are primarily useful to groups as instrumental knowledge, although they may also educate the community about the existence of the problems.

Knowledge for Critical Consciousness

Finally, some anthropological models suggest the development of knowledge to raise consciousness. Most of these models refer to Freire's theory and method of

conscientization, although they do not employ Freire's "problem-posing" method. Polgar, for example, would hope that his proposal for returning ethnological data to local communities would be accomplished in the context of Freire's work, which Polgar sees as "seek[ing] to increase the ability of poor people to analyze the conditions of their oppression" (Polgar, 1979, p. 264). Despite their reference to Freire, these models usually restrict the dialectical process between researcher and researched group to the communication of the academic researcher's research results through dialogue. For example, Caulfield (1979) refers to the possibility that anthropologists might return the results of their studies back to the communities they studied through a process of "dialogics" in which the researcher and subject-objects of research would engage in dialogue. This model assumes that the relevant knowledge production is accomplished not by the indigenous group but by academic researchers.

Huizer's (1979a) "research-serving-action" model goes farther than most other anthropological alternatives in joining the clinical anthropological approach with a Freirean-oriented dialogical process. Huizer's model is noteworthy in that the researched grassroots group participates in the production of some of the knowledge. In Huizer's model, the knowledge to be transmitted to the peasant population consists of 1) background information to show internal colonialism (official statistics and historical materials which the anthropologist gathers), and 2) the peasants' grievances, which the anthropologist elicits by using an interpretation of Freire's "problem-posing" technique as using a leading question. The peasants participate in the generation of knowledge documenting their grievances and their own suggestions for

the resolution of the problem(s) at hand. This process was dialectical in that the researcher and researched group engaged in a dialogue with one another and in that the group produced some of its own knowledge, which was simultaneously given back to it as research "results." Huizer employed another level of dialectical process as well, in that the knowledge produced by one group could be transmitted to another, which would then "test" the results in its own situation: "What was learned about action strategy in one group could be discussed and experimented with in another group...Theory and practice supplemented each other step by step" (Huizer, 1979a, p. 415). Huizer proposes that the knowledge production process would develop some aspects of critical consciousness among the peasant population, but does not go on to elaborate what exactly he means by such consciousness.

Emancipatory Roles for The Researcher

As already noted, a major contribution of critical anthropological fieldwork was to identify roles for the academic researcher that would allow activist participation in emancipatory social change. The issue first arose in the context of an expanded debate on ethics in the researcher-researched relationship. Ongoing dialogue among anthropologists about ethical issues such as "snooping" (e.g. Strathern, 1979) and the rights of research subject/objects to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality (e.g. Keesing, 1979), and reciprocity (e.g. Schensul, 1980) began to include discussions about the relationship of anthropologists to their research

subjects/objects that acknowledged the deep political contradictions inherent in doing fieldwork among colonized "minorities." From the perspective of critical anthropology, the position of the anthropologist as detached researcher and observer of oppressed indigenous groups was morally and politically indefensible because it paralleled the political detachment, objectification, and exploitation by the colonial power toward the colonized "minority."

The role dilemma was also posed in other ways. Jarvie noted the contradictions inherent in taking the stranger role as researcher while posing as a friend: "[T]he notion of participant observer.. [is]...a problem partly ethical and partly methodological: An anthropological observer...[is]...both a stranger and a friend among the people he is studying. Yet one person cannot be a stranger and a friend at the same time: the roles are mutually exclusive" (Jarvie, 1969, p. 505). And Owusu referred to the researcher's moral responsibility to work on behalf of people who are oppressed, rather than exploit them for research data: "The problem boils down to...whether or not the anthropologist qua anthropologist could hope to combine...his role as "scientist" and his role as a human being with passions studying other human beings, and whether or not the anthropologist could treat his subjects not as objects or means to other ends but as ends in themselves, and still produce valid and objective work" (Owusu, 1979, p. 145). Some saw the researcher's role as inauthentic and dehumanizing to the researcher as well as to the researched group: "In much of bourgeois field work, the field--societal praxis--is artificially turned into a laboratory. The participant observer is conceived a nothing but a researcher;

stripped of his full humanity" (Bodeman, 1979, p. 156).

Critical anthropologists suggested for all these reasons that researchers' commitment and accountability to the colonized minorities studied should replace scientific detachment and lack of accountability. "Decolonization, relevance, and commitment...are the most urgent challenges to the anthropological future" (Keesing, 1979, p. 278). Commitment meant acknowledging that the researcher is a political extension of the colonial relationship of anthropology to the societies it studies, and redirecting the anthropologist's commitment and accountability accordingly. The responsibilities for commitment and accountability were considered to extend to the researcher's personal relationships and to broader political responsibilities.

There was considerable debate among anthropologists about these new proposals. For example, Willis wrote, "urban ethnographers must agree readily to boundaries of investigation as decided by ghetto nationalists" (Willis, 1974, p. 148). But Wax countered that "hard won rights of academic freedom... are being threatened... [and]... most fieldwork places the investigator in a position of social inferiority and moral dependency" (Wax, 1977). These quotations demonstrate that the tensions between anthropologists' commitments and obligations to the academic community and to the host communities studied did not disappear with the introduction of alternative models; bringing one's personal politics into accordance with one's general politics and balancing a commitment to professional standards for research with a commitment to "reverse the machinery" are complicated matters.

One of the most striking and instructive examples of the search for new roles

was Delmos Jones' (1970) effort, in the spirit of the "new anthropology," to place himself and his research skills "in the service of the oppressed." Jones's account of the problem with internal colonialism is mentioned above. He mentions, among other things, including local residents in the research process and submitting studies to the community for review and criticism. From his experience, Jones concluded that acting on one's political commitment demands more, and is much more complicated than simply working for an "oppressed group." In short, working in the emancipatory interests of an oppressed group or groups by being committed or obligated to that group has its own contradictions. Although alternative forms of research praxis cannot eliminate the contradictions, the alternatives provide useful insights about how to bring the researcher-researched relationship more into balance with democratic ideals.

Critical anthropologists came to defend their new roles on epistemological grounds as well as political and ethical ones. The assertion that overlapping friendship with research produces better knowledge became a secondary theme in the literature. Anthropologists noted that their increased participation and authentic connection with the community being studied provided not only a more complete picture, but a picture more from the perspective of those living in the community. Huizer (1979a) writes, for example, that he entered the host community "as an equal, in a true dialogue situation", and that he gradually "had come to accept the 'view from below' as the more accurate." The anthropologists did not elaborate an epistemological basis for doing research that recognized the importance of

connectedness as in the "knowing-a-person" paradigm (Code, 1991), but they clearly saw the value of having close ties to the community being studied in terms of producing better knowledge. In this way, the alternative anthropological models affirm the epistemological position of similar approaches rooted in feminist methodology.

Below, I discuss several role adjustments the critical anthropological fieldwork theorists suggested. In any given anthropologist's fieldwork practice, several such adjustments were likely to appear. I separate them into ideal types to better clarify and distinguish the various forms of alternative research roles.

Reciprocity

One way to democratize the relationship between researcher and researched group is to ensure reciprocity between the two. Some forms of reciprocity had little to do with the research itself; researchers attempted to equalize their relationships with the researched group by performing services or providing direct support. For example, Mamak (1979) notes that he chauffered people to meetings, did typing, and drafted reports and minutes. Keesing (1979) proposes that fieldworkers should contribute to the community, as they have an obligation to the community and the host country, and that these contributions, which can be economic, medical, or educational, should continue after the fieldwork is completed. Advocacy work (e.g. Jacobs, 1974) is another form of reciprocity. These kinds of reciprocity are intended to benefit a disadvantaged group in some way, but they do not make direct use of the

researcher's ability to do research. They recognize that some grassroots groups would appreciate help, other than research, that academics can provide.

Other forms of reciprocity provide for the research itself to be part of what the researcher returns to the community. Either research results that were gathered as part of the official research project could be revealed to the host community, or special knowledge products could be produced for the community, beyond the official research project. Sometimes, as in the Schensuls' project, entire focus for the research process was on producing knowledge that would benefit the community, and reciprocity was not really an issue.

Researcher as Activist

Another role for the committed anthropologist was as an activist participant in the host group's efforts to empower itself. The researcher might advocate on behalf of the group with officials, organize meetings, type reports, or take people to meetings. For example, Kielstra suggests that researchers might "make themselves useful as full-time workers in organizations mainly doing all kinds of organizational odds and ends" (Kielstra, 1979, p. 287).

Action Research Roles

Yet another set of role redefinitions depend on changing the nature of the research process and, in the course of doing this, altering the nature of the relationship of the researcher to the researched group. "Action research" was the

term most often used to describe this set of approaches. An "action anthropologist" not only becomes an activist-participant in the host group's empowerment efforts, but finds ways to use the research process itself to further the group's interests and goals. Bodeman (1979) summarizes this approach as one in which the fieldworker

> 1) participates fully, unprotected, and self-reflexive in the setting he studies; 2) ... is affected by the setting just as he in turn affects the setting...; and 3) intervenes actively, by presenting options to communities which have been deprived of options, or brings clarity where he found confusion...share[s] his results with communities in comparable predicaments...and also can share his results with those of his fellow intellectuals who identify with his predicament and who are willing to change it (Bodeman, 1979, p. 161).

The action research approach of these anthropologists differed from the action research model proposed by Kurt Lewin, which Huizer characterized as "studying things through changing them" (Huizer, 1979a, p. 395). To distinguish between this standard definition of action research and one with a necessarily emancipatory intent, Huizer wrote of "research-serving-action" rather than "research-through-action" (1979a). The spirit of "research-serving-action" approaches is expressed in Stavenhagen's statement that, "The emerging role of the social researcher... goes beyond... participant observation to activist observation, that is, of the militant cum observer... the true synthesis between research on, and participation in, the social change process...Action and research would be joined both in the interests of furthering knowledge and of contributing to change" (Stavenhagen, 1971, p. 339).

One way for an academic researcher to adopt a research-serving-action role is by conducting research on behalf of a group in which the group itself does not participate in the research process. Several examples are described above. In this

model, the researcher's role is not necessarily substantially altered; the anthropologist may simply gather additional information that will help the group if it takes collective action. In effect, the researcher adopts the host community as an additional research client.

A second research-serving-action role involves circulating research results that would be of direct benefit to the group back to the group. The researcher's role in the research process itself is altered little in this model either, except for adding the task of communicating the results back to the group. This model produces little change in the amount of control the host group has over the research process. Inasmuch as a dialogic process between researcher and researched group occurs only after the research is completed, the emancipatory possibilities for such dialogue are limited; essentially, the researcher simply presents the research results to a nontraditional audience that then can ask questions about them.

A third version of research-serving-action increases the level of participation of the researched group in the research process by finding ways for the group to help determine what the research problems should be (e.g. Mamak, 1979; Gedicks, 1979). The research process is democratized as the researcher gives up some control over the definition of the research problem, and the focus for research shifts from looking primarily at the group to looking at the structure of power causing the group's problems. Still, the research methods are often assumed to be those of standard social science, although in some cases, the action-research framework implies studying the social change process in an acknowledgement that observers change the

environments they study whether or not changes are intended. The researcher's role may be substantially altered in that the group assumes more responsibility and control over defining the problem to be studied.

A fourth version involves the host community in additional aspects of the research process such as collecting and analyzing the data. Porath suggested that "revolutionary reforms occur when the social scientist becomes an activist and involves his subjects in his own fieldwork" (Porath, 1979, p. 303). The Schensul-Borrero model is an example of how researchers might involve people who would previously have been the objects of their research as subjects of the research process. It was a model of collaborative participatory research, the success of which depended in part on training community residents to do interviews about a problem affecting their community (in this case, the health problem of otitis media). The community residents, who are also (part of the) population under study, participated "in the design, analysis, and utilization of the research results" (Schensul, 1979).

In collaborative participatory research, the researcher's role may or may not change substantially. If the academic researcher defines the research problem, determines the research methods, and controls the data analysis, the community participant-researchers are little more than research assistants. If, however, as in Schensul-Borrero model, the community members have substantial control over all aspects of the research and play the role of researchers, the academic researcher's role is substantially changed.

The fifth version of research-serving-action reconceptualizes the research

process altogether and the academic researcher's role as well. This kind of research is based on a Freirean model, in which the research process involves the active participation of a local grassroots oppressed group in the discovery of the bases for their oppression. In this model, the academic researcher's role is transformed from social scientific researcher to facilitator, adult educator, or problem-poser, as in Freire's (1973) model, discussed below. (In practice, the anthropologists using the Freirian model usually combined it with other alternative forms of research and research roles.) The goal for research in this model is not to produce research "results" in any traditional sense, and especially not for an academic audience, but to raise consciousness among the peasant population about the causes for their oppressive conditions (e.g. Buijtenhuijs, 1979). In this model, the academic anthropologist is involved in, and works with the community in a dialogical relationship, in which the community helps define and solve its own problems (e.g. Caulfield, 1979). The anthropologist helps "demystify the 'total system' within which the oppressed exist, but about which they may know very little" (Caulfield, 1979, p. 313).

Reflexivity: Researcher Self-Study

Finally, Huizer (1979a) mentions in passing a different aspect of the researcher's role, one that is found in some feminist methodology approaches (e.g. Stanley and Wise, 1983), and that I found extremely important in my work with the parents in developing our theory of Black parent "pushout": the academic researcher's use of self-reflection. Although this form of self-reflective research on

the researcher's own reactions, feelings, and so forth is not necessarily done either on behalf of or with the participation of a group, I have found that finding a way to study oneself, especially in dialogue with members of the indigenous group, is an important aspect of the outside researcher's emancipatory participatory research practice.

Regrettably, the accounts of these various anthropological innovations do not include thick description of how the researcher's praxis is altered in each model of research-serving-action. Nevertheless, they provide some useful concepts for the researcher's praxis in emancipatory participatory research. From my perspective on such research, the critical anthropological fieldwork models are limited chiefly in two ways: most tend to assume the use of standard research methods, and few explore the possibilities for full collaboration or participation by the indigenous group as knowledge producers in the research process.

CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF SCHOOLS

What I call critical ethnography of schools is sometimes referred to by its practitioners as "collaborative action research" (Anderson, 1989), "educational action research" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 203), "critical educational science", or even "critical social science" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, pp. 148-9). I prefer the term "critical ethnography" because the ethnographic aspects of the method contribute to the development of an emancipatory participatory research framework.

The critical ethnography of schools builds on critical theories of education (e.g. Apple, 1981) that have, as Anderson (1989) says, made categories such as "giftedness," "dropouts," "management," "public relations," and "effective" schools problematic. In educational critical ethnography, the critical "researchers" are most often teachers who research their own practice. They use a dialogic process to analyze and criticize their own and each others' teaching practice. Critical ethnography is a participatory from of research in that it uses collective self-reflection based on dialogue to develop knowledge about teachers' practice and relies on groups of teachers as the "researchers." (Interestingly, there seems to be no literature in critical educational ethnography about a parent-based research process--parents are omitted equally from both critical and functionalist analyses of schooling.)

Critical ethnography has a dual grounding. On the one hand, it is grounded in traditional ethnographic methodology.[2] It begins observation in a group's everyday life and attempts to grasp meanings about the world from the standpoint of the group being studied. It is also grounded, however, in a critical theoretical perspective that makes problematic the traditional ethnographic assumption that the understandings of the group being studied should be taken at face value. As Anderson puts it: "Where critical ethnographers differ is in their claim that informant reconstructions are often permeated with meanings that sustain powerlessness and that people's conscious models exist to perpetuate, as much as to explain, social phenomena" (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). According to Anderson, the goals of critical ethnography are "unmasking dominant social constructions and the interests they represent, studying

society with the goal of transforming it, and freeing individuals from sources of domination and repression" (Anderson, 1989, p. 254). Critical ethnography might be said to provide the required "stranger" role for the researcher doing ethnography[3] by having an inside participant take the attitude of "stranger" to her or his own behaviors and attitudes.

Critical ethnographic practice resembles the participatory research practices of the prisoners' and parents' groups, as well as feminist consciousness-raising groups, in that it builds on collective, reflective research on a group's experiences, beliefs, and feelings. Carr and Kemmis refer to critical ethnography as "a form of social science to be carried out by self-reflective groups concerned to organize their own practice in the light of their organized self-reflection" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 149). As in the prisoners' and parents' models, dialogue is the method for the research process (Comstock, 1982, p. 378) .

Critical ethnography of schools differs from interpretivism, which lacks an emancipatory interest: it studies intersubjective meanings, but within an "evolving" rather than "given" form of life (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982, p. 271), reflecting an interest in transforming social conditions. However, unlike the prisoners' and parents' approaches, the emancipatory interest is focused exclusively on kinds of knowledge that would free individuals (not classes, or groups) "from systematic distortions in communications" (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982, p. 278).

Critical ethnography primarily seeks a particular kind of self-knowledge that is also the basis for Freire's conscientization model described below: critical self-

understanding or critical awareness. As Sabia and Wallulis write, "[L]iberation depends in the first instance on recognition of that which imprisons the human mind or dominates the human persons" (Sabia and Wallulis, 1983, p. 4). The goal is to create the conditions "conducive to nonalienated needs such as participation, love, creativity, and collective control" (Comstock, 1982, p. 387), and the route to this goal is through research leading to an examination, critique, and reformulation of intersubjective meanings rather than other forms of knowledge to create social change. In essence, the object about which knowledge is sought is the dominant ideology(ies): "Ideology is the means by which a society reproduces the social relations that characterize it... a corpus of ideas or a pattern of thinking... [which represent]... the cognitive residue of the practices of social, cultural, and economic relationships which sustains society" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 193). The process of coming to recognize the ways ideology continues to function in one's own attitudes and practices is ideology critique: "[Critical ethnography]...engage[s] teachers and others in a process of ideology-critique...[through which it is possible to]...identify those institutionalized patterns of practice which limit the achievement of more rational communication [and] just decision making" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 194).

The dual aims of critical ethnographic research, according to Carr and Kemmis, are to transform the practice of the practitioners (teachers) and to transform the "objective" conditions. However, the method for social transformation in critical ethnography seems to rely almost exclusively on changing one's own (teaching)

practice: "Action research recognizes that thought and action arise from practices in particular situations, and that situations themselves can be transformed by transforming the practices that constitute them and the understandings that make them meaningful" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 184). True to its roots in critical theory, critical ethnography does not stress the need for active collective struggle to transform the external conditions. Instead, the emphasis is on the need to recognize how one's taken for granted social (teaching) practices are embedded in social structural and cultural meanings, and on the need to change one's own perceptions and practices accordingly. The aim is to change teaching practices so that the social relations as revealed in critical education theory (e.g. Apple, 1981) are not inadvertently reproduced (Simon and Dippo, 1976).

Teachers are usually construed to be the principal researchers in critical ethnographic research, which makes critical ethnography a model for non-academic peer-based participatory research. However, there is often an academic critical educational theorist who facilitates the group. Carr and Kemmis, for example, refer to the role of the outside researcher as a "critical friend" who "help[s] the 'insiders' to act more wisely, prudently, and critically...the success is to be measured in the extent to which they can help those involved...improve their own educational practices, understandings, situations, and institutions (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 161)." This description does not indicate a relationship of mutuality, equality, and horizontal dialogue that are fundamental to the prisoners' and parents' processes and to Freirian collective critical reflection processes as described in other "critical"

educational settings between teachers and students (e.g. Shor, 1980; Glen, 1988). In at least some of the critical educational ethnographic models (e.g. Comstock, 1982), the academic researcher associated with the project seems to assume a fairly directive role in which, for example, the "critical investigator...begin[s] from the intersubjective understandings of the participants of a social setting and...return[s] to these participants with a program of education and action designed to change their understandings...critical research begins with a study of the subjects' own life world--the constitutive meanings, social rules, values, and typical motives which govern action in their particular setting...to see how what they do is determined by the understandings that penetrate their thought and action (Comstock, 1982, p. 380). The outside academic researcher also acts in a pedagogical role in critical ethnography. In Comstock's model, the academic researcher/teacher assumes a "vertical" (as opposed to "horizontal" dialogic position with regard to the group, and the pedagogical role is formalized. For example, "In the pedagogical step of investigation, the researcher should introduce critical concepts and theories..." (Comstock, 1982, p. 381).

The outside academic can facilitate the group's self-reflective knowledge-production process in several ways in the critical ethnographic model. These include bringing the group together in the first place, facilitating the production of the group's self-reflective knowledge (e.g., by introducing a critical perspective on society, specific knowledge about how schools reproduce class relationships, and knowledge about how historical developments produced existing conditions), and by conducting empirical research (Comstock, 1982). These examples complement the roles included

in the critical anthropological fieldwork approaches, and enlarge the range of possibilities for academic intellectuals to work with grassroots groups within an emancipatory participatory research framework.

Carr and Kemmis note that the role of the academic researcher is "paradoxical,... given the commitment of critical educational science...to participatory, collaborative forms of critical self-reflection" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 158). Yet, this form of relationship between academic intellectuals and grassroots groups goes far in resolving one of the central problematics of critical ethnography, namely the separation and alienation of academic intellectuals and emancipatory critical social theory from grassroots people, in which "radical theory is trapped in the academic practice of theory-building" (Comstock, 1982). Further, the model builds in researcher reflexivity: "Reflexivity [consists of] the demand from the practicing social scientist for a critical self-awareness of his or her goals and methods, of the role of the social sciences in contemporary society, of the values and of the political biases implicit in social science method and theory, and of limits and unresolved difficulties intrinsic to any science of man and society (including a critical science)" (Sabia and Wallulis, 1983, p. 7). These standards for reflexivity can be applied by including the non-practicing social scientists (teachers) in the reflexive process of building formal theory.

Carr and Kemmis suggest the notion of "critical community," a concept that can make important connections between critical academic theorists and disadvantaged grassroots communities resisting inequality and injustice. In critical ethnography,

however, the concept of critical community seems to have a rather narrower meaning than it might. Carr and Kemmis's reference to critical communities is limited to educational contexts, and the function of the critical community is "to develop the group's own capacity to discover the contradictions which may be developing as a result of their actions... [the aim is education]... for more enlightened and self-conscious political action" (Comstock, 1982, p. 387), but not other forms of emancipatory action. The term could be broadened to include, for example, a community such as the one that included the prisoners' group, the Committee for Hispanic Inmates (or at least the Centro), my husband and his psychology students who attended the Drug Therapy Program, and myself. The parents' group might be described as a critical community consisting of the parents, myself as both a fellow parent and critical theorist, and the professors from Howard University (perhaps stretching the point a bit, as the professors had limited connection with the group). Collins' (1991) description of the relationship between the Black feminist intellectual and Black women could also be described as a critical community, as could the Inter-University Program for Latino Studies and the Centro (Center for Puerto Rican Studies [CUNY], which seek to join academic intellectuals with grassroots intellectuals in common efforts to understand and change social circumstances. Of course, applying the term "critical community" to any of the above groups would necessarily require broadening the definition of the emancipatory project beyond education.

Despite its emphasis on individual liberation, its idealistic orientation, and

other differences from the prisoners' and parents' models, the critical ethnography of schools provides useful concepts for thinking about and elaborating a framework for emancipatory participatory research. From the critical ethnographic perspective, both the prisoners' and parents' models were indigenous critical ethnographic efforts to study our own situations. We did participant observation from the perspective of the indigenous group's experiences of everyday life, and as in a critical ethnographic approach, we sought to uncover the underlying forces that shaped behavior. Unlike educational critical ethnography, however, we sought a larger view that examined our own practices in a larger social context. The parents' group, for example, tried to understand the school site as a part of a larger system that made sure that its teachers, curricula, local administrators, and school rules worked together to create "low expectations."

Obviously, the prisoners' and parents' brands of critical ethnography sought much more than self-knowledge--but such a broader search is consistent with the idea of "critical ethnography," even if practitioners of the critical ethnography of schools do not take a broader view. Our approach differed from educational critical ethnography in that our standpoint was not only from everyday life, but from struggle as well; the notion of struggle as active, collective resistance to external structures is absent in critical educational ethnography. Critical ethnography contributes to the project of democratizing knowledge production primarily by making those who would often have been the objects of social research into the subjects of that research instead; it also democratizes the knowledge production process by making critical

theory and critical knowledge available to an audience not often a party to academic theoretical discourse. The method does not, however, provide ways for the participant researchers to produce kinds of knowledge other than self-knowledge, nor a way for the knowledge produced by the group to enter academic theoretical discourse.

FREIRE'S CONSCIENTIZATION METHOD

In the Preface to Literacy: Reading the Word and the World (1987), Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo quote Chomsky's (1987) reference to the inherent contradiction in the usage of the term "democracy":

> 'Democracy,' in the United States rhetoric refers to a system of governance in which elite elements based in the business community control the state by virtue of their dominance of the private society, while the population observes quietly. So understood, democracy is a system of elite decision and public ratification, as in the United States itself. Correspondingly, popular involvement in the formation of public policy is considered a serious threat. It is not a step towards democracy; rather, it constitutes a "crisis of democracy" that must be overcome.

It is this contradiction that Freire seeks to address through his critical literacy, or conscientization method, a method that attempts to create the conditions for people to participate meaningfully and critically in a more democratic form of life.

Like critical educational ethnography, Freire's method of conscientization is critical of traditional pedagogy and employs a critical educator working with a small group. The praxis of the critical educator is the focus of theory in both models; both focus primarily on redefining the praxis of the educator rather than on an

emancipatory group research praxis such as the prisoners'. (In contrast, in the prisoners' model, the group's processes are the central characteristics of emancipatory praxis and the analytic foci for a theory of emancipatory research praxis.)

The Concept of Conscientization

Freire's concept of conscientization (I use the common Anglicization of his Portuguese term, conscientização) is not easy to capture in a concise definition; Freire's works (e.g., Freire, 1970, 1973, 1985; Freire and Macedo, 1987; Shor and Freire, 1987) all elaborate this concept. Some short statements, however, refer to conscientization as "the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act" (Freire, 1985, p. 106); as involving "a constant clarification of what remains hidden within us while we move about in the world, though we are not necessarily regarding the world as the object of our critical reflection" (Freire, 1985, p. 107); and as "a critical demystifying moment in which structures of domination are laid bare and political engagement is imperative" (West, 1993, p. xiii).

Many approaches discussed here that fit within a framework for emancipatory participatory research incorporate aspects of Freire's conscientization method. These include works in feminist methodology (e.g., Mies, 1983), some critical anthropology fieldwork models, Brian Fay's (1987) model for a critical social science, and Maguire's (1987) feminist participatory research model (to be discussed below). Clearly, Freire's method has been interpreted and applied widely among those whose

concerns include the problematic relationship of academic intellectuals to disadvantaged groups' struggles and the need for emancipatory knowledge for effective struggle.

Freire's method is characterized in many ways. It has been called a "problem-posing" education method (Fay, 1977, p. 221), "dialogic education" (Comstock, 1982, p. 386), "radical education" (Lather, 1986b), "critical literacy" (Freire and Macedo, 1987), "empowering research" (Maguire, 1987), "critical research" (Comstock, 1982, p. 386), "critical dialogue" (Shor, 1980, p. 99), and "empowering pedagogy" (Shor, 1980). Finally, the term "participatory research" is also often used synonymously with Freire's method, although many participatory research approaches (e.g. Whyte, 1991a) have little to do with Freire's method except that some of the research participants are non-academics. (The non-Freirian participatory research models may or may not have a critical social perspective or an emancipatory goal.)

Critical Consciousness in Freire's Method

Freire's model emphasizes the production through the process of conscientization of a kind of self-knowledge consisting of critical awareness, critical self-understandings, or critical consciousness--a product similar to the one critical ethnography seeks to achieve. As Fay relates, Freire's method addresses two principal factors about the peasants among whom he developed the conscientization process: their culture of silence, "meaning these people are submerged in a situation

which they do not possess the capacities for critical awareness and response" (Fay, 1977, p. 220); and their "internalization of the values, beliefs, and world of their oppressors" (Fay, 1977, p. 221). Lacking critical awareness, the peasants inadvertently participate in the reproduction of their own oppression.

Gramsci defined hegemony as the "process of domination whereby a ruling class exercises control through its intellectual and moral leadership over allied classes" (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 57-58). The production of critical consciousness represents a counter-hegemonic process in which the dominated classes resist the ideological domination of ruling classes by becoming aware of the dominant ideology (externalizing false consciousness, as Shor puts it) and the ways that ideology has become taken for granted in their everyday understandings of themselves and the world. Conscientization helps oppressed people emerge from their culture of silence by helping them name and analyze aspects of the dominant ideology. In Fay's words, Freire's theory is that "education must first aim to persuade the peasants that they have the ability to assess their situation rationally with a view toward changing it" (Fay, 1977, p. 220). Freire says, "As conscious human beings, we can discover <u>how</u> we are conditioned by the dominant ideology" (Shor and Freire, 1985, p. 13).

Though Freire states, as above, that the conscientization process involves discovering "<u>how</u> we are conditioned by the dominant ideology", his descriptions do not include the kind of detailed analysis of the mechanisms of control the prisoners and parents noted. The parents, for example, analyzed the use of the cognitive abilities test as an institution-based mechanism of control; the preponderance of rote-

learning tasks as opposed to critical thinking assignments assigned by the teachers; and the principal's refusal to meet with groups of parents as well as her manifest disrespect for individual parents as manifestations of a system of "low expectations" that shaped parents' self-understandings. Instead, Freire's method's primary strength is the development of a pedagogy that unifies achieving basic literacy skills with critical thinking through a discovery process conducted through problem posing, codification, and conscientization. It may be that the kind of more detailed analysis the parents and prisoners conducted is more possible with groups who are not so completely immersed in a culture of silence and who are consciously aware of social inequality and of how forces of domination shape social reality.

Culture Circles

For an emancipatory participatory research process to take place, one of the problems is to identify, or create a social space for it. This is no small problem. The possibilities for the kinds of social spaces available may vary considerably depending on the circumstances. The social spaces Freire used for conscientization were "culture circles" or cultural discussion groups. The prisoners created spaces by first forming a Latino organizational entity, then more specific programs within their organization. But if it had not been for the Attica revolt, there would have been no prisoners' ethnic organizations. It was possible to begin a process with the parents by using an existing organizational entity, a committee within the PTA, and then transforming the agenda of the committee.

According to Lankshear (1993), in culture circles there are coordinators rather than teachers, dialogue instead of lectures; the class consists of "participants" rather than "pupils;" and the syllabus consists of "codifications" (described below) that are directly relevant to the participants' lives. These innovations help create a democratic pedagogical process once the culture circle is in place, but there remain non-democratic implications of any outsider's initiation of an emancipatory participatory research process. Freire's writings do not make clear how culture circles are to be initiated. For example, does the coordinator "target" a special group, and let it be known there will be a culture circle starting up? Does the coordinator move into an existing culture circle, and begin the conscientization process in addition to existing activities? How can a teacher/educator/researcher avoid manipulating the group, and thus undermining the democratic intent, in establishing such a process?

Codifications

"Codifications" are an important part of Freire's approach. Freire's method links the development of literacy with critical thought by engaging peasants in discussions of "a problematical situation... [after which]... educators should ask [the] peasants to write down their reactions--a simple phrase or whatever--first on the blackboard, and then, on a sheet of paper" (Freire, 1985, p. 24). These writings are transformed into texts... [through which]... peasants analyze their reality" (p. 24). Tape recordings of discussions can also be transcribed for "decodifying" reality. Freire's method depends on dialogue for the "decodification" process to occur:

> In the theoretical context of dialogue, the facts presented by the real or concrete context are critically analyzed. This analysis involves the exercise of abstraction, through which, by means of representations of concrete reality, we seek knowledge of that reality. The instrument for this abstraction in our methodology is codification, or representation of the existential situations of the learners (p. 51).

Freire suggests that many possibilities exist for elaborating this method. For example, peasants from one area might listen to tapes of discussions among peasants from another area. This dialogic decodification process greatly resembles the prisoners' use of the APA paper writing process as a way to set down on paper a codification of their method, which would then serve as the basis for further critical dialogue. Interestingly, for the prisoners, as for Freire's culture circles, this was also an exercise in basic literacy skills; critical literacy and basic literacy developed together in a dialogic relationship in this endeavor.

Freire's Codification Process Compared with the Prisoners' and Parents' Processes

The Teacher as Leader in Freire's Model

The need for an outside leader/facilitator/teacher and a formalized "codification" process in Freire's model, together with his analysis of the peasants' culture as a "culture of silence," illustrates the importance of attending to differences in historical conditions when developing a framework for emancipatory participatory research. The framework must be flexible enough to accommodate critical differences between contexts for emancipatory participatory research. Freire

emphasizes again and again the problem of the peasants' fatalism, and the need to "move individuals toward an increasingly critical commitment for radical change in society" (Freire, 1975, p. 40). The Latino prisoners' process was situated in different historical conditions which made the prisoners much less passive than the Brazilian peasants Freire worked with, and they were able to initiate and facilitate their own process. Similarly, the African-American parents were not immersed in a "culture of silence," at least not to the same extent or in the same way as were the Brazilian peasants among whom Freire worked. Nevertheless, some aspects of Freire's conscientization method are clearly applicable in situations even when the conditions are different, though the method might need to be adjusted outside the rural peasant context. Ira Shor (e.g., Shor, 1980; Shor and Freire, 1987) helps illustrate how this might be done in a university setting, while the Highlander model (Glen, 1988; Horton, 1990) illustrates a closely related method used among working-class rural groups in the Southern United States.

Clearly, settings that are defined as educational, even if they are nontraditional ones, set up different expectations for the role of the academic intellectual. Freire writes, "I cannot leave the students by themselves because I am trying to be a liberating educator. Laissez-faire! I cannot fall into laissez-faire. On the other hand, I cannot be authoritarian. I have to be radically democratic and responsible and directive. Not directive of the students, but directive of the process" (Shor and Freire, 1985, p. 46). The liberating classroom requires a teacher's authority, according to Freire: "I use authority and need authority to begin and direct my

classrooms. I am open to sharing it and to having the students emerge as co-directors of the curriculum" (Shor and Freire, 1985, p. 92). Clearly in Freire's model, the teacher is set apart from the peer-process; the teacher directs the educational context, and in this way, conscientization is very different from more strongly peer-participatory-based forms of emancipatory praxis like feminist consciousness-raising groups and the prisoners' process.

My relationship with the parents at my daughter's school was completely different from Freire's teacher-led process in this respect; no one considered the situations for our dialogue to be an educational context. Either we were meeting together as the Program Committee for the PTA (a context for colleagues), or we were talking together (mostly on the telephone) as personal friends. Our social space was not constructed as a pedagogical situation, but as a working group with an externally defined goal (planning the PTA programs). (The only exception to this were the PTA meetings that were structured for the other parents to learn what we on the Program Committee had been learning ourselves.)

My starting point, based on my experience with the prisoners and confirmed by my experience with the African American parents, appears to be quite different from Freire's, whose standpoint was based on his experience with a rural peasant population. My standpoint assumes that an indigenous investigative-educational process is already in place; that storytelling and friendship-based discourse carries this process forward "naturally" (i.e. without external intervention, although external intervention can stimulate the process further, and improve its ability to produce

emancipatory knowledge). From these experiences, I have concluded that the outside academic intellectual can enter an already existing informal dialogic discourse.

Freire's standpoint seems to start from the assumption that the outside academic intellectual initiates the dialogue. This presumes that some groups of oppressed people are so unaware of their own oppression that ordinary conversation among friends has no critical investigative threads at all upon which a conscientization process could be built. It would appear to me that if everywhere there is oppression there is resistance, then there is likely to be an oppositional or critical informal discourse of resistance, although that resistance and the discourse that accompanies it may inadvertently reproduce the very domination it seeks to counteract (e.g. Willis, 1981).

These points bear again on issue of the "culture of silence," and on differences between historical and cultural contexts. I note, for example, that Ira Shor, in an attempt to answer his own question of whether "first-world students need liberating" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 121) observes that college students in his classes (in the United States) are submerged in a culture of silence inasmuch as they expect to play the role of the passive student in a "banking" model of education. I found similarly, for example, that parents attending the general PTA meetings also tended to be passive; to accept the hegemonic definition of standard PTA participation (at least in Black schools) as passively receiving and supporting decisions being made by school administrators, rather than assertively creating new policies. However, alongside the PTA's passivity and seeming immersion in a culture of silence was a rather lively

culture and discourse of opposition. To me, this indicates the possibility that Shor and Freire are correct in their critique of the authority relations in traditional classrooms which help maintain and reproduce a culture of silence, but that Shor's analysis of his classes may have overlooked the oppositional culture and discourse taking place outside the classroom on which he might have built.

Problem-Posing: Who Poses the Critical Questions?

Freire described his method as "problem-posing" education rather than "banking education." That is to say, the purpose of education in Freire's model is not to acquire, or "bank" already existing knowledge taken as given, but to provide a context where people can develop critical awareness. Accordingly, problem-posing is a method used to stimulate people to think critically. Problem-posing education is a process in which "men develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation" (Freire, 1990, p. 71).

In Freire's model, the teacher, rather than the peer participants, is the central problem-posing figure: "A Freirian critical teacher is a problem-poser who asks thought-provoking questions and who encourages students to ask their own questions" (Shor, 1993, p. 26). The prisoners' model poses a striking contrast to Freire's model, in that the prisoners took the problem-posing role for each other, as peers. Whereas the prisoners themselves decided what kind of consciousness of oppression to foster by asking critical questions of each other, Freire's model depends much more

on the outside problem-poser/educator to determine from what standpoint the critical questions are posed. It appears that Freire's model takes for granted the problem-poser's authority to define the perspective from which the problem-posing dialogue proceeds; the codification process appears to be designed to confirm the problem-poser's already existing categories of analysis. This assumption raises questions both about what empowerment means in the Freirean model and about the ability of Freirean groups to develop new and better emancipatory knowledge.[4]

The prisoners' model was receptive to a more complex understanding of power relations than Freire's because implicit in the prisoners' research agenda was an ongoing search to define and redefine the structure of power. Class analysis and racial and ethnic oppression were all understood to be a part of the Latino experience. When women entered the former prisoners' group, they saw to it that sexism was included as a category of power relations that should be taken into account as well. Partly because of the mixed racial, ethnic, and gender-based composition of the group, the prisoners were involved in an ongoing search to understand power relations. In this sense, the prisoners' model is more self-critical than Freire's appears to be. The prisoners' ongoing critical perspective on their own view of the causes for oppression may also be due to the broad participation of problem-posers whose experiences and standpoints were somewhat different from each other's.

Despite these differences, it is important to recognize that both processes used the problem-posing method. Other approaches, including many that I review here as contributions to an emancipatory participatory research framework, do not incorporate

problem-posing into their methodologies. A striking similarity between Freire's model and the prisoners' lies in the fact that both approaches synthesize critical research and critical education: a research process that is also educational requires a pedagogy, and the problem-posing pedagogy fits the emancipatory process.

The Objects of Research and Analysis

Freire's method aims to help people see the outcomes of social reality as unjust and inequitable, rather than investigating the mechanisms producing those outcomes. By contrast, the prisoners' and parents' groups carefully analyzed some fairly specific mechanisms that could be observed as supporting and reproducing dominant-subordinate relationships. This difference between the models has some important implications for a group's ability to use the results of its research and education process to change social reality; the prisoners' and parents' models produce a wider variety of emancipatory knowledge to empower groups in several ways. However, neither the prisoners' nor parents' models focuses on language and literacy to the extent Freire's model does.

The Importance of Dialogue in Conscientization

Dialogue is perhaps the most prominent feature of Freire's method, just as it is in both the prisoners' and parents' models and in feminist consciousness raising, even though the participant populations and historical circumstances vary greatly across the

situations in which these different models have been developed. In explaining the importance of dialogue as the underlying method for his model, Freire makes special note that the Brazilian culture is an oral culture, (Freire, 1985). It may be significant that the Brazilian peasants, Latino prisoners, Black parents, women in consciousness-raising groups, and the women teachers involved in critical ethnography are those represented in the small group dialogue-based models discussed here; oral culture is a prominent cultural feature of each of these groups (Latinos, African-Americans, and women).[5] It remains to be seen whether dialogue could play such a prominent role in emancipatory participatory research contexts in which a high proportion of the participants were white males. It also remains for future comparative work to determine how the qualities of the dialogue process might differ across groups.

The Importance of Dialogue for Epistemology

"Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 98). "Dialogue is a challenge to existing domination... the object to be known is not an exclusive possession of one of the subjects doing the knowing... the object to be known is put on the table between the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 99). These two statements capture much of Friere's concept of the importance of dialogue to his conscientization method.

Freire's descriptions above help show the importance of dialogue to a theory of epistemology which would aspire to contribute to the democratization of knowledge

production. Dialogue, in which the "object to be known is...put on the table between...subjects of knowing," allows for a dialectical and ongoing redefinition of reality by knowers whose standpoints may be quite different. The concept and use of dialogue helps convey not only the importance of negotiated meanings in such an epistemology, but the open-ended and ongoing nature of knowledge-making. Furthermore, dialogue is a natural human activity, one in which everyone can and does participate. As such, dialogue forms a natural basis for a democratic epistemology. Despite the democratic possibilities of dialogue implicit in Freire's definition, however, Freire's method itself does not realize all of this potential, as the discussion below indicates.

Who Puts the Object for Discussion on the Table?

Dialogue Between Educator and Group or Dialogue by the Group

After stating that dialogue is a process that engages people over an object on the table between them, Freire goes on to say that "[o]f course the educator has had a certain 'gnosiological' or intellectual experience in picking this object for study before the students meet it in the classroom..." (Shor and Freire, 1987, pp. 99-100). Shor re-states Freire this way: "The teacher selecting the objects of study knows them better than the students..." (p. 100). Further, Freire states, "At the moment the teacher begins the dialogue, he or she knows a great deal, first in terms of knowledge and second in terms of the horizon that she or he wants to get to. The starting point is what the teacher knows about the object and where the teacher wants to go with it"

(Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 103).

From these statements it is clear that in Freire's model the teacher selects what goes on the table to have a dialogue about, and does so partly because [s]he believes [s]he knows more about the object than the group. The resulting dialogue engages a group of people in a conversation already structured by the outside intellectual. The nature of the dialogue in this model is what might be called "collaborative," in that the group in effect ends up collaborating with the outside intellectual on his or her theoretical project, but it is not a peer-based collective dialogue by the group about a theoretical project of the group's own making. Freire's approach takes a considerable amount of initiative away from the group, compared with the prisoners' collective dialogue model, which emphasizes the peer-participatory dialogue process.

Of course, in real life, there is no absolute and sharp line between "collaborative" dialogue and dialogue by the group when an academic intellectual is involved in the process, especially if [s]he takes some role in initiating the dialogue. The "object on the table," the theoretical project under discussion, will have been put there, or at least its definition shaped to some extent by the academic intellectual involved with the group. From my experience working with the parents' group, it seems to me that great care is required when an academic intellectual places an object on the table. The process of defining the object that goes on the table and the process of negotiating an ongoing redefinition of that object are critical to the success of an emancipatory participatory research method in empowering grassroots people by involving them in research about their own social realities.

My experience with the parents leads met to tentatively conclude that a partial solution for an outside researcher/educator is to try to see her/himself as entering an already existing dialogue among peers (which would imply that the group already has put some "objects on the table"). Then, one can either suggest other objects, or views on the objects the group has already put on the table. The point here is to create a more egalitarian dialogue between the academic educator/researcher and the group in which the group has more freedom to define the theoretical object of investigation. In my own experience with the parents, I first noted the existence of an ongoing dialogue among other parents about the school conditions. I then entered the dialogue with a combination of personal experiences and sociological knowledge which both helped name the problem that was already "on the table." In academics' terms, the name of the problem was the reproduction of race and class relations through the differential and inequitable treatment of our children at school. I first thought of the problem more specifically in terms of the use of the cognitive abilities test to predict expected achievement scores. But over time, the objects of investigation "on the table" underwent a transformation through the dialogue process. While the reproduction of race and class relations remained a central theme, the focus for analysis centered more on how the differential treatment of parents (although in conjunction with the differential treatment of children) reproduced race and class relationships.

Redemptive Remembering

McLaren and DaSilva elaborate the meaning and function of Freire's dialogic pedagogy by employing the concept of redemptive remembering from Hutcheon (1988):

> To engage in redemptive remembering is to recall how, as subjects, we have become disproportionately constituted within dominative regimes of discourses and social practices, through our race, class, and gender identities. The purpose of such remembering is to actively free us from the mystification that results from living unreflectively in such discourses and material restraints.... It not only demystifies the present by allowing us to recognize ourselves from a critical/historical perspective, as, disproportionately, oppressors and oppressed, but it also carries traces of future possibility in its reconstruction of the present moment (McLaren and daSilva, 1993, p. 77).

Thus, "redemptive remembering" seeks to reunite people with history by helping them rediscover their connection to that history from a critical perspective. This concept helps illustrate one aspect of the dialogue process, namely that part which looks backward to a history of oppression with an eye toward a different future. McLaren and daSilva go on to show how redemptive remembering is related to "dangerous memory" and "counter-memory."

I find that this concept, although it is not one Freire himself used to describe his model, is useful in elaborating an aspect of the dialogue part of the emancipatory participatory research process. It calls attention to the dialectic of looking both backward to oppression and forward to emancipation; of consciousness of oppression and consciousness of the ability to create social change.

Telling Stories

Telling stories assumes great importance in Freire's dialogic pedagogy:

"Students' voices are codified and emplotted in stories and in the often vivid descriptive accounts of their lives that students piece together from their daily experiences" (McLaren and daSilva, 1993). McLaren and daSilva analyze the importance of storytelling in the development of critical consciousness by referring to Eagleton's (1981) suggestion about the importance of narratives as the most fundamental act of human understanding. Interestingly, storytelling formed the basis for much of the dialogic conversation in both the prisoners' and parents' models. Storytelling was perhaps the most common form of dialogic conversation to produce knowledge in both the prisoners' and parents' processes. The stories exchanged were not just any stories, however; they embodied a critical subtext and, as such, helped create a popular form of critical discourse. This distinction is important because storytelling often functions in societies to reinforce the status quo in social relations. In short, storytelling is a critical feature of emancipatory participatory research that is highlighted by analyses of Freire's model. (To me, it is ironic that the dialogic process of academic critique about Freire's method was what made me aware that storytelling is an important feature of emancipatory participatory research, when in retrospect it should have been obvious to me that storytelling was the primary mode of communication in the parents' telephone network.)

Reinventing Knowledge: Integrating Education and Research

In Freire's model, the adult education process for achieving basic literacy took

place alongside the conscientization process. In this parallel process, research and education occur simultaneously: "...the research process must animate students to study themselves, the course texts, and their own language and reality" (Shor and Freire, 1987, pp. 9-10). Freire's model provides an unusual and important conceptual framework for understanding the connections between research and education. His explanation of this connection helps explicate the unity in the prisoners' process between appropriating and producing knowledge. Freire writes:

> One moment is the production of new knowledge and the second is one in which you know the existing knowledge. What happens generally is that we dichotomize these two moments; we make them separate. Knowledge is produced in a place far from students, who are asked only to memorize what the teacher says. Consequently, we reduce the act of knowing the existing knowledge into a mere transference of the existing knowledge... when we separate producing knowledge from knowing the existing knowledge, schools become easily spaces for selling knowledge which corresponds to capitalist ideology (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 8).

Freire points out that the active cognitive subject must use critical reflection to "produce" the "known" knowledge for him/herself. Freire uses the term "reinventing" knowledge to describe this process. I find Freire's observation about this close connection between education and research right on the mark to describe the untheorized relationship between the two processes in the prisoners' model.

Freire's theory has more general implications, as well, for a theory of "research as a way of life," in which people are viewed as capable of actively producing knowledge all the time by a dialectic that includes "reinventing" existing knowledge in conjunction with producing new knowledge. Empowerment in Freire's model occurs as the peasants find their voices to simultaneously name their world and

investigate it: "The more active an attitude men take in regard to the exploration of their thematics, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 97).

McLaren and Leonard point out the epistemological significance of Freire's dialogic method in the production of critical consciousness, and in doing so help elaborate a deeper implication of the close relationship between researching and knowing in Freire's model: "[T]he process of promoting critical consciousness assumes a particular orientation or set of epistemological values. Reality must be perceived as constantly evolving rather than as a static entity; as being created rather than given; as transformable rather than immutable; as something to be made rather than accommodated to" (Torres, 1993, p. 112). This observation, that the reality itself is evolving and transformable as a function of the active critical research and education process, reflects the emphasis placed on the importance of discourse as a mode of social transformation in Freire's model. Freire's theory of social change relies heavily on the social construction of reality as the principal possibility for social change.

The prisoners' and parents' groups, like Freirean groups, attempted to socially reconstruct their realities, but they also operated from another epistemological implication of the close connection between researching and knowing: an action research perspective. In this respect, the prisoners' and parents' processes differ somewhat from Freire's model in a way that may help avoid some of the idealistic tendencies in the Freirean approach. In the prisoners' and parents' models, the close

relationship between research and knowing includes the knowledge gained from using action to change external reality. For example, the parents' research included talking to teachers and trying to get them to change their teaching behavior, and seeing what happened as a result of this effort. Observing reality, trying to change the reality, finding out what happened, and critically reflecting in dialogue with others before and after the intervention all in were an integrated process. This way of maintaining the research-knowledge connection is distinctive because of its integration of research with social action as well as with education.

Knowledge By the People: For Whom?

Although Freire suggests that the participants "can produce a literature from the grassroots" (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 10), he intends only that this literature serve as texts for the pedagogical process. It appears that the participatory researcher-students in Freire's model are critical theorists of their own situation, but that the knowledge they produce is valued almost exclusively for its ability to change the consciousnesses of those who produce it. In this way, the knowledge the grassroots groups produce, the particular forms of ideology critique applicable to their situated standpoints, is locked within their own culture circles, in a manner similar to the prisoners' group. This use (or nonuse) of knowledge appears to relate to the way Freire sees his own role--not so much as a critical theorist of power structures, but as an educator-facilitator. Freire's work escapes the culture circles only in that he

teaches critical educators how to "do" critical pedagogy. Inasmuch as Freire does not see himself as a participant in the academic labor of critical theory-building about power relations per se, he does not undertake to bring the peasants' theories to an academic audience. He may be missing an opportunity. I found that the African-American parents' critique of school ideology grounded in their theme of "low expectations" had much to contribute to sociological understanding of how race and class relations are reproduced through schooling: their findings about how race and class inequality are reproduced in part by the differential treatment of parents could make a valuable contribution to current academic theoretical formulations. Their insights were readily made available to those actually living in the situation, but could become more widely useful if they entered the academic literature. This outcome is highly unlikely unless an academic intellectual is working with the group.

Approaches like Freire's, which attribute strong importance to critical theory or knowledge developed by grassroots group-based intellectuals, miss a great opportunity for democratizing knowledge if they restrict their vision to the value of the group's emancipatory knowledge for itself. The parents' model demonstrates that critical theory produced by popular intellectuals can provide insights valuable to a more general audience. This possibility is significant for the goals of democratizing knowledge production, creating a cognitive democracy, and contributing a methodology of knowledge production for substantive democracy. The parents' model made a partial provision for bringing the analysis and critique of popular intellectuals into academic theoretical dialogue, although so far, only I have written

the texts. Others have published texts created by popular intellectuals (e.g., Benmayor, 1991; Berté-Toomer et al., 1993); perhaps these and other such examples can serve as models for lay critique to enter the academic discourse in the words of their creators.

How Freire's Method Elaborates Emancipatory Participatory Research

Freire's conscientization method serves to expand and elaborate a framework for emancipatory participatory research in many ways:

1) It includes nonacademics--even illiterate people--in the category of "intellectuals."

2) It suggests a form of praxis for the academic intellectual in working with a grassroots oppressed group that overlaps the pedagogical and research roles.

3) It construes the small group emancipatory process (conscientization) as an investigatory process in which the group members and academic intellectuals together investigate social reality.

4) It affirms the need and possibilities for an emancipatory participatory research process outside the institutional spaces of universities or other traditional research institutions.

5) It elaborates a particular form of dialogue involving "problem-posing."

6) It affirms a connection between a "bottom-up" democratic methodology for knowledge production and democratic social process by emphasizing the ability of

grassroots people to become active critical theorizers of social reality.

7) It emphasizes and elaborates the empowering aspects of storytelling as a form of dialogic discourse.

8) It shows how "redemptive remembering" connects people to their history and allows them to critically view their connection to the past.

9) It starts analysis from everyday life situations, grounding theory in everyday life (although not in active, collective struggle with oppressive social conditions).

10) It blurs the role distinctions between teaching and doing research and provides a theory for closely linking education and research.

11) It provides a model for a group process in which the academic intellectual's role is to be a catalyst for change rather than an "expert" possessing (and dispensing) expert knowledge, as in a "banking" model of education.

12) It links a theory of basic literacy to a theory of critical literacy.

An analysis of Freire's method also helps clarify some important differences between it and the prisoners' and parents' models. These differences principally concern the kind and amount of leadership the academic intellectual takes in initiating the group, beginning the dialogue process, defining the objects of investigation, and structuring the dialogue process. Despite its attempt to create a less authoritarian pedagogical process, Freire's method undermines at least some of its intent by pre-structuring the process so that the student-participants lack the power to decide what is to be investigated and how that investigation proceeds. In addition, the parents' model begins to explore the potential for disseminating group-generated knowledge

beyond the group, into the discourse of academic intellectuals.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

There are various models for "participatory research," all of which have in common with the prisoners' model an emphasis on the participation of people who in standard research methods would have served as the objects of research. In other respects, however, these models are often quite different from each other. A brief discussion of the set of participatory research models contributes to the elaboration of an emancipatory participatory research framework.

Non-Emancipatory-Oriented Participatory Research

Many activities that identify themselves as participatory research have no discernible emancipatory project in my sense of the term. Nevertheless, researchers in this tradition have provided definitions of participatory action research that can serve as a useful place to start a discussion. Argyris and Schön define participatory action research as

> a form of action research that involves practitioners as both subjects and coresearchers. It is based on the Lewinian proposition that causal inferences about the behavior of human beings are more likely to be valid and enactable when the human beings in question participate in building and testing them. Hence it aims at creating an environment in which participants give and get valid information, make free and informed choices (including the choice to

> participate), and generate internal commitment to the results of their inquiry (Argyris and Schön, 1991, p. 86).

Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes define participatory action research (PAR) in this way:

> [S]ome of the people in the organization or community under study participate actively with the professional researcher throughout the research process from the initial design to the final presentation of results and discussion of their action implications. PAR thus contrasts sharply with the conventional model of pure research, in which members of organizations and communities are treated as passive subjects, with some of them participating only to the extent of authorizing the project, being its subjects, and receiving the results. PAR is applied research, but it contrasts sharply with the most common type of applied research, in which researchers serve as professional experts, designing the project, gathering the data, interpreting the findings, and recommending action to the client organization (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes, 1991, p. 20).

The articles in the volume from which these definitions come (Whyte, 1991a) all attempt to democratize the research process by making it participatory: they emphasize the issues of making the "participants" active rather than passive and of allowing them significant control over the knowledge-production process. Nevertheless, the authors sometimes assert limits to democracy in knowledge production: "Action research does not mean that the researcher should or can relinquish his or her specific professional contribution and responsibility by becoming victim to some misunderstood 'democracy' in thinking that everyone can take part equally in every step of the research process" (Karlsen, 1991, p. 148).

More significant for my purpose is the fact that the democratization of research occurs independently of any larger emancipatory project. The research processes do not involve an analysis of power relations, inequality, or injustice, or combine research with action or education to transform those relations. Although some of the participatory research projects in this genre are concerned about

organizational development or promoting workers' self-management (e.g. Pace and Argona, 1991), or are intended to increase farmers' participation in agricultural development decisions (e.g. Whyte, 1991), they tend to presume that the workers' or farmers' participation can be advanced without encountering resistance from powerful actors in the organizations or communities in which the action research takes place, that may be responsible for, or benefit from, the preexisting conditions--including the lack of participation. It is this absence of explicit recognition of power relations that distinguishes this type of participatory research from emancipatory participatory research.

Still, standard participatory research models such as the above have developed concepts useful to a framework for emancipatory participatory research. I briefly summarize some of them below.

Codetermination and "Full Participation"

The concepts of "codetermination" and "full participation" help distinguish a substantive from a pro forma quality of participation. Some practitioners have used the term "participatory research" to apply to a process in which indigenous groups do no more than help an academic researcher gather data for a study over which the researcher has all significant control (Notes taken at American Sociological Association Workshop on Participatory Research and Community-Based Education, Oglala Lakota College, Kyle, SD, June 1988). In supporting substantive forms of participation in participatory research, Elden and Levin refer to Pateman's (1970)

distinction between "full" rather than "pseudo-" or "partial" participation: "Not all participation is empowering. Participation must be full participation or a form of 'codetermination' if it is to be empowering... The insiders are not simply sources of data or sanctioners of studies and reports, but actively help create and codetermine every phase of the research process..." (Elden and Levin, 1991, p. 133). The concept of "codetermination" refers to having significant power over the research process (Brown and Tandon, 1983).

Cogenerative Dialogue

Elden and Levin (1991) suggest "cogenerative dialogue" as being one of the most important aspects of participatory research. As in Freire's model, their frame of reference takes for granted that the primary site of dialogue is between an "outsider" (e.g. the researcher) and "insiders," rather than among "insiders" as in the prisoners' model. Although I find this understanding of the dialogue relationship overly limited, the concept of cogenerative dialogue is useful for both models of the dialogue relationship.

Elden and Levin define cogenerative dialogue as a process in which "[b]oth insiders and outsiders operate out of their initial frames of reference but communicate at a level where frames can be changed and new frames generated" (Elden and Levin, 1991, p. 134). They note that it is much more demanding to allow someone else's communication to alter one's frame of reference than to simply exchange information.

The importance of dialogue in creating a context where the participants'

frames of reference can be altered has important implications for epistemology, the politics of knowledge production, and emancipatory praxis, all elements important to an emancipatory participatory research framework. For example, the application of this concept to epistemology implies the potential of dialogue as a methodology for creating knowledge that allows for an ongoing redefinition of reality. From the perspective of the politics of knowledge production, this concept helps illuminate a way for marginalized groups' standpoints to alter the theoretical frameworks held by the academic intellectuals working with such groups. And in terms of emancipatory praxis, the concept provides a model for understanding how "new frames" can be generated for both theory and practice through a dialogue process.

Action Research

Most participatory research presumes an action research framework based on Lewin's (1948) observation about the impossibility of understanding a social system without changing it. In non-emancipatory participatory research, the actions taken are not directed at overcoming inequalities of power, but participatory action research may also involve emancipatory action. In the prisoners' model, action research was one of several investigative methods.

Emancipatory-Oriented Participatory Research

In contrast to the above definitions, Kassam summarizes participatory research

as aiming toward "Progressive social change for the betterment and liberation of the oppressed people wherever they are" (Kassam, 1980, p. 63). Maguire's (1987) partial definition of participatory research as a process which "aims to develop critical consciousness, to improve the lives of those involved in the research process, and to transform fundamental societal structures and relationships" (Maguire, 1987, p. 4), and her more elaborated definition clearly show a more emancipatory view of participatory research:

> Participatory research combines three activities: investigation, education, and 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 (Maguire, 1987, p. 35).

Maguire continues her description by clarifying that the primary goal of participatory research is the transformation of power structures. This view, particularly the emphasis on a synthesis of research, education, and action (though not therapy), echoes the prisoners' process.

Origins and Theory of Participatory Research

According to Kassam (1980), participatory research developed from three streams of critique: questions about the means and ends of social science, concerns about the relationship between researcher and researched, and finally, questions about research neutrality and objectivity (Kassam, 1980, p. 62). Citing Hall (1979),

Tandon, (1981b), Horton (1981), and Vio Grossi, Martinic, Tapia, and Pascal (1983). Maguire places the origins of participatory research within three movements concerned with eliminating dominant/subordinate relationships: movements critical of existing perspectives on international development, adult education, and the social sciences (Maguire, 1987, p. 38).

Fals-Borda asserts that participatory research builds on "popular science" or "common people's science." He describes popular science as "the common-sense knowledge which has been an ancestral cultural and ideological trait belonging to the people in the social bases" (Fals-Borda, 1980, p. 16). In Fals-Borda's analysis, this knowledge is not appropriately valued because "Western specialized scientists... nowadays ... monopolize the concept of what science is" (Fals-Borda, 1980, p. 15), and popular knowledge has not been codified in the terms of Western specialized science. Popular knowledge, according to Fals-Borda, should be valued as having the potential to undermine systems of domination.

Fals-Borda's analysis of the oppositional potential of popular knowledge contrasts with critical theory's pessimistic view of oppressed people's false consciousness. Instead of viewing the consciousnesses of dominated people as completely reflecting the relations of domination such that their knowledge is false, Fals-Borda views their knowledge as contradictory:

> The Gramscian problem of how to convert popular common sense into 'good sense' had... a more positive development... We started from the fact that peasant culture--tradition--is not as conservative as it has been suspected to be, but realistically dynamic, because it includes opposing elements... There are, therefore, in peasant culture and tradition, positive and negative elements geared towards social change which open good transformation possibilities

both in knowledge and in action" (Fals-Borda, 1980, Pp. 22-23)

This analysis provides an important insight about the implications of popular knowledge for an emancipatory participatory research framework: popular knowledge is contradictory, and reflects both domination and opposition. For a grassroots group to distinguish positive from negative elements in popular knowledge as a basis for creating better emancipatory knowledge, it would seem to be important to use the group dialogue process to elicit the contradictions within the group's popular knowledge. For this to happen, a method is required that allows people to gain some distance on their own contradictory knowledge. Freire's codification method appears to be one way of doing this. Another, which I used, was to discuss stories parents had told me with other parents. Both methods place popular knowledge "on the table" to be examined.

The Participatory Research Process

Maguire has attempted to present a coherent analysis of several participatory research approaches, and claimed that despite the diversity of participatory research models, most have five phases:

> 1. Organization of the Project and Knowledge of the Working Area: Gathering and analyzing existing information about the research area and about the central problems faced by [the] people...;
>
> 2. Definition of Generating Problematics: Identify[ing] and understand[ing] participants' perceptions of their most significant problems...;
>
> 3. Objectivization and Problemization: Link[ing] participants' individual interpretations of problems to the broader context...;

> 4. Researching Social Reality and Analyzing Collected Information: Design[ing] a process to investigate specific problems together...; [and]
>
> 5. Definition of Action Projects: Researchers and participants decid[ing] on what actions to take to address the problems they have collectively defined and investigated (Maguire, 1987, pp. 49-51)

These five "phases" all had places (more or less) in the prisoners' and parents' processes, but they overlapped a great deal, and did not really occur in the orderly fashion Maguire implies. Nevertheless, this list serves as a useful, if very general, guide.

The kind of participatory research process described by Maguire (1987) and others can be characterized in many ways, including, for example, that it is a self-help process, that it aspires to empower people to become stronger by virtue of strengthening their knowledge, that it helps them gain control over their situations by providing concrete knowledge for action, and so forth. It aims for both personal and social transformation; it contributes to the development of several different kinds of emancipatory knowledge that can be produced by several different methods (e.g. practical knowledge and critical knowledge produced by positivist methods, action research, or self-reflection); and it is a community-based method. A few characteristics of the process are described below in order to help differentiate participatory research from other approaches, or from the prisoners' method.

Problem posing and problem solving. Whereas Freire's method primarily emphasizes problematization, or problem posing, many participatory research models employ both problem-posing and problem-solving research. The problem-solving

aspect of participatory research is related to its interest in forms of emancipatory action intended to change external conditions rather than just subjectivities, which is the focus of Freire's model. The prisoners' model was more like the participatory research models than like Freire's, with respect to its interest in problem solving as well as problem posing.

Collectivization of experiences. As Maguire notes, participatory research provides a method for research participants to become visible to each other and for their experiences to be viewed by each other. The nature of participatory research promotes investigation and interaction among group participants, unlike standard forms of research--including, as Maguire notes, most alternative forms of feminist methodology. She points out that Stanley and Wise (1983), for example, reject research with women because they define it as researchers speaking for women and thereby exploiting them (Maguire, 1987, p. 127). Although pro forma participatory research does not require communication among participants, but simply their individual collaboration with the academic researcher, the emancipatory-oriented models of participatory research seem to assume within-group communication.

Overlapping roles. In emancipatory-oriented participatory research models, the academic intellectual's roles of researcher, educator, and activist (e.g. Maguire, 1987) overlap as in the prisoners' model (there is no therapist role, as in the prisoners' model). More importantly, the parallel roles of the people in the

grassroots group are undertheorized; in the prisoners' model, everyone was not only a researcher, but a teacher, a therapist, and an activist as well. Everyone's roles overlapped.

The Problem of Alienation in Participatory Research

All the participatory research models I have discussed assume that the academic intellectual comes into a situation to do participatory research rather than finding her/himself in a situation that would benefit from participatory research; presumably there is a research grant, or another external reason to "do research," and the decision to do research precedes any activity of the "participants" to determine their knowledge needs. Maguire, for example, relates her own experience:

> 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 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'? (Maguire, 1987, p. 138).

This perspective contrasts sharply with the idea that research is a way of life, a natural part of the life of social groups in which the academic intellectual and the grassroots group can participate together. Maguire writes, "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" (Maguire, 1987, p. 139). But this formulation represents a choice between ways an intellectual may be alienated from a grassroots group. It illustrates that the participatory research process, which would aspire to help replace the alienated and

fetishized research forms of standard research (Fals-Borda, 1980), has itself become an alienated and alienating process. Maguire relates that she is not alone among participatory researchers in noting that initiating the research process is one of the most problematic aspects of participatory research.

The problem is not limited to the initial phase of participatory research. So long as research is housed in academic institutions and academic researchers make their livings by doing research, some awkwardness is inevitable about finding a way to initiate the research process. However, as I have noted, a more authentic participatory research process might be initiated if the academic researcher were to view the situation as one in which a "people's research" process is already taking place that [s]he might be able to join if linked to the community in some authentic way. Fals-Borda's analysis of the contradictory nature of popular knowledge pertains to the situation: the researcher would seek to identify in the people's language (especially their stories) both their opposition and their accommodation to existing power relations.

Maguire's list of phases in the research process makes clear the extent to which the participatory research project is the academic researcher's project--another indicator of the alienation of the academics from the grassroots. In this model for participatory research, the praxis of the academic researcher appears to be quite autonomous, and not deeply or dialectically related to the group's emancipatory research praxis. In comparison with the prisoners' model or even with some other approaches from the literature (such as the anthropological fieldwork approaches), this

idea of participatory research looks like a formalization of participation: the emancipatory praxis itself becomes a fetish, an alienated and alienating way of life, as participatory research becomes a profession rather than a practice.

RESEARCH AS PRAXIS: PATTI LATHER

Patti Lather's efforts to develop an emancipatory research model are grounded in her academic work in women's studies and critical education, and draw mainly on three research programs: feminist research, neo-marxist critical ethnography, and Freirian "empowering" research (Lather, 1986b). In Lather's words, her project is:

> 1) to mark the development of what philosopher of science Brian Fay (1987) terms "a critical social science" in what is more generally referred to as "the postpositivist intellectual climate of our times" (Fiske and Shweder, 1986:16); 2) to contribute to the theory and practice of liberatory education; and 3) to explore the implications of feminism, neo-Marxism and poststructuralism for developing inquiry approaches in the human sciences that move us toward ways of knowing which interrupt relations of dominance and subordination (Lather, 1991, p. xvii).

For me, perhaps the most important theme in Lather's work is its effort to define a methodology for social research that would provide a way of "continually demystifying the realities it serves to create" (Lather, 1991, p. 113). That is, Lather takes seriously the postmodernist critique of knowledge that recognizes that any way of knowing is not only limited, but serves to obscure as well as reveal social reality. She presumes that defining reality is an open-ended and ongoing process and concludes that a central project for critical social science is to identify ways such a science can be self-critical, then build those ways into its methodology. Her strategy

is to create what I would call a dialogue of perspectives: "I frame the varied critical discourses as differing practices and impulses that both weave together and interrupt one another rather than as fixed, contrasting positions" (Lather, 1991, p. 19).

Lather says that her project is an approach that "paradoxically, both calls into question 'the dream of scientificity' (Barthes, quoted in Merquior, 1986:148) and advocates the creation of a 'more hesitant and partial scholarship' capable of helping us 'to tell a better story' (Grossberg, 1988:1476) in a world marked by the elusiveness with which it greets our efforts to know it" (Lather, 1991, p. 114). She says her position is neither anti-science or post-science, but agrees with Hutcheon (1988a) that "science is... a much contested cultural space..." (Lather, 1991, p. 104).

Lather's project is to deconstruct existing research and educational practice (including some models that have emancipatory intent but retain the seeds for reproducing domination), and to reconstruct an emancipatory project by building in a deep method for reflexivity through a dialogue of models. The praxis of academic intellectuals, and especially their relationship to oppressed groups, is a central issue. "Research as praxis" provides the organizing concept for Lather's work.

She professes "an ambivalence about the politics of postmodern thought and practice" (Lather, 1991, p. 1), and refers to joining Huyssen (1987) and Foster (1985) in an attempt to create "a cultural and adversarial postmodernism, a postmodernism of resistance" and Hutcheon (1988b) in a "critical appropriation of postmodernism" (Lather, 1991, p. 1). The following assumptions guide her work (Lather, 1991, pp. 2-4):

1) Positivism's failure. Asserting that the past twenty years have established a significant challenge to positivism, Lather suggests that we are now at an important juncture marked by a disruption of the hegemony of positivist inquiry and an "experimental moment in the human sciences" (Marcus and Fischer, 1986).

2) Inquiry's value-ladenness. Lather asserts that ideology permeates all ways of knowing, and concludes that this necessitates better understandings about how the researcher's values become embedded in research, and greater self-reflexivity on the part of researchers.

3) The existence of several kinds of critical theories. Like Fay (1987), Lather emphasizes the multiplicity of critical theories "which are informed by identification with and interest in oppositional social movements" (Lather, 1991, p. 3). She considers critical theories to be useful for helping clarify people's struggles, which change depending on historical conditions. Although Lather does not state explicitly that different combinations of critical theories are needed to explain and clarify people's struggles depending on these changing historical conditions, such a perspective would appear to follow from her position. She certainly rejects the notion of a single, stable critical perspective, quoting Solomon-Godeau: "a position of resistance can never be established once and for all, but must be perpetually refashioned and renewed to address adequately those shifting conditions and circumstances that are its ground" (Solomon-Godeau, 1988, p. 204).

4) The need for a critical social science to empower oppressed groups. In this view of research, the aim is not only to help people understand the causes of

oppression, but to empower them to change social conditions.

5) The need to take into account postmodern critique. Lather suggests that postmodernism illustrates the need to "break with totalizing, universalizing 'metanarratives'" (Lather, 1991, p. 5)--that is, the several kinds of critical theories reflect various kinds of oppressive relations.

Lather's work, in its attempt to grasp the interrelatedness of several critiques (e.g. of social science methodology, of the role of transformative intellectuals, of the estrangement of critical theory from its grassroots audience, of existing definitions of objectivity, of existing definitions of false consciousness), and to address the interrelationship of critical research and critical pedagogy, is difficult to summarize briefly. This section presents some of her concepts that I find useful for my own project and comments on them in terms of that project.

Useful Concepts from Lather's Work

Empowerment

Lather's definition of empowerment recognizes and rejects some common understandings of the term. "My usage of empowerment opposes the reduction of the term as it is used in the current fashion of individual self-assertion, upward mobility, and the psychological experience of feeling powerful" (Lather, 1991, p. 3). She draws on Bookman and Morgan (1988) and Shapiro (1989) in describing empowerment as meaning "analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness,

recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change the conditions of our lives" (Lather 1991, p. 4), and underlines the importance of conceptualizing empowerment as a process that is taken by someone (or a group) on their own behalf rather than as something that can be done for someone else.

This is an important point. However, Lather does not raise the issue of the distinction (and the dialectical relationship) between self and group-empowerment that was so central to the prisoners' perspective on power and empowerment and that seems critical to a framework for emancipatory participatory research: empowerment is both an individual and a group process. In addition, her definition of empowerment is much more idealistic than that of a struggling group like the prisoners'. Empowerment for them included much more than understanding the nature of their oppression--it also meant appropriating certain kinds of practical knowledge and skills that were integrated into their "research" (and education, therapy, and resistance) program.

Emphasis on Praxis

Lather suggests that praxis "...mean[s] the dialectical tension, the interactive, reciprocal shaping of theory and practice which I see at the center of an emancipatory social science" (Lather, 1986b, p. 258). Research, for Lather, is intimately tied to action. She prefers the term "praxis-oriented" research to the term "openly ideological" research:

> 'Openly ideological' invites comparisons with fundamentalist and conservative movements, whereas 'praxis-oriented' clarifies the critical and empowering roots of a research paradigm openly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society...'praxis-oriented' means 'activities that combat dominance and move toward self-organization and that push toward thoroughgoing change in the practices of... the social formation' (Benson, 1983, p. 338).

Lather suggests that there is a "rich ferment in contemporary discourse about empirical research in the social sciences" (Lather, 1986b, p. 261) concerned with the dichotomy between empirical work and the construction of emancipatory theory. She cites, among others, Anyon (1982) and Ramsay (1983) as works committed to a "change-enhancing, interactive, contextualized approach to knowledge building" (Lather, 1991, p. 260).

Democratizing the Inquiry Process

Lather equates praxis with a democratization of research: her primary objective "is to help researchers involve the researched in a democratized process of inquiry characterized by negotiation, reciprocity, empowerment--research as praxis" (Lather, 1986b, p. 257). This part of Lather's project is not well developed in terms of specific suggestions, however; her model might benefit from other approaches with respect to this particular area.

Connections to Other Approaches

Connections between Critical Research and Critical Pedagogy

Lather's description of critical inquiry helps elaborate the nature of the close connection between critical research and critical pedagogy:

> First, critical inquiry is a response to the experiences, desires, and needs of oppressed people... The purpose... is to provide accounts that are a basis for further analysis and "a corrective to the investigator's preconceptions regarding the subjects' life-world and experiences" (Comstock, 1982, p. 381).
> Second, critical inquiry inspires and guides the dispossessed in the process of cultural transformation...At the core of the transformation is 'a reciprocal relationship in which every teacher is always a student and every pupil a teacher' (Gramsci, quoted in Femia, 1975, p. 41)....
> Third, critical inquiry focuses on fundamental contradictions which help dispossessed people see how poorly their 'ideologically frozen understandings' serve their interests...
> Fourth, the validity of a critical account can be found, in part, in the participants' responses... The point is to provide an environment that invites participants' critical reaction to researcher accounts of their worlds....
> Fifth, critical inquiry stimulates "a self-sustaining process of critical analysis and enlightened action" (Comstock, 1982, p. 387) (Lather, 1986b, p. 268).

A Critique of Critical Pedagogy

One of Lather's major concerns is that critical inquiry is not sufficiently self-critical or self-reflexive. She quotes Sabia and Wallulis as having noted that critical self-awareness has sometimes come to mean "a negative attitude toward competing approaches instead of its own self-critical perspective" (Sabia and Wallulis, 1983, p. 26). She quotes Moon as suggesting that "if critical theory is to change the way social science is conceived of and practised, it must become genuinely reflexive" (Moon, 1983, p. 30).

Lather suggests that recent works such as Ellsworth's (1989) essay, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy" and the debate that ensued following its publication call attention to the

need to problematize the practice of transformative intellectuals and critical pedagogy. She notes that critical intellectuals can act as "universalizing spokespersons [rather than]...cultural workers who do what they can to lift the barriers which prevent people from speaking for themselves" (Lather, 1991, p. 47). To illustrate this concern, she notes the negative reactions among theorists of critical pedagogy (e.g., McLaren and Giroux) to the prospect of self-critique raised by Ellsworth's critique. Lather reports:

> In regard to Giroux's pronouncements about the effects of her [Ellsworth's] self-reflexive de-centering, I read his statements about "careerism" and the undermining of "the very nature of social criticism itself" (Giroux, 1988, p. 178) as ironically repositioning himself and the other (largely male) architects of critical pedagogy at the center of her discourse. Disrupting any notion of a privileged, unproblematic position from which to speak, she seems to have unleashed "the virulence and the power invested in logocentric thought" (Grosz, 1989:34) (Lather, 1991, p. 48).

Lather clearly sees the value of critical pedagogy to her project, and I also found that a critical pedagogical praxis was essential both to the prisoners' group process and to an academic intellectual's work with a small disadvantaged group. But I share Lather's skepticism about existing concepts of critical pedagogical praxis. Lather writes:

> "...[L]iberatory pedagogies...have not clearly enough seen themselves as one of many conflicting voices in a context of semiotic bombardment. Additionally, tied to their version of truth and interpreting resistance as "false consciousness," too often such pedagogies fail to probe the degree to which "empowerment" becomes something done "by" liberated pedagogues "to" or "for" the as-yet-unliberated, the "other," the object upon which is directed the "emancipatory actions" (Lather, 1991, p. 16).

My initial experience with the prisoners, whose voices "problematized" each other, and whose collective experiences of struggle shaped and reshaped their

understandings of themselves and their situations, sensitized me to the ability of oppressed groups, at least under some conditions, to provide their own intellectual critical leadership. My experience with the parents' network helped me theorize my own practice as a "critical intellectual" as one in which I could suggest theory, but only tentatively, so that the other parents could question or criticize me as part of everyday conversation without a pedagogical process getting in the way. I would not suggest that even this practice is without the potential for domination by the academic intellectual: the norms of friendship itself can stand in the way of open criticism. What I infer from Lather's discussion is the need to remain open to the possibility that any given emancipatory method can reproduce relations of domination, and the need to recognize that even among the approaches I count as contributing to the project of creating a framework for emancipatory participatory research, some, and perhaps all, will have their own blind spots, or unwillingnesses to be self-critical.

A Critique of Feminism

As Lather points out, and as I noted in Chapter 9, even though feminist consciousness-raising groups underscored the possibility for non-academic intellectuals to create theory, the academicization of feminist theory undermined this potential of feminism to counter vanguardism:

> Feminism's grassroots, "no more experts" credo is premised on the sturdy sureness that...every woman has something important to say about the disjunctures in her own life and the means necessary for change. Such feminist tendencies against vanguardism problematize the position of those "transformative intellectuals" (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985) who assume a hegemony over what theory is and themselves as the locus of what can be

> known and done. But feminist academics themselves suffer from a tendency to do theory "for" instead of "with" people (Lather, 1991, p. xviii).

Doing Theory With People Rather than For People

Lather suggests that a way to reconceptualize research and critical pedagogy is for academic intellectuals to do theory with people rather than for them (Lather, 1991, p. xviii). In this way, academic intellectuals might avoid a situation in which they produce theory and then "others" criticize it. Lather indicates that the "deck is stacked" once the theory is already produced.

While my first inclination is to affirm this suggestion (to do theory with rather than for), my experiences tells me that to do theory with people is much more complicated than it might seem; that doing a certain amount of theory for people (or at least drawing on theory others have done for people) can facilitate the process of doing research with them. For example, when I interviewed our school principal, I was doing research for the group (and also for myself), but I used the results of that research to feed into our group dialogue, which then was facilitated to do its own research more effectively.

Research as Praxis: Lather's Model

Lather's model for research as praxis is rather broadly defined, and not very specific as to the details. Although she implies that the model applies to a researcher's praxis with a small group, there are w specific suggestions about

practice. The central ideas include doing research in a way that overlaps critical education "to empower the oppressed to come to understand and change their own realities" (Lather, 1986b, pp. 260-261); "eliminating the dichotomy between empirical work and the construction of emancipatory theory" (Lather, 1986b, p. 261); the use of theory to "illuminate the lived experience of progressive social groups" and the use of lived experience to illuminate theory (Lather, 1986b, p. 262); the empowerment of both the researcher and the researched; the use of self-reflection in the research process; reciprocity between the researcher and researched; and the importance of built-in methods for reflexivity to contribute to validity. Other approaches (such as the critical anthropological fieldwork models) have elaborated more specific practices relevant to a "research-as-praxis" framework.

Systematized Reflexivity

Lather is concerned about the validity of emancipatory theory. She suggests that additional reflexivity is needed to determine "the weak points of the theoretical tradition we are operating from..." (Lather, 1986b, p. 271). Lather begins to suggest reflexivity at some of the deeper levels: "The absence of formulas to guarantee valid social knowledge forces us to 'operate simultaneously at epistemological, theoretical and empirical levels with self-awareness'" (Sharp and Green, 1975:234). One of the principal ways she suggests doing this is by bringing research subjects into the research process as active subjects. The importance of including people in the construction of emancipatory theory is to ensure that theory is confronted with, and

respectful of, the experiences of people in their daily lives. She suggests that the creation of emancipatory theory should be a dialogical and dialectical process in which "theory comes to 'click' with people's sense of the contradictions in their lives" (Lather, 1986b, p. 265) rather than "top down impositional practices" (Lather, 1986b, p. 265).

Creating a Dialogue of Paradigms, Epistemologies, Disciplines, Praxes

Lather emphasizes the importance of creating "self-corrective techniques,... a body of research exemplars that will stand as testimony to the vigor that comes, not from positivist retrenchment, but from viewing the move into the postpositivist era with a sense of possibility" (Lather, 1986a, p. 65).

She suggests four self-corrective techniques:

1) An expanded notion of triangulation to include the triangulation of multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes. I would suggest the triangulation of epistemologies, standpoints, academic disciplines, and modes of praxis as well. The purpose of such broad-based triangulation is not only to develop better emancipatory theory, but emancipatory praxis as well (although Lather appears to be primarily concerned with the development of better theory).

2) The incorporation of a "systematized reflexivity" to ensure that a priori theoretical orientations can be changed by the logic of empirical data. The democratization of knowledge production, together with the participation of people engaged in everyday struggles, should contribute to this goal.

3) The recycling of results back to the respondents is suggested as a way to increase "face validity."

4) Using the concept of "catalytic validity" (Reason and Rowan, 1981, p. 240) as an alternative standard for validity. "Catalytic validity" is defined as "the degree to which the research process re-orients, focusses, and energizes participants in what Freire (1973) terms 'conscientization'" (Lather, 1986a, p. 67)

In sum, Lather's project to reconceptualize critical research and critical pedagogy as "research as praxis" stands as an example of an attempt to respond to postmodern critique in a way that allows emancipatory research to proceed more self-reflexively. Her model is not based on an analysis of concrete experience working with a group, but aspires to involve the meaningful participation of non-academic researchers in the critical emancipatory research and education process. Lather's model could benefit from more approaches than those she draws on. For example, the many anthropological fieldwork models might be of use to her for her own project. Her model complements the prisoners' approach, and the model for emancipatory participatory research that emerges from my work with the parents, in that these models are grounded in a "people's research" approach.

CONCLUSION

This Chapter's incomplete discussion of models of critical social science--efforts to link academic theory and grassroots struggles--illustrates the variety of

practices that participate, knowingly or not, in the larger emancipatory project to which this dissertation tries to contribute. Within the larger project, with its many aspects and linkages, each of these models reveals parts of the whole. The prisoners' praxis, the parents', and the generalized small-group model in Chapter 9 also reveal subsets of the parts, but although these grassroots models are multifaceted, even they are not equivalent to the whole project. Individual grassroots groups' practices of knowledge production and struggle within the generalized small-group emancipatory participatory research framework can only reveal parts of the emancipatory project because it is of necessity larger than any single praxis. As the postmodernist critiques and the arguments of the feminist epistemologists make clear, the emancipatory project must keep reconstructing knowledge to keep up with changing conditions and avoid the danger of reproducing oppression--it can hope to do these things only if multiple practices maintain dialogue with each other. The needed continuing dialogue of standpoints, identities, experiences, and epistemologies must take place beyond the intragroup practices I have been describing--it is of essence an intergroup process. That higher level of emancipatory participatory research is discussed further in Chapter 12.

NOTES

1. Many alternative models for anthropological fieldwork research do not assume a participatory model in which those among whom research is conducted join in that research. The participatory forms are discussed below.

2. Ethnography has been defined as "the data of cultural anthropology that are derived from the direct observations of behavior in a particular society... [which are then]... related to interpretations in cultural anthropology" (Burgess, 1984).

3. "...[E]thnographers are strangers to the situations they research" (Burgess, 1984).

4. For a critique of Freire's dialogic method with respect to its anti-democratic implications, see Walker (1981).

5. I am assuming that the teachers involved in critical ethnography are predominantly women, given that women are disproportionately represented among the population of public school teachers.

CHAPTER 12

TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BROADER CRITICAL COMMUNITY

This dissertation presents three models for emancipatory participatory research. The first, the prisoners' model, is the basis for the other two. The prisoners' model is presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. The second, a summary of which appears at the beginning of Chapter 9, is a more generalized model of a grassroots, small-group emancipatory research praxis. It is a research-based (rather than an activist, therapeutic, or education-based) elaboration of the prisoners' model that builds in roles for social scientists and for social scientific theory and research. This second model (which I think of as a tentative framework) is generalized primarily on the basis of my experience working with the parents' group but it also infuses my reading of several relevant academic literatures. The idea for the third model (which I think of as a tentative framework as well) is also described briefly at the beginning of Chapter 9. This third model or framework reaches beyond single small-group settings to address the need for emancipatory participatory research on a larger scale. This broader model envisions critical dialogue not only among individuals, but among epistemic communities, including small groups from the grassroots and certain academic communities, all of whose self-defined projects have an emancipatory intent and all of which are involved in their own internal deconstruction-reconstruction (self-critique) processes.

Both the generalized small-group model and the broader model for

emancipatory participatory research orient education, therapy, and action around building a critical social science from below, and assume that the principal trained academic intellectual actors involved in the process are social theorist/researchers. Both models, however, include elements of emancipatory praxis from education, therapy, and action, and suggest that the researcher/theorist integrate the roles of activist, educator, and therapist into the researcher/theorist role. In this sense, the two more generalized models are described in a manner parallel to my analysis of the prisoners' process: each is described primarily as a research praxis, even though each has educational, therapeutic, or activist elements that might have been the focus of a description.

BUILDING CRITICAL COMMUNITY WITH THE SMALL-GROUP RESEARCH MODEL

My central concern, as indicated in Chapter 1, is about how to address our social crises of multiple oppressions given the many difficulties of coming to some common definitions of who "we" are. Separated as we are, in the many ways described in Chapter 1, it is hard to imagine ways we might define ourselves, our critical perspectives, and critical communities to come together in a more effective struggle.

The generalized small-group research model described in Chapter 9 proceeds to help define an "us" that would primarily include grassroots groups and individual

social scientists. That model describes a form of research-based emancipatory praxis that suggests how a group or a loosely organized network of disadvantaged grassroots people can work with an academy-trained critical intellectual to produce critical and emancipatory knowledge in its own interests, serving its own needs, and in the interests of a broader critical community and constituency for change.

This generalized model for emancipatory participatory research achieves a step in the democratization of knowledge production and the creation of a more broadly participatory critical community of knowers. First, it increases the capacity of popular intellectuals to develop their critical standpoint(s) through dialogue with each other and with critical academy-trained intellectuals who have specialized knowledge, and enhances their ability to struggle more effectively both by developing various kinds of useful emancipatory knowledge with the help of the academic intellectual and by forming a stronger critical community by virtue of having joined forces with someone whose specialized training can contribute to the group. Second, it brings the critical perspective of oppressed grassroots groups into contact with academic critical theories through the academic theorist/researcher working with the group in ways that provide an opportunity for such groups to appropriate, critique, and re-synthesize academic critical theory (and possibly, through the academic intellectual, to contribute to critical theory). At the level of the generalized small-group model, the individual academic researcher/theorist-as-activist articulates the link between the critical communities of grassroots knowers and academic researcher/theorists.

In these ways, the generalized small-group model helps facilitate a more

informed public debate about the definitions of social problems, their sources in power relations, the mechanisms reproducing inequality, and possible solutions. It normally does this only at the level of local struggle, however, as in the prisoners' model. But the generalized small group model can help develop a larger critical community through its articulation with academic social scientists and academic social science. An example is related in Chapter 8 in which one of the spin-off groups of African-American parents from the parent network organized itself. This group of parents, with which I had no direct contact, learned through contact with our loosely organized parents' telephone network about the need to take a skeptical view of the curriculum with an eye toward how curriculum contributes to the "tracking" of Black students into lower academic tracks preparing them for lower paying jobs. The knowledge about the mechanisms and implications of tracking that I had introduced into the parents' critical discourse, combined with investigations by one parent in the telephone network into the systematic tracking of African-American elementary school children from our area into lower tracks at the middle school level, produced the kind of relevant knowledge the spin-off group could use to inform its own critical perspective. The group then generated knowledge that revealed how the proposed supposedly "professional" curriculum for the local high school was in fact a curriculum for vocational education, in which vocational training had simply been labeled as "professional" training by the Superintendent's office. Three local elementary and middle school PTAs then organized successfully to prevent the imposition of the vocational curriculum.

The generalized small-group model draws indirectly on the larger community of critical social scientists by bringing their research and theory products into the process. The model can also incorporate people with specialized knowledge and skills other than in social science into its process. Such people might especially include social activists with specialized experience and knowledge, people with therapeutic skills, and critical pedagogists. They could be incorporated by creating special contexts for them to help facilitate the emancipatory participatory research process. In these ways, the generalized small-group model that I have described mainly in terms of a critical social science research praxis can engage other segments of a potentially larger critical community, not self-defined as doing research, into dialogue with grassroots groups.

The small-group generalized model for emancipatory participatory research can be greatly enhanced by drawing on the many models from the literatures discussed in Chapters 10 and 11. My review of those literatures in relation to my own work points to additional roles for social scientists working with small groups, additional kinds of research a social scientist working with a group can do either for or with the group, a variety of forms of dialogue that groups can use to develop and validate knowledge, additional skills the researcher might develop, and various perspectives on the importance of drawing on different epistemologies and understanding the group's own indigenous ways of knowing. I attempt in Chapters 10 and 11 to discuss these literatures in ways that bring them into a beginning dialogue with each other about this level of small group practice.

I also attempt to show how even at the level of the generalized small group-based emancipatory research framework, these literatures bring a critical perspective to bear both on my own and each others' practice by providing a variety of ways to view each others' works. I use "critical" here not so much in the sense of a critical perspective about power relations of society, but in the sense of always retaining an open mind about what one is doing and about one's ideas. Finding in these literatures new sources for practice that share much with the prisoners' process provides me with a continuing project that has developed my ideas about the nature of a small group-based emancipatory participatory research process. Others might also use those literatures, together with my own framework as it is developed so far, to creatively elaborate and critique the frameworks they develop from their own practices and from the reading of additional approaches.

ELABORATING THE GENERALIZED SMALL-GROUP MODEL FOR ACTIVISM, CRITICAL THERAPY, AND CRITICAL EDUCATION

In the above discussion, I describe the generalized small-group process as one primarily oriented around developing critical social science, but drawing on education, therapy, and activism. Yet, as I indicate in describing the prisoners' process in Chapter 4, the prisoners themselves might well have thought of their process as a therapeutic one around which education, research, and action took place, or an educational one around which therapy, action, and research took place, or an action program with elements of education, therapy, and research. Creating a broader

critical community around a local emancipatory project might also begin with a project that appears initially to be action, therapy, or education, but that expands to include all aspects of the generalized small-group model, including a "bottom up" research process in dialogue with academic critical theory. For practical purposes, it matters little how the emancipatory praxis appears at first.

An Activist Version of the Small-Group Model

One of the most obvious ways to broaden the critical community in the case of our parents' network would have been to find other parent groups in the general metropolitan area with which to join forces. This would have entailed a more community activist orientation. In fact, I did try to accomplish this, but found serious barriers: the lack of other such groups in the larger metropolitan area (a reflection in part of the Reagan-Bush era and the lack of organized progressive movements in the society at large); the many forces in the more general local community working against parents' organizing to improve conditions at local Black schools (including, for example, the counter-resistance of ineffective teachers and principals who tended to be concentrated in our area's predominantly Black schools, and parents who were teachers in other schools and school systems who felt solidarity with the ineffective teachers, many of whom were also African-American; competition between the predominantly Black schools' constituencies for limited resources; limitations of my own time and resources; my lack of skills as a community organizer; and my outsider

[especially my race] status). If an effective, trained African-American activist working within an emancipatory participatory research praxis had been working with me at the time, we might have been able to broaden the base of the critical community and become more effective both in terms of extending critical discourse into a broader grassroots-based critical community and in terms of facilitating community control over local policy. An activist project would come to resemble the generalized small-group model to the extent that it was guided from below; included efforts at building solidarity (social support or therapy), educating the group, and developing emancipatory knowledge; and used dialogic methods of knowledge production in the spirit of that model.

The Small-Group Model as Critical Therapy

Another way to broaden the struggle might have been to begin with a therapeutic project. For example, if "diversity training" were to be reconceptualized as understanding relations of power from within the general concept of a small-group based model for emancipatory participatory research,[1] "diversity trainers" might use these quasi-therapeutic contexts partly in a "people's research" mode to work with groups to discover how the mechanisms of race, gender, and class oppressions operate in the workplace.

The trainers could do this by helping people connect their feelings, as the prisoners and parents did, to the experiences that reveal how social mechanisms of

inequality produce the feelings. The mechanisms can be discovered in all three dialectically related levels of the "system", as the prisoners analyzed: the unwitting unconscious participation of individuals in self-oppression and the oppression of others through the internalization of dominant ideologies (e.g., the prisoners' discoveries about how they reinforced their own oppression when, out of frustration, they did self-destructive things like dropping out of school or taking drugs); the social construction of oppression through interpersonal interactions (e.g. the parents' realization that they not only had "low expectations" for themselves, but for the ways they should be treated by school personnel, and the reproduction of those low expectations by school personnel in everyday interactions, as described in Chapter 8); and institutional policies and rules (e.g. the use of averaged Cognitive Abilities Test results to produce averaged "expected" scores on achievement tests, thereby providing legitimacy for low academic achievement in predominantly African-American schools, also described in Chapter 8). People could be sensitized to "diversity," but in a way that used a therapeutic mode as a critical research process to understand the connection of individual attitudes to power relations.

Other therapeutic settings could be used in similar ways. In my neighborhood in Maryland, there are (or could be developed) support groups for parents of African-American teenaged boys, who may be threatened the most by the social crises of this community and whose parents need social support. The potential for support groups also exists for the teenagers themselves, for victims of violent crime, and for other groups affected by the social crises. Bringing people together to meet such needs for

social support under a general umbrella of group therapy-like experiences could lead to a broader emancipatory praxis along the lines of the generalized small-group model if it were accomplished with a therapist who had a critical social perspective that included at least an understanding and critique of race, class, and gender relations. The leader/facilitator would need some therapy and group process skills, and her or his role would have to include that of critical researcher, and would ideally include the educator and activist roles as well. People might be trained in overlapping these roles, or they might work in teams if all skills could not be found in single individuals. Of course, it is very important to keep in mind in developing such a model the importance of the peer-based process--the model is best fulfilled when the participants themselves take a major part of the responsibility for defining the problems and carrying out the process. Trained facilitator-therapists might need to re-think their roles in light of "radical" therapy approaches and be prepared to relinquish them at least in part to "peer therapists." Because group therapy-like contexts tend to have a strong peer-participatory element, they can provide a useful basis for developing a small-group emancipatory praxis like that of the generalized model.

A Critical Education Version of the Small-Group Model

If I had been teaching at the local community college, for example, I might have been able to find ways to develop a context for critical education. As the

students for the college are drawn mostly from the local area, it might have been possible to work with them to reflect on their own educational experiences in a way that would throw light on both their own situations and the community situation at large. I would have been interested to see if it were possible to engage the students in both a self-research and community-research process in which perhaps they could have worked with local PTAs or even unorganized groups of teenagers from their neighborhoods to investigate "the system" (the three levels of the system) as described above. Such an effort would combine education with research and, if successful, could easily include therapeutic and activist elements, because self-reflection and other methods of investigation of the educational system would no doubt bring out strong feelings about the students' personal experiences that the group could help its members deal with, and it would likely produce discussions about possible political action.

Combining research, action, therapy, and education into a small-group praxis in any of these possible ways would create possibilities for creating a broader critical community, democratizing knowledge production, and creating a locally-based social movement that would bring a variety of people with special skills and training into productive interaction with various groups of grassroots people. This is the kind of vision I have at the present time for ways in which the generalized small-group model might be used to develop varieties of praxis at the local level that would produce and use emancipatory knowledge. I use my local community to generate examples; of course, the opportunities vary with local conditions. I hope these examples will

suggest possibilities to readers.

MOVING BEYOND SMALL GROUPS: BRINGING CRITICAL COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

In Chapter 1, I noted some of the social crises of the present time and the difficulty of addressing them because we who experience the crises and would do something about them are separated in so many ways and seem to have few contexts for joining our efforts into a more united effort--a critical community working toward creating a more just and equal society free from all forms of domination. This dissertation addresses the importance in this effort of emancipatory knowledge about social crises and points to ways of producing that knowledge that rely heavily on grassroots groups in interaction with ideas developed by intellectual communities. It points to the need to build a broader critical community capable of generating better critical theory, and to the importance of doing so in a way that integrates knowledge production with other parts of life of people in crisis, specifically, education, therapy (or solidarity or social support), and action.

A method for developing critical knowledge that is consistent with its aim to create a more fully democratic society is an urgent agenda for this time of many crises: people desperately need knowledge that a critical social science might produce. But how is this to be accomplished, given the separations between us? The generalized small-group model is a step toward creating such a method at the local

level. But the problems go far beyond the local level, so that local knowledges and struggles, indispensable as they are, are not sufficient.

Progress might be made above the local level by generalizing the small-group model to an intergroup level, to describe a broader theoretical framework for an emancipatory participatory praxis that includes research "from below." Like the small-group model, this framework aims to work toward substantive and cognitive democracy, but it does so at an intergroup level by establishing a dialogue between groups analogous to the dialogue between individuals in the small-group model. In Chapter 9, I suggested that this broader dialogue among models would be useful in achieving six aims:

1) developing a critical social science joining the praxis of trained academic intellectuals with that of grassroots groups to produce both better theory and more effective social change;

2) promoting a cognitive democracy in tandem with a more fully substantive political and economic democracy;

3) working toward a non-"totalizing" theory of domination;

4) elaborating a theory of emancipatory praxis involving research that avoids reproducing forms of domination in its practice;

5) developing better emancipatory knowledge by engaging groups of epistemic communities with different standpoints in dialogue; and

6) creating a theory of knowledge whose standards for objectivity and validity can be redefined by such a dialogue of epistemic communities.

A Dialogue of Communities

The dialogue I am proposing would involve a group of epistemic communities that have much in common, but that do not know each other very well and sometimes do not even seem to know of each other. As noted in Chapters 10 and 11, various academic communities, both theory-oriented and practice-oriented, have in common an interest in various combinations of the above aims. All these communities are involved in one way or another in emancipatory projects that involve research and theory-building, and most are concerned to bring in marginalized subjugated knowledges; most reject positivism as the ideal epistemology for producing critical knowledge, and are looking for ways to redefine objectivity; and so on. Yet, my search for literatures to inform my project of developing an emancipatory participatory research framework revealed that the many academic literatures that in fact contributed to the development of that framework were largely unaware of each other. For the most part, each literature operates from its own set of problematics and is in dialogue only with an insular community that shares its own discourse.

There are, of course, important exceptions. Some of the academic communities, or at least individuals within them (e.g. Fay, 1987; Lather, 1986; McGuire, 1987), have already seen some connections between them and have developed approaches that can help build a more comprehensive emancipatory research approach than could be accomplished from within their own disciplines. For example, Lather suggests that critical ethnography, feminism, and Freire's

conscientization might inform each other's practice and theory. McGuire suggests a dialogue between Freirian-based participatory research and feminism. Such contributions are important steps toward the dialogue I see as necessary.

Nevertheless, dialogue remains limited between academic communities, and is even more limited between academic knowledge producers and grassroots ones. The various critical communities' emancipatory projects are, it seems to me, seriously compromised by lack of contact with each other's discourses and insights, and it seems imperative to bring the communities into dialogue. As I note below, some categories developed in the prisoners' research process point to various ways that epistemic (and action, theory, and education) communities might productively engage in dialogue.

A Metaphorical Meeting of Communities

If I were to think of the epistemic communities as people, I would see them as people whom I would like to try to introduce--but I would also realize that it is premature to get most of them together to talk to each other. If they were people, I would see each as having ways of "living," and ideals in common, and I would know enough about each to think they would eventually enjoy knowing each other. However, they are all "living" very busy lives, and are pretty much wrapped up in the activities of their own families and communities. I respect each of these "people" as being concerned with working collectively to understand the nature(s) of

oppression(s) and to eliminate inequality and injustice. They all seem open to working with others outside their own communities, because they understand how important it is to work with others on the enormous project of creating a more just society. They all seem aware that it is important to work with others partly because they know that any individual's ideas about the nature of a problem or about possible solutions are limited by that person's own experience and grounding. Moreover, they are, for the most part, a self-critical bunch; they are all looking for ways that their own analyses might be incomplete or off-base, so they try to be as self-critical as possible. However, their ability to be self-critical is limited by the range of discourse in each of their own communities: certain issues just don't seem to come up in some communities that come up all the time in others. As a result, each "person" has developed considerable knowledge about a particular aspect of social inequality and about the relationship of academic theory to grassroots struggle, and each one's surrounding community keeps giving them new ideas to develop this knowledge. But at the same time, each "person" seems to be missing a larger picture that I think would emerge if they could be brought together to talk to each other and see how their work interrelates.

In the spirit of my late-night meetings with the ex-prisoners or my evening meetings with the PTA Program Committee, I can imagine a gathering of these "people" in an informal setting where they might get to know each other and begin to understand the ways they see their oppressions and the possibilities for building emancipatory knowledge and for combining it with education, the building of

solidarity, and action. A conversation that centers on emancipatory knowledge(s) might allow these "people," despite their different life experiences, to address needs they all share without engaging divisive issues around the nature of power and oppression that might lead each one to argue for privileging a particular group's situation of oppression over others. They might engage in a form of cooperative learning (e.g., Aronson, Bridgman, Sikes, Blaney, and Snapp, 1978), in which a common problem helps them form bonds with each other.

To carry the metaphor even further, someone might ask who I am to determine that these particular "people" should meet, rather than others. I would respond that by no means do I think I know all of those who might want to meet, or even, that these particular "individuals" might have the most in common or the most to learn from each other. I have found, though, from my work and experience, that they all share an interest in a set of problems that inspired my original work, which was to develop a grassroots based model for producing emancipatory knowledge. My grassroots-based model can be viewed as a form of praxis that "does" social science as a "people's" process. All these "people," these epistemic communities, are connected to my work in this way, and I would think they would appreciate the prisoners' approach and my elaboration of it to include a place for academic intellectuals and academic research, as a way to think more about how their own projects can be enriched by a view of "social science from below."

Conducting the Dialogue

In thinking about how a dialogue among epistemic communities might be conducted, it may help to consider analogies with some of the small-group methods developed by the prisoners' group and elaborated through my practice with the parents and in the generalized small-group framework for emancipatory participatory research described in Chapter 9. Some of the categories used to describe the generalized small group model, though fragmentary and incomplete, may provide a beginning guide. I will describe only a few.

"Using the problematic nature of local conditions to make friends, create a group, and begin the research process." The "local conditions" for the intergroup project--those that emancipatory-oriented critical researchers have in common--include the fragmentation of the academic world into disciplines and sub-disciplines. A conversation around a problem facing many disciplines may engage academy-based people in a common project around a problem that is "local" to them.

Entering a conversation. That each discourse is so involved in its own projects presents a problem for how a cooperative project might come to be defined. It would appear that efforts would have to be made by theorists willing to work on the project to try to enter each others' "conversations" (discourses about the project as the other discipline or discourse defines it) on the other's terms.

Being willing to be "researched" or interviewed. Many academic researchers

are used to being the subjects rather than the objects of research. It might be useful to conceive of a process in which people from various disciplines or sub-disciplines become the research objects of each others' investigations so that the process of discovery of each others' projects and perspectives on those projects might proceed.

"Allowing the definition of the research problem to be negotiated and transformed by the group process" Each "participant" would recognize the importance of allowing the definition of the problem to be negotiated and transformed; if each "participant" were to come with a rigid agenda and a rigid definition of the problem, the process of creating a critical community among the academic community would be compromised.

"Grounding the research first in the standpoint of the group, but bringing other perspectives into the process." In this intergroup dialogue, the "participants" are mainly academic approaches. The collective standpoint, then, is based in an academic frame of reference. It would be important for the "participants" to keep in mind that others outside academia have much to contribute to the definition and substance of the project: approaches from community organizing, critical social work, radical therapy, and critical pedagogy should be incorporated into the group at some point.

"Using everyday discourse." Finding a discourse that is shared among different epistemic groups, even within academia, is a problem if a common project

(and more broadly based critical community) is to emerge. Attempts would have to be made on the parts of the "participants" to learn each others' "languages." Using everyday discourse is probably not really the solution here, as the specialized language from many of the approaches is central to their very projects. Having "interpreters" may be more to the point: people who are knowledgeable in more than one discourse might serve as "interpreters" for the "conversation".

Emancipatory Knowledge. Perhaps the central topic of conversation to get the dialogue going would be about trying to discover how the various approaches might contribute to the collective project of developing different kinds of emancipatory knowledge. The conversation would also include defining how those kinds of emancipatory knowledge complement each other, and how the processes for developing the kinds of emancipatory knowledge as they are expressed in the various approaches are dialectically related.

Content of the Dialogue

Still, it might not be obvious at first what these epistemic communities have to teach each other. The generalized small-group process as presented in Chapter 9 provides a set of concepts for an emancipatory research praxis that would be familiar to most of these epistemic communities (many of the concepts were drawn from their work in the first place). These concepts are relevant not only to the small-group process, but also to the more general, intergroup project. They include above all the

effort to define what the complex nature of oppression is: to acknowledge, for example, that people are often oppressed by a complex interaction of systems of power; that both subjective and objective factors enter into oppression; that it is difficult to determine the interrelations of oppressive forces and of subjective and objective factors; that knowledge is always tentative and incomplete; and so on. It consists also of the effort to find methods for developing and refining understandings of oppression, for increasing consciousness of it, for building solidarity, and for finding ways to resist.

The prisoners' praxis helps put some of these issues into perspective, particularly for epistemic communities grounded in academia. The prisoners were not academic intellectuals, but grassroots people faced with a set of oppressive social conditions that they sought to change. Nevertheless, they were able to develop a sophisticated understanding of their own oppressions. The parents' group was similarly successful. In addition, both groups produced knowledge that added understanding to what was available from standard social science research. They accomplished this through a methodology that relied very heavily on dialogue, which (under conditions of friendship and shared struggle) turns out to be an effective analogue to the intellectual debate that takes place in academic circles and that functions to correct error and construct shared meanings. Some key concepts that characterize the nature of the prisoners' and parents' dialogue (which seem to distinguish their dialogue from much of the kinds of dialogue in academic discourse) are cooperative dialogue rather than adversarial dialogue (Moulton, 1983) and

"cogenerative dialogue" in which, as noted in Chapter 11, "[b]oth insiders and outsiders operate out of their initial frames of reference but communicate at a level where frames can be changed and new frames generated" (Elden and Levin, 1991, p. 134). Thus, their methods allowed them to produce knowledge that was new, valid, and useful for struggle.

Probably most important in terms of emancipatory goals, the prisoners' and parents' groups methodology for knowledge production flowed easily together with their methodologies for consciousness raising, solidarity building, empowerment, and social mobilization. It seems to me that these small-group processes would serve larger critical communities of knowers and strugglers well. They go far toward suggesting the kinds of methods needed to define and resist a range of oppressions.

NOTE

1. I have been working on this concept in dialogue with Julie Barnett.

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